ABSTRACT

Occupational stress in growing problem at workplace and may be a problem of particular magnitude for working women, in parts of because of experience, age, marital status, education number of dependent, job nature, income etc., specific job stressors and difficulties combining work and families. Although such stressors have received little research attention until recent years, new research indicates that these stressors may have a negative impact on health and well-being above and beyond the effects of general job stressors Role overload, role ambiguity etc.). A number of stress-reduction strategies have been shown to be useful for working women, ranging from the more common individual stress management techniques higher – level interventions focused on removing the sources of occupational stress. This article provides a brief overview of occupational stress as it affects working women and, presents research on approaches for reducing the negative effect of job stress.

KEYWORDS

Stress, Occupational, Anxiety, Depression, Societal Change, Marital Stress, Stress and Aging, Morbidity, Mortality, Healthy Eating, Sleep Well, Absenteeism, Time Management, Communication Skill.
INTRODUCTION

Women now are engaged as administrators, educationalists, doctors, engineers, advocates, architects, tour planners, nuclear scientists, physicists, journalists, officers in community development projects etc., and in many other professions. While taking different professions they are earning more, but the stress in them is highly increasing at the present trend. Stress is strain, force, tension, emphasis, difficulty, breakdown, anxiety, and depression. A women’s life today faces all sorts of challenges and obstacles that hamper her habitual execution and most of the times; the pressure is too hard to handle. When we were expected to meet the varying demands, we experience stress. At times, stress could be beneficial as it can give that thrust the need thereby, encouraging putting in best and staying focused and alert.

Stress is caused by internal (or) external demands that displease the balance of on individual and affects physical and psychological well being. Stress can arise from an opportunity, demand, constraint, threat or challenge. When the out come of the event is both important and uncertain, stress is the result of mismatch between a person and the environment and the perceived inability to cope up with the constraints or demands encountered.

The need for gainful employment of women has arisen for the cause of better management of the family and fulfilling their needs. Women at large are inflowing as working class to satisfy their family’s needs. Though the women employment outside family is accepted by society, yet there is no clarity about their role in the family circumstances. In the changing situation, working women have to face a crisis of adjustment. They have to perform dual role, one in the home as a traditional mother-wife and the other outside it is in gainful employment. Thus they are facing a conflicting situation (Suswagata Day Poul and Gorachand Khan. 1999).

Effects of Stress on Women

It is a common knowledge that recent societal changes are allied with alternations in illness patterns among women. Woman’s longer life expectancy implies that she generally sustains life’s stresses better than the male; there is a cause for concern in that certain previously male morbidity and mortality trends have been advancing in the female population. Elimination of stress-related disorders among them requires definite stress–reduction measures to be taken by society and by the women herself.

The term stress, despite its popularity in the professional and lay literature, has relatively little value for the scientist, because it cannot be satisfactorily or objectively defined. What is stressful for one individual may be pleasurable for another, or alternatively have little significance either way. Stress has become increasingly caught up in a verity of physical and emotional disorders or complaints, which in turn are usually linked to changing societal
or occupational demands. Illness patterns among women have changed dramatically since the turn of the century particularly in the past few decades. This may be due to the stress imposed by abrupt changes in the roles and social status, attendant upon the women’s movement, pressures for the Equal right amendment, Increased divorce rates, Disruptive family relationships, and Women’s migration in to all areas of the work force. Female role models have changed dramatically. At one time, being a homemakers and mother was in itself a fulfilling, desirable, and respectable goal. In today’s society, housewives are to be denigrated or looked down on. Now there is a premium on so called upward mobility that involves liberation from household chores, which are viewed as demeaning. To some, it seems as though modern society expects a woman to” Act like a lady, think like a man, and work like a dog” (Paul, J. Rosch, M. D, January. 1984).

