

## **A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF STRESS AND TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING STRESS AMONG WORKING AND NON WORKING WOMEN**

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### ***Abstract***

*Stress is defined as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it. Women play a crucial role in the economic and social development of nations worldwide, yet working women face a range of challenges as they navigate both family and professional responsibilities. They have to manage their career while maintaining traditional roles. Due to dual responsibilities traditional roles seem to be one of the major sources of stress that working women have to face. The study aims to evaluate the stress level in working women and housewives and to know about the techniques for managing stress adopted by working and non-working women. A quota sampling method was used in selecting the 50 women i.e. 25 working and 25 non-working (Housewives). SPSSI-Singh’s Personal Stress Source Inventory was used to evaluate the degree of stress. Here t-test was used to calculate the significance of the difference. The outcomes show that the degree of stress was high in the working women in collaboration with the housewives. From the help of a self-prepared stress management techniques list in which the researcher included eight healthy coping skills, adopted by the women for both groups.*

### ***Keywords:***

*Working women, non-working women, housewives*

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## **Introduction**

The modern era is the era of women's empowerment. Most of the females are working and they have a difficult day while managing both their home and workplace. Actually, women have to play the role of homemakers also and this dual role ultimately invites stress in their lives. The main issue with the working women is that they are expected to perform best in all fields of their life. They do need to prioritize most of the time. If they don't and try to be good in all the fields and all the roles then they will end up with severe health issues like anxiety, headache and stress issues. Anxiety not only hampers their personal but also their professional lifestyle. For instance, if a working woman prioritizes her children, then she can't be her full self as a wife, daughter or daughter-in-law. Similarly, they have to prioritize what they require and they will have to plan accordingly. When children are young, they seek parental attention and it is also compulsory for their nurturing. Many a times due to this, women have to compromise with their careers and this also becomes a major cause of stress, also it makes them feel strain on their time and energy (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Kenny & Bhattacharjee, 2000). Many studies reflect that, the more tasks she has to juggle throughout the day, the greater her chances of ending the day with low satisfaction, while the likelihood of experiencing stress and anxiety also rises (Williams & Suis, 1991). The important cause of stress in working women is when they do not get their husband's help and support in household tasks. (Repetti et. al, 1989)

## **Stress**

Stress is challenging to explain with precision. The idea of stress was first introduced to by Hans Selye in 1936. The word Stress originates from the Latin word "Stringere," it originally referred to experiences of physical hardship, starvation, torture, and pain.

"Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand, whether it is caused by, or results in pleasant or unpleasant conditions." Hans Selye, MD(1956)

For a working women, workplace and work stress are described as the negative biological and mental responses that arise when job requirements exceed the abilities, skills, or resources of employees. It can lead to mental or physical changes, often harmful, with signs of psychological or physical issues sometimes becoming apparent.

Khanna. S. (1992) study aimed to assess the degree of stress among employed and non-employed or non working women in relative to anxiety and depression. The sample (N=406) consisted of women from two locations in India: Jalandhar

(Punjab) and Shimla (Himachal Pradesh). Correlation analysis revealed the following: 1. In non-working women, anxiety is significantly and negatively associated with useful and pragmatic life changes; 2. In working women, unhappiness and depression are significantly and positively linked to positive life changes, while in non-working women, it is linked to negative life changes. These findings suggest that in India, positive life changes are associated with depression in working women, while in unemployed women, life changes in a positive way are linked to stress and negative life changes to depression.

Kristina and Stephen (2005) found that employed women experience excessive levels of stress compared to men, with stressors including multiple roles, discrimination, and stereotyping. Maryam Zarra Nezhad et al. (2010) further reported a positive healthy relationship between occupational tension and family problems in working women.

