

Sociological and Environmental Factors Causing Stress Among Women and Fighting Techniques Used

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Our family environment is entangled with stress and strains where homemakers are directly affected by the same. Problem further intensifies in case of working women as they have to cope up with all pressures of a worker as well as of a housewife (Bolger et al 1989). Pearlin and Schooler (1978) reported that the concept of stressors, not only refers to major life events but also encompasses ongoing minor events like electricity failure, maid not turned up, unexpected guests and child's misbehaviour. Stress is not uncontrollable. With proper understanding of the different stressors that cause stress, the situation can be well managed. In India research work on family stress management had been low priority because of lack of awareness of importance of stress in our family life. The present study was conducted with following specific objectives:

1. To examine the factors contributing to stress among working and nonworking women.
2. To find out the stress management techniques used by working and non working women.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in four localities namely Haibowal Kalan, Bhai Randhir Singh Nagar, Bharat Nagar and P.A.U. Campus. The total sample of 150 respondents was stratified into two categories namely working and non-working homemakers having 75 respondents in each category. The data were collected through personal interview schedule method and analysis was done using simple percentages, mean scores, chi square test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

(i) Back ground Information of Respondents

Results of the present investigation showed that majority of the non-working women (53.33%) were in the age group of 30-45 years whereas majority of the working women were in the age group of 45-60 years. Maximum number of women (68.67%) were educated up to graduation level and above. Maximum number

of families (76.60%) were medium size with 4-6 members. The average family income was higher in the working categories of respondents than the non-working categories. Maximum number of women (69.40%) was having the day length between 16-18 hours. Most of the women were getting assistance from servant for doing household work especially house cleaning. Most of the working women (98.67%) had full time jobs, which needed mental work. Working hours varied between 6-7 hours for most of the women.

(ii) Sociological Factors Causing Stress

Data presented in Table 1 reveals the sociological factors affecting stress in working and non-working women. Under the sub-title of 'social pressures' compulsion to attend different social activities was given first rank by non-working respondents and second rank by working respondents. Significant difference was observed due to stressor 'unexpected guests'. Working respondents (mean score 0.95) were more stressed due to this factor as compared to non-working respondents (mean score 0.65). This may be because of shortage of time and overburden of work; it was difficult for her to attend the guests.

Regarding stressors related to husband, both the working and non-working respondents gave first rank to 'husband's stress' as a factor of stress (mean score 1.56 and 1.72 for non-working and working women respectively). Last rank was given to 'dis-satisfaction with husband's job statuses by working respondents whereas this factor was given rank 8.5 by non-working respondents. Stress due to troubles with in laws was given last rank by non-working respondents and rank 7.5 by working respondents. Significant difference was observed in working and non-working respondents regarding adjustment to marriage. It was found that working women were having more difficulty in adjusting to marriage as compared to non-working respondents. Working respondents ranked it sixth having mean score 0.28 and non-working respondents gave rank 8.5 to it having mean score 0.10.

Table 1: Sociological stressors among working and non working women

Sociological stressors	n=150				Chi-square	
	Non working (n=75)		Working (n=75)			
	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank		
<i>Social Pressures</i>						
Unexpected guest	0.65	2	0.95	1	6.49*a	
Interference by neighbours and relatives	0.56	3	0.64	3	2.88	
Compulsory socialization	0.73	1	0.86	2	1.52	
<i>Stress Related to Husband</i>						
Modification of personal goals	0.66	2	0.76	2	0.84	
Indifferent treatment to relatives & parents	0.52	3	0.57	5	2.56	
Problems in marriage adjustment	0.10	8.5	0.28	6	9.08*b	
Dominance of husband	0.35	4.5	0.60	4	4.86	
Dissatisfied with husband's job	0.10	8.5	0.10	10	0.07	
Husband's stress	1.56	1	1.72	1	2.4	
Difference in opinion about	0.35	4.5	0.61	3	3.62	
Children's upbringing						
Non trusting husband	0.11	7	0.13	9	0.10	
Husband's unhealthy habits	0.19	6	0.21	7.5	0.06	
Troubles with in laws	0.02	10	0.21	7.5	2.76	
<i>Stress Related to Children</i>						
Children's future	1.32	1	1.35	1	0.72	
Intergeneration problems	0.48	2	0.55	2	0.10	
More Children	0.05	5.5	0.05	6	0	
Child under two years of age	0.11	4	0.16	4	0.42	
Childlessness	0.05	5.5	-	7	2.02	
No male Child	0.08	7	0.11	5	0.68	
None to care for children in absence	0.21	3	0.24	3	0.40	

*a= χ^2 value at 1 df=3.84 (5% level of significance)

*b= χ^2 value at 1 df=5.99 (5% level of significance)

Regarding stressors related to children, both the working and non-working respondents gave first rank to 'uncertainty about children's future' (mean score 1.32 and 1.35 in non-working and working respondents respectively) followed by 'intergeneration problems' and 'care of children in her absence' as a factor of stress having rank second and third 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. No significant difference was observed in working and non-working respondents with regard to stresses related to children. On an average it was found that working respondents were more stressed due to sociological factors of stress as compared to non-working respondents.

