

Stress management by rural working and non-working women in Patna district of Bihar State

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ABSTRACT : In a patriarchal society like India a particular boundary exists only for women and if they try to cross that boundary then people start maligning them. The general perception is that if some women are doing things differently, beyond people's limited imagination and out of sync with traditional thinking, like going out for jobs, wearing different type of fashionable clothes, talking freely with male members etc., immediately they are branded as loose women. India probably has still a long way to go to make our work-places free from any prejudices, abuses and harassments. Even then we can still try at solving some of the related issues and problems with some possible solutions that have been mentioned above so that women become stronger and are able to handle any adverse situations.

Key Words: Farm women, stress management, agriculture.

Stress management can be defined as interventions designed to reduce the impact of stressors in the workplace. These can have an individual focus, aimed at increasing an individual's ability to cope with stressors. The goal of Stress Management is to manage the stress of everyday life among employees. Many different methods may be employed, such as bio-feedback, meditation and massage. Counselors work with individuals in order to determine what stress management program will work best for that person (Andal, 2002; Arnove *et al.*, 2012; Beek and Keddie, 1980; Borooah and Iyer, 2005).

The term 'stress' has different importance for researchers in diverse discipline. Study conducted by different researchers stress is associated even in relation to ecosystem and population of organisms. Biologists refer to temperature, cold and insufficient food supply as being sources of stress. Social scientists are more concerned about people's contact with their situation and the resulting emotional disturbances as causes of stress. Stress is anything that disrupts the routine, physical or mental well-being of individuals (Chakraborty, 2013; Budhwar *et al.*, 2005; Chandra, 1993; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). It occurs when the body performs beyond his capabilities or when a person faces unusual demands. A simple demonstration of stress may be a bad temper while a severe display may be an act of violent behavior. A stressor is a cause that creates stress. A stressor can be either positive or negative on the basis of how person reacts. For example, one person may view stressor as a motivator, whereas another person may identify it as a constraint. Stress can be positive or negative. Positive stress is known as eustress and negative stress as distress. Distress affects physical and mental well being of a person. Eustress trigger the body and mind to perform creatively. Distress has a negative

stress which affects the mental composure of a person. Some of these problems are insomnia, eating disorders, heart problems, and suicidal tendencies.

Devoid of stress, a person becomes sluggish and boring. Positive stress encourages a person to achieve better. However, if this stress exceeds beyond the required level it causes distress. The perception of stress varies among individuals and they have their own stress endurance as some tend to work better under pressure, while the others cannot bear last minute syndrome? (Majumdar, 2004; Dube, 2001;).

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in purposively selected district of Patna, Bihar. Four blocks namely Phulwari, Barh, Fatwah and Bihta were selected for the selection of respondents. 5 village panchayat were selected from each block. The villages were selected proportionately where working women were more in number. From each village, approximately 5 working and 5 non working women were selected proportionately making the total size of 180 working and 180 non-working women.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic stressors : Data presented in Table-1 reveals the sociological factors affecting stress among working women. Even among working women as their income goes up expenditure also goes up and it constitute certain level of stress due to job insecurity. Significant difference was observed due to stressor "unexpected guests". Working respondents (mean score 0.93 ranked 1) were more stressed due to this factor. This is because of shortage of time and overburden of work; it is difficult for them to attend the guests. Stress due to troubles with in laws was given last rank by working respondents. It was observed that working women tend to spend less

Table-1 : Socio-Economic Stressors among Working and non working women.

Socio-Economic factors	Working Women		Non-Working Women	
	Mean Score	Ranks	Mean Score	Ranks
Interference of relatives and neighbors	0.66	IV	0.69	VII
Absence of servant or Domestic help	0.62	VII	0.65	III
Unexpected guests	0.68	III	0.59	V
Compulsory socialization	0.81	II	0.72	IV
Financial pressures	0.65	V	0.62	II
Troubles with in-laws	0.93	I	0.54	I
Lack of social support	0.63	VI	0.50	VI

Table-2 : Psychological stressors among working women.

Psychological Factors	Working Women		Non-Working Women	
	Mean Score	Ranks	Mean Score	Ranks
Pessimistic Attitude	0.80	IV	0.73	III
Perfectionism	0.71	VII	0.75	II
Low self esteem	0.82	III	0.68	IV
Procrastination	0.86	II	0.58	VII
Temperament / anger	0.75	V	0.81	I
Lack of assertiveness	0.92	I	0.63	VI
Unnecessary worries	0.62	VI	0.66	V

time with in laws. There is significant difference in the attitude of working women regarding the absence of servant maid. This act as stressors ranked number 2 by working women. It is inferred that absence of servant maid causes stress due to cluttering of things at home for working women. On an average it was found that working respondents were more stressed due to socio-logical factors of stress.

Psychological stressors : It is interesting to note that perfectionism and unnecessary worries (mean score 0.81 and 0.75) constitute major stressors for working women in Table-2. Working women are good performers and expect perfectionism in all walks of life which leads to stress most of the time. One husband asserted that his wife expects everyone to do perfect job and keep nagging him and the children and blaming them for not going a good job and get stressed in turn.