Balaji (2014) examined the factors contributing to work-family problems and the stress experienced by women employees. He experimented that married women face work-family problems due to factors such as the number of hours worked outside the home, the flexibility or inflexibility of their working hours, the size of their family, and the number of dependents they care for. These factors have a significant impact on the mental well-being and distress of married employed women. Hashemi H. A. et al. (2007) studied on marital adjustment, stress, and depression among a sample of 150 married women, both working and non-working, aged 18 to 50 years. All participants had at least a graduate-level education and belonged to middle or high socio-economic backgrounds. The findings revealed that working married women face more challenges in their marital lives compared to their non-working counterparts. Additionally, the study showed that highly educated married women, whether working or non-working, tend to manage their marital lives better and experience less depression compared to their less educated peers.

Shirin Ahmad and Nia (2002) conducted research analyzing the impact of jobs on mothers' health in Tehran, Iran, using an analytic role framework. The study surveyed a representative sample of 1,065 employed and unemployed mothers in 1998. Three key explanatory factors were examined in relation to various mental and physical health outcomes. Unlike findings in Western countries, where women's paid work is typically linked to improved health, the study in Tehran found no statistically significant differences in health outcomes between employed and unemployed mothers. So, stress is a growing problem in the modern era where everyone is struggling to excel in his/her area, whether it is at home or at the workplace. Employed women report more non-fatal but long-term and disabling

health problems. The present study addressed the issue of stress among working women, this issue is a burning issue in our modern society.

### **Stress Management Techniques**

Charles Raison, MD, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, says that the keys to reduced stress and increased happiness are not money or material possessions. Instead, they lie in positive actions, good health, strong relationships, and a sense of hope.

Working women in this modern era, they should be very clear about the planning, and priorities of their lives. Due to lack of planning and lack of clarity what they want actually puts a lot of stress and anxiety and unnecessary medication needs to be taken. The exercise comprises of anything just they like as listening to music, which is a great source of mental relaxation or any kind of yoga, meditation, gardening etc.

There are many types of stress management techniques by which working women can reduce their stress and attain emotional well-being.

- Regular exercise helps reduce stress, enhance mood, and improve overall health.
- Develop a support network system-Specially for a working women they should build a support system from their family members.
- Acknowledge that some things are beyond your control.
- Find ways to relax- our body requires good nutrition to counteract the effects of stress.
- By adopting such stress management techniques employed women can reduce their stress and in the right sense empowered women and an empowered nation can be built.

### **Rationale**

The traditional roles and dual responsibilities of working women often emerge as a major source of stress. The present study aims to evaluate the stress levels experienced by working women compared to housewives and to explore the techniques for managing stress used by both working and non-working women. The review as given above makes it obvious that stress among working women is a major problem of our modern era. However this problematic behavior has not received the attention of the researchers as it really deserves, especially in India.

The tools used in the present study and the sample from the urban area of Patna, Bihar have generally not been targeted in the previous studies.

### **Aims and Objectives**

To determine:

- The stress levels of working women.
- The stress levels of non-working women.
- The comparative stress levels of working and non-working women.

-which stress management techniques are the most used.

### **Hypothesis**

- There would be no significant difference in the mean score of stress levels between working and non-working women.
- No significant difference in the degree of stress among working women and nonworking women shall be observed.

### **Method**

#### **Participant**

Participants for the present study were 50 educated women of Patna town ( 25 working women and 25 nonworking women- housewives) selected from different schools, offices, hospitals and societies located in urban area of Patna city. Age of participants ranged from 25 to 40 years. For the sampling technique, the Quota sampling technique was used to select the respondents.

#### **Materials**

- Singh Personal Stress Source Inventory (SPSSI) –The scale was established and standardized by Dr. Arun Kumar Singh. The test consists of 35 items and there are three given response options for each question namely ‘Seldom’, ‘Sometimes’ and ‘Frequently’. For scoring every item marked as ‘Seldom’ by the testee is given a score of 1, marked as ‘sometimes’ is given a score of 2 and marked as ‘Frequently’ is given a score of 3. Unmarked items are given a score of zero. The higher the score the higher is the magnitude of personal stress, likewise lower the score lower is the magnitude of personal stress. The maximum score on SPSSI is 105.

