

# The Causes of Stress and Its Coping Strategies Adopted by Working Women in Southern Part of Tirupur City – A Study

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## ABSTRACT

Women today are encountering a demanding and hastening lifestyle. Taking care of the needs of her home along with the office work makes 24 hours insufficient for a working woman. She has to balance both the requirements and make herself readily available in both the places. The study focuses on the causes of stress and its coping strategies adopted by working women in southern part of Tirupur city. Objectives of the study were to identify the factors at work and home that cause stress, health issues faced by the respondents and the coping strategies of stress adopted by the working women in southern part of Tirupur city. Incidental purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents. 80 questionnaires were distributed among married working women including teachers, shop in charges, bank clerks, beauticians, etc. out of which 54 completely filled in questionnaires were received. Simple percentage and weighted average methods were used for analysis. Results revealed that most of the women took up their job as they had a passion towards it. The women also agreed that it was also due to financial difficulties and the help their spouse required to lead a respectable economical life. They were stressed as they had to work extra time with heavy workloads and that they had no good relationship with their peers. They did not have support for house hold chores without a maid and had to take care all by themselves. They got exhausted mentally and physically leading to health issues like body pain, back ache, head ache, digestion disorders and for some it was even menstrual problems. The respondents felt relaxed while talking to friends, listening to music, relaxing and so on.

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## Introduction

The Indian women today have ventured beyond the traditional roles of a daughter, wife and mother and have sought employment and career outside their homes. They are actively participating in the economic and social development of the nation. With the developments of globalisation, there is an exceptional spread of services sector, additionally in terms of outsourcing thus creating more employment avenues round the clock especially for women. The increasing expectations, acquired skills and the abilities to do so give her a chance to realise her own potentials, exploit talents and exercise choices in terms of how she would live her life. Undoubtedly, women work in order to earn a living, to be independent and self-reliant. It gives women a way to actualise herself, gain self-esteem and confidence and ultimately the most cherished gender equality.

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Stress is not something strange to our daily life nowadays. Everybody feel stressed when they face situations under pressure. Unbalanced situation arising out of the difference between perception and reality will lead to an experience of stress and ultimately into stress reaction.

Normally, high level of stress would lead to unsatisfied work, work absenteeism, and work abandonment. Factors like unsatisfied attitude of supervisors or colleagues, bad work environment, lack of proper working hours, etc. also lead to a stressful atmosphere. Stress could be caused due to factors at home like lack of physical and moral support from family members. She may not be able to give time to her children and their requirements. Taking care of her household and personal needs may also be problematic sometimes causing psychological stress.

Stress reactions include several psychological reactions like anxiety and sadness, physiological reactions like headache, high blood pressure, digestion disorders, menstrual problems, etc. Unsatisfied work/family environment would lead into stress factor and causing physical and psychological health problems. The researcher has made an attempt to study the factors that are causing a stressed life among the working women in southern part of Tirupur city and the strategies they resort to, in order to cope up with the stress.

## **Need for the Study**

India is a source of abundance resources of untapped and unrecognised potential of the women folk. It becomes important for the people of a country to recognise this potential and help tap it to make themselves live in a better economical society and henceforth an economically better nation. The women need encouragement and support from their family as well as work place in order to espied their potential thus making it useful. Tackling multiple roles without or with little support would obviously end up creating chaos in her life which ultimately causes stress. Stressed women cannot contribute wholesomely to their work place too. On the contrary, some would even prefer to retreat from their jobs. Hence there is a need to identify and monitor the stressful factors that are creating a challenge to her psychological and physical well being. In this regard, the researcher has attempted to examine the problems that have been a cause for stress in due course of interface between the work life and family life of the working woman.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The researcher has made an attempt to analyse the causes of stress and its coping strategies adopted by the working women in southern part of Tirupur city. The secondary objectives were to study the pull and push factors that made the respondents choose the profession they were in, work factors and home factors that caused stress, mental and physical consequences of stress caused due to their home and work arena experiences, health issues faced by the respondents and the coping strategies of stress adopted by the working women in southern part of Tirupur city.

## Review of Literature

**Jones & McKenna (2002)** revealed that the absence of the support by the employer may lead to difficulties for working mothers. The work intensification and long hours, along with child rearing demands resulted in stress. A study by **Ramon Lewis (1999)** inspected that teachers' estimations of the stress was high when they were unable to discipline students as they ideally preferred. The most concerned teachers also expressed a greater tendency to get sick as a result of the stress. **Astrid M. Richardsen (1997)** analysed that the organizational support was positively correlated with all the work outcomes, indicating that women were more satisfied with both career and job when organizational supports were present.