(iii) Environmental Factors Causing Stress

Table 2 deals with environmental stressors under two sub headings – seasonal changes and work place. Working respondents were found to be more stressed due to extreme hot weather

(mean score =0.86) followed by extreme cold weather (mean score = 0.64) whereas non-working respondents regarded the fear of natural calamities (mean score 0.92) and extreme hot weather (mean score 0.75) as factors of stress and gave them first and second rank respectively. Significant difference was observed in working and non-working respondents with regard to extreme hot weather. In case of work place, both the categories gave first and second rank to disturbing noise and disliked neighborhood respectively as factors of stress. Significant due to disliked neighborhood and improper lighting. Non-working respondents were found to be more stressed due to these two factors (mean score 0.64 and 0.53 respectively) as compared to working respondents (mean score 0.35 and 0.24 respectively). On a average non-working women were found to be more stressed due to environmental factors than their working counterparts. The reason behind this difference may be that non-working have to spend more time in household chores and they get more chances of interacting

Table 2: Environmental stressors among working and non working women

Environmental stressors	n=150				Chi-square	
	Non working (n=75)		Working (n=75)			
	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank		
<i>Seasonal Changes</i>						
Change of season	0.66	3	0.44	4	3.92	
Extreme cold weather	0.53	4	0.64	2	2.9	
Extreme hot weather	0.75	2	0.86	1	6.8*a	
Rainy Season	0.38	5	0.38	5	0.03	
Natural Calamities	0.92	1	0.62	3	5.5	
<i>Work Place</i>						
Inadequate house	0.48	4	0.35	2.5	1.0	
Disliked neighbourhood	0.64	2	0.35	2.5	5.26*b	
Disturbing noise	0.91	1	0.80	1	0.43	
Improper lighting	0.53	3	0.24	4	4.5*b	

*a= χ^2 value at 1 df=3.84 (5% level of significance)

*b= χ^2 value at 1 df=5.99 (5% level of significance)

with neighbours as compared to working respondents.

(iv) Stress Management Techniques

Relaxation: Data shown in the Table 3a reveals that both the working and non-working respondents gave first rank to taking out time for leisure (mean score 1.18 ad 1.37 for non-working and working respectively) followed by 'rest' and 'deep breathing relaxation'. From the table, it is clear that there was a significant difference between working and non-working women with regard to writing a diary as a method of reducing stress. Majority of working women (mean score 0.28) were found to be using this technique as compared to non-working women (mean score 0.09). This may be because working women have more interaction with the society which may have made them more aware of this stress management technique than non-working women.

Correct Posture: The data in Table 3a shows that both the categories gave first rank to 'placement of things at convenient reach' (mean score 1.72 and 1.76 for non-working and working women respectively). Non-working gave second rank to both 'avoiding bending and use of standard furniture having mean score 1.37. A statistically significant difference was observed in working and non-working women with regard to the use of 'standardized and comfortable furniture'. Working respondents ranked it first having mean score 1.76 and non-working respondents ranked it second having mean score 1.37. This can be said that adopting the correct

posture for performing various tasks can help to reduce the physical stress.

Diet: An examination of the data in table reveals that with regard to taking balanced diet and a low calorie diet, both the working and non-working women gave first and second rank respectively to these techniques. Both the categories were not found to be using the technique of 'eating less food' as a means of reducing stress. A significant difference was found in working and non-working women in the case of the consumption of high fibre diet. Working respondents (mean score 0.92) were found to be more aware of this technique than non-working respondents (mean score 0.56). No significant difference was found in both the categories with regard to 'taking balanced diet and a 'low calorie diet'.

Body Therapy: From the table it is clear that none of the respondents from both the categories used aerobic and swimming exercises as a way of stress management. This may be because women are not aware of these techniques as a method of stress management. Both working and non-working respondents gave first rank to 'listening to music while resting' having mean score 1.21 and 1.20 respectively. 'Daily walks' was given second rank by both the categories followed by 'music listening while working'. The more use of music as a way of reducing stress clearly reveals that music relieves oneself from stress and every person can enjoy a stress free life. Table values clearly show that there was no significant difference between both the categories with regard to the stress management under body

Table 3a: Mental stress management strategies among working and non working women