- Self-Prepared Stress Management Techniques List –In this list the researcher included eight healthy coping skills adopted by the working women and nonworking women.

#### **Procedure**

Each participant in the study was individually briefed on the purpose of the research and good rapport was established before starting the testing and were asked to fill SPSSI. The scale was collected from them after getting their responses and they were thankfully relieved from the testing. When the total scores for both

the groups were found out then the data was statistically analyzed. After the result was found out as to which group is highly stressed then the researcher suggested some stress management techniques for them to manage their stress in an efficient way.

## Result

**Table-1** Qualitative description of scores

Score range	Details	Working	Nonworking
>80	High degree of stress	05=20%	0=0%
31-79	Moderate stress level	20 = 80%	25=100%
0-30	Low level of stress	0=0%	0=0%

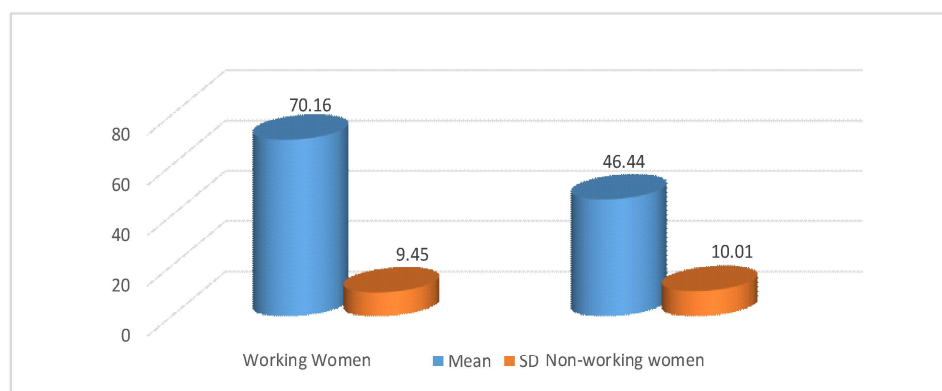
Table 1: The results indicate that among 25 working women, 5 are classified in the high-stress group, 20 in the moderate-stress group, and none in the low-stress group. In contrast, among 25 non-working women, none fall into the high-stress category, all 25 are in the moderate-stress category, and none are in the low-stress group.

**Table-2**

Comparison between the level of stress among working and non-working women: T-ratio

Stress level	Total obtained score on SPSSI	Mean	SD	t	DF	p (Level of significance)
Working women	1754	70.16	9.45	8.444	48	p<0.05
Non-working Women	1161	46.44	10.01			

\*p<0.05(significant)



**Figure 1:** The mean and Standard deviation of degree of stress in working and non-working women.

**Table-3**

Stress Management Techniques and the response of the sample for each technique

Techniques	No of Participants
Go for a walk	14
Talk to a supportive friend	10
Write in journal	0
Play with a pet	1
Reading good books	1
Listening music	16
Watching a comedy show	6
Spend time with nature	2
Total	50

Table 1 provides a qualitative description of SPSSI scores for working and non-working women. Table 2 displays the total scores, means, standard deviations, degrees of freedom, and T-ratios for both groups. It is obvious from Table 2 that the mean stress level for working women is higher than that for non-working women. The study hypothesized that there would be no significant difference in stress levels between working and non-working women. However, the mean stress level for working women was 70.16, compared to 46.44 for non-working women, clearly indicating that working women experience higher stress levels than their non-working counterparts.

It was also assumed and hypothesized that there would be no significant difference between the stress levels of working women and non-working women. The standard deviation in the score of working women is 9.45 and for non-working women is 10.01. The same scores were put to the T-test the value 8.444 was obtained, which was significant at a 0.05 level of significance. Here the null hypothesis was rejected which interprets that there is a significant difference in the stress level of working women and non-working women. The stress level is high in working women in comparison to non-working women. Table 3 shows various stress management techniques adopted by both the categories of women. Out of 50 women the most adopted stress management techniques were listening to music, going for a walk and talking to a friend.

