

Levels of Neuroticism between Working Women and Non- Working Women

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ABSTRACT

In the present times, work has become demanding and is in turn interfering with the psychological well-being of an individual. The pressure to perform well and being consistent at that is not what everyone can handle and people are increasingly becoming vulnerable to stress. The tendency to be vulnerable to anxiety, depression and other negative feelings when faced with potentially stressful situations is known as Neuroticism. Although people with neuroticism tend to have more depressed moods such as feelings of guilt, envy, anger and anxiety, more frequently and more severely than other individuals it does not mean that they are abnormal. To show the significance of work-stress and work-family conflict, comparisons in levels of neuroticism was made between working and non-working women. The study makes use of Manual for Medico Psychological Questionnaire (MPQ) by Dr. J Bharath Raj. Data was collected using a convenient sample of women from different backgrounds. Results showed that non-working women have higher level of neuroticism as compared to their working counterparts. The objective of this research was to understand how external circumstances and situations affect an individual (woman) and it was concluded that even though working women have to balance work and family together, being a home-maker (housewife) takes an unexpected toll on the physiological and psychological well-being of a woman. The study explores different methods and techniques that help individuals adapt to changes like familiarization, meditation, yoga and other stress relieving techniques that can be performed by the affected individual on their own.

Keywords: *Neuroticism, Working Women, Non-Working Women, Stress, Vulnerability, Psychological Wellbeing*

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The environment that we interact with in is dynamic in nature and is a constant source for stress as it demands adaptations to be made to be in sync. Concept of stress was first introduced in the life science by ‘Hans Selye’ in 1936. As per Lazarous and Folkman (1984) “Stress as an internal state, which can be caused by physical demand on the body.”

Approximately 75 percent of the diseases are related to stress. Many chronic illnesses related to heart, cancer, diabetes and maladjusted behaviour are an outcome of inability to cope with stress. Most researches support the belief that some level of stress is essential for mental and physical well-being, but higher or lower levels of stress may interfere in day to day life.

Change in the environment and coping with it to adapt to the new environment constantly provides to an individual’s level of stress as it needs constant evaluation of threats and opportunities. Change is unavoidable in routine life and specifically while working in organizations. As the wise Greek philosopher Heraclitus rightly said, “Change is the only constant. It is therefore necessary to embrace the change and be flexible enough to adapt to it in order to remain an asset or a value addition to the organization. Resisting change can make one rigid and non-receptive to new opportunities.

An individual’s attitude towards change determines the emotions, feelings and experience of the ongoing change. Individuals, who view change as being positive, see it as an opportunity to learn and grow and others who view it negatively fear it and avoid it. Downsizing, reinventing, reorganizing, merging, acquiring, joint venturing, relocating and restructuring are those organizational activities that bring change.

There are two main ways of coping with stress as discussed by Mel Fugate, Angelo J. Kinicki, and Gregory E. Prussia.

- 1.) Control coping: is a positive way to view change and cope with it proactively. It is taking charge of the situation and becoming a part of finding solutions to manage the change. It is the refusal to feel like being a victim of change and passively accepting or avoiding change.
- 2.) Escaping coping: is a negative view of change and is based on avoiding change. It is taking actions in such a way that helps in avoiding the demands of change.

There are multiple ways to cope with the changes and stress produced in an organizational setup. It is of prime importance that all the employees need to be prepared for change. One should be ready to face the change and have a plan and strategies as to how the predicted change can be handled. Feelings regarding the change should not be suppressed but communicated openly with superiors and co-workers.

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Expectations from change should be realistic and voiced explicitly in order to be fulfilled. Increased workload, pressure and demands should be duly acknowledged and no abuse should be tolerated

All employees leisure time should be protected. When the companies are undergoing change, the extra workload in order to be at par with new trends tends to wear away the remaining employees' free time, taking up lunches, weekends, evenings and holidays for overtime work. Although they are paid for working overtime, they should not be under pressure as leisure time is necessary to cool off.

Family should not be ignored. Work and family should be an equal priority. There should be a balance between work life and family life. When either of them is given more importance, the equilibrium may get disturbed and the worker may find themselves in trouble. Work stress should not be handled through the means of alcohol, drugs, food or other maladaptive coping behaviours. This can be harmful to ones' health and may lead to substance dependency or substance abuse.

Those employees, who get fired, laid off or who remain employed often experience headaches, body pain, anxiety, nervousness, irritability and disturbances in sleep. They resort to quick and easy fixes which only seem to make problems go away but persist once the effect of these substances wear away. Consuming alcohol and drugs makes people lose touch with reality. It helps them become numb evade their emotion instead of confronting them and finding solutions. Instead healthier practices such meditation, yoga, exercise, playing sports or even activities like gardening, painting and coloring, listening to music help to lessen stress by a process called earthing. It brings awareness back into the individual by forcing them to use all their sense organs.

