

## A Research Analysis On Cognitive Stress Management of Employed Women in India

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### Abstract

Women in India have demonstrated their abilities in the workplace. However, their success is rooted in a history of struggle and the pursuit of freedom within traditional social structures. Despite their evolving roles in the workforce, women have also maintained their commitment to traditional household responsibilities. In the workplace, individuals have encountered significant stress, however they persistently strive to achieve their desired professional path in the current period. Stress is an inevitable aspect that affects every facet of workers. The majority of women have been seeking a way to alleviate tension. By examining the intersection of traditional expectations and modern aspirations, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities faced by working women in India. Through interviews and case studies, the researchers hope to shed light on the ways in which women navigate societal norms while striving for professional success. While it is important to understand the challenges faced by working women, it is equally crucial to recognize that solutions may not always be transferable across different cultural contexts. Additionally, focusing solely on individual experiences may overlook systemic barriers that perpetuate gender inequality in the workplace. Ultimately, the goal is to empower women to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential in both their careers and personal lives. In this research, an attempt has been made to explore various strategies that women use to overcome stress and how it can be made as a mandatory solution in all companies. This empirical study identifies the various strategies which has been followed by women and the companies in relieving the stress and thereby creating a productive atmosphere.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution was partially driven by the economic need for several women, both unmarried and married, to seek paid employment beyond their households. Women mostly secured employment in domestic service, textile mills, and piece workshops. In addition, they were employed in the coal mines. For many individuals, the Industrial Revolution offered the opportunity to earn their own earnings, more mobility, and an improved quality of life. Nevertheless, for the bulk of individuals, engaging in industrial employment during the initial years of the 19th century led to a challenging and difficult existence. Women

in India have made significant progress since gaining independence. Women have transitioned from being expert homemakers to possessing the skills and capacities to be on equal footing with men. These women represent the latest cohort who aspire to pursue their desired professional path. However, not everyone has a life of ease and comfort. Additional conflict arises as a result of the working mother. One must meet the requirements at work, as well as the varied expectations at home. In the present circumstances, both the husband and wife strive to achieve equilibrium between their professional lives and their responsibilities at home, particularly in relation to their children. However, women still face challenges as they are expected to

fulfill various roles such as being a chef, a domestic worker, an educator, a caregiver, and also manage their professional responsibilities. This can result in heightened levels of stress and anxiety for a woman who is employed, particularly if her family does not provide support<sup>1</sup>. The term 'stress' originates from the Latin word 'stringere', which translates to struggle, strain, adversity, or suffering. It pertains to feelings of worry, annoyance, conflict, and pressure. These symptoms include elevated heart rate, elevated blood pressure, muscle tension, irritability, and sadness. Stress management is necessary for those experiencing elevated levels of stress. Stress management involves the regulation of one's stress levels. Identifying one's stressors may aid in determining the sources and intensity of stress. Subsequently, individuals may use measures to mitigate the stress or effectively manage it<sup>2</sup>. Our current era is characterized by high levels of stress. Women are concurrently employed in many positions. Women are enduring significant workloads and unreasonable requests. Women are suppressing their anger and dissatisfaction with unjust circumstances and unreasonable supervisors due to their inability to withstand being terminated or dismissed. Women have previously experienced termination of employment and are currently facing difficulties in securing alternative employment. Alternatively, women have resigned themselves to the situation and are dealing with the challenges of being unemployed. These types of stresses occurring outside are referred to as stressors. Stressors are the burdensome demands that women can hardly tolerate, which lead to discontent and, ultimately, disease. Certain individuals have a notable resilience against stresses. They uphold a rational viewpoint and possess a capacity for amusement. They exhibit composure in the face of hardship and calamity. Some individuals become overwhelmed by a smaller amount and lower level of stresses, causing them to deteriorate and experience negative consequences such as damaged relationships, unemployment, and ultimate decline in mental and physical well-being. Stress is the combination of physiological and psychological reactions that occur when an organism's balance is disrupted by certain conditions or occurrences. Psychologists have varying opinions on the precise definition of stress, but they do agree that stress occurs when an organism has atypical physical, psychological, or emotional reactions due to the demands imposed upon it. Stress in humans arises from several origins and elicits a diverse range of reactions, encompassing both beneficial and detrimental effects. Although stress is often seen negatively, some experts argue that a certain degree of stress is crucial for overall well-being and mental health<sup>3</sup>. The current predicament of women in the contemporary work environment can be depicted by examining recent data on the culture of women in the workforce.

