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Comparative Study on Stress in Context to Working Women in Developed and Developing Economies

Purvi Mathur^{1*}, Anju Sharma², Madhavi Sinha³, Roopali Sharma⁴ & Vivek Gaur⁵

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Birla Institute of Technology, Off- Campus, Jaipur.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science, Birla Institute of Technology, Off- Campus, Jaipur.

³Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, Birla Institute of Technology, Off- Campus, Jaipur.

⁴Professor, Department of Management, Birla Institute of Technology, Off- Campus, Jaipur.

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science, Birla Institute of Technology, Off- Campus, Jaipur.

*Corresponding Author: purvimathur1986@bitmesra.ac.in

Abstract

"Any society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women is at a huge disadvantage in the modern world"- Tian Wei, CCTV News. The Women are the indispensable part of the society as they contribute a lot at the household, culture, market and workplace. Indifferent to the economies, the society follows patriarchy in which the dominance of man over woman is there. Recent changes have been made by the Government of various economies for the development of the woman. On this note woman has become the important part of the working sphere of the society. The multiplicity of roles is leading to a stress under this gender segment. This paper analyses the level of stress in working women in developed economy in particular to America and developing economy in context to India. The study also extends its dimension to identify the reason of stress among the working women and to find out the remedial measures to overcome stress at work and home.

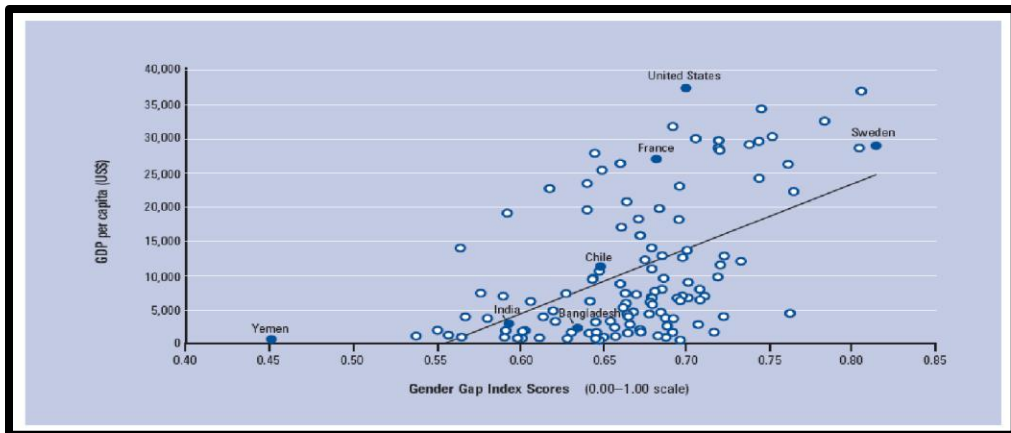
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Introduction

Women are playing a vital role in the economic and social development of the nation all over the world. Women have to play their role as a wife, a mother and an earner. An increase in female labor force participation—or a reduction in the gap between women and men labor force participation—results in faster economic growth. The economic empowerment of women in the developed economy is one of the most remarkable revolutions in the past 50 years as millions of women who were once dependent on men have taken control of their own economic fates. For instance, Sheryl Kara Sandberg is an American technology executive, activist, and author. Currently, she is the [chief operating officer](#) (COO) of [Facebook](#) and founder of [Leanin.org](#). Even in the developing economy like India, the position of women has