Similarly, **Susanna Lo (2003)** found that changes in work patterns towards a flexible schedule would be beneficial for both employers and employees. **Kristina Holmgren (2008)**, studied women sick listed because of work related stress. Overall work related stress was significantly associated with increased odds of high level of self reported symptoms. High perceived stress owing to indistinct organisation and conflicts and low influence at work were significantly associated with sick leave.

In a study, **Elliott (2003)** examined that in order to afford high quality child care which was costly and consumed a large portion of income and reduced the likelihood that the mother had to be employed. They had to face the more emotional double burden of child care and elder care than men. It was still women who kept hold of the major responsibilities for childcare. **Surena Sabil (2011)** suggested that practicing work-home segmentation and support from family members helped them to manage work and family commitment effectively and efficiently and would lead to lesser stress.

## Methodology

Tirupur is the "Dollar city" of India. It is also known as "Little Japan" of India due to its busy lifestyle. Tirupur has motivated the textile industry in India for the past few decades. The economic boom of Tirupur boosts the morale of Indian industrialists. It contributes to a huge amount of foreign exchange in India. Besides men, a large number of the woman population too are engaged in all kinds of knitwear processes across the different manufacturing units and also other fields.

Incidental purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents. The term Incidental Purposive sampling is applied to those samples which are readily available. The basic assumption of this technique is that, with good judgment and an appropriate strategy, one can hand pick the cases to be included in the sample and thus develop samples that are satisfactory in relation to one's needs (Guilford, 1973). 80 questionnaires were distributed among married working women including teachers, shop in charges, bank clerks, beauticians, etc. out of which 54 completely filled in questionnaires fit for analysis were received. The researcher used simple percentage and weighted average to identify the underlying problems that cause stress to working women.

## Analysis and Discussion

**Table 1 : Pull factors that made the respondents take up the job**

Sl. No	Variable	Percentage	Rank
1	Passion in the job	50	1
2	Exposure of the job	27.8	4
3	Gain experience	33.3	3
4	Desire to be independent	22.2	5
5	Be contributing part of the society	22.2	5
6	Gain self confidence	38.9	2

**Source:** Primary data collected through field survey

The above table depicts the reasons that were a pulling factor for the respondents to take up their job. **Simple percentage analysis** was used. Ranks were assigned based on the percentage. Most chosen factor was given the first rank and so on. 50 percent of respondents said that they selected their profession because they had a passion in it. 38.9 percent of them agreed that that they wanted to gain self confidence, 33.3 percent of the working women said that they wanted to gain experience, and 27.8 percent of the respondents wanted to gain exposure of the job. 22.2 percent of the respondents had a desire to be independent and 22.2 percent of the respondents wanted to be a contributing part of the society.

**Table 2 : Push factors that induced the respondents to take up the job**

Sl. No	Variable	Percentage	Rank
1.	Financial difficulties	38.9	3
2.	Responsibility of family	50	2
3.	Need for personal expenses	16.7	4
4.	Need for additional income	61.1	1

**Source:** Primary data collected through field survey

The above table portrays the reasons that were a pushing factor for the respondents to take up their job. **Simple percentage analysis** was used. Ranks were assigned based on percentage. Most chosen factor was assigned the first rank and so on. Through the above table it is clear that need for additional income with 61.1 percent was the main factor that the made the respondents to take up their job. 50 percent of the respondents agreed that they realised that they had to share the responsibility of the family. Financial difficulty was the reason for 38.9 percent to restrain themselves to working. 16.7 percent of them agreed that they had to work in order to satisfy their personal expenses.

**Table 3 : Work related stress**

SI. No	Variable	Percentage	Rank
1	Work Load	3.7	3
2	Difficulty in completion of target	3.5	5
3	Working extra time	3.9	1
4	Promotion Chances	3.5	5
5	Discrimination by male workers	2.0	8
6	Amount of struggle to establish yourself	2.5	7
7	Feeling of a good relationship with your peers	3.9	1
8	Irritation due to misbehaviour of customers	3.6	4
	<b>Average mean score</b>	<b>3.3</b>	

**Source:** Primary data collected through field survey

**Weighted Average** method was used to identify work related stress. The above table illustrates mean scores (the corresponding numbers in brackets) for work related stress factors. It reveals that the respondents were highly stressed as they did not have a good relationship with their peers (3.9) and also they felt that they had to work extra time (3.9). The mean scores were far greater than the average mean score (3.3). The other factor that stressed them was heavy work load (3.7) which caused a lot of irritation towards their customers (3.6). They found it difficult to complete the given targets (3.5) and said promotion chances were low (3.5). All these factors caused the respondents stressed out at the work place. The factors like - to struggle a lot to establish themselves (2.5) and discrimination by their male counterparts (2.0) had the mean scores little less than the average mean score which explains that these factors were slightly troublesome.

