

# Occupational stress and its contributing factors among young working women from nuclear families

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## ABSTRACT

Occupational stress often stems from unexpected responsibilities and pressures that do not align with a person's knowledge, skills, or expectations, inhibiting one's ability to cope. Women are especially likely to experience these sources of stress, since they still carry more of the burden of childcare and domestic responsibilities than men. The double pressure of work is having an impact on the growing creed of working women while the number of nuclear families is accentuating the problem due to withdrawal of the support system. Looking at the rising number of working women and increasing amount of stress and its impact on home environment an attempt was made to assess occupational stress and its contributing factors among young working women in the age group of 25-40 years of age and belonging to nuclear families. The study was conducted with a sample of total 150 respondents, 50 each from different professional group namely, private school teachers, nurses from private hospitals and private bank employees were selected. Results showed that almost all of the respondents were found to be having medium level of occupational stress. While only 7.33 per cent were having low level of occupational stress and no respondents were having high level of occupational stress. Further it was found out that among the factors contributing to stress, time pressure gave more stress as compared to others followed by related to work factors and role conflict.

## INTRODUCTION

The word "stress" has been defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a state of affairs involving demand on physical or mental energy". In medical term "stress" is defined as a perturbation or disturbance of the body's homeostasis. Extreme stress conditions are detrimental and disadvantageous to human health. But in moderation stress is normal and in many cases proves advantageous

in completing work. Desai (1993) revealed that perceived efforts, a factor of mental work load, were found to be the main contributor to prediction of stress. The study also concluded that presence of stress is a reality in work units and that stress is an inevitable consequence. Main features of the work-stress process are possible sources of stress (stressors), factors of individual differences (moderators/mediators), and impacts of stress strain (Lu *et al.*, 2003).

As the number of working women has increased over the previous several decades in India, women are at equivalent standards with their male counterparts. Moreover, women who do not get support from their partner in household work also endured high level of stress (Repetti *et al.*, 1989). Paruthi and Bhardwaj (1985) said that family conflict leads to emergence of job stress. The level of tension in job depends with increase or decrease in family disharmony. This also implied that the influence of work stress were likely to intensify tension in the family which is a clear indication of a kind of carry over effect from work to home and back. Both home and workplace can become the scene of many triggers for physical and mental tension which can gradually build up and, if left unchecked, can develop into serious health risk. While many investigations has been organized on the occupational stress in men, only a meager amount of study has investigated the occupational stress in working women especially of nuclear families and the impact of these stresses on their families. The current study mainly aims at identifying job stress and its causes for working women; and the difficulties that women experience in facing these problems.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was undertaken to understand occupational stress, its contributing factors, impact of stress on working women and their home environment, and various coping styles used by the selected categories of working women from nuclear families in Ludhiana city. The study was conducted on young working women in the age group of 25-40 years belonging to different professional groups namely, private school teachers, nurses from private hospitals and private bank employees. For the selection of school teachers a list of five schools were randomly selected and 10 teachers from each school from nuclear families were further selected purposively thus making a sample of 50 school teachers. For selection of private bank employees, five banks were selected randomly and further 10 women employees belonging to nuclear families from each bank were purposively selected. Similarly, from five private hospitals selected

randomly, ten nurses from each hospital from nuclear families were selected from this list purposively thus making a total sample of 50 nurses. Thus in all a total sample of 150 young working women from nuclear families *i.e.* 50 private school teachers, 50 private bank employees and 50 nurses were selected for the present study. An interview schedule was prepared for collection of requisite data from the selected respondents to meet the specific objectives. The data were analyzed by using the statistical tools simple percentages, averages, mean score, standard deviation and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were presented in the form of tables.

## OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The results obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following heads :

### Level of occupational stress in respondents :

The occupational stress index was used to measure the level of occupational stress among the working category of women from nuclear families and its various aspects among the respondents. Some important aspects included in the scale were role conflict, overload of work pressure, role ambiguity, unreasonable group or political pressure, responsibility of person, poor peer relations, intrinsic improvishment, low status, strenuous working conditions, unprofitability, sacrificing family over work. The scale comprised of 46 statements which were scored on a five point scale.

The data in the Table 1 reveals that almost all of the respondents are found to be having medium occupational stress. While only 7.33 per cent were having low occupational stress, none of the respondents were having high occupational stress. With thorough observation it has been seen that both teachers and nurses were having medium occupational stress; whereas 84 per cent bank employees had followed by medium occupational stress 16 per cent low occupational stress. Rastogi and Kashyap (2003) studied about job stress and work adjustment among nurses, clerks, and teachers and found that nurses were more stressed than clerks and teachers which is

Level of occupational stress	Teachers (n = 50)	Bank employees (n = 50)	Nurses (n = 50)	Total
Low	3(6.00)	8(16.00)	0(0.00)	11(7.33)
Medium	47(94.00)	42(84.00)	50(100)	139(92.67)

because nurses worked in harsh working environment as compared to teachers and clerks.

### Factors contributing to stress :

Different types of factors causing stress to the selected working women from nuclear families were studied and are presented in the following tables.

