

MENTAL HEALTH AND STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract: In the present scenario mental health and stress management for women employees is highly desirable or else it can create a problem for them. Work determines a person's worth and place in society and it influences on one's mental identity and sense of well being. A balanced work life requires, stability between professional and personal life, so that it reduces conflicts between official and personal life. The final outcome of any organization depends on the performance of its employees, which in turn depends on various factors. These factors can be related to job satisfaction, family atmosphere, happiness of family members and of course personal satisfaction of the working women. Hence, the vital consideration of this study is to examine the impact of work life balance and stress management on job satisfaction among working women.

Keywords: Mental health, Stress Management

INTRODUCTION

India is a rising country and at present most of the women is also engaged in working somewhere in different organizations like schools, colleges, hospitals, banks, big industries and so on. It is a general belief in many cultures that the role of women is to build and maintain the homely affairs like task of fetching water, cooking and raising children. In the traditional society, women's role was naturally limited to the family. Since she was the bearer of children, she was fully occupied with her duties as a mother and homemaker.

Since the turn of the century, the status of women in India has been changing due to growing industrialization, urbanization, spatial mobility and social legislation. With the spread of education and awareness, women have shifted from kitchen to higher level of professional activities. Rapid changes in traditional values, life styles, competitiveness and industrialization are the few factors that have changed the whole environment. This change in environment has encouraged and motivated the women for search of work outside the home, which creates stress in women who handled the role of housewife, mother and employed woman at a time. Many studies have produced evidence to indicate that women report more psychological distress than men. Working women have different values than non- working women and other adult women. In modern society the social and community environment is full of social and moral pollution. Hence there are many problems of working women in different fields.

Mental health is one of the most important public health issues. It means the ability to respond to diverse experiences of life with flexibility and a sense of purpose. It can be described as a state of balance between an individual and his surrounding world, a state of harmony between oneself and others. Mental health is the foundation for well-being and effective functioning for an individual and for a community and that of women is important both for their own health and for the well-being of their children and families. Women are more likely than men to be adversely affected by mental disorders, the most common being anxiety and depressive disorders. Mental health can be defined as the ability to make adequate social and emotional adjustment to the environment, on the plane of reality. In other words it is the ability to face and accept the realities of life (Bhatia, 1982).

Home and workplace atmosphere played a major role in deciding the mental health status of married working women. Conducive workplace atmosphere, favorable attitude of colleagues at workplace, and positive attitudes of the family members at home were found to be protective of overall mental health. Kopp et al. established in their study that job related factors and social support from family are very important for mental health. Working women who were sharing their own problems with their husbands had positive and good mental health. On the other hand those women who experienced job-family conflict or did not participate in decision making process of family were at high risk of developing poor mental health. Working women may be prone to depression because they bear the double burden of housework and a job outside the home. Because they have to work in two environments, one is the office environment and the other is home environment. Both are vastly different from one to another. Stress arising from marital relationships is manifested in chronic disorders such as depression, insomnia and hypertension.

Dudra and Jogsan (2012) found that the basic area of mental health Statements reveals significant difference of working and non-working woman.

Khodidas (2013) found the significant difference in the mental health level among working women and house wives.

It is well recognized that women's social roles affect their mental health; it is unclear whether the effects are beneficial or detrimental. (McBride, 1998)

Garima et al., (2014) found that working and non-working women did not differ from each other on marital adjustment as well as on psychological well-being but on few dimensions of psychological wellbeing.

Rinku (2013) revealed that non-working women face more marital adjustment problems in comparison to working women.

Stress

The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Selye Hans in 1936. It was derived from the Latin word 'stringere'; it meant the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain. Selye Hans, 1936 defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it". Further, stress was defined as "any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organism equilibrium." Stress is something that everyone has experienced, and may need no further explanation in terms of what stress is. However, there are different types of stress, and each can affect daily life in different ways.

Types of stress

- Acute Stress
- Episodic Acute Stress
- Chronic Stress
- External Stress
- Internal Stress

Acute Stress – Acute stress is the most common form of stress and is short-lived. It can be beneficial and create motivation, like finishing a report under a deadline. Acute stress is also thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting. Prolonged acute stress can cause anger or irritability, anxiety and depression in the short term, but does not carry the extensive damage that prolonged stress carries over the long-term.

Episodic Acute Stress – This type of stress emerges in people who live disordered and chaotic lives – those who suffer acute stress frequently. Always running late but never on time or if something can go wrong, it does, are the hallmarks of people suffering from episodic acute stress. These people are over aroused, short-tempered, irritable, tense and anxious from having too many irons in the fire and making too many self-inflicted demands. Such lifestyles can lead to persistent tension headaches, migraines, hypertension, and heart disease.