**Table 4 : Stress caused due to home factors**

SI. No	Variable	Percentage	
		Yes	No
1	Do you have a maid at home to help in household chores	27.8	72.2
2	Are you able to cope with domestic chores?	44.4	55.6
3	Do you get support from your family in domestic chores?	38.9	61.1
4	Do you get neighbours' support?	11.1	88.9
5	Being in the job, are you able to take care of the needs at home satisfactorily?	16.7	83.3
6	Do you complete your office work in your office itself?	33.3	66.7

**Source:** Primary data collected through field survey

**Simple percentage** was used to identify stress due to factors at home. When inquired about it, 72.2 percent of the respondents said that they did not have a maid in their home to help them in their household chores. 55.6 percent of the respondents said that they were unable to cope up with domestic chores. 61.1 percent said that that their family did not give them supporting hands for the completion of their domestic chores. 88.9 percent of the respondents said that they did not get support from their neighbours. 83.3 percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the way they took care of home. 66.7 percent of the respondents said that they carried home office work for completion.

**Table 5 : Mental and physical stress caused due to home and work arena experiences**

SI. No	Variable	Mean Score	Rank
1	Physical Tiredness/ exhaustion after the day's work	3.6	2
2	Mental Tiredness/ exhaustion after the day's work	3.7	1
3	Feeling of Irritation	2.9	4
4	Feeling that nobody loves you	2.2	7
5	Disturbed emotionally if you have not handled job well	3.3	3

6	Occasionally loosing self confidence	2.7	5
7	Impatience	2.5	6
	<b>Average Mean score</b>	<b>3.0</b>	

**Source:** Primary data collected through field survey

**Weighted average** method was used to analyse mental and physical stress. The above table explains that the respondents highly agreed that they got exhausted mentally and physically after the day's work with mean scores as 3.7 and 3.6 respectively. They agreed that they got disturbed emotionally if they had not handled their work properly with mean score 3.3. The mean scores of these factors being above the average mean score (3.0), interpreted that they were highly causing stress. Stress made them feel irritated and also occasionally loose self confidence with mean scores of 2.9 and 2.7 respectively. Impatience, with 2.5 as its mean score and the feeling of deprivation of love, with 2.2 as its mean score (below the average mean score 3.0) explained that these factors created stress, but not to the extent of the earlier ones.

**Table 6 : Health issues faced by the respondents**

Sl. No	Variable	Percentage	Rank
1	Heady ache	50	3
2	Body Pain	77.8	1
3	Back ache	61.1	2
4	Digestion Problems	11.1	8
5	Cold, Cough	11.1	8
6	Menstrual Problems	16.7	6
7	Blood Pressure	11.1	8
8	Loss of appetite	16.7	6
9	Trouble of sleeping in the night	38.9	4
10	Dizziness	38.9	4
11	Stomach ulcer	16.7	6

**Source:** Primary data collected through field survey

The above table depicts the health issues faced by the respondents. **Simple percentage analysis** was used to identify the health issues faced by the respondents. First rank was assigned to the factor which was chosen by the highest percentage of respondents and so on. When asked about the health issues they faced 77.8 percent of the respondents agreed with body pain as the most troublesome problem, followed by back ache with 61.1 percent respondents choosing it and head ache with 50 percent. Nearly 38.9 percent of the respondents agreed that they had dizziness and 38.9 percent said that they had trouble of sleeping in the night. Loss of appetite, ulcer problem and menstrual problem were chosen evenly by 16.7 percent each. 11.1 percent of them agreed that they had cold, cough, digestion problems and blood pressure.

**Table 7 : Coping strategies adopted by the respondents**

Sl. No	Variable	Mean Score	Rank
1	Forgetting work	3.1	6
2	Internet browsing	2.2	13
3	Listening to music	3.4	2
4	Playing sports	1.9	14
5	Singing	2.7	10
6	Relaxation	3.4	2
7	Talking with friends	3.6	1
8	Travelling	2.8	8
9	Watching TV	3.2	5
10	Teaching	2.8	8
11	Sleeping	2.9	7
12	Spending time with children	3.3	4
13	Spending time with Hobbies	2.4	12
14	Yoga and Meditation	2.5	11
	<b>Average Mean score</b>	<b>2.9</b>	

