

PERSONAL, EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF STRESS ON WORKING WOMEN: FIELD SURVEY

Dr. J. H. RAKINI CHANDERA SEKARAN¹

Asst. Professor of Physics, Arignar Anna Government Arts College, Musiri – 621211. Tiruchirappalli, South India.

ABSTRACT:

Taking the family problems to work and work problems to family, invariably lead to stress and productivity comes down.

Women form the most important human capital in the country, they are still the most deprived and neglected segments of society, despite the constitutional guarantee for equal rights and privileges for men and women. Women continue to be victims of the process of economic, social, cultural and political marginalization. Half of the world's food is produced by working women in the fields and they constitute 1/3rd of the world's labour force. Women's development is possible only when they are given opportunity to develop freedom and participation in decision making. In the process of job and participatory efforts women encounter stress which can be a source for all other problems in them both physically and mentally.

Stress is the one that has been defined as a response to danger or demand in the environment that disturbs the physical and psychological balance of human being in all spheres of life. The causes of stress are called stressors which vary in type and in severity. These stressors have more impact in women than men as they perform dual job in the present-day society of shouldering the responsibility of family affairs to a larger extent and jobs. Thus, for working women in an organizational setup, the work is more challenging and, on such reasons, stress is caused. The multi dimensional analysis of job stress of women employees in service sectors is the primary focus of this research. The various levels of stress such as personal level stress, health level stress, work level stress, organizational level stress, environmental level stress, physiological level stress, sociological level stress, emotional level stress, cultural level stress and organizational health factors.

KEYWORD: *Stress, Job, Working women, Emotions, Emotional imbalance, Proactive mechanism.*

INTRODUCTION

Stress is the one that has been defined as a response to danger or demand in the environment that disturbs the physical and psychological balance of human being in all spheres of life. The causes of stress are called stressors which vary in type and in severity. Stress is the “wear and tear” experienced by the body as adjusting to a continually changing environment; it has physical and emotional effects and can create positive or negative feelings. As a positive influence, stress can help compel to action; it can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, this in turn can lead to health problems.

Stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of the jobs does not match with capabilities, resources or needs of the workers. It has been found that most illness is related to unrelieved stress. Positive stress adds anticipation and excitement to life, and man thrives under a certain amount of stress. Deadlines, competitions, confrontations,

¹ Corresponding Author: Dr. J. H. Rakini Chandera Sekaran
Manuscript Published online on: September 11, 2022

and even frustrations and sorrows add depth and enrichment to lives. Insufficient stress acts as a depressant and may leave feeling bored or dejected; on the other hand, excessive stress may leave feeling “tied up in knots” (Rao V S P, 2005).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Stress can cause depression, irritation, anxiety, fatigue and reduce job satisfaction. Stress affects individual’s performance and efficiency; it can undermine their relationship at home and on the job. Stress has been proven to be a difficult issue for the occupational health of the community. Stress is an extreme pressure exerted on the individual especially in a work place. Stress occurs when there is a mismatch between things we aspire to do and are capable of doing. The recent study carried in London with the help of WHO reveals that at the global level there are about 1.2 million people being affected by stress and of whom it is heartening to note that 36 per cent of them are Indians with an average age of 31.9. Globally the suicidal death of 85 thousand people every year is caused by stress. It is the fourth major factor that reduces the average life expectancy and is expected to take the second place by the year 2020 if no special concern is given. Women have started participating actively in jobs particularly in the services sectors (banking, insurance, hospital, hospitality, software and tourism) on par with men in all spheres of employment. In the light of these aspects it is considered to be more relevant to make a focused study on the work- or job-related stress of women in the service sectors, the stressors and their effects.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the greatest problems faced by people today is stress which cannot be avoided and these pressures leading to mental, emotional or physical strain or tension can be a source of motivation to people in a long run. Stress is thus a good encounter but prolonged exposure to high levels of pressure can be bad and can lead to physical and mental health problems.

Beeher and Newman, (1988) On the basis of service sectors, two types of stressors have emerged. One of them is conceptualized as organizational sources as, on the job stressors whereas the second is conceived as extra organizational sources or off the job stressors. Job stress is usually conceptualized as a condition wherein job-related factors interact with the individual to change (disrupt or enhance) his or her psychological or physical condition, a person (mind and / or body) is forced to deviate from normal functioning.

Bourbonnais (2006) studied job stress and psychological distress in white collar workers. They analyzed whether workers submitted to high job-stress or a combination of high psychological demand and low decision latitude. 1491 female white collar workers were the sample for the study and results show that a combination of high psychological demand and low latitude was associated with psychological distress. Social support of work was significantly related to psychological distress.

