



## **PERFORMANCE OF WORKING WOMEN AT WORKPLACE IN STRESSED CONDITION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The word “stress” is used in psychology in at least two different ways. First it is defined as the state of psychological upset or disequilibrium in the human beings caused by frustrations, conflicts and other internal as well as external strains and pressures. What to do and what not to do, How to do, Where to go. Such questions depict the state or state of stress under which one is expected to act or behave. In a more serious condition of the stress, the individual reaches a point where the physical processes are seriously affected, the mental processes are confused, and the emotional state is chaotic.

**Keywords:** Stress, Burden, Performance. working women.

Stress is most widely - spread single occupational problem. It is a problem for almost in every employee. This phenomenon is also increasing globally. It is affecting all countries, occupations and categories of people at work. It can be no longer considered as an occasional and personal problem to be remedied by treating the individual. Stress prevention must deal with root causes. For any one, work stress usually lead to suffering, health problems and even death. It may cause absenteeism,

low productivity and excessive health care expenses. Impoverished personal and family life, low self - esteem, low job satisfaction and a withdrawal from participation in community life are some potential reasons.

The term stress is derived from Latin term “stringer” which means to clutch, compress or blind. In 15<sup>th</sup> century, the term was used to describe troubles or pain. A century later, the term was used to describe burden, force or pressure, especially on a person’s body or



soul. In the 17th century, stress denoted “hardship, straits, adversity or affliction” During 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it meant, force, pressure, strain or strong effort.

Wolff and Goodell (1968) considered stress as an inherent characteristic of life. They indicated that living creatures are constantly in a state of more or less stress- a dynamic state within an organism stemming in response to a demand for constant adaptation. They further postulated that different stressors had divergent meanings for individuals in terms of their past experiences. Lazarus (1971) defined stress as a general class of problems which deals with demands taxing the - psychological, social and physiological systems and the responses of these systems. The reaction of the individual will depend upon how he interprets or appraises the significance of harmful, threatening or challenging events.

Do women react differently to stress than men? This question is not easy to answer. In some works or occupations, women have a

significantly higher risk of health problems due to psychological fear than men. Studies on women have shown that social support may have a negative effect on health. To women a large social network means obligations to other people and may function as a stress-increasing factor. Studies have shown that even though women are as mentally active as men; their stress responses are less pronounced. Women react less to performance demands than men do. However, women with paid or non-paid work of more than 20 hours a week have higher, subjective risk of stress at home compared with men with the same amount of work. This shows that woman’s total burden of work must be considered when tiding stress- related illness. Eric verborgh, deputy director, European foundation, declared that stress was the leading illness among worker at home or other than home. He further stated that the problem will not vanish but it can be minimized by suitable management or it is possible to prevent the stress using an approach, which is global and,



multidisciplinary between varied factors in the workplace and their environs. The challenge before us is how to develop and disseminate measures to effectively present stress at the workplace either in home or office.

Women's roles have changed much over the past 35 years. For example, in the 1970's it was difficult for women entrepreneur to start a business. Today, however, women represent the fastest - growing segment of business owners. Changing roles, and changes in society as a whole, have led to changes in the overall level of women's confidence and status. As Ogilvy & Mather pointed out in a qualitative study carried out in the early 1990s, women are complex. They found that housewives, in particular, tended to suppress aspects of their personalities and desires in favour of their role as family provider, but under the surface there was a range of other personality facets fighting for recognition and satisfaction. This could be regarded partly as a

reflection of need states, but arguably goes deeper than that.

