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## **Comparative Study of Occupational Stress of Working Women of Different Job Strata**

**Arun Kumar**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Gurukul Kangri University, Haridwar.*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Occupational stress refers to a stress an employee experience due to responsibilities, conditions, environment, or pressures at the work place. There are several types of occupational stress, depending upon employees, type of job or environment. Thus, in the present investigation an attempt is made to study occupational stress of working women of different job strata. For this 300 working women (50 from higher job strata, 150 middle and 100 from lower job strata) from government organizations were undertaken. Sample was collected by purposive sampling techniques from tricity, i.e., Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. Exclusion criteria for the sample is that divorcees, widows or women living apart from the husband, having contract or temporary job were not included in the study. Data was collected by using occupational stress index, constructed by Srivastava and Singh (1984). Critical analysis of the data reveals that working women of lower job strata were higher on occupational stress as compared to middle and higher job strata.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Occupational stress, working women, job strata.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Occupational stress is growing problem globally at work places for all workers, including women. In a survey by Barzilai-Perach and associates (2006), 60% of employed women cited stress as their number one problem at work. Hemalata, (2006) found that out of the total 397 million workers in India, 123.9 million are women and have level of stress in the alarming stage. Female work participation rate has increased from 19.7 per cent in 1981 to 25.7 per cent in 2001. In addition to discrimination and stress at the workplace, working women had to face several hazards. In the era of globalization, working women have become more vulnerable to intense exploitation; they are exposed to more and more risks and are forced to endure more and more stress and strain.

Stress is an integral part of everyday life and simply cannot be avoided. People encounter stressful stimuli many times a day in their personal and social domains and, as work is an essential aspect of human existence, in the workplace. According to AL-Hussami (2008) occupational stress is a harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. Yahaya *et al.* (2009) occupational stress is chronic conditions caused by situation in the workplace that may negatively affect an individual's job performance and their overall wellbeing.

Cooper (1983; 1985) categorized six groups of organizational variables that may cause stress in the work place.

1. Factors intrinsic to the job (e.g. Heat, noise, chemical fumes, shift work).
2. Relationships at work (e.g. Conflict with coworkers or supervisors, lack of social support).
3. Role in the organization (e.g. role ambiguity).
4. Career development (e.g. lack of status, lack of prospects for promotion, lack of a career path, job insecurity).
5. Organizational structure and climate (e.g. lack of autonomy, lack of opportunity to participate in decision making, lack of control over the pace of work).
6. Home and work interface (e.g. conflict between domestic and work roles; lack of spousal support for remaining in the work force).

### **Working women and occupational stress**

Working women compose an increasing large population of the not only in India but in most of the developed and developing countries work force. They also face high risk from job-related stress, musculoskeletal injuries, violence, and other hazards of the modern workplace as reported by National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Increasingly, women are moving into occupations once held exclusively by men, such as the construction trades. In such instances, physiological differences between women and men can translate into occupational hazards, as when women operate equipment designed for men workers of larger stature.

The NIOSH article “Working women and stress” finds that:

- Gender-specific work stress factors, such as sex discrimination and balancing work and family demands, may have an effect on women workers above and beyond the impact of general job stressors such as job overload and skill under-utilization.
- Discriminatory barriers to financial and career advancement have been linked to more frequent physical and psycho-logical symptom and more frequent visits to the doctor.
- The most effective way of reducing work stress is through organizational change in the work-place. This holds true for reducing work stress in female and male workers alike. Workplace that actively discourage sexual discrimination and harassment, and promote family-friendly policies, appear to foster worker loyalty and attachment regardless of gender, studies indicate. Organizational changes effective for reducing job stress among women workers include expending promotion and career ladders, introducing family support programs and policies, and enforcing policies against sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

Many researches suggests that women’ occupational stress is poorly understood for several interrelated reasons. In classical studies women had been conspicuously absent from most occupational stress studies, largely because most research focused on the gender difference and discriminations. Second, when woman were included in occupational research, the design of the studies did into accurately or adequately reflect their experiences and concerns. Third, measuring instruments and methods of data collection often inaccurately reflects women’s work experiences or their positions in the work force and society. Finally, from two to three decade researcher give much attention on occupational stress researches. Thus, the present research is an attempt to do comparative study of working women on occupational stress.

