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Management of work stress of self employed women in rural area

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Abstract

Stress at home or work is to a large extent affected by the level of control they have over their working condition, pressures, the degree of support they receive from others in the workplace and the strategies they use to return to work burdens. The study was carried out in 40 self employed rural women of Hisar district. A well structured interview schedule was used for data collection. Main source of the demand were work demands and job control with mean score of 2.69 and 2.58 respectively. Uppermost stress indicator level was emotional (37.78 points) followed by physical indicator (32.3 points) and lowest was sleep indicator (7.7 points). Thus the working women necessity to have work life balance and imbibe stress management strategies like meditation, balanced diet filled with entertainment and fun to lead a stress free life.

Keywords: Self employed women, women of Hisar, stress free life

Introduction

The word "stress" is defined by "Oxford dictionary of psychology" as "Psychological and physical strain or tension generated by physical, emotional, social, economic or occupational circum-stances, events or experience those are difficult to manage or endure. Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. There is a clear distinction between pressure, which can create a 'buzz' and be a motivating factor, and stress which occurs when this pressure becomes excessive.

The position of women in Indian society is weak as its male dominant society, a large percent of women in India work. Women who are working in organized or unorganized sectors of urban and rural part of India, faces problems at the workplace just by virtue of being women. Social attitude to the role of women lags much behind the law. From the psychological perspective, the three major aspects related to working women are Family Adjustment, Job Satisfaction level and Occupational stress.

Today, more people than ever before are choosing self-employment. The self-employed are those who work for their own account and risk (Hebert and Link, 1982) [7], for example, through running their own limited company or as a sole trader. India's workforce has fewer women than it did six years ago: no more than 18% in rural areas are employed, compared to 25% in 2011-12 and 14% in urban from 15%. However, in urban areas, the percentage of women in salaried jobs has increased from 35.6% in 2004 to 52.1% in 2017, but continue to be under-represented compared to their presence in self-employed or casual work.

Today, women's roles are emerging differently with new commitment and career oriented as well as commitment to families. So, this in turn leads to a number of stress and strain among working women.

Work and family are two important parts of a person's life and both are closely related (Ford *et al.*, 2007) [6]. Since an increasing number of women are entering the work force and pursuing careers (Sevim, 2006) [9], they have to balance the competing demands of both workplace and family life (Bickasiz, 2009) [2]. Working women are working for longer hours and taking more work at home (Dawn *et al.*, 1999) [4]. This situation results in a greater amount of stress for working women. Hence the study was undertaken to explore the level of stress and its effect of on the performance of self-employed rural women.

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Methodology

For present study, two villages namely Mangali and Dabra from block I and Ludas and Rawalwas Khurd from block II of Hisar district were selected randomly as the locale of the study. Ten self-employed women were selected from each village, thus making a total sample of 40 self employed women.

A questionnaire was developed to collect data on identification of the work stressors and effect of stress on the performance of self employed women. Stress Indicators Questionnaire of the Counseling Team International was used to assess the level of stress of self employed women.

Results

Self-assessment for identification of sources of stress

Table 1 represents the self-assessment of sources of stress by respondents under work factors and personal factors. Under work factors, effective management of time was identified as the major demand among respondents (2.78) followed by satisfactory physical working environment (2.70). Majority of respondents (2.85) complained about no adequate control over the day-to-day work activities and also about unavailability of support when undertaking new tasks / activities (1.85). Lack of communication with family members to discuss work procedures and other work related issues was identified as

major relationship issue among the respondents (2.63) along with poor training or information sources to carry out work (2.48) as the major constituent of stress. The stress related to change factors involved inability to support/cope with any significant changes in work (1.83) and unawareness of available support to assist with any changes (1.78). Crain and Hammer (2013) [3] reported that women would be experiencing more of family-to-work conflict on account of family role involvement, childcare responsibilities, and elderly care responsibilities at home, thus leading to demand for higher family involvement.

