

## **An Impact of Stress Management on Employed Women**

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### **Abstract**

Today women are in a state of transition caught between the illusory safety of traditional role on one hand and the challenge to realize their potential outside on the other hand. Women, have a lot of balancing to do between home and workplace, and balancing between social and personal requirements. The major issues are maternity, menopause, parenthood, gender roles, conditions at home and workplace, familial and social support, often blight women's lives in the long run. Stress is the reactions of people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.

A woman is constantly under stress either at home or at work place. At work place coping with demands, time management, and completion of tasks before the deadlines are the problems which need to be handled skilfully. At home maintaining relationships, making ends to meet are factors that can cause stress. Stress is caused whenever any event, internal or external, is perceived as making demands over and above the copy resources possessed by the women's.

Stress make a person more susceptible to disease, which then aggravates any existing illness or chronic condition such as heart disease, depression, ulcers, irritable bowel disease, diabetics, the common cold, urinary tract infections. Some people seek comfort from stress by engaging in behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse, smoking, or overeating, which have negative physical and emotional health consequences of their own.

A recent survey showed that 70-90 percent of women feel stressed at work place and outside. Depression, only one type of stress reaction, is predicted to be the leading occupational disease of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, responsible for more days lost than any other single

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factor. Globally, 23 percent of women executives and professionals, say they feel “super-stressed”.

The aim of the field study has been to find out the cause and effects of stress on the working women. Causes of occupational stress and several specific techniques have been suggested through stress management. To conclude, the effective management of stress involves directing stress for productive purposes, preparing role occupants to understand the nature of stress helping them to understand their strength and usual styles and equipping them to develop approach strategies for coping with stress.

**Key words:** stress management, impact, women, disease,

## **Introduction**

In the traditional society, women’s role was naturally limited to the family. Since she was the bearer of children, she was fully occupied with her duties as a mother and homemaker. This was no small feat, since the traditional household may be described as both a production and a consumption unit. Man’s responsibility was to provide the household with raw materials, which were then converted by the woman into consumable products or conditions by means of rudimentary methods and tools.

Many factors like urbanisation, technical progress, women’s education, etc., have profoundly changed these traditional conditions even in a developing country like India. Slowly starting with the metropolitan areas and going back, the women’s role at home has become lighter due to technical progress. The production side of women’s work at home is gradually decreasing leading to a reduction of women’s role at home.

Mechanization and automation of many production processes have decreased the importance of man’s physical ability over women for performing a physical job. Further, it has not been scientifically proved that a woman is incomparable to a man either in skill or mental abilities. This has enabled women to take advantage of the industrialization has lead to a consumer society, where many desirable products are readily available women perceive

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more and more clearly that if they really born to contribute to the welfare of their family and society the most effective way are to go out of home and earn money.

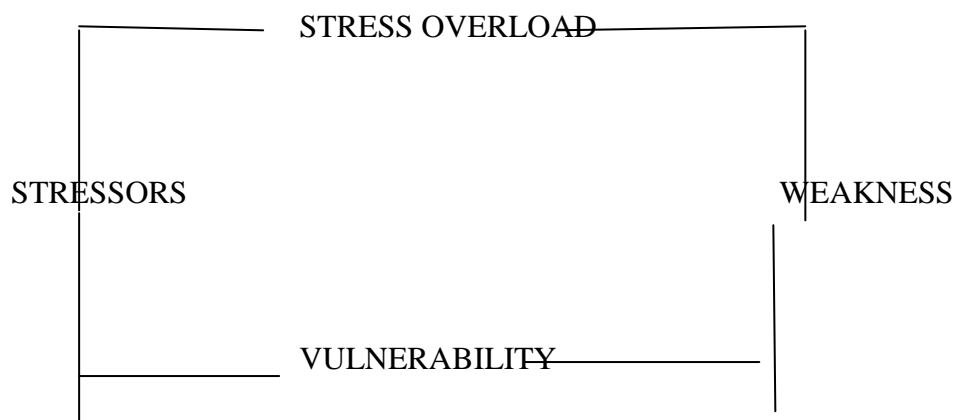
Workplace stress is a very real occurrence in the modern world, with the incidence of stress related claims having risen dramatically in the last ten years. Studies have pointed to growth in non-standard work and other changing work patterns as contributing to the recent sharp increase in the stress levels in the workplace.