Thomas-Li-Ping (2009) states that “Sex differences in satisfaction with pay and co-workers; Faculty and staff at a Public Institution of Higher Education” examined sex differences in job satisfaction of 110 faculty and staff of a public University. The Job Descriptive Index measured five dimensions of job satisfaction: Work, Pay, Promotions, Supervision and co-workers. Males tended to have higher satisfaction with pay than females, whereas females tended to have higher satisfaction with co-workers.

Christo Fernandes (2019) investigated the differences of Organizational Role Stress (ORS) among men and women bank officers of private and public sectors. Ten types of role stress were measured using ORS Scale. The total of 456 sample respondents was divided into two on the basis of gender. The results indicate that women experience more stress than men on the stress parameters. Moreover, women in private sector banks experience more stress than women in public sector banks.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Stress has a major impact on the performance, attitude and mental health of the women employees in service sectors as it has become an inevitable part of modern lives. In order to face the prevailing competition organizations worldwide need to work beyond the limit. As a result, employees are being affected by stress. There is a relevance, need and importance of understanding the stress level of individual in organizations. Hence there arises a need to study on the level of stress and on other areas namely the ways and means to manage and overcome stress. Under such circumstances, while living with stress, having a fair idea about stress, the stressors that bring about the stresses, the psychological, physical and behavior effects of stress and the means of coping is highly mandatory. The outcome of the study may help women employees to gain a basic understanding of stress and how it affects their physical and mental health. It may also give them idea about various stressors and how to handle them successfully. Furthermore, this study would also suggest some methods and relaxation techniques to cope effectively with stress as it cannot be avoided permanently.

OBJECTIVES

General objectives: An attempt is made by the researcher in this study to examine various levels of stress forged on working women in service sectors.

Specific objectives

1. To observe and identify the various levels of stress affecting the working women.
2. To understand the various factors involved in stress.
3. To explore various techniques and methods to be followed to avoid stress.
4. To offer the most suitable stress handling method both to the organisations and to the employed women.

METHODOLOGY

Universe: The population selected for this particular study is the women employees of service sectors.

Sampling: The sampling population of this research includes 220 women employees working for service sectors. This research has followed a systematic random sampling method identifying a representative population. The population belongs to women from all age groups. Descriptive study is employed with the methods of data collection such as questionnaire and observations. Designing the methods of data collection; selecting the prospective respondents; collecting; processing and analyzing the data; and reporting the findings.

TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The multi dimensional analysis of job stress of women employees in service sectors is the primary focus of this research. The following is the methodology adopted in the tools that causes various levels of stress such as personal level stress, health level stress, work level stress, organizational level stress, environmental level stress, physiological level stress, sociological level stress, emotional level stress, cultural level stress and organizational health factors. The pre tested questionnaire covering all the above factors is distributed to the respondents for the collection of primary data. The secondary data is collected with the help of books, magazines, research publications, government documents and internet sources.

STATISTICAL TOOLS

The role of statistics in research is to function as a tool in designing research, analyzing its data and drawing conclusion there from. The data collected from the respondents have been analyzed with the help of the following statistical tools namely the frequency distribution, rank correlation, chi-square and factor analysis with the use of SPSS package.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ✓ **Personal stress** – it is common to all, whoever lives in the work they are forced to have such stress. It may be in the form of family responsibility and family situation, sexual harassment, ego, insufficient income, general dispute in the family, non-cooperative children, travelling for long hours to the work place, joint family responsibilities, emotional imbalances and other similar personal problems. The most dominating stress factor is the emotional imbalance among the respondents and this personal level stress lead to all other stresses.
- ✓ **Health level stress** – These percentages include some of the most serious and life-threatening ailments of heart disease, high blood pressure, hardening of the arteries, ulcers and even diabetics. For many the job itself is a stress and when one is over burdened with the job ultimately their health is affected.
- ✓ **Work level stress** – most of the respondents have opined that they spend more time at work than in any other single activity. The work / jobs / careers are the central source of stress. For majority of women in service sectors the following factors produce stress in work setting, they are blatant sexual harassment, discrimination (caste), extreme work overload (too much work in a too short time) and work under-load (too little to do) which produces intense feelings of boredom. The other factors are conflict, over expectation and under estimation of the capability of employees. Thus, task factors intrinsic to the job include the concept of work load as a potential source of stress and both overwork load and under work load are acknowledged as stressors.
- ✓ **Organisational level stress** – the stress of employee is stress to organisation and the stress of organisation is stress to employees. Both employees and organisations are interrelated with each other. The policies of the organisation are causing stress to a majority of women respondents in service sectors. The organisational structure causes stress to a majority women respondent as the hierarchy in the organisation sometimes try to influence and confuse women who by nature are yielding to situations and circumstances.
- ✓ **Environmental level stress** – change in any component of organisational environment lead to stress. The work setting and the interaction with peers and colleagues is of paramount

importance to persons to work ably well in organisations. If the work situation is not comfortable employees will not be able to work to their full potential. Nearly half of the total (i.e.) 50 per cent of the respondents has a feeling that the work situation is not helping them to discharge their job well.