The major personal factors of stress among respondents were identified as pressure of being physically active (2.63) and general good health (2.55) under health issues. Relationship stress factors involved difficulties with partner, relatives, friends, etc (2.30) followed by inability to spend quality time with family / friends (2.30). Insignificant financial security and wellbeing was the major financial stress factor identified among respondents (1.98). Balaji (2014) [1] also reported that women employees experience work family conflict due to the number of hours worked outside the home, flexible or in flexible working hours, size of the family and number of dependents of the family. These factors have severe consequences for the psychological distress and well-being of married working women.

Table 1: Self-assessment for identification of sources of stress (n=40)

S.No	Assessment of sources of stress	Yes	No	N/R	Mean score
Work Factors					
I Demands					
1.	Physical working environment is unsatisfactory (lighting, noise, temperature, ventilation)	30(75.0)	8(20.0)	2(5.0)	2.70
2.	Lack of skills and abilities to meet the demands of the job	28(70.0)	9(22.5)	3(7.5)	2.63
3.	Ineffective management of time at work	32(80.0)	7(17.5)	1(2.5)	2.78
4.	Feeling of dissatisfaction with job	30(70.0)	6(15.0)	4(10.0)	2.65
Average					2.69
II Control					
1.	No adequate control over the day-to-day work activities	35(87.5)	4(10.0)	1(2.5)	2.85
2.	Inadequate control over the pace of doing day-to-day work activities	29(72.5)	8(20.0)	3(7.5)	2.65
3.	Inadequate input into the planning and prioritisation of day-to-day work activities	23(57.5)	4(10.0)	13(32.5)	2.25
4.	Unable to change work environment	31(77.5)	4(10.0)	5(12.5)	2.65
5.	Lack of opportunity to improve skills and obtain adequate training to carry out work effectively	27(67.5)	6(15.0)	7(17.5)	2.50
Average					2.58
III Support					
1.	Lack of knowledge to access managerial support	12(30.0)	5(12.5)	23(57.5)	1.73
2.	unable to access support promptly	8(20.0)	10(25.0)	22(55.0)	1.65
3.	Unavailability of support when undertaking new tasks / activities, etc	14(35.0)	6(15.0)	20(50.0)	1.85
Average					1.74
IV Work Relationship					
1.	Lack of communication with family members, to discuss work procedures and other work related issues	30(75.0)	5(12.5)	5(12.5)	2.63
2.	satisfied that there is no significant work related problems or concerns within work area	20(50.0)	10(25.0)	10(25.0)	2.25
3.	Unfair or inappropriate treatment at workplace	20(50.0)	7(17.5)	13(32.5)	2.18
4.	Harassment or excessive conflict at workplace	23(57.5)	2(5.0)	15(37.5)	2.20
Average					2.32
V Role					
1.	Inadequate training / information to carry out work	23(57.5)	13(32.5)	4(10.0)	2.48
2.	Unmanageable conflicting work demands from different customers	21(52.5)	7(17.5)	12(30.0)	2.23
3.	Have clear, reasonably accurate and understood job description	17(42.5)	1(2.5)	12(30.0)	1.63
4.	Have a clear idea of your day-to-day activities	21(52.5)	6(15.0)	13(32.5)	2.20
Average					2.14
VI Change					
1.	Unable to support/cope with any significant changes in work	20(50.0)	3(7.5)	7(17.5)	1.83
2.	Unaware of support available to assist with any changes	19(47.5)	3(7.5)	8(20.0)	1.78
Average					1.81
Personal Factors					
I Health Factors					
1.	Pressure of keeping physically active	28(70.0)	9(22.5)	3(7.5)	2.63
2.	Difficult to incorporate physical exercise into each day/week	14(35.0)	24(60.0)	2(5.0)	2.30
3.	Unaware of the importance of a healthy balanced diet and incorporating fruit, vegetables and grains into daily diet	21(52.5)	13(32.5)	6(15.0)	2.38
4.	Manage to eat a healthy balanced diet	21(52.5)	15(37.5)	4(10.0)	2.43
5.	Generally in good health	27(67.5)	8(20.0)	5(12.5)	2.55
6.	Manage to have an adequate restful sleep pattern	25(62.5)	6(15.0)	9(22.5)	2.40
Average					2.12