## Stress

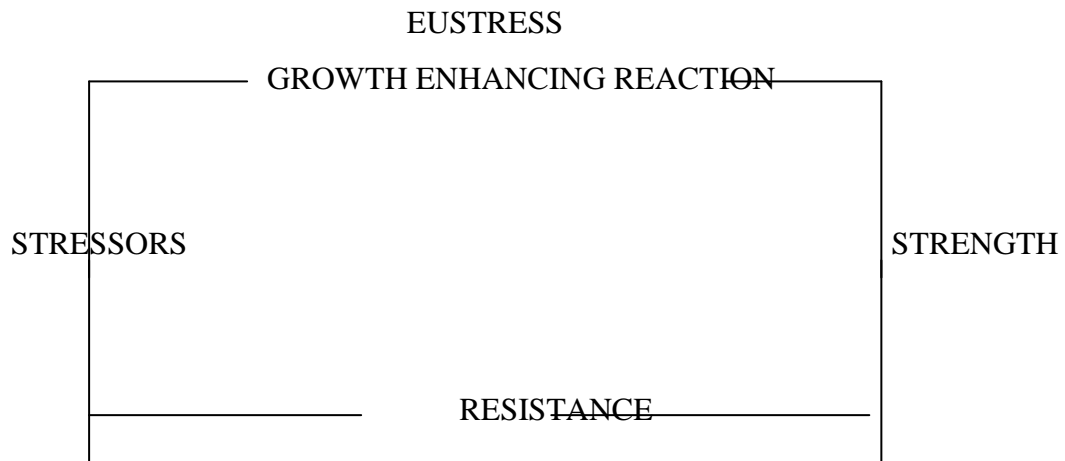
In an era characterized by accelerated technological expansion and development resulting in an overall explosion in knowledge and opportunities it is expected that the roles and functions, characteristic of traditional society would undergo a metamorphic change. This change can cause frustration, conflict, confusion (i.e.) this change can built up a pressure and this pressure in its full form is called stress.

Stress may be defined as the sum of physical and mental responses to an unacceptable disparity between real or imagined personal experience and personal exceptions. This definition may appreciate that stress is a response which includes both physical and mental components. The physical responses include a host of psycho logic changes which largely fall into acute response and chronic response. Mental responses to stress include adaptive stress, anxiety and depression.

## Stress Reaction Distress



In everyday life we must distinguish between two types of stress effects, namely **eustress** (from the Greek eu or good – as in euphony, euphoria, eulogy) and **distress** (from the Latin dis or bad – as in dissonance, disease, dis satisfaction), depending upon whether stress is associated with desirable or undesirable effects.



Stress is the wear and tear our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment; it has physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative feelings.

### **Women and Stress**

Until the 1960s, a woman’s primary role was wife and mother: normality for these women was defined as adaption to these roles. Competence and accomplishment were measured through the success of their husband and children. Social acceptance of wider roles for women began to emerge in the 1960s, and women began to professionally integrate themselves into industry. The workforce is changing with more women now employed. Women bring a unique set of dynamics to the workplace because they have to deal with inter role conflicts – attend to families as well as their jobs.

The number of working women has grown from 5.3 million in 1900 to 18.4 million in 1950 and to nearly 65 million in 2003 and is increased to 75.5 million by 2010; the paid labour force participation rate for women has grown from 34 percent in 1950 to more than 60 percent in 2003. By 2010, more than 62 percent of women will be in the paid workforce.

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Women have made progress by taking on new roles in the workplace and entering certain traditional male occupations.

“Women and stress: successfully juggling your busy life” is a brochure produced by the office of health promotion at Baylor College of Strategies on dealing with stress and preventing it from interfering with their lives. Some stress can help women perform at their peak. But too much is destructive to their physical and emotional well being. Stress can even come from good events such as planning a wedding or receiving a promotion. Unfortunately, your body doesn't know the difference between “good stress” and “bad stress”.

Some common physical and emotional symptoms of stress are:

Fatigue;

Head, back, neck and shoulder aches;

Stomach problems;

Eating too much or not enough or interrupted sleep;

Colds;

Change in menstrual cycles;

Feeling anxious;

Feeling isolated;

Frustration;

Irritability and

Difficulty concentrating

Stress affects women health in many ways. Choosing the right way to relieve stress and making the right choice for a healthy lifestyle is very important for women.

### **Women's Stress in Various Fields**

The problem of stress in women, particularly housewives, is an important aspect of the process of social change in India. Traditionally, Indian women worked within the framework family system. Today they have joined hands with men as part of the workforce in the organisation. The consequent outcome is that modern women live in two systems and

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need to perform both familial as well as professional roles. This, in turn, leads to a number of role stresses among working women.