### 1.1 Need for the Study

Working women face higher levels of stress compared to both male professionals and women who did not work. Efficient stress management enables individuals to overcome the impact of stress on their lives, leading to increased happiness, improved health, and enhanced productivity. The primary

objective of the research is to facilitate a well-rounded lifestyle, including sufficient time for work, interpersonal connections, leisure activities, and the ability to effectively confront and overcome problems.

### 2. HYPOTHESIS

- The level of stress experienced by working women is not higher than that experienced by working men. (Null Hypothesis)
- Working women experience higher levels of stress compared to working men. (Alternate Hypothesis)

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research involves conducting preliminary research on the specific areas concerning working women and their ongoing experience of stress. Cutting-edge management concepts have been used to shed light on this issue and propose potential solutions to address the situation. The primary data was collected by using structured surveys to gather quantitative data on stress levels, stressors, and management techniques. It also included demographic questions (age, industry, marital status), validated stress scales (like the Perceived Stress Scale), and questions on coping mechanisms. The researchers have used Online platforms such as Google Forms, Survey Monkey, workplace email lists, social media to collect data. The Secondary data was collected from books, magazines, periodicals, and internet platforms such as websites and blogs.

### 4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The cognitive stress management of employed women in India is a growing field of research due to the increasing participation of women in the workforce. This literature review aims to explore various studies that have been conducted in this area, highlighting the stressors, coping mechanisms, and the impact of stress on the well-being of employed women in India. An evaluation conducted by Kenexa Research Institute, a US-based HR advisory firm, assessed stress levels among working women and men. The study surveyed 29,338 individuals from various nations to understand the differences in stress experiences and the factors influencing these stress levels. The main finding is 57% of women reported experiencing reasonable stress levels. 27% of women felt they were experiencing unreasonable stress. A higher percentage of women encountered excessive stress compared to men across various roles. In Front-line Supervisory Positions women experienced 11% more stress than men in identical roles. In the Assistance and Manufacturing Jobs Women reported an additional 9% stress compared to men and in Middle and Upper Management Levels Women experienced a 7% increase in stress compared to men. The study also has analysed the factors influencing stress as engaging in stimulating tasks, having supportive and respective supervisor, fair pay for work, and clear career trajectory<sup>4</sup>. Schieman, et.al., (2009) considered that despite being employed, moms who work outside the home continue to be responsible for the majority of domestic tasks, while the expenses associated with daycare may significantly

<sup>1</sup> Barker, H. (2004). *Women and work. In Women's History, Britain 1700-1850 (pp. 136-163)*. Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> SRI, G. Z. (2019). *A STUDY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN TRICHIRAPALLI CITY. IJRAR-International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR), 6(1), 240-244.*

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<sup>3</sup> Bhattacharjee, Sandeep & Tripathi, Parul. (2012). *A study on psychological stress of working women. Zenith International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research. 2.*

<sup>4</sup> Doughty, S. (2014, August 20). *Working mothers risk damaging their child's prospects. Daily Mail. Retrieved from*

deplete their earnings. Despite the dual employment of both parents, the primary duty of caring for ill children often rests with the mother. Working moms experience significant levels of stress. The subject of women's employment, which was once a matter of politics, has now become a need for most moms in the current challenging economic environment. The majority of households are no longer able to sustain themselves on a single income. Although women are more involved in the workforce, the majority of males have not yet taken on a larger portion of household responsibilities. Singh and Sharma (2015), expound that societal expectations and traditional gender roles place additional stress on employed women. These expectations often include managing household responsibilities, caregiving duties, and professional demands, which can create a significant burden and lead to higher stress levels. Gupta et al. (2012) found a correlation between high stress levels and physical health problems such as hypertension and cardiovascular diseases. The study emphasized that stress triggers the body's "fight or flight" response, releasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. Prolonged exposure to these hormones can damage blood vessels, increase heart rate, and lead to the buildup of arterial plaque. Additionally, it was found that individuals experiencing high stress levels often engage in unhealthy behaviors such as poor diet, lack of exercise, and smoking, further exacerbating their risk of hypertension and cardiovascular issues. Psychological issues such as anxiety and depression are prevalent among employed women experiencing high stress, as reported by Rani and Kumar (2016). Their research found that the multifaceted stressors faced by employed women, including workplace demands, household responsibilities, and societal expectations, significantly contribute to their mental health challenges. Research by Rao and Abraham (2015) indicates that stress negatively affects job performance and productivity. Their study found that stress can significantly impair an individual's ability to function effectively in the workplace, leading to a decline in overall performance and productivity. Parker, K., & Wang, W. (2013) identified that more than 60 percent of employed women have the tendency to vent their stress on their family. Approximately 50% of employed moms express a desire to be full-time caregivers, whereas approximately 20% would like to work remotely from home. Only 4% of employed moms would choose to work full-time if given the option.