II		Personal Relationship			
1.	Not able to create adequate quality time with family / friends	17(42.5)	17(42.5)	6(15.0)	2.28
2.	Difficult to maintain healthy relationships with partner, relatives, friends, etc	18(45.5)	16(40.0)	6(15.0)	2.30
		Average			2.29
III		Financial Factors			
1.	insignificant financial security /wellbeing	2(5.0)	35(87.5)	3(7.5)	1.98
		Average			1.98

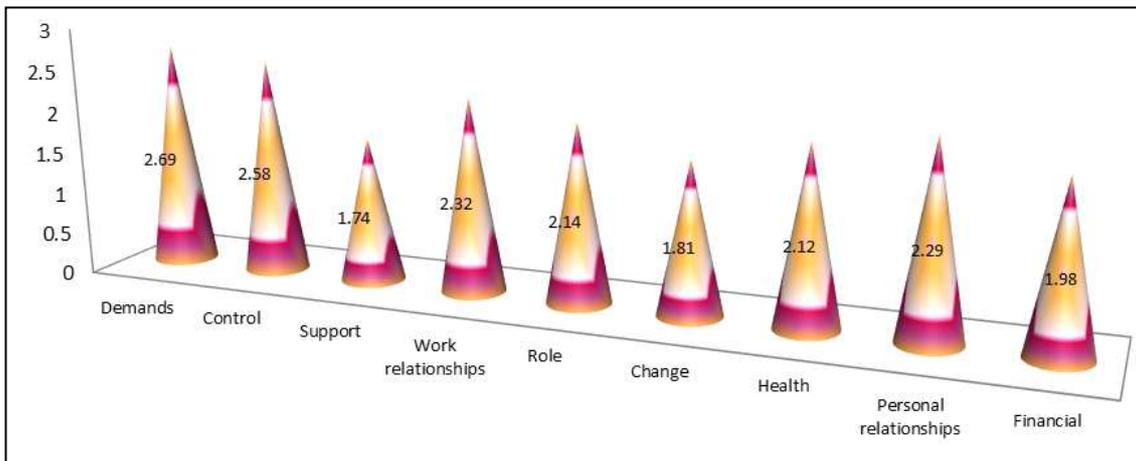


Fig 1: Overall Scores for sources of stress

Level of stress

Table 2 and fig 1 depict the overall mean scores of stress sources and indicates their level among self-employed respondents. Demands and control were found to be the highest sources of stress followed by all the other work and personal factors as medium level factors. Dhanabakyam and Malarvizhi (2014) [5] stated there is a positive relationship between stress and family difficulties in working women. The increase in work-family conflict leads to increase in work stress and vice versa in married working women.

Table 2: Overall scores for sources of stress and level of stress

S. No.	Stress factors	WMS	Level of Stress
Work Factors			
1	Demands	2.69	High
2	Control	2.58	High
3	Support	1.74	Medium
4	Work relationships	2.32	Medium
5	Role	2.14	Medium
6	Change	1.81	Medium
Personal Factors			
1	Health	2.12	Medium
2	Personal relationships	2.29	Medium
3	Financial	1.98	Medium

Stress indicators level of the respondents

Table 3 represents different indicators of stress level among respondents. The physical indicators indicate tension or muscle spasms in face, jaw, neck or shoulders as the major indication (Rank I) followed by having hard time feeling

relaxed (Rank II) and getting severe or chronic headaches (Rank III) along with other factors such as body tension, severe or chronic lower back pain and nervous sweat, etc.

Taking pills to get sleep (Rank I) followed by difficulty in falling asleep (Rank II), waking up feeling tired (Rank III) were identified as the major sleep stress indicators along with other factors such as having nightmares (Rank IV) and waking up between sleep (Rank V).

The behavioral indicators for stress depicted highest factors as enhancement of social status (Rank I) and use of drugs or alcohol to relax (Rank II). These indicators were followed by smoking (Rank III), defamation by family for unsuccessfulness and drinking too much of tea /coffee when stressed (Rank IV), by lonely time (Rank V) and betting for money (Rank VI), etc.

Impulsive behavior causing problems (Rank I), feeling anxious about hard-described problems (Rank II), feeling very tired and disinterested in life (Rank III), pessimistic about future (Rank IV) were identified as the major emotional stress indicators among the respondents. These were followed by avoidance of facing problems, worrying a lot, thinking badly about self and taking professional help for personal problems, etc.

