

MANAGING STRESS DURING PANDEMIC: A STUDY ON WOMEN EMPLOYEES FROM SERVICE SECTOR

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Abstract:

Stress causes change in physical and emotional due to anxiety or pressure you need to give your attention. it is common in all. No person is found stress free. Somewhere, sometimes, he or she is under stress and is not able to cope with the situation or people around him. Stress has many causes and may last long for a long time. It has a bad effect on mental state and also physical body if untraced and untreated. Stress in the service sector is unavoidable. Handling bosses, subordinates, management, and customers create much stress on employees. Employees need to handle it with care to stand stable and grow. Stress in the service sector cannot be avoided, but it can be managed, during covid-19, remote work and family responsibilities made many women go through great stress and had to face the uncertain situation. Quality of work-life was not only affected but also the work-life balance became a matter of sustaining stress-free life. In this paper, an attempt is made to understand the stress, women employees underwent and managed during covid-19, especially in the service sector.

Keywords: Covid-19, Stress, Burnout, Management

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Introduction:

The Covid -19 virus brought a sudden change in the nature of work, home based work from office based work. The organizations provided necessary tools and equipment to all working force so that they were able to work from home. Prior to pandemic home based work used to be considered as flexibility given to female employees as they were able to manage work both office task and family chores. The fact is that home based work triggers both family work conflict and work family conflict. Women finds it challenging to balance both work and home which in turn give rise to stress, slowly leading women employees to mental stress and health related problems.

Women and Service sector:

There is no doubt that service sector has helped the Indian economy grow, at the same time it has also caused various dents in the quality of work life and work life balance among the women employees. Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization have paved the way for tuff competition in the service sector. Success of any industry depends upon the quality of work, productivity and profit. To increase these parameters Companies started investing more on employees which in turn increased the workload of employees, there was change in the Organizational structure, culture, introduction of hi-tech and updating of new technology in the service sector. Employees started suffering stress from increasing work load, lack of motivation. Lack of time started effecting in low productivity among the employees

which again became cause for stress. So it is essential to find out the reason for stress among women employees and ways to manage stress among women employees during pandemic.

Covid-19 and lockdown:

Covid-19 pandemic was a global health crisis, which people had never experienced in the modern times. Government declared lockdown with the main aim of minimizing the dreadful virus transmission into others by giving orders to stay at home, all business were closed. Intra, inter, national and international travel restrictions had a substations impact on the society. The widespread changes represented considerable amount of stress among entire population. Staying at home without any connection with neighbours, outsiders, friends had a tremendous impact on mental health

Significance of the Study:

Stress can be defined as a form of tension or strain in the body for which there is no release or outlet. Stress is not something that affects us from outside. It is not something acquired only by some unfortunate individuals. It is an integral part of the physical and mental system.

It is the state of the body that saves our life on the one side and on the other side; it fatigues body systems to the point of malfunction and disease. Stress is a natural and unavoidable feature of life. In underdeveloped communities, factors causing stress can be related primarily to the need for physical survival to finding food, shelter, and safety while in the developed societies, stress has rather less to do with the basic mechanics of survival and more to do with living standards and meeting the expectations. Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustration, and demands. For many people, stress is so common that it has become a way of life. Stress is not always bad. In small doses, it can help us to perform under pressure and motivate to do our best. But when constantly running in emergency mode, our mind and body pay the price. We can protect our self by recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress and taking steps to reduce its harmful effects. The challenge is an important ingredient for healthy and productive work. Challenge can be referred as the bit of stress good for survival and growth and results to be positive. But when the challenge moves in the fast pace with high impact and sharp pressure, it leads towards negative impact of stress.

