

Assessing the Impact of Age and Career Stage on Job Stress Levels of Women in NCR

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Abstract

This research paper presents an in-depth analysis of job stress levels among women at different stages of life by investigating the factors contributing to job stress, encompassing workload, work-life balance, career advancement opportunities, and gender-related issues, among others. These stressors are often associated with the initial transition from education to the workforce and the balancing of work and family responsibilities. The purpose of this study was to investigate job stress of women in NCR. A sample of 280 women were taken and they were recruited in two groups based on ages. First group with age = <35 years and the other >35 years. For the measurement of stress levels, a tool was developed by the researcher herself and the standardization process was done to meet the criterial requirements. A questionnaire with 18 items was developed and data collection was done using convenience sampling. SPSS was used for analysis where the main results states that the mean job stress levels of women with >35 years of age is -8.59 higher than women with age =<35 years with t-value of 3.14.

This study calls for continued research into these dynamics, considering evolving workplace structures, social and familial changes, and the dynamic experiences of women across their career trajectories.

Keywords

Women, Job stress, work-life balance, Stressors

Introduction

Across modern-day work environments, women across a range of age groups encounter numerous obstacles that may result in different levels of stress related to their jobs.(Jain & Batra, 2015) The pressure of social and role constraints placed upon women by society, family, and, shockingly, women themselves, is what causes illness and failure in them as they aspire to succeed in their respective careers.(Chandra & Mathur, 2015) These women face challenges in their work lives and ultimately experience stress. And further social reality in India that warrants mention is the growing demand for women's incomes due to rising household expenses. Although she has been embraced as a co-earner, she is nonetheless relieved from her household duties. (Researcher's personal observation)

Despite the fact that both men and women have demonstrated their abilities in the global business sector, women continue to be in minority and largely invisible in leadership positions in India.

In the modern workforce, the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women have made significant strides (Smith, 2020). However, the journey towards gender parity remains fraught with challenges, and the issue of workplace stress among women continues to be a significant concern (Johnson et al., 2019). This research delves into the complex interplay between women's professional lives and the pressures they encounter at various stages of their careers and personal development.

In light of the fact that women's experiences in the workforce change as they advance from entry-level jobs to leadership roles and as they negotiate various life milestones like motherhood, caregiving, and retirement planning, this study aims to shed light on the unique stressors that women encounter across age groups and life stages. (Brown & Green, 2018; Davis, 2021). The particular stress factors that affect women's mental and physical health must be investigated as they continue to shatter glass ceilings and question conventional roles. (Roberts & White, 2017). Comprehending the complexities of job stress levels among female employees is not only imperative for ensuring workplace parity but also for advancing the general well-being, mental well-being, contentment and productivity of women employees. (Taylor, 2019). This study intends to educate organisations, politicians, and individuals on the need for specialised support systems, policies, and interventions to lessen the negative effects of stress on women's jobs and personal lives by analysing the changes in stress levels at different life stages. (Wilson, 2022). This research paper aspires to shed light on the intricate issue of stress experienced by women in the workforce and to provide valuable insights into the design of workplace environments and strategies that can foster a more inclusive, supportive, and stress-resilient culture (Harris, 2020). It underscores the urgency of addressing job stress among women, ensuring that every woman can thrive, succeed, and find fulfilment in her career and personal life, regardless of her age or life stage (Adams, 2019).

Literature Review

Stress in the workplace is a pervasive issue, and its impact on employees' well-being and productivity is a matter of increasing concern (Beehr et al., 2017). Women, in particular, experience a unique set of stressors as they navigate their careers and personal lives, with the challenges evolving across different life stages. This literature review explores existing research on job stress among women in various age groups and life stages, shedding light on the distinct factors contributing to their stress.

Women embarking on their careers often face stressors related to establishing themselves in the workplace, breaking into male-dominated fields, and striving to prove their competence (Eagly & Carli, 2020). Work-related stressors include heavy workloads, the pressure to meet high expectations, and the perception of gender bias (Eagly & Carli, 2020). Balancing the demands of

entry-level positions with personal life and the aspiration to move up the corporate ladder can be particularly challenging.

Women in mid-career stages frequently encounter stressors associated with motherhood and family responsibilities (Hill et al., 2018). The demands of raising children, arranging childcare, and managing work commitments can result in role conflict and feelings of burnout (Grzywacz et al., 2019). Employers often struggle to provide adequate maternity leave and family-friendly policies, compounding the stress for working mothers.

As women progress in their careers and approach retirement, stressors can shift to concerns about financial security and retirement planning (Calvo et al., 2016). The gender pay gap, which often persists throughout a woman's career, can leave them with lower retirement savings (Rix, 2017). This financial insecurity can be a significant source of stress as women age.