The personal habits of the respondents also indicated the stress through factors such as spending less than 30 minutes a week and talking casually with neighbors (Rank I), watching television for entertainment more than one hour a day (Rank II) and difficulty in planning time and activities to constructively release stress (Rank III).

Table 3: Stress indicators level of the respondents

Indicator	Always (5)	Most of the time(4)	Some time (3)	Almost never (2)	Never (1)	Mean Score	Rank
Physical Indicators							
My body feels tense all over	0	1(2.5)	9(22.5)	14(35.0)	16	1.87	IV
I have a nervous sweat or sweaty palms	0	1(2.5)	8(20.0)	14(35.0)	17	1.82	VI
I have a hard time feeling really relaxed	0	3(7.7)	10(25.0)	11(27.5)	16	2.00	II
I have severe or chronic lower back pain	0	4(10.0)	5(12.5)	12(30.0)	19	1.85	V
I get severe or chronic headaches	0	3(7.7)	8(20.0)	14(35.0)	15	1.97	III
I get tension or muscle spasms in my face, jaw, neck or shoulders	0	3(7.7)	13(32.5)	7(17.5)	17	2.05	I
My stomach quivers or feels upset	0	4(10.0)	7(17.5)	5(12.5)	24	1.77	VIII

I get skin rashes or itching.	0	0	8(20.0)	8(20.0)	24	1.60	XII	
I have problems with my bowels (constipation, diarrhea).	0	2(5.0)	7(17.5)	9(22.5)	22	1.72	X	
I need to urinate more than most people	0	2(5.0)	10(25.0)	4(10.0)	24	1.75	IX	
My ulcer bothers me.	0	2(5.0)	5(12.5)	8(20.0)	25	1.60	XII	
I feel short of breath after mild exercise like climbing up four flights of stairs	0	1(2.5)	7(17.5)	6(15.0)	26	1.57	XIII	
Compared to most people, I have a very small or a very large appetite.	0	3(7.7)	4(10.0)	8(20.0)	25	1.62	XI	
My weight is higher than what is recommended for a person my height and build.	0	2(5.0)	6(15.0)	5(12.5)	27	1.57	XIII	
I smoke tobacco	0	3(7.7)	3(7.7)	7(17.5)	27	1.55	XIV	
I get sharp chest pains when I'm physically active.	0	3(7.7)	3(7.7)	7(17.5)	27	1.55	XIV	
I lack physical energy	0	2(5.0)	4(10.0)	7(17.5)	27	1.52	XV	
When I'm resting, my heart beats more than 100 times a minute.	0	4(10.0)	5(12.5)	3(7.7)	28	1.62	XI	
Because of my busy schedule I miss at least two meals during the week.	0	2(5.0)	6(15.0)	7(17.5)	25	1.62	XI	
I don't really plan my meals for balanced nutrition.	0	2(5.0)	4(10.0)	7(17.5)	27	1.52	XV	
I spend less than 3 hours a week getting vigorous physical exercise (running, playing basketball, tennis, swimming, etc)	0	4(10.0)	8(20.0)	4(10.0)	24	1.80	VII	
Physical Indicators Point total							32.3	
Sleep Indicators:								
I have trouble falling asleep.	0	0	4(10.0)	17(17.5)	19	1.62	II	
I take pills to get to sleep.	0	2(5.0)	5(12.5)	14(35.0)	19	1.75	I	
I have nightmares or repeated bad dreams	0	2(5.0)	5(12.5)	3(7.7)	30	1.47	IV	
I wake up at least once in the middle of the night for no apparent reason.	0	1(2.5)	3(7.7)	5(12.5)	31	1.35	V	
No matter how much sleep I get, I awake feeling tired	0	2(5.0)	5(12.5)	4(10.0)	29	1.50	III	
Sleep Indicators Point Total							7.7	
Behavioral Indicators								
I stutter or get tongue tied when I talk to other people.	0	0	0	6(15.0)	34	1.15	XV	
I try to work while I'm eating lunch.	0	0	7(17.5)	5(12.5)	28	1.47	XI	
I have to work late	0	3(7.7)	4(10.0)	3(7.7)	30	1.50	X	
I go to work even when I feel sick	0	3(7.7)	2(5.0)	5(12.5)	30	1.45	XII	
I have to bring work home.	0	0	2(5.0)	9(22.5)	29	1.32	XIV	
I drink alcohol or use drugs to relax.	0	11(27.5)	5(12.5)	4(10.0)	20	2.17	II	
I drink too much of tea /coffee when stressed	0	7(17.5)	10(25.0)	4(10.0)	19	2.12	IV	
Some parts of my work are not pleasant	0	3(7.7)	2(5.0)	14(35.0)	21	1.67	IX	
I I smoke /eat paan-kathha, etc	0	10(25.0)	5(12.5)	6(15.0)	19	2.15	III	