	Non working (n=75)		Working (n=75)		Chi-square
	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank	
Meditation					
Offer prayers	1.46	1	1.68	1	2.98
Pilgrimage	0.78	3	0.82	2	0.66
Yoga	0.14	4	0.17	4	1.36
Religious	0.81	2	0.76	3	1.60
Psychotherapy					
Change in routine	0.77	3	0.94	3	1.22
Recreation with family	1.50	2	1.42	2	0.68
Positive thinking	1.72	1	1.53	1	6.82 ^{ab}
Cry to relieve stress	0.58	4	0.85	4	3.10
Social Support					
Work in group	1.16	2	1.2	2	4.16
Talk to someone	1.38	1	1.36	1	0.11
Attend social gatherings	1.01	3	1.10	3	1.49
Take hired help	0.61	4	0.54	4	0
Take counseling	0	5	0	5	0
Altering Situation					
Changing residence if unsuitable	0.28	4	0.36	4	1.44
Maintaining well organized home	1.62	1	1.62	1	0.84
Avoiding painful reminders	1.50	2	1.53	2	0.90
Adapting to the distressing events	1.44	3	1.18	3	4.37
Planning					
Set priorities	1.86	1	1.84	1	0.24
Do preparation	1.36	3	1.61	3	4.92
Alter heavy work with light work	1.14	4	1.41	4	4.56
Use time & labour saving devices	1.64	2	1.78	2	2.78
Reducing Responsibilities					
Postponing certain tasks	1.00	2	1.36	1	11.34 ^{*a}
Legitimately avoid disliked tasks	0.96	3	0.86	4	1.84
Assign work to others	1.09	1	1.12	2	0.42
Change standards of job performance	0.90	4	1.02	3	15.42 ^{*a}

therapy.

Medicinal Therapy: It can be seen in the table that the use of sleeping pills and tranquilizers was given first and second rank respectively by both the working and non-working respondents. Data also makes it clear that no respondent was 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 were 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. An examination of data shows that there was no significant difference between both the categories with regard to the use of medicinal therapy.

Natural Cure : Data shown in Table 3a shows that herbal therapy was given first rank by working respondents with mean score 0.49 while

non-working gave it second rank having mean score 0.06. Non-working gave it second rank having mean score 0.06. Non-working respondents gave first rank to water therapy while working women gave it second rank. From the calculated value of chi square in the Table 3a, it may be concluded that with regard to natural cure for stress statistically no significant difference was found between working and non-working women. It is also clear from the table that very few respondents in both the categories were making the use of natural cure for stress. This may be because of unawareness regarding these techniques.

Majority of respondents from both the categories were making the use of physical stress management strategies related to correct posture, relaxation, body therapy, diet. Effectiveness of these techniques is also reported by many research workers like proper working surface

Table 3b: Physical stress management strategies among working and non working women

Physical stress management strategies	Non working (n=75)		Working (n=75)		Chi-square
	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank	
<i>Relaxation</i>					
Take rest	0.97	2	1.05	2	2.56
Take out time for leisure	1.18	1	1.37	1	2.2
Deep breathing	0.24	3	0.28	3.5	0.01
Write dairy	0.09	4	0.28	3.5	6.2*b
<i>Correct Posture</i>					
Change posture	1.28	4	1.41	3	1.02
Avoid bending	1.37	2.5	1.24	4	2.88
Convenient placement of things	1.72	1	1.76	1.5	3.44
Use standard furniture	1.37	2.5	1.76	1.5	12.24*b
<i>Diet</i>					
Eat less	0.37	4	0.44	4	-
Take balanced diet	1.46	1	1.6	1	1.80
A low calorie diet	1.12	2	1.16	2	1.08
High fibre diet	0.56	3	0.92	3	8.9*a
<i>Body Therapy</i>					
Aerobic and swimming	-	6.5	-	6.5	-
Games	0.09	5	0.12	5	0.28
Walks	1.04	2	1.13	2	2.32
Listen to music while resting	1.2	1	1.21	1	0.04
Listen to music while working	1.01	3	0.78	3	3.28
Do massaging	0.58	4	0.56	4	1.70
<i>Medicinal Therapy</i>					
Sleeping pills	0.24	1	0.30	1	0.50
Tranquillizers	0.09	2	0.06	2	0.52
Alcohol and Mood altering drugs	-	3.5	-	3.5	-
<i>Natural Care</i>					
Colour therapy	0.02	3	0.02	3.5	0
Herbal therapy	0.06	2	0.49	1	0.78
Aroma therapy	0.01	4	0.02	3.5	0.32
Water therapy	0.08	1	0.12	2	0.66

*a= χ^2 value at 1 df=3.84 (5% level of significance)

*b= χ^2 value at 1 df=5.99 (5% level of significance)

(Bhaskaran and Neelakantan 1993), exercise and relaxation (Nelson and Nelson 1981), music (Litle 1986), balanced diet (King and Parham 1981) are different physical stress management strategies which are effectively used by the women.

