

## Physiological and Psychological Stressors among Working and Non Working Women

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**ABSTRACT** Psychological and physiological stressors among working and non-working women have been examined in the present study. Data were collected from 75 working and 75 non-working women from four localities of Ludhiana city. Results indicated that common factors of stress in both categories were unfinished tasks, compulsion of doing disliked activities, death of close relative, improper sleep. In working women, stressors were 'pleasing others' (mean score 0.92) and overburden of work (1.04), whereas in non-working women stressors were 'wrong working posture' (0.97) and 'non-involvement in decision making by family' (1.02). This study shows that working women were more stressed as compared to non-working women.

Stress has been defined both as a non specific adaptive response of the body to any demand and an internal and external stimulus. Stress can be said to involve three major conceptual domains: sources of stress, moderators of stress and the manifestations of stress (Pearlin et al., 1981). To cope up with stress, it is very important to have a proper understanding of the different processes that are the main factors of stress. Physiological factors of stress are mainly the bodily resources viz. life experience, genetic, congenial factors etc. Psychological factors are based on internal operations of human mind. It is more serious as it includes life crisis, frustration etc.

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) reported that the concept of stressors, not only refers to major life events but also encompasses ongoing stress such as lack of health, too many interruptions and various decisions to be made. Speckhard (1985) found that the type of abortion (i.e. spontaneous or induced) is related to the symptoms of stress following abortion. Polubinski (1987) classified major and minor stressful life events and reported that factors related to work, home, marriage were identified as major life events causing stress. According to McGown and Fraser (1995), the more one perceives the hassles to be of greater concern, the more likely one have physical manifestations of stress. Demas (1990) identified

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diabetes as a source of psychological stress. Factors of stress are different for different occupations and vary according to the individual's psychological maturity. The remedial measures cannot be undertaken against stress unless the causes are known. So the present study was undertaken with the following objectives: 1. To find out the various physiological stressors among working and non-working women. (2) To investigate the different psychological stressors among working and non-working women.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

**Sample:** A total sample of 150 respondents was divided into two categories i.e. working and non-working women. Each category had 75 respondents.

**Interview Schedule:** The data were collected through interview schedule, which was having questions to find the background information of the respondents and questions were made to know various physiological and psychological factors of stress among the women.

**Analysis of Data:** The qualitative responses were quantified with the help of proper statistical scoring techniques. The responses i.e. always, sometimes and never were given scores 2, 1 and 0 respectively. Total score earned by each statement was computed by summation of the scores and then mean score was calculated. Chi-square test was applied for determining the association between the two categories of respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information regarding psychological stressors among working and non-working women are presented in Table 1. Under the subtitle of 'feelings and emotions', it was observed that working respondents were significantly more stressed due to 'pleasing others by ignoring her personal desires'. Significant difference was also observed in both the categories with regard to 'not being allowed to take family decisions independently'. Working respondents (mean score 0.73) were found to be more affected by this stressor as compared to non-working respondents (0.68). This may be because working women being independent economically want to have a right to decision making herself without interference from anyone. A significant difference was also observed in case of respondent's non involvement in decision making by the family. Non-working (mean score 1.02) scored more and gave third rank to this stressor as compared to working respondents who gave seventh rank to it. The difference may be because working women being independent economically are more involved in family

decision making. These findings are in accordance with the findings of Mangal (1994) who reported that the participation of women in the economic activity tends to modify the relational system within the family and influence their status in positive manner. Discontentment having mean score 0.93 and pleasing others having mean score 0.92 was given first rank by non-working and working respondents respectively.

Psychological stressors related to working conditions which was ranked first by both the categories was 'unfinished tasks' (mean score 1.10 and 1.28 by non working and working women respectively) followed by performance of disliked activities.

With regard to life experience, death and accident in the family were ranked first and second respectively by both the categories. From table 1, this may be analyzed that on an average working women experience more psychological stressors as compared to non-working women.