### Related to work :

Table 2 presents the information related to work factors contributing to stress among the working women from nuclear families. The statement “there is lack of permanency in your job” got maximum score of 3.27 among all the statements. This was followed by “feel that stress negatively influence your job performance” and “can do much better on the job if the conditions were changed” with mean score of 2.88 and 2.73, respectively. The respondents agreed to the statements of “enjoy what you do at work”; “work environment is good and “satisfied with your current job” with mean score of 2.22, 2.20 and 2.19, respectively. According to Ahmed and Omar (2010), previous findings have indicated that

employees working in an environment perceived as more family- friendly reported less work-family conflict. It can also be seen that the respondents agree with “there is too much workload” and this shows that there is pressure of workload in all the three type of work.

It can be evident that there is statistically significant difference in the statement of “satisfied with current job”; “enjoy what you do at work”; “work environment is good”; and “can do much better on the job if the conditions were changed”. This may be because of the difference in the types of jobs the respondents were made to do.

### Time pressure :

Table 3 shows the information on time pressure as one of the factors contributing to stress among the respondents. Minimum score of 1.91 is scored by the statement “over expectation of work to be done as fast as possible”. Nurses scored highest in this and bank employees scored lowest. Therefore there is significant difference in all three categories for this statement. Pareek (1983) agrees with this saying that overburdened

Statements	Teachers (n = 50)	Bank employees (n = 50)	Nurses (n = 50)	Total	F-ratio
Satisfied with current job	1.86±0.81	2.28±0.90	2.42±1.05	2.19±0.95	4.94*
Enjoy what you do at work	1.56±0.58	2.86±0.95	2.24±1.08	2.22±1.04	26.46**
There is lack of permanency in my job	3.04±0.97	3.40±1.07	3.36±1.01	3.27±1.02	1.89
Work environment is good	2.08±1.07	2.56±0.97	1.96±0.99	2.20±1.04	4.94**
Can do much better on the job if the conditions were changed	2.42±.88	2.56±0.81	3.22±0.93	2.73±0.94	11.86**
There is too much workload	2.20±1.26	2.28±0.99	2.16±1.17	2.21±1.14	0.14
Feel that stress negatively influence your job performance	3.16±1.23	2.72±1.18	2.76±1.13	2.88±1.19	2.11

Strongly disagree - 5, Disagree - 4, Undecided - 3, Agree - 2, Strongly agree - 1

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Statements	Teachers (n = 50)	Bank Employees (n = 50)	Nurses (n = 50)	Total	F-ratio
Lack of time for planning to accomplish various work responsibilities	2.90±1.16	2.76±1.24	2.56±1.05	2.74±1.16	1.10
Lack of time for spending time with family members	2.72±1.14	2.10±0.89	2.56±1.15	2.46±1.09	4.56*
Over expectation of work to be done as fast as possible	2.08±0.99	1.54±0.50	2.12±1.00	1.91±0.90	7.05**
Given short duration for completion of work	2.46±1.13	2.44±1.11	2.30±0.91	2.40±1.05	0.34
Deadline is a source of stress	2.32±0.96	2.16±1.04	2.26±0.99	2.25±0.99	0.33
Lack of time for planning to accomplish various household activities	2.12±1.06	2.08±1.03	2.46±1.13	2.22±1.08	1.89

Strongly disagree - 5, Disagree - 4, Undecided - 3, Agree - 2, Strongly agree - 1

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

individuals may unknowingly commit errors in their work execution thereby affecting the job quality. This is followed by the statement “lack of time for planning to accomplish various household activities” with mean score of 2.22 followed by deadline is a source of stress. The statement “given short duration for completion of work” had a score of 2.40 and “lack of time for spending time with family member” with a score of 2.46. Statistically significant difference was found in statement “lack of time for spending time with family members, this may because of the difference in duration of working hours among the three types of respondents. The respondents of all three categories agreed with time pressure being one of the factors contributing to stress.

**Role conflicts :**

Table 4 reveals information on role conflicts as a factor of occupational stress. The statement “husband does most of the household work” had a maximum score of 3.75 that shows that most of the husbands of the respondents did not help them in household work. The statement “your role in the workplace is appreciated” had a mean score of 2.19 which means that the respondents agree with the said statement. Statistically significant difference was seen for the statement “allowed to give suggestions or ideas at workplace”, “at workplace often given work not related to you”, “have to modify

personal goals to accommodate husband’s goals” and “your role in the workplace is appreciated”.

**Social support :**

Table 5 presents information regarding lack of social support as a factor contributing to stress. Maximum score of 3.87 was given to the statement “job affects your social obligation” followed by “feels disturbed due to society’s negative attitude towards working women” with mean score 3.82 which shows that they do not agree with the statements. Difference is statistically significant in the statements “gender differences at work” and “job affects your social obligation”; this may be because of the different types of experience faced by the respondents depending on their workplace and social relationship. It presents information regarding lack of social support as a factor contributing to stress. Maximum score of 3.87 was given to the statement “job affects your social obligation” followed by “feels disturbed due to society’s negative attitude towards working women” with mean score 3.82 which shows that they do not agree with the statements.