Life situation

Major life events such as a divorce, death, mid-life crisis, financial worries, persistent strain of caring for a chronically sick child, nagging health problems or managing a physically or mentally challenged family member can act as potential stressors. Even conditions such as prolonged unemployment or a sudden lay-off from a job can leave tremendous stress. One just can’t wish away situation. Moreover one has to live through these situations, in the right spirit, to make living a worthwhile experience.

Stress also emerges from personal and social contexts and from psychological and emotional reactions to such conditioning. At this juncture, the mental and emotional disposition, built over the years, decides whether to accept these situations with a fighting or feeling spirit. Accordingly, we may either be under harmful influences of stressors or to be out of it.

Children and women when subjected to mental or physical abuses, they suffer from tremendous stress symptoms of depression, constant anxiety and burnout.

Marital Stress

The possible causes of marital stress can be endless, but some major factors are:

- An unaffectionate spouse.
- Unforgiving attitude of a spouse.
- Handling of monetary affairs (budgeting, investment, expenditures).
- Lack of proper communication between spouses.
- Unable to find quality time for each other.
- Extramarital relationships.
- Step children.
- Dealing with in–laws.

More often than not, stress arising from marital relationships is manifested in chronic disorders such as depression, insomnia and hypertension. Since a relationship depends on the nature of the persons involved, it helps to seek the middle path when the inherent
individual differences surface. It often helps to change one’s attitude, prefer counseling or talk openly with their spouse about problems facing relationship among them.

**Recent Research Finding**

**Stress and Aging**

Recent research results suggest that long–term revelation to adrenal stress hormones may enhance brain aging in later life.

Writing in the journal Nature Neuroscience, scientists at the University of Kentucky in Lexington looked at the results of memory tests taken by elderly patients with high levels of stress hormone cortical, released by adrenal glands when the body is stressed. The test reveals that higher-level group scored lower than other with reduced levels of the hormone, researchers say.

**Job Satisfaction vs. Sick Leave and/or Absenteeism**

A Researcher at England’s Manchester University say if one feels that he/she is underpaid and is fed up, then they are a prime candidate for a pain in the back. Their study is based on interviews with 1,600 people, half of whom were employed.

Doctors say that there was a little difference in the risk of backache between those who had work and those who had not. But those who were unhappy about their job status, whether in work or currently unemployed, were twice as likely to suffer from the ailment.

Workers unhappy about their salaries were three times more likely to go for medical aid or simply take time off work than those satisfied with the money they get. The researchers say the study refutes the myth that those who suffer from pain in the lower back are just work–shy.

Tolerance of stress levels differ from individual to individual. Some are able to sustain a highly stressful lifestyle or adapt themselves to a series of stressful events easily. However, many others succumb more readily to a variety of stress–related illnesses and event accidental injuries.

Day-to-day life is full of stress, both on the personal and professional fronts. It is vital to manage work and home stress as it affects not only the individual and the organization, but also society at large. This article explores stress influencing in personal and professional life among working women and its causes for work – family conflict. How women, face with stress and work – family conflict, suggests various best WLB practices and many different approaches to manage it for the betterment of the both sides. Eliminating or reducing stress is avoiding work family conflict and so work-life balance would mean stress – free, enjoyable private life.
Stress Coping Mechanism

Habitually working under stress for long hours and lack of physical rest may cause critical physiological disorders, like insomnia, acute depression, loss of appetite, migraine, irritability, lack of concentration etc.

Stress may be reduced at work by empowering others, delegating work and encouraging others to extend their range of work. Managers need to resist the nagging fear that one will lose control. Work can be managed better by applying strategic planning.

- Unlock people’s motivation.
- Deal with difficult employees.
- Cope with the resistance arising from managing change.
- Be a more effective communicator.
- Understand how to pass on work and issued instructions.
- Encourage participation.

At home we need to enjoy leisure with family members and children. Taking a good diet and rest make a difference. Learning to relax is important. Relaxation facilitates in numerous ways to combat the effects of work related stress. One of the most powerful and well-established ways of combating the effects of stress could be regular meditation. Fifteen minutes at the start of each day could alter one’s life.
Identify the Issues

Be clear what the problem is all about. It must be remembered that different people might have different views about the issues they are facing. Everybody is entitled to hold his or her own opinion.

