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STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG WORKING WOMEN: CAUSES AND COPE UP STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT   Families today are seeing rapid changes due to the increased pace of growth and modernization. Indian women belonging to all classes have entered into various professions which causes stress in their personal and professional life. Women's exposure to educational opportunities is significantly higher than it was some years ago, especially in the cities. Our study have identified socio-economic stressors, psychological and family and relationship stressors causing stress among working women and strategies to cope up with it. The findings of the study reveal that under socio-economic stressors unexpected guests, followed by absence of domestic help causes major stress among working women. Similarly being perfectionist with unnecessary worries which cause psychological set back among working women. Moreover anxiety about children future and husbands job insecurity play a major role in causing stress under family and relationship. Thus the study suggests that the working women need to have work life balance and imbibe stress management strategies like meditation, balanced diet filled with entertainment and fun to lead a stress free life.

Introduction
Women in India have come a long way after independence. From just a skilled homemaker, women today have acquired skills and capabilities of not just being a homemaker but being at par with their male counterparts. This is the new generation of women, who wants to pursue their dream career. But this life is not a bed of roses for all. Stress is anything that disrupts the routine, physical or mental well-being of individuals. It occurs when the body performs beyond his capabilities or when a person faces unusual demands. A simple demonstration of stress may be a bad temper while a severe display may be an act of violent behavior. A stressor is a cause that creates stress. A stressor can be either positive or negative on the basis of how person reacts. For example, one person may view stressor as a motivator, whereas another person may identify it as a constraint. Stress can be positive or negative. Positive stress is known as estruses and negative stress as distress. Distress affects physical and mental well being of a person. Estruses trigger the body and mind to perform creatively. Distress has a negative stress which affects the mental composure of a person. Some of these problems are insomnia, eating disorders, heart problems, and suicidal tendencies. Devoid of stress, a person becomes sluggish and boring. Positive stress encourages a person to achieve better. However, if this stress exceeds beyond the required level it causes distress. The perception of stress varies among individuals and they have their own stress endurance as some tend to work better under pressure, while the others cannot bear last minute syndrome.

Review of Literature :
Our family situations are entwined with stress and strains where working women they have to cope up with all pressures at work as well as at home. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) reported that the stressors, not only affects major life events but also encompasses ongoing minor events like electricity failure, maid not turned up, unexpected guests and child's misbehavior. Stress is not uncontrollable. With proper understanding of the stressors that cause stress, the situation can be well managed. In India research on family stress management had been of low concern because of lack of awareness and importance of stress in our family life. Kapur (1974) indicated that women who choose to combine marriage with career face a situation of helplessness and they hardly know how to allocate time and resources between these two major responsibilities. Paterson (1978) confirmed that the job taken by women created more conflicting situations for them due to dual role played and inability to tolerate the whole burden. Similarly, Holahan and Gilbert (1979) also reported that women who assumed home roles (e.g. wife, mother and a home maker) and non home roles (e.g. employee) frequently experienced conflict between competing role demands. However, Barnett and Baruch (1985) found that role conflict and levels of overload were significantly associated with occupying the role of mother but were not

significantly associated with occupying the role of paid worker or wife. In opinion of Frone M.R. Russell (1992) combination of career and family roles are often associated with conflict, overload and stress.

Objectives:
The main objectives of the study are to find out the various factors contributing to stress among working women, to identify the impact of the stress management techniques used by working women, to analyze the mental and physical stress among working women.

Research Methodology:
The study includes exploratory research on the concerned areas relating to working women and the stress levels that are constantly being felt by them and try to highlight the situation in context of such problem and tried to suggest some of them for correcting the situation.Data was collected mainly using secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines and online sources such as websites and blogs.

Factors causing Stress:
1. Child Prospect's : Some researchers have revealed that mothers who return to work after their baby is born risk causing serious damage to the child's prospects in later life. Such children are more likely to do worse at school, become unemployed and to suffer mental stress than youngsters whose mothers stay at home to bring them up.
2. Income difficulties in social context: If a mother works, then childcare has to be arranged. In some cases, childcare costs can eat up much of the mother's wage. For low-income families, a second wage may actually leave the family in the same or worse financial position than a single wage, simply because the Parenting Allowance is income-tested.
3. Stress loads are higher for working mothers: Recent survey in a health magazine reported that managing the dual roles of mother and worker is extremely hard. Findings include: Over 60 per cent of working mothers feel they take out their stress on their families. Close to half of all working mothers would prefer to be full-time mothers, while around one fifth would like to work from home. Just four per cent of working mothers would elect to work full-time if they had the choice. Nearly eight out of 10 working mothers would quit their jobs if they could.
4. Housework is still considered as woman's work: Various Researches indicates that married women with children are worse off than ever before, which is why they are initiating divorce in higher numbers and having fewer children.
5. Sick children of working women: Many working mothers dread the possibility of their child getting sick and needing care during usual business hours. Most employers only provide paid

sick leave for unwell employees. This means that many working mothers have to take annual leave or unpaid leave in order to stay home and care for their sick children.