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### Objectives

1. To study the occupational stress of married working women of varied job strata.
2. To evaluate the different level of occupational stress among married working women of varied job strata.

### Hypotheses

There would be significant difference between lower, middle and higher job status of married working women in terms of occupational stress.

### Sample

The sample in the present study consisted of 300 respondents (100 from lower job strata, 150 from middle job strata and 50 from higher job strata.) married working women in the age range from 25 to 45 years. A purposive sampling technique consisting of married working women in different types of organizations were taken from the Tricity, i.e., Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. Exclusion criteria: Divorcees, widows, or women living apart from the husband and of having contract or temporary job were not included in the study.

Working women of higher job strata were taken who are of group A services like doctors in hospitals, teachers, Professors from colleges and universities, lawyers and officers from Government organizations. Working women of middle job strata were taken from group B jobs. The sample is from subordinate staff including section officers/head clerks, High school/ intermediate teachers or senior nurses of government hospitals. Whereas, working women of lower job strata means group C and below category. All the respondents working in State/ Center Government on permanent Job in prescribed pay scales as per Government norms were taken.

### Scale used

**Occupational Stress Index:** Shrivastava and Singh (1984).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to see the comparative difference between lower, middle and higher job status of working women in terms of occupational stress. For analysis of the data ANOVA and Post Hoc test was applied.

Table-1 shows comparison between married working women of higher, middle, lower job strata and total score on descriptive values, i.e., N (total number of samples), mean, standard deviation, standard error, 95 percent confidence interval of mean, minimum, maximum score obtained, skewness and kurtosis for occupational stress. Occupational Stress of married working women under study reflects the result as N=50, mean (119.22) and standard deviation (19.32) of married working women of higher job strata, N=150, mean (124.71) and standard deviation (18.00) of married working woman of middle job strata and N=100, mean (138.75) and standard deviation (13.67) of married working women of lower job strata whereas N=300, mean (128.47) and standard deviation (18.47) of total sample.

**Table-1: Comparison between higher, middle and lower job status of married working women on occupational stress**

Occupational stress								
Job status	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
High	50	119.22	19.32	2.73	113.72	124.71	81.00	172.00
Middle	150	124.71	18.00	1.46	121.80	127.61	84.00	201.00
Lower	100	138.75	13.67	1.367	136.03	141.46	102.00	170.00
Total	300	128.47	18.47	1.06	126.37	130.57	81.00	201.00

**Figure-1: Bar diagram (mean scores) of occupational stress of married working women of different job strata**

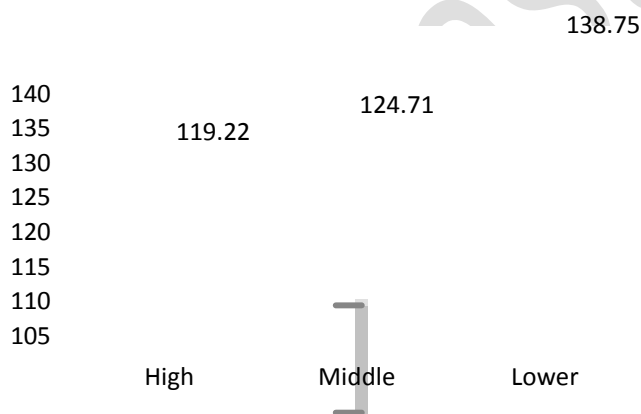


Figure-1 shows bar diagram of comparison of mean score of occupational stress of married working women of higher, middle and lower job strata. Mean score of occupational stress of higher job strata is 119.22, middle job strata is 124.71 and lower job strata is 138.75. From this it is very much clear that married working women of lower job strata is high on occupational stress as compared to middle and higher job strata.