Understand Everyone’s Interests

This is a critical step that is usually missing. Interest is the needs that you want satisfied by any given solution. We often ignore our true interests as we become attached to one particular solution. The best solution is the one that satisfies everyone’s interests. This is the time for active listening. Put down the differences for a while and listen to each other with the intention to understand. Separate the naming of interests from the listening of solutions.

List the Possible Solutions (Options)

This is the time to do some brainstorming. There may be lots of room for creativity. Separate the listing of options from the evaluation of the options.

Evaluate the Options

What are the pluses and minuses? Honestly! Separate the evaluation of options from the selection of options.

Select an Option or Options

What’s the best option, in the balance? Compile the number of options together for a more satisfactory solution.

Document the Agreement(s)

Don’t rely on memory. Writing it down will help to think through all the details and implications.

Agree On Contingencies, Monitoring, And Evaluation

Conditions may change. Make contingency agreements about foreseeable future circumstances. How will you monitor compliance and follow-through? Create opportunities to evaluate the agreements and their implementation.

Guidance on Managing Stress

Stress is the reactions of people have when they feel they cannot cope with the pressures or other demands placed upon them. These demands may arise from home or work, when the person no longer feels able to cope and ill health may result. (Stress Assessment/Managing Stress Risk Assessment. Pauline Trush).

The following are things health preventions:

Learn To Relax

There are different techniques—if one doesn’t suit, try another. Remember that relaxation is a skill and therefore needs practice. Learn new skills and become more able to cope with difficult situations in your life.

Healthy Eating

Exercise

It’s a great way to relieve tension. Burns up the stress chemicals and lowers anxiety. Improve confidence and self-esteem. Choose an activity that gives enjoyment. A minimum of 3 sessions per week of at least 20 minutes duration is recommended. A brisk walk will do the trick.

Sleep Well

Sleep is the boy’s natural regenerating process. One can improve their sleep patterns by having a deep sleep. Avoid burning the candle at both ends develop a relaxing routine before bedtime.

Time Management

Time management plays a vital role. Learning priorities and delegation makes one’s time very useful. Make sure it is not all work and no play. Dividing time equally makes time management very successful.

Communication Skill

One must improve his/her communication skills. Share problems. Listen to others. Build things in a creative manner using best communication skills.

Avoid Negative Thoughts

Make a list of worrying thoughts and ways of dealing with them. We all have tapes that play in our heads. Listen to it. If they are negative - try to replace them with positive thoughts. Remember we all have our good points.

Be Assertive

Try to express feelings calmly and effectively. Aggressive or passive behavior can cause stress in one’s mind and in others. Improve communication skills. Listen more.

Socialize

Social contact with friends is important. All work and no play= stress. Laughter is a great stress reducer.

Avoid unnecessary “Stressors”

Recognize things that wind’s up and plan ways to reduce, avoid or eliminate them.

Emotional Needs

Laughing, crying, sharing thoughts or worries with a friend or colleague helps to read emotions. Be kind enough to handle things. One must find time each day to do something very peaceful in order to reduce emotions.

Leisure Pursuits

Make time for hobbies, family and friends. Try to spend the evenings in a relaxed manner.

Methodology
To understand the level of occupational stress a questionnaire, comparing 46 different situations with five options is sued. Occupational stress scale – Srivastava Singh (1984). Women have been selected from different categories of lecturer’s, bank officers, doctors, engineers. 150 respondents from all the region of Chidambaram town by using stratified random sampling technique chi-square technique is used for analyzing the data.

**Objective**

The objective of the present study is to find out the relationship between over all stress and demographic factors (experience, age, marital status, education, number of dependent, job nature, income etc.,) of professionals.

**Hypotheses**

There is no significant association between the different experience, age education, number of dependent and income groups of professionals and their occupational stress.