This work has enhanced my social status	0	7(17.5)	16(40.0)	5(12.5)	12	2.45	I	
Some of my family and friends try to defame and malign me as unsuccessful.	0	8(20.0)	8(20.0)	5(12.5)	19	2.12	IV	
In any given week, I take at least one prescription drug without the recommendation of a physician,	0	6(15.0)	7(17.5)	3(7.7)	24	1.87	VII	
I have problems with my sex life	0	6(15.0)	5(12.5)	4(10.0)	25	1.80	VIII	
At least once during the week I will make bets for money	0	6(15.0)	7(17.5)	5(12.5)	22	1.92	VI	
After dinner I spend more time alone or watching TV than I do talking with my family or friends	0	9(22.5)	5(12.5)	5(12.5)	21	2.05	V	
I arrive at work late	0	2(5.0)	3(7.7)	3(7.7)	32	1.37	XIII	
At least once during the week I have a shouting match with a co-worker or supervisor.	0	2(5.0)	5(12.5)	4(10.0)	29	1.50	X	
Behavioral Indicators Point Total							30.13	
Emotional Indicators								
I have found the best way to deal with hassles and problems is to consciously avoid thinking or talking about them	0	10(25.0)	5(12.5)	2(5.0)	23	2.05	V	
I have trouble remembering things.	0	3(7.7)	19(47.5)	4(10.0)	14	1.80	VIII	
I feel anxious or frightened about problems I can't really describe.	0	4(10.0)	12(30.0)	12(30.0)	12	2.2	II	
I worry a lot.	0	2(5.0)	14(35.0)	7(17.5)	17	2.02	VI	
It is important for me not to show my emotions to my family	0	3(7.7)	3(7.7)	6(15.0)	28	1.52	XI	
It is hard for me to relax at home.	0	2(5.0)	3(7.7)	5(12.5)	30	1.42	XIV	
It's best if I don't tell even my closest friend how I'm really feeling.	0	6(15.0)	3(7.7)	3(7.7)	28	1.67	X	
I find it hard to talk when I get excited.	0	3(7.7)	4(10.0)	4(10.0)	29	1.52	XI	
I feel very angry inside.	0	2(5.0)	6(15.0)	3(7.5)	29	1.52	XI	
I have temper outbursts I can't control	0	0	5(12.5)	7(17.5)	28	1.42	XIV	
When people criticize me, even in friendly, constructive way, I feel offended.	0	0	3(7.7)	9(22.5)	29	1.40	XV	
I feel extremely sensitive and irritable.	0	2(5.0)	3(7.7)	8(20.0)	27	1.50	XII	
My emotions change unpredictably and without any apparent reason.	0	1(2.5)	5(12.5)	6(15.0)	28	1.47	XIII	
I feel like I really can't trust anyone.	0	2(5.0)	4(10.0)	7(17.5)	27	1.52	XI	
I feel like other people don't understand me.	0	2(5.0)	9(22.5)	6(15.0)	23	1.75	IX	
I really don't feel good about myself	0	9(22.5)	5(12.5)	4(10.0)	22	2.02	VI	
Generally I am not optimistic about my future.	0	7(17.5)	9(22.5)	6(15.0)	18	2.12	IV	
I feel very tired and disinterested in life.	0	10(25.0)	5(12.5)	6(15.0)	19	2.15	III	
Impulsive behavior has caused me problems.	0	10(25.0)	8(20.0)	6(15.0)	16	2.30	I	
I have felt so bad that I thought of hurting myself.	0	5(12.5)	6(15.0)	8(20.0)	21	1.87	VII	
When I have an important personal problem I can't solve myself, I do not seek professional help	0	7(17.5)	7(17.5)	6(15.0)	20	2.02	VI	
Emotional Indicator Point Total							37.78	
Personal Habits:								
I spend less than three hours a week working on a hobby of mine.	0	4(10.0)	3(7.7)	6(15.0)	27	1.60	VII	
I spend less than one hour a week writing personal letters, writing in a diary or writing creatively.	0	2(5.0)	5(12.5)	5(12.5)	28	1.52	VIII	
I spend less than 30 minutes a week talking casually with my neighbors	0	16(40.0)	4(10.0)	4(10.0)	16	2.50	I	
I lack time to read the daily newspaper.	0	5(12.5)	3(7.7)	15(37.5)	17	1.90	V	
I watch television for entertainment more than one hour a day.	0	10(25.0)	5(12.5)	10(25.0)	15	2.25	II	
I drive in a motor vehicle faster than the speed limit for the excitement and	0	1(2.5)	11(27.5)	13(32.5)	14	1.93	IV	