In related studies Kawaharda and his associates (2007) in their study found that occupational stress differed by occupational class and the two occupational stress models gave different results for occupational classes with high occupational stress. Koustelios and Kousteliou (1997), Papastilianou, (1997) found that low wages and limited opportunities for promotion, teachers' goals (occupational and financial) have been identified as a source of stress for primary teachers in Greek (Inadequate salary and low status were found to be important in predicting job stress among school teachers (Litt and Turk, 1985). Khurshidet *al.* (2011) showed that the teachers with low income experience more occupational role stress than teachers with higher income level.

**Table-2: F-Value (ANOVA) of occupational stress of married working women in relations to different groups**

		Sum of Sq	df	Mean Sq.	F value
<b>Occupational Stress</b>	Between Groups	16970.36	2	8485.18	<b>29.611**</b>
	Within Groups	85106.42	297	286.55	
	Total	102076.78	299		

\*\*p<.01

Table-2 shows F-value for occupational stress of married working women of different job strata (i.e., higher, middle and lower). F-value for occupational stress is 29.611 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. This shows that there is difference within the groups (higher/middle/lower) job strata. Thus, the hypothesis-1 is accepted. From this we can conclude that the level of occupational stress is different at different level of job strata.

On the other hand similar study by Sekineet *al.* (2006) have reported that job stress differs according to employment grade, high grades being characterized by high job control and high job demands. Achhnani (2015) could not found any significant difference between the levels of work stress of the two categories of employees. Kawakami et al. (1995) have found connections between nine occupational categories and job stressors among Japanese employed men and women, also reporting that low-grade occupations such as laborers and machine operators are highly exposed to low job control and high job strain. Ahsan, Abdullah, Fie and Alam (2009) identified stress including factors in academic staff include: Work overload, homework interface, role ambiguity and performance pressure. Scelgrove (1998) in his comparative study on occupational stress on health visitors, district nurses found that level of stress were a function of occupation with significant variation between groups. Health visitors Yield the higher stress scores and lower job satisfaction scores.

**Table-3: Post-hoc test on occupational stress of married working women of different job strata**

<b>Occupational Stress</b>					
<b>Job status</b>		<b>Mean Diff.</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	
				<b>Lower Bound</b>	<b>Upper Bound</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>Middle</b>	-5.48NS	2.76	-11.99	1.02
	<b>Lower</b>	<b>-19.53**</b>	2.93	-26.43	-12.62
<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>	5.48NS	2.76	-1.02	11.99
	<b>Lower</b>	<b>-14.04**</b>	2.18	-19.19	-8.89
<b>Lower</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>19.53**</b>	2.93	12.62	26.43
	<b>Middle</b>	<b>14.04**</b>	2.18	8.89	19.19

\*\*p<.01

Table-3 shows values of Post-hoc test (multiple comparisons) of married working women of higher, middle and lower job strata for occupational stress. This reveals the differences between all three job strata (higher/middle/lower) which was the limitation of the F-test that shows differences within the group overall but doesn't provide F-value or any value of significance on each strata. Post hoc test of occupational stress shows that difference between middle and higher job strata is 5.48 which is non-significant at any level but difference between lower and middle job strata is 14.04 and lower and higher job strata is 19.53 which are significant at .01 level of significance. Not significant difference in higher and middle job strata may be due to not much difference in working conditions and expectations from the workers. But the difference in higher and lower job strata as well as lower and middle job strata support our hypothesis.

## CONCLUSION

An overview of the obtained findings would lead one to conclude that there is a difference in occupational stress, role conflict, quality of life and work adjustment of married working women of higher, middle and lower job strata. Occupational stress of married working women of lower job strata is higher than middle and higher job strata.

In view of the fact that there is a phenomenal increase in the number of women combining marriage and career in all classes of society, each society has a moral responsibility to tackle the plethora of problems resulting from this trend. Taking into consideration the findings of the present study reflect that there is a significant difference in psychological problems faced by married working women in all classes of society. Society in general, various governmental and non-governmental agencies should gear up efforts to ensure adequate help to the working women in household chores and opening crèche and day care centers, providing a very satisfactory and adequate care to the children while the mother is away from the home and is at work place.

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