### **Discussion**

It was assumed that there would be no significant difference in stress levels between working and non-working women. However, when the final scores were analyzed using a T-test, the result was significant at the 0.05 level. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that there is a significant difference in

stress levels between the two groups. Specifically, working women experience higher stress levels compared to non-working women. The findings of the present study extend empirical support to Sanlier Nevin and Arpaci Fatima (2007) who observed that working women on the stress scale have higher average scores than that of the non working women. A similar result they found that complete scores of the stress of employed women were higher compared to non employed women and that there is a significant difference between women's employment status and their total stress scores. These employed women are stressed because they have to balance between work and family and this creates a pressure on them indirectly.

The findings of the present study get support from some other previous studies also. For example, Hashmi et al(2007) obtained that employed married women have to deal with more difficulties in their lives like they face more stress and depression as compared to unemployed housewives. Nezhad et al. (2010) investigated occupational stress and family difficulties among working women. The study involved a sample of 250 married working women with two or more children. They used the Sources of Work Stress Inventory, which includes the Sources of Stress Scale and the General Work Scale, and employed a five-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using SPSS with multivariate and correlation analysis. The study found that family difficulties and stress are interrelated, with both negatively affecting individuals' mental health. Three hypotheses were tested: (1) a positive relationship between occupational stress and family difficulties; (2) a significant multiple relationship between sources of stress; and (3) the work-home interface as the best predictor of family difficulties in working women. The results supported all three hypotheses, indicating that mothers with high levels of stress face greater family difficulties. The findings of the study concluded that educational tools should be developed to help reduce stress among employed women.

The finding of the present study shows various stress management techniques adopted by both the categories of women. Out of 50 women the most adopted stress management techniques were listening to music, going for a walk and talking to a friend. The findings of the present study support from some other previous studies also. Some laboratory-based studies have shown inconsistent results. For example, while some research reports that music effectively reduces cortisol levels after stress or is compared to a non-music control condition, Khalifa (2003) highlights this variability. Previous investigations found that listening to music can trigger a variety of cognitive processes in the brain, suggesting that it may also impact stress-related cognitive processes and, consequently, psychological responses. Overall, research indicates that listening to music has the inherent ability to reduce psychological stress responses.



## **Conclusion**

The present study was conducted to examine the level of stress among working women and nonworking women and the result shows that the degree of stress was high in working women in relation to non-working women. In the present modern world, the effects of economic conditions of inflation and, the desire to maintain a high standard of living or develop own identity are contributing to the economic push of women into the workforce and this is a must for empowering a woman. This financial burden is stated as the main stressor among working women. Women encounter physical hazards from their work environment as well as pressures from managing multiple roles and conflicting expectations. While employment has undoubtedly provided women with financial independence and a defined social status, it has also required them to balance the dual demands of work and family life. They perform very well in their workplace responsibilities of their traditional role still remains the same. Multitasking is the buzzword in this modern era for working women. Person requires special skills to perform multitasking simultaneously. It can thus be concluded that the dual role of working women or it can be said that multiple roles of working women were significantly more stressed.

Stress is an escalating issue in the workplace, particularly for working women. High levels of stress can manifest in physical, psychological, and behavioral ways, affecting an individual's overall well-being and success. The most effective approach to managing stress is to prevent it proactively. The best thing is to reduce stress through different techniques of stress management just as meditation, hypnosis, yoga, exercise for physical relaxation, etc. should be used.

## **Limitations and suggestion**

The current study was conducted to the best of the researcher's ability however in spite of taking care of even the minutest aspect of the research, the study had a few limitations such as the sample size was very small. Therefore, extensive research should be conducted in future studies in this field.

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