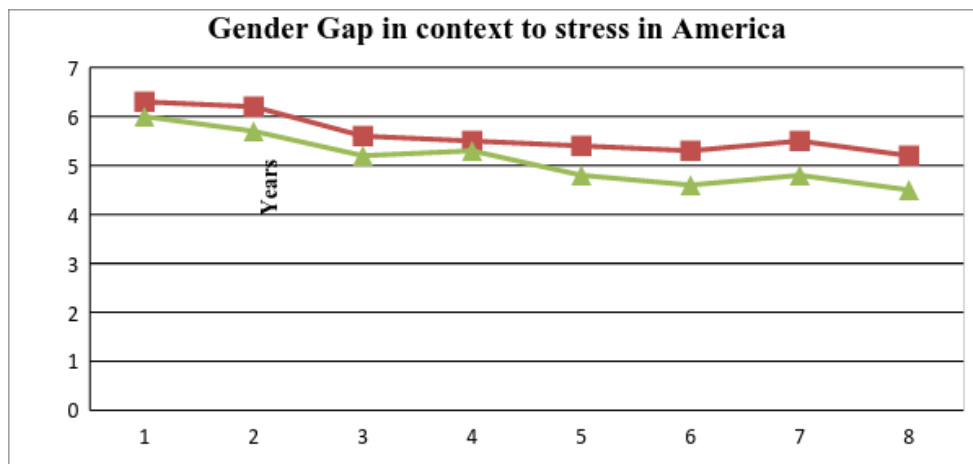
become dominant as the working population in context to women is increasing day by day. For instance, Indra Krishnamurthy Nooyi is an [Indian American](#) business executive and the current [Chairperson](#) and CEO of [PepsiCo](#) which is the second largest food and beverage business in the world by net revenue.

As the number of employed women has increased over the past several decades, women are at par with their male counterparts. The Government of the different economies also took the initiatives to uplift the position of women in the society. Unlike their counterparts they have to play the role of a homemaker also. The dual roles of the working women are leading to stress in their lives. Women are still considered responsible for the majority of household labor and management, child care and elder care and employed women work to the equivalent of two full time jobs (DeMeis & Perkins 1996). This makes employed women experience strain on their time and energy (Hughes & Galinsky, 1988; Kenney & Bhattacharee, 2000). Research has shown that the more juggling incidents per day, the better her chances for having low satisfaction at the end of the day (Williams & Suls, 1991) and the chances for experiencing stress buffering effects increases. In addition, women who do not get their spouse support in household management are also experiences high level of stress. (Repetti et al, 1989).



Gender Gap and per Capita GDP

As per the Stress report of America in 2015, women reported a higher level of stress than men (5.2 vs. 4.5 on a 10-point scale in 2014, compared with 6.3 vs. 6.0 in 2007). Women ratio in context to men in respect source of stress are Money (68:61) and Family responsibilities (55:39). This identifies that even in the developed economy like US, stress level is increasing continuously more in women to men. But women are taking less initiative to manage their stress level.



Source: Stress report of America in 2015

Women constitute half of the world's population but this resource is still underutilized in most of the economies. For instance in developing economy the position of women was quite depressing as they were not treated equally in context to men. In particular to India, the women faced problems related woman infanticide, illiteracy, child marriage, sati system and purdah system etc. In today's scenario, Indian women are allowed to work. But they face many problems at workplace and in family. The problem of unequal treatment of women at the workplace is most common. In case of married working women, they are not allowed by family members to go for business tour. Gender discrimination is another problem faced by women in case of pay. In some companies women employees are paid less salary than men. Even women, who are at high position in their office, have to do household activities after office at their home like cooking, cleaning and looking after their family affairs. This makes them more stressful and leads to some health problems. Another most difficult problem faced by working women who have small children is that they are forced to leave their child in daycare or in hands maid on whom they have little faith. This creates more tension in them and less concentration on their work. Although working women hired maid to do their household work in return of that they have to give more pay to them. The multiple roles performed by women are creating deleterious effect on their mental as well as their physical health. This results into continuous stressful situation at home and workplace.

Objectives the Study

- To study the level of stress in working women in developed economy in particular to America and developing economy in context to India.
- To identify the reason of stress among the working women
- To find out the remedial measures to overcome stress at work and home.

Research Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature to identify the stress among working women in developed and developing economy. The analysis is done to identify the reasons for stress among the working women and its effects is been analyzed through cause and effect model.

Level of Stress in Working Women in Developed and Developing Economy

Occupational stress is a growing problem in US and other developed economies. It may be a problem of particular magnitude for working women or in part because of sex-specific job stressors (sex discrimination and difficulties combining work and family). Such stressors had received little attention in context to research. But the new research indicates that these stressors may have a negative impact on health and beyond the effects of general job stressors (work overload, skill underutilization etc.). A number of stress-reduction strategies have been shown to be useful for working women ranging from the more common individual stress management techniques to higher-level interventions focused on removing the sources of occupational stress.