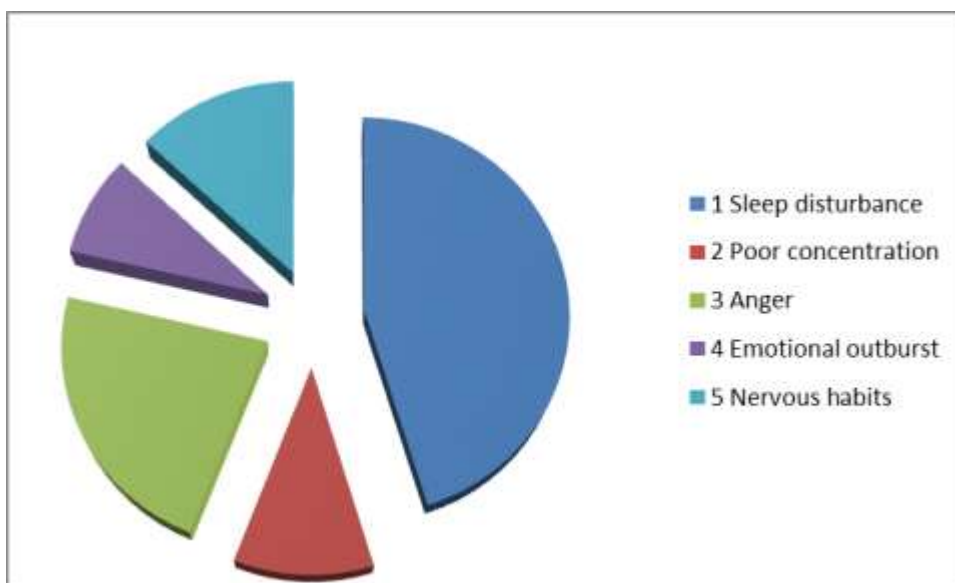
Sociological researches assert that family structure (working or stay-at-home mothers and other models) affects performance and employee attendance either directly or of the interactively family demands and family attitudes were found to influence the absence frequently at workplace.

The following table lists those occupations which equal or exceed the rate of 6 on a stress rating scale of (0-10).

#### **OCCUPATIONS WITH HIGH STRESS LEVEL**

OCCUPATION	RATING SCALE
BPO concern	8.3
Software professionals	7.7
Airline pilot	7.5
Journalist	7.5
Advertising executive	7.3
Dentist	7.3
Doctor	6.8
Broadcasting personnel	6.8
Nurse	6.5
Musician	6.3
Teacher	6.2
Social worker	6.0
Bank manager	6.0

Source: conditions of work digest: preventing stress at work



The evidence indicates that a broad and growing range of occupation are prone to work-related stress. There is a strong relationship between social support and mental stress and trauma in women. It relates to a women's help – seeking attitude social networks, kinship networks and support networks. Besides these factors, adapting to a new workplace culture and reformations tends in job sectors, affect men and women alike.

### **Work Place Stress**

Women may suffer from mental and physical harassment at workplaces, apart from the common job stress. Sexual harassment in workplace has been a major source of worry for women, since long women may suffer from tremendous stress such as 'hostile work environment harassment', which is defines in legal terms as 'offensive or intimidating behaviour in the workplace'. This can consist of unwelcome verbal or physical conduct. These can be constant source of tension for women in job sectors. Also, subtle discriminations at workplaces, family pressures and societal demands add to these stress factors.

### **Job Insecurity**

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Organised workplaces are going through metamorphic changes under intense economic transformations and consequent pressures. Reorganisations, takeovers, mergers, downsizing and other changes have major stressors for employees, as companies try to live up to the competition to survive.

### **High Demand and Performance**

Unrealistic expectations, especially in the time of corporate reorganisations, which sometimes puts unhealthy and unreasonable pressures on the employee, can be a tremendous source of stress and suffering. Increased workload extremely long work hours and intense pressures to perform at peak levels all the time for the same pay, can actually leave an employee physically and emotionally drained. Excessive travel and too much time away from family also contribute to an employee's stressors.

### **Technology**

The expansion of technology – computers, pagers, cell phones, fax machines and the internet has resulted in heightened expectations for productivity speed and efficiency, increasing pressures on the individual worker to constantly operate at peak performance levels. Workers working with heavy machinery are under constant stress to remain alert. In this case both the worker and their family members live under constant mental stress. There is also the constant pressure to keep up with technological breakthroughs' and improvisations, forcing employees to learn new software all the times.

### **Workplace Culture**

Adjusting to the workplace culture, whether in a new company or not, can be intensely stressful. Making oneself adapt to the various aspects of workplace culture such as communication patterns of the boss as well as the co-workers, can be lesson of life. Maladjustments to workplace cultures may lead to subtle conflicts with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases office politics or gossips can be major stress inducers.

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## **Personal or Family Problems**

Employees going through personal or family problems tend to carry their worries and anxieties to the workplace. When one is in a depressed mood, his unfocused attention or lack of motivation affects his ability to carry out job responsibilities.

