

## A Study of Occupational Stress Among Women Professionals



### Psychology

**KEYWORDS :** Occupational Stress, Women Professionals, Lawyers, Doctors, Engineers.

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study examines the Occupational stress among Women Professionals (Lawyers, Doctors and Engineers). The sample for the study consisted of 300 women professionals (100 from each profession). Purposive random sampling procedure was used for the study. The sample was administered the Occupational Stress Index developed by Dr.A.K.Srivastava and T.R. Singh(1984). The obtained data was organized for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD) and ANOVA (F' test) were computed. Significant difference in stress was found among Doctors than Lawyers and Engineers. Significant difference was found among various aspects of Occupational stress.*

### Introduction:

Among the hardest part of living in the modern world is stress and anxiety with worries about work, environment, the economy, natural disasters, terrorism and general states of the world. Everyone faces stress- businessmen, professors, men, women and children. Occupational stress is defined as an event or situation in which one or more job stressors interact with the worker and leads to acute disruption of psychological or behavioral homeostasis. Occupational stress can occur when there is discrepancy between the demands of the environment/workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete these demands. Stress can be managed, but cannot be done away with. It is lately suggested that stress is necessary to the well-being and the lack can be harmful. It is a subjective experience. Work stress is recognized worldwide as a major challenge to worker's health and healthiness of their organizations

### Professional Women

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. In ancient India, the women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields of life. The Indian woman's position in the society further deteriorated during the medieval period from equal status to low status. In modern India, women have adorned high offices in including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition. However, women in India continue to face discrimination and other social challenges and are often being victims of abuse and violence. A majority of women (63%) worldwide define professional success as having the right balance between work and personal life and nearly three quarters of women (74%) believe they can 'have it all', according to What Women Want @ Work study released by LinkedIn. Indian women still face blatant discrimination at their workplaces. In spite of all these hurdles, women have entered into the so called male dominated professions as engineers, managers, doctors, pilots, lawyers, designers, architects, Police force and defense as well. Thus the professional woman's occupation is fluid and multidimensional.

### Need for the present study

The present study was an attempt to understand professional women's role in the male dominated professions. Traditionally, women are thought to be a home maker, rearing children and taking care of home. But now, there has been an increase of women in service industries because of their competencies and social acceptance. Women have been found to handle multiple tasks with sincerity, sensitivity and compassion both at work and home. Women's role in the family is changing due to increasing hours of work spent at work leading to emotional spill over in the family life. Understanding these issues will help sug-

gest coping skills. This study will provide information that will dictate occupational choices and help organizations to realize the weak link that increase the stress, thereby developing a strategy towards its reduction.

### Objective of the study:

The objective of the study was to find the level of occupational stress among Women professionals. Based on the objectives, certain null hypotheses were framed.

### Hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in occupational stress between Lawyers, Doctors and Engineers.
2. There is no significant difference in the different aspects of occupational stress among the three women professionals.

### Review of Literature:

Gaur, Shubra Prateek and Dhawan, Nisha(2000) studied work related stress(WRS) and adaptation pattern among women professionals. A sample of 120 was chosen between ages 25-55 years women professionals(teachers, doctors, bank officers and bureaucrats) participated in the study. Women in all four professions reported moderate WRS.

Ghosh, Anjali(2000) studied three dimensions of occupational adjustment namely occupational stress, psychological strain and coping resources among physicians and executives. Executives were found to possess more occupational stress than the physicians. Executives differed significantly in terms of role insufficiency and responsibility. Coping resources were found to be high in the areas of social support and rational /cognitive coping among both the groups.

### Research Design:

Ex post facto research design.

### Variables

Independent variable: Three group of women professionals between the ages of 22-55 years.

Dependent variable: Responses to occupational stress.

### Sample

A study was conducted on three groups of 100 women from each profession(Lawyers, Doctors and Engineers)aged between 22-55 years in and around Bangalore city. The sample was selected using a purposive random sampling procedure.

### Tool:

Occupational Stress Index: The scale was developed by

Dr.A.K.Srivastava and T.R. Singh(1984) to measure the extent of stress arising from various constituents and conditions of job. The scale consists of 46 items which is representative of twelve sub scales. It is rated on a five point scale.

**Reliability:**

The author has reported a reliability index by split half method and Cronbach's alpha- coefficient to be .935 and .90 respectively.

**Validity:**

The validity was found to reveal positive correlation with measures of job attitudes and job behavior.

**Procedure**

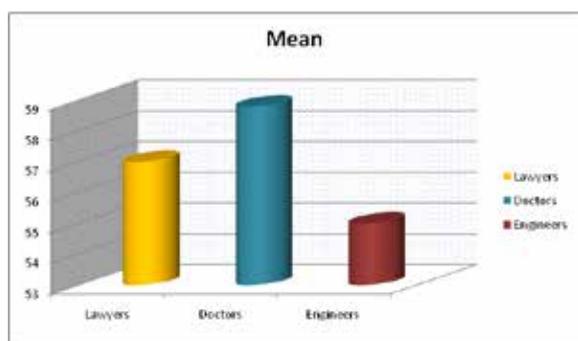
In order to collect data for the research, women professionals were contacted personally to get their consent to participate in the study. The purpose of the study was briefed and rapport was established. Their biographical information was obtained in the data sheet prepared for the purpose which contained age, education, occupational position, experience etc. Ethical issues like confidentiality of information and convenience of subjects for data collection were strictly followed. The participants were informed of the choice to withdraw themselves from the research at any point during the responding period. Occupational stress index was administered to the participant. The obtained responses were scored and interpreted.