Physiological factors causing stress were studied under two subheadings- fatigue and bodily problems. Table 2 reveals that significant difference was observed due to overburden and

**Table 1: Psychological stressors among working and non working women (n=150)**

Psychological stressors	Ranks in order of importance				Chi square
	Non Working n=75		Non Working n=75		
	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank	
<i>a) Feelings and Emotions</i>					
i) Feel discontented	0.93	1	0.84	2	3.92
ii) Helpless feelings	0.92	2	0.80	4	4.26
iii) Feel lonely	0.61	5	0.70	5	2.34
iv) Try pleasing others	0.66	4	0.92	1	12.06 <sup>*a</sup>
v) Personal wants not understood	0.70	3	0.81	3	3.22
<i>b) Working Conditions</i>					
i) Performing disliked work	1.05	2	1.25	2	3
ii) Interference in work	0.53	7	0.52	7	0.16
iii) Unfinished work	1.10	1	1.28	1	2.68
iv) Monotonous work	0.82	5	0.93	3	1.10
v) Dependence to take decisions	0.68	6	0.73	5	6.32 <sup>*a</sup>
vi) Non-involvement in decision making	1.02	3	0.64	6	7.4 <sup>*a</sup>
vii) Work not appreciated	0.86	4	0.92	4	0.28
<i>c) Life Experience</i>					
i) Had a miscarriage/still birth/ abortion	0.51	4.5	0.43	5	0.33
ii) Pregnancy period	0.82	3	0.53	4	3.56
iii) Death of a close relative	1.36	1	1.41	1	0.10
iv) Accident in the family	0.99	2	1.28	2	3.28
v) Child married against wishes	0.13	6	0.16	6	0
vi) Disruption in social support	0.51	4.5	0.61	3	0.6

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

\*b= $\chi^2$  value at 2 df = 5.99 (5% level of significance)

**Table 2: Physiological stressors among working and non working women (n=150)**

Physiological stressors	Ranks in order of importance				Chi square
	Non Working n=75		Non Working n=75		
	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank	
<i>a) Fatigue</i>					
i) No help from family	0.80	4	0.95	3	1.85
ii) Lack of labour saving devices	0.39	5	0.32	5	1.14
iii) Overburden of work	0.91	2	1.04	1	6.34 <sup>*a</sup>
iv) Improper planning and organization	0.83	3	1.00	2	3.12
v) Wrong working posture	0.97	1	0.80	4	6.74 <sup>*a</sup>
<i>b) Bodily Problems</i>					
i) Inadequate diet	0.21	5	0.24	5	0.40
ii) Lack of exercise	0.58	4	0.84	2	3.96
iii) Improper sleep	0.88	1	1.05	1	3.52
iv) Day to day disease	0.81	2	0.60	3	4.60
v) Long duration disease	0.64	3	0.53	4	0.5

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

\*b=  $\chi^2$  value at 2 df = 5.99 (5% level of significance)

wrong posture. It was observed that working respondents experienced more physical stress due to overburden of work (mean score 1.04) than non-working respondents (0.91). This may be because working respondents have to take care of both outside job and household tasks.

Non-working respondents experienced more fatigue due to wrong working posture and gave first rank to this factor whereas working ranked it fourth. This may be because non-working women have to spend more on household tasks. Grandjean (1973) also reported that wrong working posture may have injurious effects on physical health of homemakers.

Under the sub-heading 'bodily problems', both the categories gave first rank to 'improper sleep' as a cause of physiological stress. Narayanan *et al.*, (1992) also confirm the results. According to him sleep deprivation results in fatigue. Working respondents experience more stress (mean score 1.05) due to improper sleep as compared to non-working women (0.88). On an average, it was found that working women were more stressed due to physiological factors of stress.

From the present study, following conclusions can be drawn: 1) Unfinished tasks, compulsion of doing disliked activities, death of a close relative and improper sleep were the common factors of stress in both working and

non working women. 2) Working women were more stressed due to factors viz. pleasing others, overburden of work and non-allowance by family to take family decisions independently. 3) Non – working women were more stressed than working women due to wrong working posture and her non- involvement in decision making by family. 4) On an average, working-women were experiencing more physiological and psychological factors of stress.

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