Literature Review:

Fatima Islahi (2107) studied women and stress by analyzing liaison keeping in mind that job creates frustration among women. The study was carried out on 200 women. **Harilal and Santosh (2017)** studied stress levels among working women in the state of Kerala by carrying descriptive study. The study was carried out on 130 women from different districts. They showed a relationship between working women's profiles and levels of stress. **Josephine and Randy (2010)** studied gender and stress generation based on interpersonal predictors. The study was carried out on 206 college students as freshers. The study was explained by using descriptive analysis. **Kristina Holmgren (2008)** studied work-related stress among women in her research by developing a questionnaire for her data. She used a cross-sectional design for her studies. **Lata Krishan (2014)** studied factors causing stress among women and strategies for cop up. Her objectives were to analyze mental and physical stress and stress management techniques. The study was based on a structural equation model. **Mariam et.al (2010)** studied occupational stress and family stress among women employees. They tried to find out the relationship between family difficulty and occupational stress. The study was nonexperimental. **R. Umarani and K. Bhuvaneshwari (2014)** found the factors affecting occupational stress among working women in Salem between the ages of 21-and 33. The study was econometrically explained. **Vijaya**

Kumar and Purosothama (2017) studied stress among women working in Bangalore. They refereed 30 articles and reviewed them to know the research gap.

Objectives of the study:

1. To study the demographic profile of women working in the service industry.
2. To study the factors causing stress among working women from the service industry during covid-19
3. To find out ways working women adopted to reduce stress caused during Covid-19
4. To conclude with some suggestions.

Research Methodology:

Primary:

A study was carried out on 150 women working in five service sectors namely Education, Banking, Insurance, Transport, IT in Pune city. 30 questionnaires were taken filled out by them to get desired data. A structured questionnaire was prepared on two objectives using the Likert scale.

Secondary:

The secondary data was taken from published articles on women's employment. The sources were taken from journal articles.

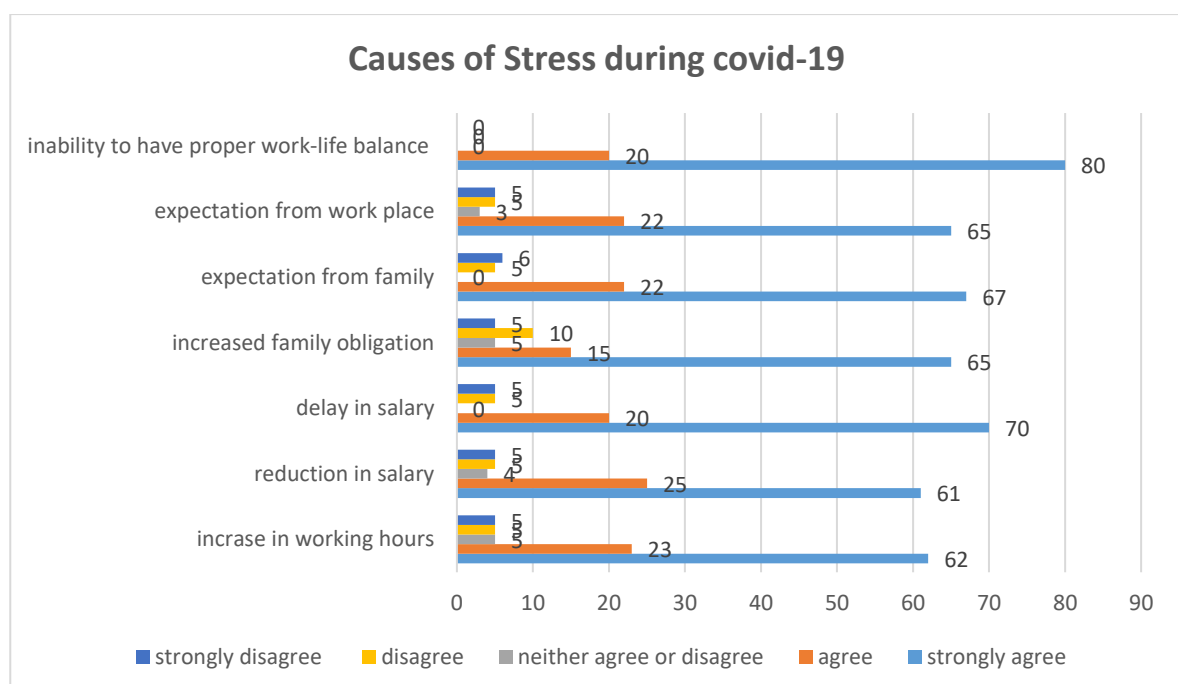
Sampling Technique:

The sampling universe in this study is women working in the service industry. The sampling area is Pune city and the sample size is 150 women from five service industries taken as 30 from each sector. The study is descriptive and is qualitative.