According to Reich and Nussbaum (1994) 60% in the United States of working women reported that stress that affecting their lives was related to job. Kristina (2008) investigated work-related stress in women and its association with self-perceived health and sick leave among working women. The findings of the research revealed that the major factor that causing stress among them is 'stress owing to hard to set their limits' and followed by 'increased workload'. On the other hand women associated with 'high perceived stresses', owing to indistinct organization and conflicts. It is also that reported that they are taking more sick leaves in comparison to man. Kristina and Stephen (2015) reported that working women are facing higher level of stress than compared to men. The stressors that the working is facing are their multiple roles, discrimination and stereotyping. Maryam Zarra-Nezhad et al., (2010) stated that there exists positive relationship between levels of occupational stress and family difficulties in working women. Iwasaki et al., (2004) has concluded that women experience greater levels of work-family stress as a result of societal expectations and thus bear the greater levels of burden at work and family than men. Stephen Palmer and Kristina Gyllensten (2005) observed, multiple roles, lack of career progress, discrimination and stereotyping are the factors that create stress among the women.

According to Babin & Boles (1998) role stress affected female service providers as their job performance are more negative than males. Women particularly feel stressed about trying to be a good organizational citizen, while at the same time, still fulfilling their responsibilities towards their spouse and family. In another study done by Beena & Poduval (1992) observed that female executives showed greater

stress than male executives. The difference in the stress experienced by female executives is due to a consequence of workfamily conflict, social expectations, and behavioral norms that women face as they occupy a combination of roles. O'driscoll, et al., (1992) concluded that interpersonal conflict, work overload, and role conflict contributed to the experience of emotional exhaustion. Dhanabakyam and Malarvizhi (2014) stated there is a positive relationship between stress and family difficulties in working women. The increase in work-family conflict leads to increase in work stress and vice versa in married working women. It is observed that Women are facing stress where ever they are. Even in developed economy which is identified with high GDP, Per capita income and standard of living are very low in context to Human Development Index.