Meditation is a very positive approach that has been used for decades and has its roots in Buddhism. It involves in focusing on the breath or bodily sensations. This in turn brings about awareness of the current state of mind and helps the individual calm down and also become more attentive and therefore increasing their efficiency.

Stress, which is most often produced by change, seems to be involved in much of our happiness, irritability and dissatisfaction. Although some people are hardly seen to be affected by a stressor; they possess a personality trait known as 'Hardiness'. Psychological hardiness refers to the coping strategies, attitudes and beliefs that help people work through the stressors of life. They consist of three components – commitment, control and challenge (Lambert & Lambert, 1999.)

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study was conducted by *Hashmi Ahmed Hina (2007)* to determine the marital adjustment, depression and stress between working and non-working married women. A sample of 150 working and non-working married women was taken for the study and their education was at least gradation and above. All the women in the sample belonged to middle and high socio-economic status.

The results of the study indicated a highly significant relationship between marital adjustment, stress and depression. The findings of the results also show that:

1. Working married women have to face more problems in their married life as compared to non-working married women.
2. On further analyzing the results, it showed that highly educated working and non-working married women can perform well in their married life and they are free from depression as compared to lesser educated working and non-working married women.

Khanna. S (1992) conducted a study to determine life stress among working and nonworking women's in relation to anxiety and depression. The sample size taken here was of 406 women, who were based in Jalandhar (Punjab) and Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) in India.

A correlation analysis reveals that:

- 1.) Anxiety is negatively related to positive life change in non-working women, i.e. higher the positive change in life, lower the anxiety and vice versa is true.
- 2.) Depression is positively related to positive life change in working women.
- 3.) Depression negative life change in nonworking women.

Sanlier Nevin (2007) study was conducted to determine the relationship between stress and working status in a sample of working and non-working women. Data, for the study, was gathered from 540 women who were living in Turkey. Mean, standard deviation and T test were performed on the data. Stress system scale, stress related factors and total stress score were significantly associated with state of working. Family issues, issues related to environmental, social-self issues, issues regarding individual roles and financial issues had a higher score in working women than that of the non-working women's. Working women also scored averagely high in the scales of immune system and susceptibility to stress scale than the non-working women. The total stress score of working women was determined to be higher compared to non-working women and that there is a significant difference between women's working status and total stress scores. Working women's have higher level of stress than non-working women's. The results suggest that working status was associated with increased levels of stress in Turkish women's.

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METHOD

For this study, 78 women were approached out of which, 33 were working women and 45 were non-working women. The tool used was Manual for Medico-Psychological Questionnaire by Dr. J. Bharath Raj. It consists of 50 items and each item is to be answered by the subject - encircling either Yes, No or Doubtful (?). Total score is obtained by multiplying the total number of Yes by 2 and the total numbers of Doubtful (?) answers by 1. This total score is reflective of general neuroticism which is interpretable on the “emotional adjustment- mal adjustment” continuum. The entire test can be divided into subcategories namely, Hysteria (11 items), Anxiety neurosis (14 items), Neurasthenia (14 items), Reactive Depression (21 items) and Obsession Compulsion (9 items). According to the manual, any individual who obtains a score of 46 or more should be considered as neurotic. An individual who obtains a score falling between the limits of 17 and 45 should be considered as falling within the normal range and individuals obtaining scores of 16 or less must be considered as emotionally stable and well balanced.

RESULTS

The total score of the women was examined to classify the value of neuroticism into Low, Average and High category. Minimum score obtained was 5 by a working woman and maximum score obtained was 62 by a non-working woman. About 23% of the total women interviewed fall in the category of High of which, 15% are working women and 29% are non-Working women. It can be seen that approximately 27% of working women are emotionally stable as compared to the 7% of non-working women. 58% of working women can be considered normal out of the total 33 working women and 64% of non-working women fall in the same category out of the total 45 non-working women.

Table 1	Working Women		Non-Working Women		Total (N)
	n	%	n	%	
Low	9	27.3	3	6.7	12
Average	19	57.6	29	64.4	48
High	5	15.1	13	28.9	18
Total (N)	33		45		78

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study examined the prevalence of neuroticism or stress among women (working and non-working) and found that stress cannot be accounted for only by the work place or home environment of women but also the kind of emotional stress they undergo in dealing with their own difficulties. Although many researches prove that stress levels of working women is higher, as compared to non-working women the results of our study are contradictory, therefore we conclude that there may be some unknown factors that affect the ability of women to deal with stress and cope with change both at work and at home. The study leaves room for further

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research in future in the area of stressors that affect women and improving their mental and physical well-being.

Women are expected to take care of their family members if they are working outside the house which can create some conflict if they aren't able to meet their own expectations of work because of their responsibilities. On the other hand, if women are home makers, their house work is often neglected as "work" and they are given the status of non-working women.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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