Strategies to Cope up with stress:

1. Understand Gender differences in stress: If as a woman is feeling more stressed than their male counterparts, then they shouldn't take it as a sign that they are not handling stress as well; it might be because they are experiencing more stress.They should uplift themselves for handling what they already are, and should move confidently to next step.

2. Prioritize & Eliminate what you can: Women are associated with organising events in home and office. They may fall in situations where saying' no' becomes difficult for them especially when the work may seem to be easy and happy mood persists around the environment. They need to encourage themselves to be politely responding negatively to reduce the already existing stress. They must prioritize what's necessary and what can be avoided.

3. Alter or chande ypur perspective: Much of the experience with stress can be eliminated with a change in the way we look at things. This may sound too good to be true, but it isn't! Altering the way to conceptualize the events like finding or viewing them as a "challenge" instead of a "threat," or an "opportunity" instead of a "crisis,". The point is to make them feel less threatening and stressful. When people don't perceive a situation as a threat, then the body's stress response is deactivated more quickly (or doesn't get triggered in the first place), and individual's may be more capable of avoiding the effects of chronic stress.

4. Have some quick stress relievers: Fast stress relievers may be adopted my working women to avoid the monotony of stress . Such may include reading a book of jokes, listening to songs or discussion on general topics with colleagues.

5. Maintain regular stress – relieving habits:One can avoid stress from occurring in the first place by maintaining or practicing regular stress relieving activities. It may include Exercises ,Yoga, meditation etc. This can be inducted in either morning or evening schedule for regular days.It can be stretched further during holidays or weekends.

6. Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) :Stemming from Mayo's Hawthorne Studies, Employee Assistance Programs were designed to assist employees in dealing with the basic causes of stress. Some programs included were counselling and psychological services for employees and workers. There are organizations that uses EAPs today, but the popularity has diminished substantially because of the advent of stress management training (SMT).

7. Stress Management Training: Stress Management Training (SMT) is employed by many organizations today as a method to get employees to either work through regular stress or to control their stress levels. The idea is to maintain stress levels below instances of burnout.

8. Stress Interventions:Several Researches has been conducted that links certain interventions, such as narrative writing or topic-specific training to reductions in physiological and psychological stress.

9. Problem based Coping: On an individual basis, employees can cope with the problems related to burnout and stress by focusing on the causes of their stress. Various therapies, such as Neurofeedback therapy, claim to assist in cases of burnout. This type of coping has successfully been linked to reductions in individual stress.

10. Appraisal-based coping: Appraisal-based coping strategies deal with individual interpretations of what is and is not a stress inducing activity. There have been mixed findings related to the effectiveness of appraisal-based coping strategies.

11. Social Support:Social support has been seen as one of the largest predictors toward a reduction in burnout and stress for workers. It require creating an organizationally-supportive environment as well as ensuring that all the employees have supportive work environments .This may negate some of the severe affects of stress and burnouts.

Conclusion and Suggestions :

Economic conditions of inflation, desire to maintain high standard of living, or develop "one s identity" are contributing to the economic push of women into the work force. Thus, financial burden is stated as main stressors among working women. But as women increasingly gain occupational mobility, they are not only exposed to the same physical hazards of work environment as men but also exposed to the pressures created by multiple role demands and conflicting expectations. By fulfilling their economic needs, employment has no doubt made women independent with an identifiable social status but it has also made them to juggle into two main domains of life- work and family. They have stepped into work place but the role responsibilities of women still remain the same. Multi-tasking is the buzzword these days for working women. An individual requires special skills to perform multiple tasks simultaneously. One way to minimize stress while multi-tasking is to plan, prioritize, and perform. It can thus be concluded that working women were significantly more stressed. It is also important to broaden the horizons of one s mind right from one s youth so that one can overcome the possessiveness excessive attachment, too many & choosy expectations from family members (which are usually responsible for discord & bitterness in family). One should be flexible about this point. Dependence to some extent is many times inevitable and hence should not be taken as pitiability. This involves efforts to acquire physical, instinctual, emotional & intellectual well being. In addition, total well being pertains not merely to an individual (analogous to a cell) but to whole mankind in fact whole universe (analogous to an organism).

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