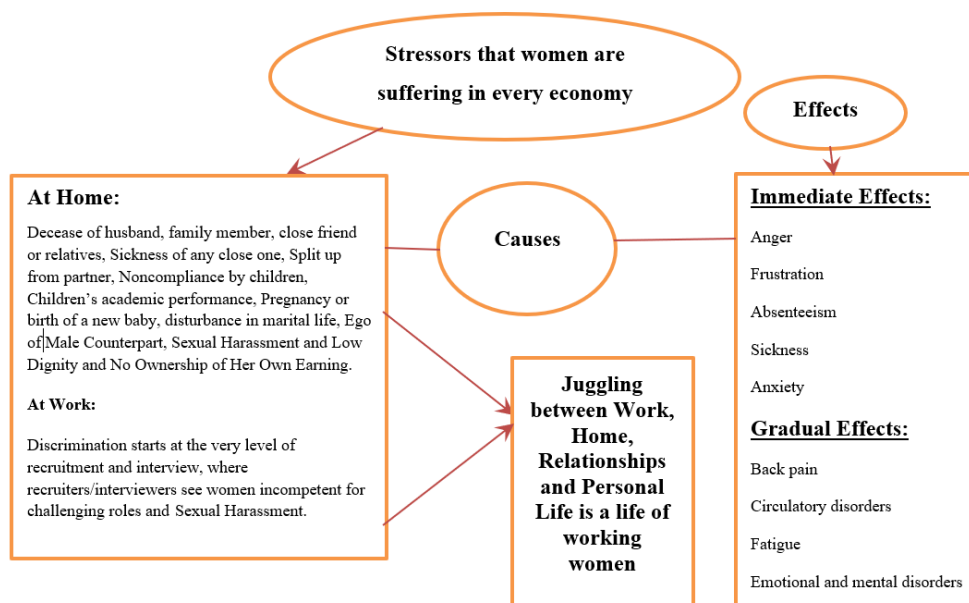
Source: Human Development Report Office

In the developing economy like India, Women's position is much worse in the respect of developed economy. The country is progressing that is increasing the burden on the citizens of the country in particularly to women. Indian society is still stuck in the clutches of superstition and social rituals that create the mental stress among the Indian working women as they are not getting the time to relax. According to "Women of Tomorrow" survey showed that out of 21 nations and 6500 women, India is leading nation when it comes to stress for women. About 87% of women were stressed most of their time and 82% claimed that they did not find time to relax. The reason behind it is that Indian women have to play different roles in daily life i.e. work and home related activities. Career opportunities for Indian women are increasing but social norms and family expectations are the root cause of this stress. Vijay & Vazirani (2012) conducted a comparative study on stress among nurses in

private and public hospitals in Mumbai. The study identified that the various type of stress that nurses are suffering in private and public hospitals are improper behavior of patient's friends and relatives (50%), interpersonal relations (40%), low pay scale (31.4%), poor quality of infrastructure (57.1%), number of patients handled every day (48.6%) and number of working hours in a day (21%). Sowmya (2010) conducted a research on Stress Level: Assessment and Alleviation. The study identified the level of physiological, psychological and behavioral stress in the work, personal and social life respectively. It was found that there was no association between the age of the employees and the employee's physical ailments caused due to physiological stress in work life, there was no association between the experience of the employees and the relaxing technique preferred by the employees during the working hours, there was no association between the employee's age and the employee's expected job satisfaction caused due to psychological stress at work, there was association between the employee's experience and the sleeping habits influenced by psychological stress in personal life, there was no association between the employee's age and the employee's performance management influenced due to behavioral stress in the work life, there was no association between the employee's age and the imbalance in their diet caused due to behavioral stress at work. According to Bhumika M. Achhnani (2015) there is no significant difference between the levels of stress of women working in education industry and banking industry so it can be concluded that now even academics have become more challenging. Further the study shows that marital status does not play any role in increasing or decreasing the stress felt by women at workplace which is again against the general notion that after marriage working women feel more stressed. It was also found by the study that most of the women who are working are not directly spending the money earned. These women give there complete salary to the household. According to Vemuri Swathi¹, M. Sudhir Reddy² (2016) Stress is a growing problem in the workplaces and a particular magnitude for working women. The problems due to high levels of stress can be exhibited physically, psychologically and behaviorally by an individual. The most serious effects of stress are related to performance. Women who are working reported more non-fatal but long term disabling health problems due to stress.

Reasons for Stress among the Working Women

There are various expected and highly individual reasons for having stress. It depends on numerous variables including the type of her personality, attitude towards life, analytical skills, and societal and family's cooperative environment. By every individual, stress can be handled in different manner like it can be stressful in negative manner for someone, while at the same time it can be eustress for another. All those reasons are stressors, which create lots of pressure and demand on an individual to perform.



Stress Model that Identify the Causes and its Effect

- **Perception of the Environment towards Working Women**

A woman named Perna (inspiration for working women) was working in the Aviation Industry. She was a graduate in commerce and simultaneously joined the Air Hostess Academy. When she joined the academy, the society's perception was very weird and created several questions on the upbringing of her. Then after her completion of her course, she got a job in the top most Aviation Company. She was very elated as she did not expect that. Then the family did not want her to go. The reason identified that her family had given her permission to do the course, not to do the job. After long days of arguments, she went out of the hometown to do the job in the metro city. Her happiness was immeasurable. Her early days in the corporate were very good. But after that things changed, she was started looking depressed and not talking to anyone in the workplace. She was also not connected with home. Her parents were also not satisfied with her attitude. Then reason identified that she was been sexually harassed by a man in the corporate. On the other side of the coin, her parents want her to get married. She was not showing interest. She was busy in her work and flying offshore and other countries for 25 days in a month. After one year, she got married but she did not told anyone in her company about it as she signed a contract with the company she will not marry when she is in the job.