Quantity and quality of leisure time distribution between the genders is an interesting index of how women get burdened with stress for either natural or social obligations. Multinational time budget data archive and the Australian time use survey suggest that women are now bearing a “dual burden” as both family providers and family careers. Absence of reciprocal and joint emotion management within family is a nagging stressor for women. This can be physically both and psychologically draining.

## **Family Responsibilities as Source of Stress**

The convention, which had been ratified by 31 countries as of 30 June 2000, calls for measures to be adopted which into account the needs of workers with family responsibilities in their terms and conditions of employment and in social security. The recommendation also covers a number of arrears in which measures can taken to facilitate the lives, and therefore reduced the levels of stress encountered by workers with family responsibilities. These include:

The provision of child-care facilities;

The reduction of hours of work, the reduction of overtime and the introduction of more flexible arrangement in relation to working schedules, rest periods and holidays;

Adequate regulation and supervision of the terms and conditions of part-time workers, temporary workers and home workers, many of whom have family responsibilities;

The possibility for either parent to take parental leave, during the period immediately following maternity leave, without loss of job employed rights;

The availability of leave of absence for a sick or family member.

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## **Impact of Stress Management on Working Women**

Stress is both additive and cumulative in the negative effects on individuals, organisations and societies. The national institute for occupational safety and health are dedicated to studying stress.

Stress is linked to physical and mental health, as well as decreased willingness to take on new and creative endeavours.

Job burnout experienced by 25 to 40 percent of U.S workers is blamed on stress. More than ever before, women stress is being recognised as a major drain on corporate productivity and competitiveness.

Depression, only one type of stress reaction, is predicted to be the leading occupational disease of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, responsible for more days lost than any other single factor.

Women who work full-time and have children under the age of 13 report the greatest stress worldwide.

Nearly one in four mothers who work full-time and have children under 13 feel stress almost everyday.

Globally, 23 percent of women executives and professionals, say they feel “super-stressed”.

70 percent of the working women at the age group of (25-35 yrs) experience a higher level of stress.

Women in call centres suffer from high stress level at a percentage of 51.

The scale of occupational stress: further analysis of the impact of demographic factors and type of job, published in 200, found that 41 percent of teachers reported themselves 'highly stressed', while 58.5 percent came into a 'low stress' category.

Almost 20 percent of women physicians have a history of depression, with an estimated 1.5 percent reporting a suicide attempt.

Sleep disorder is the major stress related symptoms of working women.

Stress seems to be one of the most important factors in the development of chronically high blood pressure.

Sudden stress increases the pumping action and rate of the heart and causes the arteries to constrict, thereby posing a risk for blocking blood flow to the heart.

Peptic ulcers – stress may predispose one to ulcers and sustain existing ulcers. It is estimated by some experts that social and psychological factors play some contributing role in 30 to 60 percent of peptic ulcer cases.

It has been established beyond doubt that stress is inevitable, many its harmful effects can be successfully allayed. Stress come in many forms including predictable challenges and sudden unpredictable crises.

## **Conclusion**

Today there are many young women who do not want to just stay at home and do house work but want to have their careers. "Women alleviating stress by altering their life style includes building greater stress tolerance, changing their pace of life, controlling distressful thoughts, acquiring problem solving skills, and seeking social support.

To conclude, effective management of stress involves directing stress of for productive purposes, preparing role occupants to understand the nature of stress helping them

to understand their strength and usual styles and equipping them to develop approach strategies for coping with stress.

Occupational stress is a growing problem in workplaces and a problem of particular magnitude for working women. A number of stresses – reaction strategies have been made useful for working women, ranging from the more common individuals stress management techniques to higher level intervention focused on removing the sources of occupational stress as it affects working women and present an approach for reducing the effects of job stress.

Work place stress is a very real occurrence in the modern world. Stress has far-reaching consequence and has percolated into all aspects of our modern world. Stress is responsible for restlessness, sleep difficulties, depression, headache, apart from a series of psychosomatic ailments and a psychiatric problem. Hence to reduce the work place stress the following are some stress management techniques

One method of counteracting the harmful effects of the psychological stress is the possibility of regular elicitation of the relaxation response.

The practice of yoga gives the tool and techniques by which we can expand our conscious awareness into the unconscious parts of the mind in order to become aware of the patterns and habits which lead to stress.

Meditation is recognised for its myriad health benefits, and is widely practiced as a way to counteract stress.

A proper balance diet is clearly essential, both to avoid direct physical stress, causes via brain and nervous system, and to reduce stress susceptibility from poor health and condition.

Physical exercises in necessary in order to keep the body healthy, both physically and mentally and is the best antidote for stress. It provides recreation and mental relaxation.

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Walking is the most efficient form of exercise and the only one and individual can safely follow all his life. Stress and strain can be counteracting an even prevented by regular vigorous walking.

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