**Results and Discussions:**

**Table 1**  
**Mean, SD and 'F' test value of Lawyers, Doctors and Engineers on Occupational Stress Index.**

|                | Lawyers  | Doctors | Engineers |
|----------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| Percentile     | 56.0     | 71.0    | 36.0      |
| Mean           | 57.0     | 58.8    | 55.0      |
| SD             | 7.4      | 4.2     | 5.6       |
| Interpretation | Moderate | High    | Moderate  |
| 'F' test value | 10.52*   |         |           |

\*P < 0.05



**Fig 1** Mean scores of Lawyers, Doctors and Engineers on Occupational stress Index.

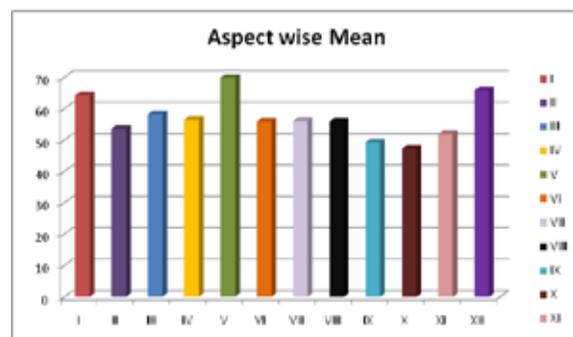
The above table shows the mean occupational stress scores among the three groups of women professionals. Doctors are found with considerably more stressed ( 58.8%) followed by Lawyers (57.0%) and Engineers (55.0%). Doctors are found with considerably more stress than lawyers and engineers in the study. The statistical test indicates that there is significant difference in the occupational stress scores among the group of professionals (F=10.52\*). Thus disproving the hypothesis which states – “There is no significant difference between Lawyers, Doctors and Engineers”. This has been supported by Koleck.M et al (2000) study who examined the job stress, coping and burnout among French general practitioners. Findings revealed that physician perceived stress was harmful as it induced emotional exhaustion, which

leads to professional dissatisfaction

**Table 2**  
**Mean, SD and 'F' test value of various aspects of Occupational Stress among Lawyers, Doctors and Engineers on Occupational Stress Index.**

| Sl no. | Aspects of Occupational Stress | Occupational Stress Scores (%) |      |                 |      |                   |      | F value |
|--------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------|------|---------|
|        |                                | Lawyers (n=100)                |      | Doctors (n=100) |      | Engineers (n=100) |      |         |
|        |                                | Mean                           | SD   | Mean            | SD   | Mean              | SD   |         |
| I      | Role overload                  | 65.9                           | 14.0 | 71.1            | 11.3 | 55.8              | 9.6  | 44.03*  |
| II     | Role ambiguity                 | 53.9                           | 16.7 | 57.1            | 9.7  | 49.9              | 11.8 | 7.53*   |
| III    | Role conflict                  | 57.4                           | 16.2 | 60.7            | 8.4  | 56.4              | 9.6  | 3.56*   |
| IV     | Unreasonable group             | 54.4                           | 15.4 | 60.1            | 12.5 | 55.0              | 9.9  | 5.95*   |
| V      | Responsibility for persons     | 72.5                           | 10.6 | 69.3            | 10.3 | 67.8              | 14.6 | 4.07*   |
| VI     | Underparticipation             | 58.9                           | 10.3 | 56.0            | 12.0 | 54.8              | 11.1 | 0.93NS  |
| VII    | Powerlessness                  | 55.7                           | 13.0 | 60.6            | 10.8 | 51.9              | 10.8 | 14.25*  |
| VIII   | Poor peer relation             | 55.2                           | 8.8  | 57.0            | 9.6  | 55.6              | 11.0 | 0.87 NS |
| IX     | Intrinsic impoverishment       | 47.0                           | 11.3 | 50.4            | 7.2  | 50.6              | 11.0 | 4.22*   |
| X      | Law status                     | 44.8                           | 13.2 | 45.1            | 7.1  | 51.6              | 12.6 | 11.54*  |
| XI     | Strenuous working condition    | 54.7                           | 12.8 | 46.1            | 9.3  | 54.8              | 12.6 | 18.19*  |
| XII    | Unprofitability                | 67.2                           | 17.2 | 71.9            | 12.4 | 58.7              | 13.6 | 21.14*  |
|        | Combined                       | 57.0                           | 7.4  | 58.8            | 4.2  | 55.0              | 5.6  | 10.52*  |

\*P < 0.05, NS: Not significant



**Fig 1** Aspect wise mean occupational stress among women professionals.

The above table indicates the aspect wise mean occupational stress of professionals. The statistical 'F' test value indicates that only under participation and poor peer relationship is not significantly different among the professionals. In the remaining aspects of occupational stress, significant differences were found in the occupational stress among the group of women professionals. A study done by D'souza et al;(2005) aimed at comparing the occupational stress level experienced by executives, managers and engineers. Results revealed that executives have highest role overload and strenuous working conditions. Engineers are said to possess the highest scores in role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group, political pressure, under participation and powerlessness, lowest score in low status and overall highest occupational stress. Managers have the least strenuous working conditions as compared to executives and engineers

**Conclusion**

Current study reveals that role overload is very high among Doctors, than Lawyers and Engineers as there is insufficient

supporting staff, hurrying work due to excessive work load and strenuous, insufficient time to the domestic and personal problems. Role conflict is also found to be high among doctors followed by lawyers and engineers as they are pulled between familial and professional obligation, away from the family spending long hours in the hospital.

#### Limitations of the study

1. The chosen professional women only consisted of Lawyers, Doctors, Engineers and not other professions.
2. The study was conducted on women professionals in and around Bangalore city, thereby restricting the scope to understand the occupational stress of women outside Bangalore city.
3. The study was on only working women so the scope to understand the non-working women was restricted.
4. The study was on women and gender differences in occupational stress could not be assessed.

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