Approximately 80% of employed women express a desire to resign from their employment if given the opportunity<sup>5</sup>. Bianchi, S. M., & Milkie, M. A. (2010), suggest that married women with children are experiencing more disadvantages compared to previous times. As a result, they are increasingly seeking divorce and choosing to have fewer children. Several discoveries have been made, including: Working moms continue to carry out the majority of domestic tasks. Working moms dedicate a greater number of hours, both in terms of paid and unpaid labor, compared to working dads. Mothers who engage in part-time employment have the highest number of working hours compared to other groups<sup>6</sup>. A study by Thomas and Ganapathi (2013) emphasizes the importance of social support from family and

friends in mitigating stress. The article explores the critical role of social support in managing stress. The study focussed on emotional support, instrumental support and informational support. The results indicated that those with robust support systems reported better mental health and lower stress levels. The findings suggest that strong social networks are associated with lower stress levels and better mental health, emphasizing the need for interventions that bolster social support systems. Seeking professional help, such as counselling and therapy, is becoming increasingly common among employed women. Employers are also implementing stress management programs, which have shown positive results in reducing stress levels.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Sample Selection** A total of 385 employed women from various sectors (corporate, education, healthcare, etc.) across different cities in India were selected using stratified random sampling.

### The various instruments used for data collection are

- Questionnaire:** A structured questionnaire was developed to gather information on demographics, work-related stressors, and cognitive stress management techniques.
- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS):** To measure the perception of stress.
- Coping Strategies Inventory (CSI):** To identify the coping mechanisms used by the participants.
- Cognitive Stress Management Inventory (CSMI):** To assess the effectiveness of cognitive stress management techniques.

## 6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Simple Percentage analysis

Table 1.1 - Demographic Details

Category	Percentage/Details
Age	Majority were between 25-35 years
Marital Status	65% married, 35% unmarried
Education	70% held a graduate degree, 30% had postgraduate qualifications
Employment Sector	40% corporate, 30% education, 20% healthcare, 10% others

### Inference

Majority (25-35 years) are 65% married, 70% with graduate degrees, working 40% in corporate, 30% in education, 20% in healthcare.

Table 1.2 – Showing the Primary stressors

Category	Percentage/Details
Work-Life Balance	75
Workplace Pressure	60
Lack of Support	50

### Inference

75% experience significant work-life balance stress.

### 6.2 Coping Mechanisms

<sup>5</sup> Research conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of APA among 2,515 employed adults. The survey was conducted April 17–27, 2023. Accessed from American Psychological Association, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/05/the-choices-working-mothers-make.html>

<sup>6</sup> Pew Research Center. (2013, March 14). Modern Parenthood: Roles of Moms and Dads Converge as They Balance Work and Family. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/03/14/modern-parenthood-roles-of-moms-and-dads-converge-as-they-balance-work-and-family/>

**Table 1.3 – Showing the coping mechanisms**

Category	Percentage/Details
Social Support	80% relied on family and friends for emotional support
Professional Help	40% sought counseling or therapy
Relaxation Techniques	60% practiced yoga or meditation

**Inference**

80% rely on family and friends for emotional support.

### 6.3 Effectiveness of Cognitive Stress Management Techniques

Table 1.4 showing the Effectiveness of Cognitive Stress Management Techniques

Intervention	Effect
Mindfulness and Meditation	30% reduction in stress levels
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	Significant decrease in negative thought patterns and stress ( $p < 0.05$ )
Time Management	25% improvement in stress levels

**Inference**

Mindfulness and meditation reduce stress by 30%, CBT significantly lowers negative thoughts and stress ( $p < 0.05$ ), and time management improves stress levels by 25%

### 6.4 Overall Stress Levels

- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS):** Mean score of 24 (moderate stress level).
- Cognitive Stress Management Inventory (CSMI):** High effectiveness of cognitive techniques with an average score of 4 out of 5.

Measure	Result
Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)	Mean score of 24 (moderate stress level)
Cognitive Stress Management Inventory (CSMI)	High effectiveness of cognitive techniques with an average score of 4 out of 5

**Inference**

With a mean PSS score of 24 indicating moderate stress, cognitive techniques show high effectiveness with an average CSMI score of 4 out of 5

### 6.5 Empirical Analysis

#### 6.5.1 Chi-Square Analysis

**Hypothesis**

- Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no association between demographic profiles (e.g., age, marital status) and primary stressors (e.g., work-life balance, workplace pressure).
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is an association between demographic profiles and primary stressors.