Women who break through the glass ceiling and reach leadership positions may still face gender-based stressors (Eagly & Carli, 2018). They may experience isolation, imposter syndrome, and heightened visibility, all of which can lead to substantial stress (Eagly & Carli, 2018).

A key stressor for women at all stages is the challenge of achieving work-life balance (Bailyn, 2019). The need for flexible work arrangements, as well as access to support services like affordable childcare, becomes crucial in mitigating stress (Perrigino et al., 2020).

It is important to acknowledge that the stress experienced by women is not uniform; it is influenced by intersectionality factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (Cole, 2021). Women from marginalized groups often face compounding stressors related to discrimination and bias.

Understanding these various stressors at different life stages is critical for organizations and policymakers to implement effective support systems and policies that address the unique needs of women (Brown et al., 2020). By tailoring interventions to the specific challenges women face, we can create more inclusive and supportive workplaces, ultimately benefiting both women employees and the organizations they work for.

Four factors were discovered to be the reason why female employees were not promoted to senior levels: 1) the notion that married women would not perform as well as their male counterparts; 2) promotions in hotels may be linked to a change of assignment to a different hotel chain, and married women are thought to be less mobile than men; 3) female employees typically need to put in significantly more hours than male employees in order to be as productive; and 4) the existence of cultural barriers that hinder women from advancing in their careers (Banerjee, 2017)

The study indicates that heavy schedules and tighter deadlines in IT sector is affecting the health of women employees plus the household chores are telling on the health of married women workers. They are becoming prone to restlessness and insomnia and the major cause identified in this study is domestic stress. (Vimala & Madhavi, 2009)

A job's nature that requires a lot of physical labour can also lead to tension and exhaustion, which could be a sign to leave the industry. Long work hours are cited by 31% of female

employees as a cause for leaving, which is closely tied to work-life balance. Other causes for leaving jobs include: unsuitable superior-subordinate relationship; work-related stress; limited prospects for professional advancement; and spouse transfer.(Zaheer, 2016)

Inter Role Distance (IRD), Role Stagnation (RS), Role Expectation Conflict (REC), Role Erosion (RE), Role Overload (RO), Personal Inadequacy (PI), Self-Role Distance (SRD), and Role Ambiguity (RA) are the eight stress variables that have been discovered among working women. (Makhija et al., 2016)

Aims & Objectives

The objectives of the current study were to (i) To Identify Age-Specific Job Stressors among women, (ii) To Identify specific stressors associated with different career stages such as entry-level, mid-career, and senior positions, (iii) To Explore the Short term & Long-Term Implications on Well-being of women, (iv) To Provide Recommendations for Workforce Policies and Practices, (v) To Contribute to a Comprehensive Understanding of Gender and Age Dynamics in Workplace Stress.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to capture a holistic understanding of women's experiences. Stratified random sampling has been used to select a diverse sample of women across different age groups, including young adults, middle-aged women, and elderly women, from various industries and sectors in Delhi-NCR. Purposive sampling has been employed to select participants for in-depth interviews. The tool was developed by the researcher herself and the standardization process was done to meet the criterial requirements.

A questionnaire was developed in two parts with three-point and five-point Likert scaling system. It was extensively utilized to collect quantitative data on job stress levels, demographics, coping strategies, and work-related factors. The questionnaire focused on the different facets of working life and how they can affect an employee's stress level. The elements that influence an employee's behaviour can be categorized as either contextual or content aspects. These characteristics also include the nature of the respondent and personality type, as well as aspects related to the connection between bosses and subordinates, rewards and challenges at work, freedom to work, and duty and accountability involved.

The scale has had 19 items in total each question with two parts. The statements were chosen in such a way that they reflect the present stress levels of the respondents. The responses to these questions were added as per the Likert scale. In this questionnaire every question is segregated in two parts A & B. In the first part of every question, they were asked general statements regarding nature of work, heavy work commitments, overtime, organizational structure, decision making, receptivity towards ideas and suggestions, conflicts and quarrels, compensation, salary

and other benefits, appreciation and recognition of their work, incompetence of other employees affecting their work, work- life balance, time with family and friends, sleep issues and physical and mental health issues. In the second part of the question the respondent was asked to provide rating on a five-point Likert scale as how the above-mentioned factors are found stressful i.e. not stressful, mildly stressful, moderately stressful, very stressful, extremely stressful.