**Interaction between work, home stress and health problems :**

Table 6 shows the interaction between work, home stress and health problems as one of the factors

Statements	Teachers (n = 50)	Bank employees (n = 50)	Nurses (n = 50)	Total	F-ratio
Allowed to give suggestions or ideas at workplace	2.02±1.00	2.96±1.23	2.88±1.00	2.62±1.16	11.59**
Husband does most of the household work	3.86±1.11	3.64±0.92	3.74±0.96	3.75±1.00	0.61
At workplace often given work not related to you	3.48±0.95	2.38±1.12	3.38±1.19	3.08±1.20	15.45**
Have to modify personal goals to accommodate husband’s goal	2.94±1.15	3.02±1.06	2.52±0.86	2.83±1.05	3.39*
Your role in the workplace is appreciated	1.74±0.60	2.72±1.16	2.10±0.99	2.19±1.03	13.66**

Strongly disagree - 5, Disagree - 4, Undecided - 3, Agree - 2, Strongly agree - 1  
 \* and \*\* indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Statements	Teachers (n = 50)	Bank employees (n = 50)	Nurses (n = 50)	Total	F-ratio
Feels disturbed due to society’s negative attitude towards working women	4.08±1.01	3.76±1.17	3.62±1.12	3.82±1.11	2.29
Unexpected guests create problem as unable to complete household work	2.88±1.15	3.04±1.16	2.68±1.00	2.87±1.11	1.33
Gender differences at work	4.14±1.13	2.78±1.00	3.02±1.20	3.31±1.25	21.33**
Job affects your social obligation	3.70±1.07	4.28±0.67	3.64±0.85	3.87±0.92	8.05**
Have to attend different social activities and unable to complete household work	2.86±1.07	2.80±1.25	3.12±1.21	2.93±1.18	1.05

Strongly disagree - 5, Disagree - 4, Undecided - 3, Agree - 2, Strongly agree - 1  
 \* and \*\* indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Table 6 : Mean score of contributing factors related to interaction between work, home stress and health problems					(n = 150)
Statements	Teachers (n = 50)	Bank employees (n = 50)	Nurses (n = 50)	Total	F-ratio
Employment is damaging husband's ego	4.34±0.59	4.18±0.98	3.98±0.80	4.17±0.81	2.50
Family affects the job or <i>vice versa</i>	3.58±0.99	3.38±1.03	3.72±1.03	3.56±1.02	1.41
Unable to cope with changing and ever increasing demands of work, husband's work and everyday life	3.54±1.07	3.24±1.15	3.14±1.16	3.31±1.13	1.70
Feel the cause of stress is inadequate diet, improper exercise and lack of sleep	2.48±1.20	2.52±1.11	1.98±0.96	2.33±1.11	3.78*
Feels fatigued as no help received from family members in doing household work	2.92±1.19	2.98±1.15	2.66±1.29	2.85±1.21	0.99
Feels little control over your life and workplace	3.48±1.20	3.82±1.04	3.48±0.99	3.59±1.09	1.64
Often find stressed because of lack of income in the family	3.68±1.02	2.86±1.09	2.12±0.98	2.89±1.21	28.66**
There is difference in opinion between you and husband regarding upbringing of children	2.82±1.04	3.28±1.38	3.27±1.14	3.12±1.08	3.14*

Strongly disagree - 5, Disagree - 4, Undecided - 3, Agree - 2, Strongly agree - 1  
\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

contributing to stress. The statement “feel the cause of stress is inadequate diet, lack of exercise, improper sleep and disease” was given mean score 2.33 which means that the respondents agreed with the statement. Maximum score was given to the statement “employment is damaging husband's ego” followed by “feels little control over your life and work place” and “family affects the job and *vice versa*” which shows that the respondents disagreed with the statements. Among the respondents, nurses got the minimum score in the statement “feel that cause of stress is inadequate diet, lack of exercise, improper sleep and disease” with 1.98 and “often find stressed because of lack of income in the family”. This shows that nurses have problem of not getting enough sleep, diet and exercise and moreover stressed because of lack of income. Narayanan *et al.* (1992) also confirms the result and according to him sleep deprivation results in fatigue. Statistically significant difference was seen in statements “feel that cause of stress is inadequate diet, lack of exercise, improper sleep and disease”, “often find stressed because of lack of income in the family” and “there is difference in opinion between you and husband regarding upbringing of child”.

### Conclusion :

The occupational stress index (Singh and Srivastava, 1981) was used to measure the extent of occupational stress level among the working category of women from nuclear families and its various aspects among the respondents. The study finds out that almost all *i.e.* 92.67 per cent of the respondents are found to be having

medium occupational stress while only 7.33 per cent were having low occupational stress and none of the respondents were having high occupational stress. Factors of contributing stress was reviewed and it dealt with seeking background as well as specific information related to the factors contributing to occupational stress *i.e.* relating to work; time pressure; role conflicts; social support; and interaction between work, home stress and health problem. Among the factors, time pressure gives more stress to the respondents followed by related to work factors.

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