When working women get stressed out, many blame her job. But women who stay at home are more likely to suffer from anxiety and to feel unhappy. Rosalind Barnett of the Wellesley College Center for Research on women and Grace Baruch, both psychologists, studied 238 women - never married, married with or without children, divorced, working and non-working in the Boston area. (Baruch and Brnett, 1986; Kessler and Mc Crae,) There are two ways to look at women and work," says Barnett. "One way supposes that you have a limited amount of energy. Each role drains part of that energy, so the more you do, the worse off you are". But the other way is that having more roles offers women more opportunities to be challenged to feel competent and to have their work acknowledged. It also gives them more options, like having more money to hire help, to lessen the burden of housework. Filling more than one role also allows women to divide their emotional eggs among



several baskets “If something is going poorly in one area,” Barnett points out, “things are likely to be going better in another.” Frustration doesn’t seem to be related to how many roles a person takes on. Up to a point, Barnett says, the more the roles, the greater the self - esteem. “It is the family role that gives women most stress,” she says. “Work is clearly not the culprit. Barnett admits that her findings can be interpreted differently. Perhaps only women with high self-esteem take on many roles, and she doesn’t think every woman should continue working once she has children. She acknowledges that wearing many hats can make some women feel overloaded shorten time and pressured by the constant need to make choices. Planning, child care and day-to-day support systems play an important part in becoming a successful wife, mother and career women, Subramaniam expressed that when she was seven years old, she often thought that her mother was the luckiest women in the world because all she was required to do was pack Tiffin’s and

settle down to day dreaming, reading or chatting. Some 10 years later, when her mother started working, she was compelled to revise her views. Suddenly she seemed full of a new animation, a sense of purpose and dynamism, and certainly a lot happier than before. Then she deduced that “working women” lead more satisfying lives than those who stay at “home”. Sending the kids to school, taking them to tuition classes, planning menus, meeting family needs - there must be more to life than this. Today all that’s a thing of past. In fact some social scientists are even saying that children / kids whose mother’s work, are not only more independent and outgoing but also perform better than those whose moms are not working and that the upwardly man would rather have a wife with whom he can intellectually connect with.

To perform the duty as a better in a real sense, woman has to play a majority roles, shouldering the responsibilities, taking various decisions and implementing them



successfully. With disintegration of joint family system woman's role is more highlighted in this context as decision maker and task performer. Traditionally, woman had a negligible say in the family matters. The woman is the administrator in the home shouldering these responsibilities by organizing the complicated schedule of various household activities. This routine monotony of job adds to drudgery in her life.

Growing desire for more varied, interesting and colorful manner of life, escaping monotony and dullness of home life drives quite a number of women into the employment market (Tondon 1963). Industrialization has given a jolt to social structure, bringing revolutionary changes in the traditional role of woman. Industrial society is the first cultural system to permit women to occupy independent jobs. (Goode, 1965)

Increasing number of women are found leaving their homes to take up jobs to supplement their family income (Kaur 1982). Thus, the women's economic horizon once

limited to household chores has now expanded. The proverb, says "A man's work is from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done. (Devadas, 1964). The primary status of women in all societies is that of housekeeper and mother. The modern homemaker lives in many sided life in and out of the house and plays many roles in a day (Goode, 1965)

In modern world, the role of women is much beyond the home and bringing up children. As each need arises, a new service is released. Now, there is scarcely any avenue of employment which women have not entered. The woman, who in addition to a role as woman can develop her talents by taking a job, is able to contribute to her children's characters and to the vitality of her family. The working wife is the major force behind our rising standard of living because of the money she earns and spends.

The modern women play various roles. As a manager, guides various activities and she shares the activities with others. As a mother, share her time, energy and emotions



with their children, as a wife they join in doing things with and for their husband, as an individual they may enter into political, social and creative activities. In addition, as working wife, they have to keep up the standard of job. Loretta (1972) views that today many women take up employment for economic reason or personal fulfilment and thus they have to play a dual role wage earner and a homemaker. To reconcile her job with her household chores, therefore, becomes a necessity.

However, the additional role of woman as a wage earner calls for many adjustments in family life, requiring careful planning and performing of the household chores, without sacrificing the harmony in family living. The absences of the woman for 8 to 10 hours a day create grave problems, endangering the delicate bonds of human relationship and peace in the family life. Many of the daily activities requiring personal attention and loving care as wife and mother also may be switched over to paid

services, which may lead to conflicts resulting in tensions in the family.