Analysis of the Data:

A) Causes of Stress during Covid-19:

Chart 1

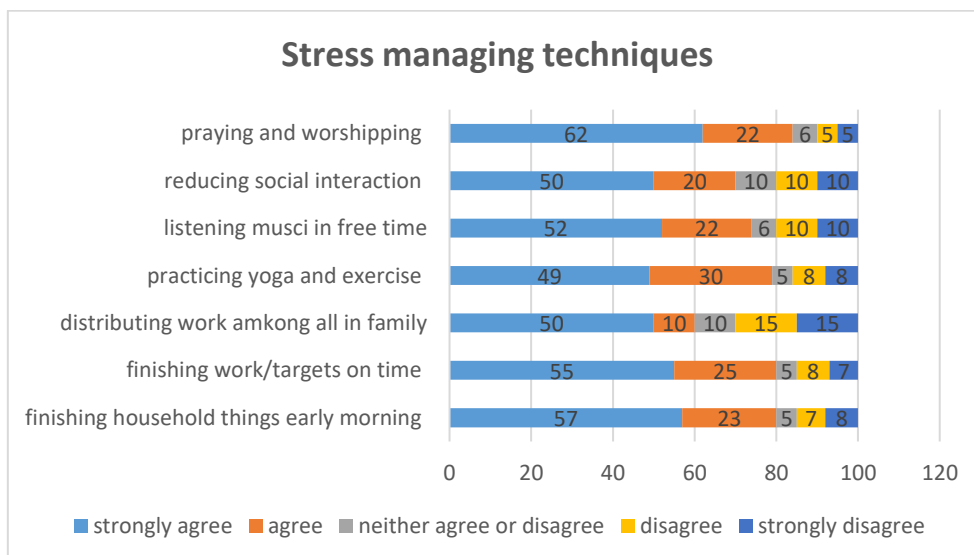


Causes of Stress:

1. **Inability to have proper work life balance:** 100% of the women employees are of the opinion that during pandemic they were not able to balance their office and home work because schools were closed, children were at home, can't go out to play. No day care was active, no maids were coming to help in household chores so managing all these responsibilities women had to do office work equally so they were not able to balance their work and home which led to acute mental stress.
2. **Expectation from work place:**87% of the women are of the opinion that, Management were expecting more output during pandemic as they were of the opinion that employees were at home so they can work more time with dedication.
3. **Expectation from family:** 89% of the women are of the opinion that expectation from office was more and Family on the contrary were expecting more time with them. In joint families in-laws were expecting working women to do all house hold work, take care of children, their studies, and then if time permits then only to work.
4. **Increased family obligation:** 90% women shared that during pandemic the obligation of working women increased as they were at home, no helping hands to their responsibility so their obligation increased towards family which in turn increased stress within them and the output is seen in their health issues.
5. **Reduction in salary:** 86% of the women employees shared that during pandemic many MNC due to no business had given half salary for few months. For salaried person before salary is credited the expenses are fixed and they are need to be paid so with half salary it was difficult to manage the entire expenses of the family.
6. **Delay in salary:** 90% of the employees agreed that during pandemic the organization were not in a position to credit salary on time.
7. **Increasing working hours:** 85% of the working women said that during pandemic there was a drastic change in the working environment, digital mode of work, increased work pressure due to challenges faced by them led them to work more time.