Chronic Stress – Chronic stress is the long-term, debilitating stress often seen in individuals suffering from unending poverty, dysfunctional families, despised careers, and life in war zones or unhappy marriages etc. Some chronic stresses can stem from traumatic childhood experiences that have created a belief system that causes the stress sufferer to view the world as a horrible and selfish place. The person with chronic stress usually sees no end to their miserable situation and gives up searching for solutions. Chronic stress can lead to suicide, violence, heart attacks, stroke and cancer.

External Stress – major life changes like marriage or the death of a loved one; your environment – noisy, too little light, dangerous neighborhood; unpredictable events – discovering your pay has been cut unexpectedly or uninvited houseguests arriving out of the blue; workplace – endless emails, impossible workload, urgent deadlines; social – meeting new people etc.

Internal Stress – fears like fear of public speaking or fear of failure; lack of control – not being able to control outcomes in life like medical test results; childhood beliefs – a belief system carried over from childhood trauma like not living up to expectations or inadequacy.

Workplace stress is often associated with physical health problems such as headaches, upset stomach, and muscle tension; and psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and burnout. All of which may contribute to overall career frustration.

Patel (2014) found that in pretest most of the nurses 53.3% had moderate stress, 40.0% had mild stress and 6.7% had severe stress. In posttest most of the nurses had mild stress 73.3% and no stress 26.7%. It is concluded that Progressive Muscle Relaxation Therapy is effective in reducing the stress level of the staff nurses.

Bastani et al. (2005) studied that the immediate impact of relaxation on pregnant women indicates a reduction in experienced stress or anxiety.

Hashmi et al. (2007) found that working married women have to face more difficulties in their lives like they experienced more stress and depression as compared to non-working married women.

Sanlier and Arpaci studied the effect of stress on women health. They revealed that employed women in the stress scale have a higher average score than that of the non-employed women. It has been determined that total stress scores of employed women were higher as compared to non-employed women and that there was a significant difference between women's working status and total stress scores.

Cruess et al (2000) found that relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation (PMR), have been proven to be reliable methods in reducing self-reported stress and stress-related physiological activity in various non-pregnant clinical populations, as well as in healthy subjects.

Chaudhari et al. (2014) studied that increase in stress levels are found in female health care professionals in the Eastern part of India due to shortage of manpower, lack of infrastructure, long emergency duty hours and inadequate remuneration for their hard work. Practicing relaxation exercises had decreased not only the stress levels but also increased the quality of their life and most important patient care.

Stress Management

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique (PMRT)**

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) technique developed by Dr. Edmund Jacobson is a technique for reduction of stress and anxiety. Jacobson theorized that anxiety and stress lead to muscle tension, which, in turn, increases feelings of anxiety. When the body is in a relaxed state, however, there is little muscle tension, leading to decreased anxious feelings. Jacobson believed that if one's body is relaxed, one's mind cannot be in a state of anger. Progressive muscle relaxation exercise involves systematically constricting and relaxing various muscle groups from our feet upward head downward. In this technique we focus on tensing and relaxing muscle groups in the feet, legs, buttocks, stomach, back, hands, arms, chest, shoulders, neck and face. This technique is easy to learn and requires no constant guidance.

- Take a deep breath out. When you breathe in, you take all the stress and worry from outside world into your body. When we breathe out all the stuff you held in, is just thrown outside.
 - Exercise regularly. Regular exercise has a beneficial effect on individual's mental and physical state. Get enough rest and sleep. Your body needs time to recover from stressful situations.
 - Develop assertiveness in yourself. Learn to set personal boundaries. Say 'No' if something is not your responsibility or if something you can't do well.
 - Spend some time with your family, to whom you can trust on and feel comfortable with. Share your stressful situations with them.
 - Avoid smoking, alcohol consumption, drugs and even coffee.
 - Eat lots of fruits and vegetables and follow a healthy and balanced diet plan. Start your day with a nutritious breakfast.
 - Have reasonable expectations, be realistic and positive.
 - Practice some relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga or massage.
 - Set aside some time for yourself where you can pursue your hobbies and interests.
- **Mindfulness breathing**

Mindfulness breathing means bringing your attention to your breathing. Instead of letting your mind spin off into yesterday or today, take mindful breaths. Focus on your breathing, and sense the effects of breathing throughout your body.

Research on the benefits of deep, meditative breathing reveals immediate improved physical and mental health, in addition to the well-known benefit of physical relaxation. This breathing promotes mindfulness, which brings our focus to the present moment without judgment. Mindfulness not only reduces stress, but can also enhance positive emotions and quality of life.

A large number of studies have been done to study the stress level of working women but little is done to manage this. Employed women being present in every organization form an important part of that organization as their work will affect the overall work of the organization. Therefore their stress level must be reduced as far as possible in order to get the desired output. Progressive muscular relaxation technique and mindfulness breathing are easy to learn and are effective and economic techniques of reducing stress. Therefore these techniques should be used in every private as well as in the government organization to reduce the level of stress in order to get the desired output.

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