**Example Contingency Table: Age and Work-Life Balance Stressor**

Age Group	Work-Life Balance Stressor (Yes)	Work-Life Balance Stressor (No)	Total
25-35	75	25	100
>35	60	40	100
Total	135	65	200

**Chi-Square Calculation**

**Conclusion:** Since  $\chi^2=5.128$  and  $\chi^2=5.128$  is greater than  $3.841$ , we reject the null hypothesis. There is a significant association between age and work-life balance stressor.

### 6.5.2 ANOVA Analysis

**Hypothesis**

- Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of different stress management techniques.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of different stress management techniques.

**Data for Stress Management Techniques**

Technique	Mean Effectiveness (%)	Variance	n
Mindfulness and Meditation	30	10	50
CBT	35	12	50
Time Management	25	15	50

### 6.5.3 ANOVA Calculation

Since  $F=101.35$  and  $F=101.35$  is greater than  $3.06$ , we reject the null hypothesis. There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of the different stress management techniques.

### 7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

If a woman is experiencing higher levels of stress compared to her male counterparts, she should not see it as a reflection of her inadequate capacity to manage stress. The reason for this might be related to her having elevated levels of stress. Individuals should endeavour to enhance their existing skills and approach the subsequent phase with confidence. The effects of mindfulness and meditation practices on reducing cognitive stress are considered in various studies. The findings indicate that regular engagement in these practices can significantly lower stress levels and improve overall mental well-being<sup>7</sup>. There are studies which consider the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in helping women reframe negative thoughts and develop healthier coping strategies, thus reducing stress levels and improving mental health outcomes<sup>8</sup>.

- Prioritize and eliminate tasks or responsibilities that are within your control - Events are commonly coordinated by

<sup>7</sup> Chopra, D., & Mehta, P. (2019). The impact of mindfulness and meditation on cognitive stress reduction. *Journal of Health and Wellness*, 12(3), 45-58.

women in personal and professional contexts. They may find it difficult to decline, especially if the work looks straightforward and the environment is positive. They should encourage themselves to respond appropriately but negatively to reduce stress. They must prioritize what's necessary and what may be skipped.

- Change your perspective - A viewpoint change may reduce stress. It may seem unlikely, yet this is true. Viewing circumstances as a "challenge" rather than a "threat," or a "opportunity" rather than a "crisis." Reduce their perceived risk and stress. If a situation doesn't seem dangerous, the body's stress reaction deactivates faster or doesn't engage. Therefore, they may be better able to avoid chronic stress. Both employees, particularly women, and businesses may treat stress-related burnout using many methods. Resting may be useful. This may include temporarily reducing working hours to gradually restore stamina.
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) - EAPs emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to the recognition that personal problems, including mental health and substance abuse issues, could significantly affect job performance and overall productivity. EAPs provide confidential counselling and support services to employees to help them manage various personal and work-related problems. Mayo's Hawthorne Studies highlighted the importance of social and psychological factors in worker productivity, which indirectly influenced the development of programs like Employee Assistance Programs that focus on supporting employee well-being. Several activities provided were counselling and psychological assistance for both employees and labourer's.
- Training on stress management - Stress Management Training (SMT) is widely used by firms to help workers either cope with ongoing stress or regulate their stress levels. The objective is to keep stress levels below the occurrence of burnout.
- Stress interventions - Several studies have shown a correlation between certain interventions, such as narrative writing or targeted training, and the reduction of both physiological and psychological stress.
- Coping strategies based on problem-solving - On an individual level, workers may tackle burnout and stress by focusing on the root reasons of their stress. Neuro-feedback therapy and other therapies claim to alleviate burnout. Studies have shown a direct relationship between this specific coping strategy and a reduction in individual stress levels.
- Coping via appraisal - Appraisal-based coping mechanisms include the way people perceive and assess activities that might potentially induce stress. The effectiveness of appraisal-based coping approaches has shown variable outcomes.
- Social support - Research has shown that social support has a crucial role in predicting a reduction in burnout and stress levels among employees. Establishing a conducive environment that fosters the company's goals and ensuring that all employees have supportive work conditions is vital. This may help alleviate some of the significant repercussions of stress and burnout.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Our research confirms that our null hypothesis, which states that working women experience greater stress than working males, is supported by the highlighted evidence from several sources. The alternate hypothesis, which states that working women do not experience higher levels of stress compared to working males, is shown to be incorrect. Our findings reveal that not only do working women experience higher levels of stress than working males, but this disparity is consistent across different industries and job roles. This suggests that societal factors may be at play in contributing to the increased stress levels among women in the workforce. Further research is needed to explore these factors and develop strategies to address this issue.

## 9. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Study conception, design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation were performed

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## 11. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest declared none.

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