There is significant association between the different marital status and job nature.

**Analysis and interpretation**

Table – 1 - Chi-Square Test of Association between Different Experience Groups of Professionals and Their Occupational Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Occupational stress</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Between 1-5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Between 6-10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Between 11-15 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypotheses**

There is no significant association between the different experience groups of professionals and their occupational stress. Therefore the stated hypothesis rejected.

It further reveals that professionals are not having high amount of occupational stress with their experience levels. Professionals are having moderate and low amount of occupational stress with their experience levels. It implies that the professionals moderate and low level of stress is not satisfied with their experience levels of relationship and
they are having lot of confusion in their experience. So the professional’s has to concentrate more on these levels.

The result clearly shows that the occupational stress based on the professionals experience is different.

The study reveals that most of the professional’s experience low to medium level of stress. The finding is also contrary to the results of Gani et al. (1998) most of the employees experiences medium to high level of stress.

Table – 2 - Chi-Square Test of Association between Different Age Groups of Professionals and Their Occupational Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupational stress</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20-30 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>41-50 and above years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses

There is no significant association between the different age groups of professionals and their occupational stress.

The above table reveals that professional’s fall between different age groups have same occupational stress. Chi-Square Table value for 2 degrees of freedom at 1% level of significance indicate that there is significant association between the different age groups of professionals and their occupational stress.

Professionals are found to have moderate and low amount of occupational stress with their age levels implying moderate and low level of stress is not satisfied with their age levels of relationship and they are having lot of confusion in their age. So the professional’s has to concentrate more on these levels.

The result shows that the occupational stress based on the professional’s age is different and also reveals that most of the professional’s age low to medium level of stress. This finding is also parallel to the results of Bernadette et al. (1990) that the younger age groups show higher stress than the older once.

Table – 3 - Chi-Square Test of Association between Different Marital Status Groups of Professionals and Their Occupational Stress
Hypotheses

There is significant association between the different marital status groups of professionals and their occupational stress.

From the above table 3, it is clear that professional’s fall between different marital status groups are having the same regarding occupational stress. From the chi-square table, the value for 2 degrees of freedom at 1% level of significance. That there is no significant association between the different marital status groups of professionals and their occupational stress. Therefore, the stated hypothesis accepted.

Table – 4 - Chi-Square Test of Association between Different Education Groups of Professionals and Their Occupational Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupational stress</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>U.G</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>P.G</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no significant association between the different education groups of professionals and their occupational stress.

From the above table 4, it is clear that professional’s fall between different marital status groups are having the same regarding occupational stress. From the chi-square table, the value for 2 degrees of freedom at 1% level of significance. That there is no significant association between the different marital status groups of professionals and their occupational stress. Therefore, the stated hypothesis accepted.
eduction groups are having the same regarding occupational stress. From the chi-square table, the value for 2 degrees of freedom at 1% level of significance. That there is significant association the different education groups of professionals and their occupational stress. Therefore, the stated hypothesis rejected.

Professionals are having moderate and low amount of occupational stress with their education levels. It implies that the professionals moderate and low level of stress is not satisfied with their education levels of relationship and they are having lot of confusion in their education. So the professional’s has to concentrate more on these levels.

The result clearly shows that the occupational stress based on the professional’s education is different. The study reveals that most of the professional’s education low to medium level of stress. This finding is also parallel to the results of Khwaja and Shanta Kohli Chandra (1999) education decreasing the higher degree of stress.

Table 5 shows that professionals those falls between different numbers of dependent groups are having the same regarding occupational stress. Chi-Square Table value for 2 degrees of freedom at 1% level of significance implies that there is significant association between the different education levels of relationship and they are having lot of confusion in their education. So the professional’s has to concentrate more on these levels.

The result clearly shows that the occupational stress based on the professional’s education is different. The study reveals that most of the professional’s education low to medium level of stress. This finding is also parallel to the results of Khwaja and Shanta Kohli Chandra (1999) education decreasing the higher degree of stress.