- ✓ **Physiological level stress** - Physiological stress is related to the response of the body during illness or pain. This type of stress is also related to hormonal changes in the body. In women, physiological stress stretches between premenstrual syndrome, pregnancy and menopause. Other disorders like chronic fatigue, insomnia, depression or eating disorders as well as certain other imbalances in the body can lead to physiological stress. Sometimes physiological stress can be beyond the control. In this study, it is observed that more than 70 per cent of the respondents have all the above said problems and are regular users of pills to balance their health to the work or job situation. They are also aware that the remedy is temporary and feel that they have to cope with it as job is more important source to their livelihood.
- ✓ **Sociological level stress** –There is a situation of teasing by fellow employees which causes more personal injury to people and majority of 58 per cent of the women in the government sector and 45 per cent of the women in private sector organisations feel that they are stressed due to socialisation process of interaction with fellow employees. Workers need to interact with each other and this interaction creates a socialisation process where in the attitude, feelings, and other aspect of relationship is shared. The process of socialisation lead to stress as each and every individual is unique and different.
- ✓ **Emotional level stress** – In this study most of the respondents do not experience real threat or danger but almost all the respondents feel that a socially or individually created perception of threat, danger or loss has become the most dominating force of emotions. As emotions are the central role of human functioning in many cases it has great impact on social, work, family or solidarity sphere of human endeavour, thus it affects the functioning of the organisation. Emotions are viewed by most researchers as having adaptive function or purpose, with either a protective or nurturing function. This over-riding adaptive function of protecting from negative consequences and maximising positive consequences was identified early in the study of emotion in Freud’s “Beyond the pleasure of principle”. Through biological processes, emotions activate proactive mechanisms or behaviours in situations of danger, threat or loss.
- ✓ **Cultural level stress** – organisational cultures are largely dominated by male values with a description that women are not ambitious or career oriented as men, which is a significant barrier to women’s career progression. Both managers and management students believe that the so-called challenges affect women much when they are in job.

SUGGESTIONS

To the management

- ✓ The management must take adequate steps to redesign jobs which are taxing to the capabilities and abilities of women employees in service sectors. It means that the job should be designed in such a way that women employees feel comfortable to work whether it relates to time, technology, skill formation, training & development programmes and other aspects of orientation that are required to motivate employees to contribute to the maximum extent to the organisation.
- ✓ Encourage cross-functional and interdepartmental work arrangements to reduce work related stress among low performers and low achievers. There is a transition at the global level particularly on human resource development and enhancing skills to compete across nations.