The task of family management and comfortable relationship with children may become burden and more difficult for employed women due to physical fatigue and nervous strain (Goodyear & Klohr, 1954). Being employed working women have to face two fronts, the home and occupation, so there are more demands, stresses, conflicts, problem situations than unemployed counterpart who has to perform the role of a housewife only. With the increasing number of married women working outside the home, contemporary families are facing novel challenges (Lin and Wang 1988; Lin I 986; 1987; Aneshensel, 1986). Women still hold major responsibility for childcare and housework (Lin, Lan and Liu, 1985; Weitzman, 1985) whether due to the expansion or integration of woman's traditional family and emerging career roles (Lin and Moor 1985) stress has become inevitable for women and their families.



Stress situations may be biological or psychological in nature. At the biological level, physical injury and other stresses like physical illness, diseases, and fatigues pains result in the organic adjustive reactions. The human body is placed on a “war footing” contributing to the adaptive potential providing biological defences against stress.

Psychological stress especially severe ones, upset the psychological balance or equilibrium of an organism. His /her reactions to such stresses are both physiological and psychological in nature. The physiological stresses may be reflected in the form of changes in the nervous and endocrine systems like increased muscle tone, pumping of stored sugar into the blood stream, change in breathing, perspiration and secretion of gland. This fact is utilized in the interrogation of criminals who, being under more than ordinary stress, exhibit definite physical reactions in the form of faster beating of heart, rapid and irregular breathing, rising blood pressure,

and change in the electrical conduction of the skin. Such changes may be recorded by the lie detector or polygraph for the identification of the physiological reaction to stress situations.

### **Stress tolerance capacity**

It has been observed that people are able to weather severe adverse circumstances without showing significant psychological damage. They are able to handle the most threatening situations without much difficulty while other break down under relatively mild stresses. Therefore, the severity of a given stress depends on one’s tolerance capacity.

The term stress tolerance thus refers to the amount of stress one can tolerate before breaking down under the pressure of stress. Individual differences in the stress tolerance capacity are not easy to explain. While a biological explanation may involve the assumption that more stable neuro-endocrine systems show a greater resistance to stress situations, psychological interpretation will involve the individual’s evaluation of



the stress situation. Two young lecturers on probation may view their termination of services by a private management in quite different ways: for one, it may seem a humiliating failure leading to frustration and severe stress. The other may view it a painful but fortunate, in the sense that he may get an opportunity to work in a better institution or try for another good job.

In a true sense, people learn to perceive stress events in the light of previous experiences which may condition a person to regard life events as threatening. Consequently, such a person will have less stress tolerance than the person who has been conditioned to regard such events in a more philosophical and less personal way.

Work or job outside the home is one of the stressor in working women. Rapid changes in traditional values, life styles, competitiveness and industrialization are the few factors that have changed the whole environment. This change in environment has encouraged and

motivated the women for search of work outside the home. This outside work creating the job stress and anxiety in women who handled the role of housewife, mother and working women at a time.

According to Caplan et.al. (1975) work stress is “the result of characteristics of job environment which pose a threat to the individual”. It indicates that more work in short span of time or excessive demands, job over load, workers expectation from the bosses creates job stress. As per the experts opinion the factors related to job stress are as follows :

**i) Stress due to Organization :**

Working conditions ,Under load or over load ,Use of poor technology,Long working hours, Organizational culture.

**ii) Stress due to Environment :**

Seating arrangement, Insufficient space, Illumination (lighting), Load shedding, Ventilation,Interior decoration ,Storage facilities.

**iii) Stress due to Relationship at**

**work place:** Relation with boss, Relation with subordinate, Relation





with colleague , Relation with management.

**iv) Stress due to Family factors:**

Family environment, Expectation of other family members, Life style, Standard of living , Attitudes towards job.

**v) Stress due to Other factors :**

Career development, Job insecurity ,Salary structure.

**vi) Stress due to Personal factors:**

Rigidity in nature Non flexibility Bossing nature Communication problem, Lack of decision making ,Feminism, Lack of interest, Home work balance, Role ambiguity, Team working.

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