**Hypothesis**

There is no significant association between the different number of dependent groups of professionals and their occupational stress.

Further it could be seen professionals are not having high amount of occupational stress with their number of dependent levels. Professionals are having moderate and low amount of occupational stress with their number of dependent levels. It implies that the professional’s moderate and low level of stress is not satisfied with their number of dependent levels of relationship and they are having lot of confusion in their number of dependent.
So the professional’s has to concentrate more on these levels.

The result clearly shows that the occupational stress based on the professionals number of dependent are different. The study reveals that most of the professional’s number of dependent low to medium level of stress. This finding is also parallel to the results of Pondey (1997) has observed that stress was not much explained by personal demographic variables.

**Table – 6 - Chi-Square Test of Association between Different Job Nature Groups of Professionals and Their Occupational Stress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Job nature</th>
<th>Occupational stress</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>High responsibility</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High stake</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dealing with external pressures</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypotheses**

There is significant association between the different job nature groups of professionals and their occupational stress.

From the above table 6, it could be seen that professional’s fall between different job nature groups are having the same regarding occupational stress. From the chi-square table, the value for 2 degrees of freedom at 1% level of significance it implies that there is no significant association between the different job nature groups of professionals and their occupational stress. Therefore, the stated hypothesis accepted.

Professionals have moderate and low amount of occupational stress with their job nature levels. It implies that the professionals moderate and low level of stress is not satisfied with their job nature levels of relationship and they are having lot of confusion in their job nature. So the professional’s has to concentrate more on these levels.

The result clearly shows that the occupational stress based on the professional’s job nature is different. The study reveals that most of the professional’s job nature low to medium level of stress.

This finding is also contrary to the results L. Sundin et al. (2006) if employees are not clear wit job content they will face high amount of stress.

**Table – 7 - Showing the Chi-Square between Different Income Groups of Professionals and Their Occupational Stress**
Management Of Occupational Stress Of Women Professional’s In Chidambaram Town
- K. Sirajunisa and Mr. S. Satheeshkumar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Job nature</th>
<th>Occupational stress</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rs. 15,000-20,000</td>
<td>High - 30</td>
<td>Moderate -</td>
<td>Low -</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rs. 21,000-25,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rs. 26,000-30,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypotheses**

There is no significant association between the different income groups of professionals and their occupational stress.

From the above table 7, it is clear that professional’s fall between different income groups are having the same regarding occupational stress. From the chi-square table, the value for 2 degrees of freedom at 1% level of significance. That there is significant association between the different income groups of professionals and their occupational stress. Therefore, the stated hypothesis rejected.

Professionals are having moderate and low amount of occupational stress with their income levels. It implies that the professionals moderate and low level of stress is not satisfied with their income levels of relationship and they are having lot of confusion in their income. So the professional’s has to concentrate more on these levels.

The result clearly shows that the occupational stresses based on the professionals’ income are different. The study reveals that most of the professional’s income low to medium level of stress. This finding is also parallel to the results of smith et al. (2000) has observed that stress and income are having inverse relationship.

**Conclusion**

Stress can be both positive and Negative, which has an impact on women performance at work, it taken positively, the results are positive, and it taken in a negative way, may yield disastrous results, stress can be confronted and reduced if and only if we understand our selves. Better, analyze the behaviours and identified the stressors. They have taken various initiatives like recreational facilities, flexi time, virtual office, gymnasiums, family holiday packages, social inter actions wit spouses, meditations and yoga centers, round the – clock categories concierge services, etc. This kinds of practices must be improve our self – esteem and reduce our stress.

A stress management training program may provide individuals with some awareness of stressors, but some environmental stressors. (eg. excessive work load) may not be amendable to change by the individual and may require a mare systemizing by management (Peterson, 1993).

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(www.lifepositive.com)

Pauline Trush Stress Assessment/Managing Stress Risk Assessment.