Family and relationship stressors : Stressors related to children, respondents gave first rank to anxiety about children's future (mean score 1.44) followed by stressors related to husband, respondents gave second rank to "husband's job insecurity" as a factor of stress mean score 1.32. Thus, it is inferred that the women

gives top priority towards children and husband and any discomfort in this zone causes extreme stress to them. Significant difference was observed in working respondents regarding adjustment to marriage. It was found in Table-3 that working women were having more difficulty in adjusting to marriage. Intergeneration problems and care of children in her absence is as a factor of stress having rank seventh and fifth respectively. Majority of respondents in the sample did not regard "childlessness" and "more children" as a factor of stress because they were not facing these problems.

Mental and Physical stress management strategies adopted among working women : It is observed in Table-4 that the use of sleeping pills and tranquilizers was given last rank by the respondents. Data also makes it clear that no respondent are making the use of alcohol and mood altering drugs. The low scores give to all the medicinal methods reveal that very few of the respondents are making the use of these techniques. This may be due to the reason that they were not considering these techniques as effective and might be seeing some side effects of these techniques.

Majority of respondents from both the categories

Table-3 : Family and Relationship Stressors among working women.

Family and Relationship Factors	Working Women		Non-Working Women	
	Mean Score	Ranks	Mean Score	Ranks
Marital disagreement	0.78	V	0.29	VIII
Rebellion teens	1.32	II	0.53	IV
Caring for ill family members	0.25	IX	0.52	V
Children with special needs	0.81	IV	0.56	III
Anxiety about children’s future	0.84	III	0.35	VI
Husband’s job insecurity	0.73	VI	0.74	I
None to care children in absence	1.44	I	0.31	VII
Husband’s unhealthy habit	0.28	VIII	0.61	II
Inter generation problems	0.56	VII	0.22	IX

Table-4 : Mental and physical stress management strategies adopted among selected working women.

Stress Management Strategies	Working Women		Non-Working Women	
	Mean Score	Ranks	Mean Score	Ranks
Meditation	0.81	VI	1.41	II
Breathing exercises and yoga	1.44	III	1.09	IV
Exercises, jogging and walking	0.94	V	0.11	XI
Social support	1.25	IV	1.40	III
Psycho-therapy	0.36	XI	0.90	V
Entertainment and fun	1.60	II	0.35	IX
Balanced diet	0.74	VII	0.64	VII
Nature care and body massage	2.20	I	0.60	VIII
Time Management	0.58	IX	0.29	X
Music and instruments	0.56	X	1.94	I
Sleeping pills and tranquilizers	0.68	VIII	0.73	VI

are adopting physical stress management strategies related to relaxation, body therapy, and diet. Effectiveness of these techniques is like exercise and relaxation, music, balanced diets are different physical stress management strategies which are effectively used by the women.

There is no significant difference in the use of meditation techniques among working women respondents. From the data, it was found that first rank was given to positive thinking as a method to overcome stress. It was observed that the working women are better time managers. It was stated by one of the working women that we teach time management to our students but we fail to practice on our own.

Economic conditions of inflation, desire to maintain high standard of living, or develop “one’s identity” are contributing to the economic push of women into the work force. Thus, financial burden is stated as main

stressors among working women. But as women increasingly gain occupational mobility, they are not only exposed to the same physical hazards of work environment as men but also exposed to the pressures created by multiple role demands and conflicting expectations. By fulfilling their economic needs, employment has no doubt made women independent with an identifiable social status but it has also made them to juggle into two main domains of life- work and family. They have stepped into work place but the role responsibilities of women still remain the same. Multi-tasking is the buzzword these days for working women. An individual requires special skills to perform multiple tasks simultaneously. One way to minimize stress while multi-tasking is to plan, prioritize, and perform. It can thus be concluded that working women were significantly more stressed.

It is also important to broaden the horizons of one’s

mind right from one's youth so that one can overcome the possessiveness excessive attachment, too many and choosy expectations from family members (which are usually responsible for discord and bitterness in family). One should be flexible about this point. Dependence to some extent is many times inevitable and hence should not be taken as pit ability. This involves efforts to acquire physical, instinctual, emotional and intellectual well being. In addition, total well being pertains not merely to an individual (analogous to a cell) but to whole mankind in fact whole universe (analogous to an organism).

The results of the study showed that different age group of working women have different kinds of problems and challenges and different categories as married, single, divorcee, single parent, separated, have different issues at stake in the workplace (Sarkar and Sivaramayya, 1994; Sharma, 2002; Shyamalie and Saini, 2011; Readworthy, 2013). Some problems are definitely common, like mental and physical stress, lack of proper balance between employment and family care, unfair treatment in the workplace, stressful life and work place discrimination etc. but some challenges are age or category specific, like prejudiced and stereotyped thinking, safety and security issues, ego hassles with colleagues, and problem of glass ceiling etc. Some probable solutions for problems plaguing urban working women that could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace are proper safety and security measures by the parent organizations, sensitive and supporting partners at home, effective child care policies and appropriate grievance redressal mechanisms for women in place at the workplace.

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