Source Primary data collected through field survey



**Weighted average** was used to identify the coping strategies adopted by the respondents to overcome stress. Numbers in brackets represent the mean scores. The above table explains that based on the average mean score (2.9), it can be concluded that the respondents strongly agreed that they got over stress by talking to friends (3.6), listening to music (3.4) and by relaxing themselves (3.4). They agreed that spending time with children (3.3), watching a programme on the TV (3.2), forgetting work for some time (3.1) and sleeping (2.9) helped them to get relaxed. These factors had their mean scores above the average mean score which explained that the respondents strongly agreed that these strategies helped the respondents to cope up with stress. Teaching (2.8), travelling to different places to visit relatives or friends (2.8) and singing (2.7) as strategies they adopted to overcome stress. Yoga and meditation (2.5) was a coping strategy resorted only sometimes. Spending time with hobbies (2.4), internet browsing (2.2) and engaging themselves in sports (1.9) had low mean scores, explaining that very few of the respondents occasionally adopted them to overcome stress.

## Findings

### Pull and push factors

**Simple percentage analysis** revealed that 50 percent of respondents said that they chose their profession because they had a passion in it. 38.9 percent of them agreed that that they wanted to gain self confidence, 33.3 percent of the working women said that they wanted to gain experience. These factors pulled them towards their profession

Certain factors like need for an additional income (66.1 percent), to shoulder the responsibility of the family (50 percent), to overcome financial difficulties (38.9 percent) etc. pushed the working women to take up their profession.

### Work related stress factors

**Weighted Average scores** (numbers in brackets represent the mean scores of the factors) revealed that the respondents were highly stressed as they did not have a good relationship with their peers (3.9) and also they felt that they had to work extra time (3.9). The other factor that stressed them was heavy work load (3.7) which caused a lot of irritation towards their customers (3.6). They found it difficult to complete the given targets (3.5) and said promotion chances were low (3.5). The mean scores were greater than the average mean score (3.3).

### Stress caused due to factors at home

**Simple percentage** was used to identify stress due to factors at home. When inquired about it, 72.2 percent of the respondents said that they did not have a maid in their home to help them in their household chores. 55.6 percent of the respondents said that they were unable to cope up with domestic chores. 61.1 percent said that that their family did not give them supporting hands for the completion of their domestic chores. 88.9 percent of the respondents said that they did not get support from their neighbours. 83.3 percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the way she

took care of home. 66.7 percent of the respondents said that they carried home office work for completion.

### **Mental and physical stress caused due to home and work arena experiences**

**Weighted average** method was used to analyse mental and physical stress. The respondents highly agreed that they got exhausted mentally and physically after the day's work with mean scores as 3.7 and 3.6 respectively. They agreed that they got disturbed emotionally if they had not handled their work properly with mean score 3.3. The mean scores of these factors being above the average mean score (3.0), interpreted that they were highly causing stress.

### **Health issues faced by the respondents**

The results of **Simple percentage analysis** explained that 77.8 percent of the respondents chose body pain as the most troublesome problem, followed by back ache with 61.1 percent respondents choosing it and head ache with 50 percent. 38.9 percent of the respondents agreed that they had dizziness and 38.9 percent said that they had trouble of sleeping in the night.

### **Coping strategies adopted by the respondents to reduce their stress level**

**Weighted average** results, based on the average mean score (2.9) can be concluded that the respondents strongly agreed that they got over stress by talking to friends (3.6), listening to music (3.4) and by relaxing themselves (3.4). They agreed that spending time with children (3.3), watching a programme on the TV (3.2), forgetting work for some time (3.1) and sleeping (2.9) helped them to get relaxed. These factors had their mean scores above the average mean score which explained that the respondents strongly agreed that these strategies helped the respondents to cope up with stress. Teaching (2.8), travelling to different places to visit relatives or friends (2.8) and singing (2.7) were other means of relaxation strategies adopted by them.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research it can be concluded that married working women felt stressed as:

- They had to work without a good relationship with their peers and also had to work extra time.
- They did not have a maid in their home to help them in their household chores and it was stressful to cope up with all the work with no supporting hands from the family.
- They got exhausted mentally and physically after the day's work and were finding it difficult to handle work in both the places i.e. at home and at work place with little or no help from the people around them.

Though they were passionate of their job and wanted to gain self confidence, overburden of work was a stressor for the working women. The reasons that still kept them going were the need for additional

income and also to help their spouse by shouldering the responsibility of their family. The stress levels could be reduced if they got helping hands at home and at work place with an understanding atmosphere and flexible timings. They said that they found less or no time to use coping mechanisms to reduce their stress. They said that they found no time for themselves. It could be a suggestion that every woman must find time for her personal needs and to take care of her health. It would be helpful if she is in an atmosphere with care, understanding, love and affection. She can reach better heights with fewer complexities in her life. This would ultimately lead to happier and less stressed women who in turn can work more profitably leading to happier homes and better economically developed nation.

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