A sample size of 280 was considered appropriate based upon the slovin's formula. The respondents were selected randomly; the only consideration in determining the inclusion of a person in the sample being that he /she should be working in an organization either private or Government in NCR. The response data were extracted and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS was used for data analysis, tabulation, and graphical presentation. The t-test was applied in accordance with the necessity and suitability to track the variation in responses from respondents in different categories.

Analysis

This empirical study attempts to determine the stress levels according to age, occupation, kind of work. Also evaluates the effect of workplace culture on women employees' stress levels and determine how stress relates to different aspects that matter to the respondents when they are working for the company.

The women employees are divided into two groups. One group consists of respondents with age equal to and less than 35 years and other group with age more than 35 years.

Job Stress levels	Age of women employees (in years)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std Error Mean	t-value
	< = 35	166	22.03	17.19	1.88709	3.14
	> 35	114	30.63	13.71	1.81708	

Table 1: Gives mean comparison of two groups on the level of stress that is those who are equal to and below the age of 35 years and above 35 years.

The above table shows that the Job stress of women with age ≤ 35 years is 22.03 with standard deviation of 17.19 and the Job stress of women with age > 35 years is 30.63 with standard deviation of 13.71. Therefore, the difference between the sample means is found to be significant.

We fail to reject the null hypothesis (at the 95% confidence level) that the variances are equal as because the Sig value for the F is greater than 0.5.

The t-value of 3.14 suggests that there is a statistically significant difference in mean stress levels between the two groups. Because the “Sig (2-tailed)” value is below .05, the coefficient is significant at 95% confidence. The mean difference of -8.59 implies that we can say, with 95% confidence, that “the mean job stress levels of women with >35 years of age is -8.59 higher than women with age =<35 years.

Based upon this analysis formative constructs are conceptualized as a collection of indicators that collectively are responsible for stress among working women namely workload, work related conflicts, lack of social support, health problems, dissatisfactory compensation, gender biasness and most importantly work life balance. As women aged above 35 years of age faces challenges like mid-career crises and more responsibilities of families it is evidently proved they are more stressed.

Findings and Conclusion

This study offers valuable insights into the complex relationship between age, gender, and job stress among women. Work-life balance is a key concern for all age groups, with challenges varying based on life stage. Young women seek flexible work arrangements to accommodate personal goals whereas Middle-aged women prioritize time management strategies to balance work and family obligations. Middle-aged women shoulder the combined weight of professional and caring obligations, whereas younger women are concentrated on making a name for themselves in the workforce. The transition from work to retirement presents particular difficulties for older women. Gender-related stressors are prominent, with unequal pay and limited career opportunities being common concerns across age groups.

The results emphasise how crucial it is to acknowledge the variety of needs and experiences that women have in the workplace. Organisations must put in place gender- and age-sensitive support networks and policies that address the unique stressors that women experience at various phases of their lives. These could include campaigns to reduce gender-based discrimination, mentorship programmes, and flexible work schedules.

This study suggests that stress level assessment is essential to identify the current stress level of employees in any workplace. This would help the companies to reduce its stress level further and maintain gender equity.

It is noteworthy to remark that the study's answer was positive and indicates that Indian women are gradually learning to speak out for what they deserve and want at home and at work.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Here are some suggestions and recommendations by the author for the organizations and employees both to identify, address and cope up with the stress levels among women employees.

- Foster open communication by creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment.
- Encourage employees to share their concerns and challenges.

- Pay attention to feedback and concerns raised during one-on-one meetings or team discussions.
- Consider whether workplace policies, such as maternity leave or childcare support, are adequate and accessible.
- Analyse HR data, such as employee turnover, sick leave, or performance reviews, to identify trends.
- Look for patterns that may suggest increased stress levels among women employees.
- Encourage employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance by offering flexible work arrangements, if possible.
- Promote the importance of taking breaks and using vacation time.
- Promote diversity and inclusion to ensure that women employees feel supported and valued.
- Address workplace issues, such as discrimination or harassment, promptly.
- Implement mental health awareness programs and destigmatize seeking help for mental health concerns.
- Provide information on local mental health resources and services.

Organizations must remember that addressing stress in the workplace is an ongoing process. It requires a commitment from both the organization and its employees to create a healthy and supportive work environment. Additionally, respecting the privacy and confidentiality of employees is crucial when dealing with sensitive issues like stress.

As we stand at the crossroads of evolving workplace structures, societal changes, and the dynamic experiences of women across their career trajectories, this research champions the need for continued exploration and adaptation to ensure that women can thrive, lead, and excel under the pressures of the modern professional world.

Limitations of the study

As the data is collected at a single point in time, causal relationships cannot be established definitively.

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