Meditation: Data exhibited in Table 3b shows that prayer was ranked first by both the non-working and working respondents as a stress management techniques. Second rank was given to reading religious books by non-working women while working women gave second rank to 'liking of pilgrimage'. This may be because non-working has enough time to devote to reading as compared to working women. Last rank was given to yoga by both the categories. There was no significant difference in the use of mediation techniques between working and non-

working respondents.

Psychotherapy: From the data, it was found that both the categories gave first rank to 'positive thinking' as a method to overcome stress. Both the categories gave second and third rank to 'sharing play and recreation with family' and 'changing monotonous routine', respectively. These techniques provide them mental satisfaction and relieve their stress. Last rank was given to 'crying' as a method to relieve stress by both the categories. Non-working respondents (mean score 0.58) were found to be using this technique more than working respondents (mean score 0.85).

Social Support: Working women gave first, second and third rank to 'talking to some one', 'working in group' and 'social gatherings' respectively. The same trend of ranks is observed

for non-working respondents. From the results in Table 3b, it is clear that there was no significant difference between working and non-working respondents with regard to the use of social support as a stress management technique. This may be said that human being is a part of social system and interacting with others help to curb their natural instincts and relieves stress.

Altering situations: Table 3b shows that both working and non-working respondents maintained well organized home (rank first) as a method to reduce stress followed by 'avoiding situations that serve as painful reminders'. Last rank was given to shifting the place of living if it produced stress. This may be because it is not possible economically to shift house. There was no significant difference between working and non-working women with regard to the altering situation for getting relief from stress. People who always think of past never succeed. The only way to prepare for future is to do today's work with strength and enthusiasm.

Planning: The data shown in table shows that both the categories gave first rank to method of 'setting priority' (mean score 1.86 and 1.84 for non-working respondents respectively) followed by use of time and labour saving devices. The technique of altering heavy work with light work was given last rank by both the categories. This may be because they feel more comfortable in the set sequence of doing work as they usually do. An examination of data shows that there was no significant difference between working and non-working respondents with regard to the use of planning as a stress management technique.

Reducing Responsibilities: Data shows that strategy of 'assigning work to others' was given first rank by non-working respondents having more score 1.09 while working respondents ranked it second having mean score 1.12. Non-working respondents gave last rank to 'change of standards of job performance' while working respondents gave last rank to 'legitimately avoiding disliked task'. Table values show that there was a significant difference between non-working women with regard to the method of postponing certain tasks when there is shortage of time. Working (mean score 1.36) and non-working (mean score 1.00) women gave it first and second rank respectively. Working women have less time for doing certain tasks which may become a reason of stress for them, so to avoid this situation they use this strategy more as

compared to non-working women. Significant difference was also observed in the two categories with regard to changing the standards of job performance. Working respondents having mean score 1.02 reported more use of this method than non-working women (mean score 0.90). This was found that both the categories were making the use of mental stress management technique. Earlier studies also show that planning (Paden and Buehler, 1995), social support (Cannella, 1987) and meditation (Anthony, 1985) are effective stress management techniques.

CONCLUSIONS

It can thus be concluded that working women were significantly more stressed. Highest-ranking social pressure was 'unexpected guests' (as felt by working women) followed by 'compulsory socialization' as disclosed by both the categories of respondents. All the respondents agreed that husband's stress was also the major factor contributing to their own stress followed by stress due to modification of their personal goals. Main stress point related to their children's future was also agreed upon by both the groups of respondents. Extremely hot weather and natural calamities were also identified as main environmental factors causing stress among all respondents. Majority of respondents in both the categories were using various stress management techniques viz. relaxation, music, prayers, recreation with family, Planning etc. Planning and relaxation were most preferred techniques whereas medical and natural therapy was the least preferred ones.

KEYWORDS Stressors. Stress. Management. Techniques.

ABSTRACT Study was aimed to isolate the sociological and environmental factors causing stress and different stress management techniques used by 75 working and 75 non-working women of Ludhiana. Results showed that working women were significantly more stressed. Highest-ranking social pressure was 'unexpected guests' (as felt by working women) followed by 'compulsory socialization' as disclosed by both the categories of respondents. All the respondents agreed that husband's stress was also the major factor contributing to their own stress followed by stress due to modification of their personal goals. Main stress point related to their children's future was also agreed upon by both the groups of respondents. Extremely hot weather and natural calamities were also identified as main environmental factors causing stress among all respondents. Majority of respondents in both the categories were using various stress management techniques viz. relaxation, music, prayers, recreation with family, Planning etc. Planning and relaxation were most preferred techniques whereas

medical and natural therapy was the least preferred ones.

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