

Stress Among Working Women

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ABSTRACT:

The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of stress. Nowadays, stress is a common feature in everyone's life. It is becoming a major issue and a matter of concern for the employees and the organizations. Working women are more affected as compared to their male counterparts, as their life becomes complex in order to maintain balance between home as well as work, so it becomes impossible to avoid stress. It is becoming difficult that they play the role of a perfect housewife, mother and working women at the same time. Many factors are involved in causing stress among working women at home or at workplace. Policies should originate in favour of working women to encourage them and to support them by providing a friendly, stress-free environment.

Key words: Stress, Working women, Family stress, Job stress

INTRODUCTION:

Nowadays stress has turned into a universal phenomenon. Stress is defined as the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it¹. It is a part of day to day living and wear and tear of every individual. The reason of stress differs from person to person. It causes physical and emotional changes on an effected individual and can be motivating and productive, or negative and destructive². Extreme stressful conditions are detrimental to the human health, but in moderation stress is normal and in many cases, proves useful. It is a mental and physical condition which affects an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work.³ Tension and anxiety, as well as depression, are frequent emotional consequences of stress⁴.

Stress is particularly common among career women at workplace. Work and family are the two important aspects in life of working women and they continue to juggle traditional responsibilities after hours. Sociologists describe them as struggling to achieve the male standard at work, while trying to maintain the perfect wife and mother standard at home⁴. Poor balances between work and family can be a major stressor for women and have a negative impact on emotional wellbeing⁵. An increasing number of articles have promoted the importance of work-life balance. They highlight the current concern within society and organizations about the impact of multiple roles on the health and well being of professional women and, implications leading to work and family performance and women's role in society. With this background, a recent five year literature searching was done on Google Scholar from 2013 to 2017 by using key words stress, working women, work and family, occupational stress. A total of 24 studies were found related to the topic, out of which 15 articles were selected after refined search.

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Working women, no matter whether they are single or married, face higher strain and contrary health effects. Working women most probably feel accented because of their diverse workload. At home, she has to take on multiple roles right from child care, looking after family members, a cook, a tutor, and a housemaid who takes care of the home, and a caretaker to fulfill the requirements at home. Hence, she has to fulfill the assorted demands of both home and workplace.

Factors of stress in working women:

Reason of stress in working women depend on various factors including type of her personality, attitude towards life, analytical skills, and co-operation from family and society. Each individual handles stress in different way; either positive or negative. There are many reasons of stress which can be at home or at workplace.

At home:

Death of husband, family member, close friend or relatives, sickness of any close one, break up from partner, noncompliance by children, children's academic performance, pregnancy or birth of a newborn.

At workplace:

Long working hours, working environment, job security, workload, salary, transfer, lack of recognition, conflict, grievance regarding problem, lack of promotion, strict policies, lack of resources, high demands of the job, relationship with colleagues, excessive work pressure, or excessive commuting time.

Sign and Symptoms of Stress:

Stress differs in degree and level of experience, and it is necessary to identify and determine the cause of stress. Some of the signs to identify the stress among working women are: disturbed eating habits, lack of patience, wrong decisions, loose temper easily, unable to achieve targets, switch job frequently, job dissatisfaction and depression, lack of concentration, poor performance, pessimistic attitude, persistent sadness and hopelessness, low self-esteem, lack of focus and energy, workplace aggression; physical complaints like headache, epigastric pain; chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and heart diseases⁶.

Review of Literature:

Nowadays, every individual wishes more and more for the attainment of pleasure that creates an atmosphere of competition in every aspect of life and this competition generates stress among them. In the recent years more and more women are coming to take on many jobs to

support their families or to improve their life styles¹. Working women are stressed because they have to perform various roles. They have the pressure to manage a balance between work, home and family¹. The cause of stress may arise either from home or organizational source. The family stresses often arise when women try to balance the multiple competing demands of their spouses, children, and elderly parents, among others⁷. In a study⁸, daily home based activities, child care and looking after the family members were the personal factors that usually caused stress in working women, on the contrary, long working hours, job insecurity, lack of supervision, work load, lack of opportunity for growth and advancement, job dissatisfaction and poor relationship with colleagues affected the efficiency of the employees at work place due to stress. The significance of the work related stressors are evidently greater than those associated with the family function, although the relationship of the family functioning, stress and well-being are also significant⁹. Family stress pervades the life of working women and may impact adversely their mental and physical health and their ability to perform office work effectively¹⁰. Working women who experience a high level of family stress for a long time and are unable to cope with this stress, become irritable, socially withdrawn and emotionally unstable, which may lead to sickness such as hypertension, stroke and psychological problems like depression and anxiety¹¹.

How can women cope with stress? Stress reduction strategies:

Researchers found stress reduction strategies to help working women to cope with stressful situations such as; setting limits appropriately, working ahead of time to minimize threatening situations, embarking on guided aerobic exercises like jogging, walking, biking and skiing, keeping a positive attitude, relaxation, having enough rest and sleep, listening music etc¹¹. People can live happier and healthier lives by keeping a positive attitude, accepting that there are events that one cannot control, being assertive instead of aggressive, expressing their feelings, opinion or beliefs instead of becoming angry¹². However, individuals can fight stress better when they are fit mentally and physically, eat healthy, manage time properly and effectively, learn to say no to requests that would create excessive stress, make time for hobbies/personal interests and by having enough rest and sleep according to the requirement¹³⁻¹⁵.

CONCLUSION:

Working women are constantly under different forms of stress as they are expected to perform multiple tasks. When they try to reduce stress levels, even then they are continuously busy in coping with their work and household responsibilities. Lack of support from spouse and family aggravates the stress level of women, which might sometimes lead to disastrous outcomes such as separation and divorce. It is recommended that seminars and workshops should be organized to teach methods

to deal with, and reduce the level of stress. Government should make family-friendly policies to enable women to work in a stress-free environment.

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