After three days of her wedding she went back and joined her job. Her husband took transfer to place where she is working. Both were happy in the starting. After that they were always fighting , the reason was that the expectations that every

man has from woman to do household work along with your job. She was struggling a lot to manage her aspirations and marriage. At her workplace, she was been criticized for the mistakes in her work. At home, her husband was also not happy with her. She tried a lot to manage the things then she gave up. Her husband left her and got marriage again.

Then to she continued her job with full dedication. She got the promotion as well and was happy but after a few minutes her happiness was vanished. Her ex-husband called her and said, "Finally, you got the promotion. I got the news from your relative. You pleased your boss with your attitudes and looks. Nice... Keep it up." Her whole efforts towards work were shattered with the statement.

After four year, she died for some reasons. The reasons could be the mental stress or shame from the society as she unable to manage her working life and married life. This incidence raised so many questions regarding the condition of working woman and what changes are required in the society to avoid such situation in the future course of time.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Constitution of India has given special attention to the needs of women to enable them to exercise their rights on equal footing with men and participate in national development. It aims at the creation of an entirely new social order where all citizens are given equal opportunities for growth and development and that no discrimination takes place on the basis of race, religion, caste, sex, etc. Some initiative taken by the government of India are Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, Working Women Hostel, Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the children of Working Mothers, Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) and many other.

Initiatives that should be taken by government to empower working women in India like:

- Infant care programme should be made mandatory in all companies so that working mother can continue their jobs after having a baby.
- Harassment cases in companies should be solved soon with gravity so that a woman can work in a free environment.
- Wages should not be partial for the same position for working women and men. Gender equality should be encouraged.

Even in the Developed Economies, Government is taking initiative to empower working women. The U.S. government, including the Department of State, is committed to advancing women's economic empowerment as an essential part of our efforts to promote both economic prosperity and gender equality. Through the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community has a broad shared understanding that secure, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth cannot

happen without the full participation of women and girls in all economic activities, including education, employment, entrepreneurship, transportation and infrastructure, and access to goods and services. The goal of this strategy is to provide guidance, examples, and strategic direction for Department of State officials on how best to support women's economic participation globally. Four broad policy objectives will guide our efforts:

- Promoting equal access to resources and services
- Promoting equal access to decent work.
- Promoting women's entrepreneurship
- Addressing overarching issues that impede women's economic participation

The Department of State will work toward achieving these policy objectives through an action framework, which includes:

- Legal, regulatory and policy reform – Discriminatory laws, regulations, policies and the lack of legal protections restrict women's ability to access education and jobs, to expand their economic potential, to rise into leadership positions, and to contribute to the economy. The Department of State will continue to work with our partners to promote legislative and policy frameworks that increase women's economic empowerment.
- Gender inclusive economic development – A lack of reliable, safe, affordable, and accessible infrastructure and financial services often prevents women from participating in the economy. The Department of State will continue to promote and advocate for gender integration and inclusion across economic development plans, strategies, and investments.
- Individual skill and institutional capacity building – Capacity building and skill development enables women to participate in the economy, including the ability to start and scale their own businesses. The Department of State will continue to provide technical assistance and capacity building to the public sector and civil society to increase women's economic empowerment.

And there are many steps that can be taken to balance life of working women at home also like flexible timing and possibility to work from home are required for working women. Partners can be more sensitive to women's needs, and counter tradition by helping their wives perform daily tasks and take care of children. The counsellor should be appointed by Organization for understanding more about problems of Working Women. Accept the things that you can't change. The Strategies to sustain in the environment are:

- Think positively
- Change your emotional response.
- Protect your time.
- Learn how to take time for yourself without feeling guilty.
- Restore work life balance.
- Try meditation.
- Maintain a strong social network.

There is a widespread demand from employees for the right to balance work and home life in today's busy world where finding time for oneself seems impossible. Health and wellness programs can, for sure help working women in balancing their personal and professional life. But they alone cannot be the answer to addressing the problems of imbalance. The problems and difficulties of women are multidimensional as evident from the reviewed; therefore, they require further probing to help working women in balancing their work and family life.

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