- ✓ For women in service sectors it is highly important to facilitate role enlargement, role linkage and role enrichment to manage role isolation, self-role distance and role erosion. The modern-day mantra is the conversions of human resource to be a multi-faceted personality where in individuals acquire knowledge and skills that can match to any type of job that a particular organisation demands or assigns to its employees. The enhancing of basis knowledge and skills will certainly contribute to role enlargement and enrichment to handle any kind of situation without much difficulty or stress.
 - ✓ Adequate role clarification is to be made whenever necessary to eliminate role ambiguity. Many a problem in organisations emerge as there was no proper clarification of role. The no proper or improper clarification of role lead to confusion and stress in a person who is responsible for the job. In service sectors it has become very common for women not to have a particular role or job as there is a heavy demand to act to situations whether it is a banking sector or a hospital industry.
 - ✓ There should be full freedom to employees to develop a strong and sustained drive to achieve poorly defined and self-imposed goals. It will make them to have a self-push to achieve and discharge the duties assigned ably and efficiently without difficulties or stress. This type of attitude will by and large benefit the organisation in realising its goals or objectives as these employees have nothing more than sincerity and dedication to towards the organisation. Majority of women have the attitude of sense of belonging and it is to be positively nurtured in the interest of the organisation and its achievements.
 - ✓ The work settings or situations must be comfortable to employees and there should be a perfect environment that does not permit any deviation for want of facilities required to work comfortably. it relates to all facilities such as lighting, ventilation, space, rest room, canteen, water, emergence arrangements such as medical facilities, financial support, etc.,
 - ✓ The top management must ensure that proper relationship is maintained with all the employees considering them to be the asset of the organisation. On all spheres employees must be recognised for their involvement, dedication and hard work. The management must ensure that all the employees are treated with care and concern and be provided with all social security measures of insurance, reasonable and adequate share in company's profit and other basic requirements to make them happy to work for the organisation.
 - ✓ The culture of the organisation must be in such a way that women are treated on par with men without any disparity. India has its tradition and values and it is to be balanced in such a way that there should be gender justice with human face. Women should not be looked down to be a sexual object which is a diverting aspect of human values.
 - ✓ Service sector organizations must make women individuals who experience much stress and anxiety to develop a strong tendency to use task-oriented strategy than applying emotion or avoidance-oriented strategies. They should be made known that the effectiveness of any coping strategy depends on the nature of the stressful situation. Task orientations will help to resolve any critical or a stressful situation with the system of realizing organizational goals or objectives in a systematic manner.
- To the women employees**
- ✓ Proper nutrition is very important to maintain healthy body and healthy mind. This will also avoid encountering stress owing to tiredness owing to physical exhaustions. The physical health is more important to discharge job ably well. Women in India situation are more choosy of their food which is not advisable as working in a situation with a target requires plenty of energy.

- ✓ Relaxation techniques through music, reading, yoga, meditation, etc. should be part of work and this type of technique will make mind to be free from stress as these practices have the capacity to reduce blood pressure and heart rate and ultimately improves the mood of work, work and work.
- ✓ Build meaningful and supportive relationship with colleagues, higher officials and other people whom you interact in the course of your job and in other supportive situations. It is also important to interact gently with fun with a particular focus on job.
- ✓ Believe in physical activity and every day at least a 30-minute physical activity releases tension and normalizes stress hormones which will get one to have a good sleep.
- ✓ Learn to manage your time more effectively and make lists of all the activities that are to be discharged and prioritize the work, plan ahead and avoid procrastination and often consult with counselors, pastors or health professionals for guidance and understanding of work.

CONCLUSION

Women in service sectors have work stress, the factors such as Personal level stress, Health level stress, Work level stress, Organizational level stress, Environmental level stress, Physiological level stress, Sociological level stress, Emotional level stress and Cultural level stress has ultimate impact on the Organizational health factors which often proves detrimental to the quality of work and overall health factor of women workers in the service sector organizations. From the study the researcher has found that the working hours of the organizations are not convenient to and they are not able to attend social activities, they have psychological abuse, job insecurity and unable to achieve the target in time due to many reasons such as unable to update the latest technological skill, not able to cope up with heavy work load, etc., The results of the study show the intensity of work stressors and the coping mechanisms that lead to the behavioral aspects of the respondents in the study area. The study helps to identify the stress and the stress level among the women employed in the service sectors. Suitable steps have to be taken to minimize the stress at the organizational level.

REFERENCES

1. Adams, John (1979) *Understanding and Managing Stress: a workbook in changing life style*.
2. Luthans, Fred (1998) *Organizational Behavior*, New York: Irwin Mc Graw Hill Publishing.
3. Pestonjee, DM (1992) *Stress and Coping: the Indian experience*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
4. Gulati, Uma (2005) *Managing of Organizational Stress*, New Delhi: New Century Publications.
5. Unknown (August 2005) *Stress Management, Readers Shelf, A Monthly Magazine of Commercial Management and Legal Issues, Vol.1, No:11, Pp. 22-24*.
6. Pareek, *Understanding Organizational Behaviour*, pp. 209 – 224.
7. Coleman J C (1976), *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life (Indian Reprint)*, Taraporewalla Press, Bombay.
8. Seleye H (1936), “Thymus and Adrenals in the Response of Organism to Injuries and Intoxications”: *British Journal of Experimental Psychology, Vol. 17, pp. 234 – 248*.
9. Strange R E and Brown D (1970), “Home from the War: A Study of Psychiatric Problems in Vietnam Returnees”, *American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 127, No. 4, pp.488 – 492*.
10. Selye H (1976), *The Stress of Life*, McGraw Hill, New York.

11. Bahaudin G Mujitaba, Paul Knapp, Donald Baker, and Mohammed Ahmed (2009), *Stress Overload Perceptions of American MBA Students in Recessionary Times*, *The Icfaci University Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. VIII, Nos 3 & 4, pp. 73 – 84.