B) Stress managing techniques:

Chart 2



Stress managing techniques:

1. **Praying and worshipping:** 84% of the women employees believed and experienced that prayer is the best and most widely practiced method which helped them to be calm in times of trial. Prayers gave them peace of mind.
2. **Reducing social interaction:** 70% of the women employees were of the opinion that due to less or no social interaction during pandemic they felt isolated, loneliness feeling. Socialization increase a hormone that decrease anxiety levels and make us feel more confident in our ability to manage stress. Talking with friends, sharing our problems with family members, mentors also reduces the level of stress.
3. **Listening music in free time:** 74% of the women employees said that listening to music reduced stress as music acted as a mental health treatment for major depression, reduce in cortisol level. Music reduces burnout, music reduces anxiety in children.
4. **Practicing yoga and exercise:** 79% of the women agreed that yoga helped to reduce stress as yoga promotes relaxation, yoga benefits three aspects of ourselves that are often affected by stress, our body, mind and soul. Exercise reduces levels of the body's stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol.
5. **Distributing work among all in family:**60% of the women said that they agree that when work was distributed among family members they were able to balance their responsibilities on time. A good healthy relationship can be created.
6. **Finishing work /targets on time:** 80% of the women employees are of the opinion that when work is completed on time, they feel relaxed and happy.
7. **Finishing household things early morning:**80% of the women are of the opinion that when they get up early and do their homework they were relaxed for the entire day. Working women get ample of time to balance their office work and get some time for their passion. Giving priorities to work also help working women to be relaxed and stress free.

Limitations of the study:

- **Research is confined to Pune City only.**
- **Stress level and its management has been studied only in respect to working women.**

Suggestions:

- Research has revealed a significant trend in the impact of social status on employee stress levels. A different type of stress involves there (physical, mental, and personal. Emotional). The demographic factors have greatly affected the various work pressures. It is therefore a good idea to address the root cause of the stress on employees in the service sector.
- As result shows that young employees are under a lot of pressure compared to others because they are less experienced and have a lot of burden doing challenging work. Organizations should give them more training and development time so that they can develop their skills.
- They should share their concerns with emphatic family members, co-workers, with friends if necessary, seek professional advice. Create and use a support network, from members of a trusted and caring professional, family or social organization Group. Everyone needs someone they can trust and who are productive situations can be discussed in the department without fear or rejection.

- One can reduce work stress by prioritizing and planning work. When they feel more pressures and threaten at work, then decide to take some easier step those can help to control the situation as well as stress.
- Employee have to maintain self-control it can receive by the help of co-worker, subordinate, peers and supervisors. These lead to better relationships at work.
- One has to focus on time management. One should analyse one's schedule, responsibilities, and daily activities.
- All the work and no play is a way of exhaustion. They should try to find a balance between work and family life, community work and personal activities, daily Obligations & leisure time. They should not be overly dedicated to their work.

Conclusion:

“More smiling, less worrying. More compassion, less judgement. More blessed, less stressed. More love, less hate”

Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

It has been concluded that work in the service sector is under pressure regardless of any service sector. Because of the pressure of time they continue to make the right balance in their legal and family life. People see themselves through work / role, as work is a great focus on their strengths, abilities and aspirations. Their work, family and Society throw up various challenges and seek solutions to problems. It is also possible be a way to search happiness, peace of mind, improvement and joy in life or in it can be a reason of depression, annoyance, anxiety, disgrace and a feeling of Impotence when requirement and achievement are incompatible. Work can create stress between employees and indeed the middle ground context and offer to adult growth. A situation that is not stressful can make a source of stress only when someone focused on seeing it as a threat and exceeds his own the ability to cope. Man does his best and diligently describes and builds compelling transactions through his or her understanding Assessment and understanding policies. It's a cause why the same situations or circumstance are answered uniquely by various people. The concept of oppression is bound to the people & humble experience. Repetitive needs in work & family life leads to a significant level of stress among banking professionals and telecommunications. There is a connection between different aspects of people and role Oppressors. It can be concluded that experts of a different age group have it a different situation with respect to stress levels. Experienced employees more effective in manage stress as compare to fresher.

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Cite This Article:

**Prof. Niji Shajan, (2022). Managing Stress During Pandemic: A Study on Women Employees from Service Sector, Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal, XI (III) May – June, 73-79.*