challenge of it.							
I spend less than 30 minutes a day working toward a life goal or ambition of mine.	0	1(2.5)	6(15.0)	17(42.5)	15	1.78	VI
My day to day living is not really affected by my religious beliefs or my philosophy of life	0	0	6(15.0)	7(17.5)	27	1.48	IX
When I feel stressed, it is difficult for me to plan time and activities to constructively release my stress.	0	0	12(30.0)	22(55.0)	6	2.15	III
Personal Habits Point Total							17.25

Stress indicators level

Table 4 and Fig 2 depicts that there was high stress level among the respondents behaviorally and emotionally while stress level was medium physically and for personal habits. Stress level was identified as very low for sleep factors. Latha Krishnan (2014) [8], reported that under socio-economic stressors unexpected guests, followed by absence of domestic help causes major stress among working women. Similarly being perfectionist with needless fears which cause psychological set back among working women. Moreover worry about children future and husbands job anxiety play a major role in causing stress under family and relationship. Thus the working women necessity to have work life equilibrium and imbibe stress controlling approaches like meditation, balanced diet filled with entertainment and fun to lead a stress free life.

Table 4: Stress indicators level on the basis of personal stress levels (n=40)

Sr. No	Stress Indicators	Total point	Level of stress
1.	Physical indicators	32.3	Medium
2.	Sleep indicators	7.7	Very low
3.	Behavioral indicators	30.13	High
4.	Emotional indicators	37.78	High
5.	Personal habits	17.25	Medium

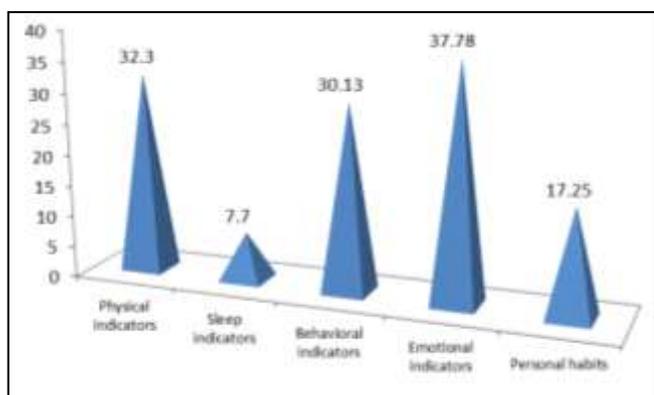


Fig 2: Stress indicators level

Conclusion

Stress at home or work is to a large extent affected by the level of control they have over their working condition, pressures, the degree of support they receive from others in the workplace and the strategies they use to return to work burdens. Main source of the demand were work demands and job control with mean score of 2.69 and 2.58 respectively. Uppermost stress indicator level was emotional (37.78 points) followed by physical indicator (32.3 points) and lowest was sleep indicator (7.7 points). Thus the working women necessity to have work life balance and imbibe stress management strategies like meditation, balanced diet filled with entertainment and fun to lead a stress free life.

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