



UGC-Aligned | HEI-Approved Peer Reviewed Refereed Journal (Under New UGC Guidelines)

ROLE & STRESS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

HARSHITHA HP

Department of Psychology, GFGC, Tiptur

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, stress has been the focus of intense research attention. Stress is a misfit between the demands of the environment and the individual's abilities; the imbalance may be corrected, according to the situation, either by adjusting external demands to fit the individual or by strengthening the individual's ability to cope or both.

Women are socialized to be the caretakers of others, Move women than men have both a career outside the home and continue to try to juggle traditional responsibilities after hours, It has often been shown that women are the worriers and often do not make time to manage their health and take care of themselves.

Stress is on the rise for women as they struggle to find a balance between their homes and careers. The recession has caused a greater need for women to work outside of the home to support their families.

Health is a general condition of the body or mind with reference to soundness and vigor it will be reflected by good or poor health.

A poor health affects our mind, as a stressed life affects our health. The struggle that women confront each day trying to achieve the standards of being a daughter, woman, wife, mother, house and career keeper, puts us in a vulnerable position of presenting stress effects that may affect our health. And there are some preventive measures to cope with stress such as meditation, yoga, quality time etc.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a universal phenomenon, All people experience it, Stress affects the whole person in all the human dimensions, the perception of stress and the responses to it are highly individualized, not only from person to person, but also from one time to another in the same person .

Definition

Stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand for change”.-Selye.

Stress as that which occurs when "an individual perceives that the demands of an external situation are beyond his or her perceived ability to cope with them." -Lazarus and Folkman.

WHAT IS HEALTH

The word health refers to a state of complete emotional, mental, and physical well-being. People may be able to maintain or improve their health by eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and connecting with Others

Definition:

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. – WHO (1946).

“Health is the condition of being sound in body, mind and spirit, especially freedom from physical disease or pain. – Webster

CAUSES OF STRESS IN WOMAN

Stress in women is heavily driven by the “Second Shift” – juggling high pressure careers with disproportionate caregiving and household responsibilities.

The primary drivers of stress in women can be categorized into four distinct areas:

1. Domestic & Care giving Demands

- The “mental load” : women frequently take on the role of family manager, anticipating and coordinating domestic and childcare tasks, which leads to chronic cognitive fatigue.
- Caregiving Burnout: women are more likely to serve as the primary caregivers for both Children and aging parents or relatives.
- Relationship Inequality: Unbalanced division of household labour with partners frequently leads to frustration and emotional strain.

2. Career & Economic Pressures

- Work-life conflict: Attempting to achieve a standard of professional excellence while bearing the brunt of home life creates a high-pressure balancing act.
- Financial Worries: Women consistently report higher levels of disturbance over the cost of living. Unexpected expenses, and wage gaps compared to men.

3. Biological & Health Factors:

- Hormonal shifts: Fluctuations in estrogen and progesterone – especially during premenstrual syndrome (PMS), pregnancy, postpartum, menopause, can heighten the body’s physiological stress response.
- Health Challenges: Managing chronic health conditions or navigating life-altering diagnoses.

4. Societal & cultural Expectations:

- Cultural Roles: Many women face heavy familial and societal pressures regarding traditional roles and expectations, leaving very little time for Personal rest or relaxation.
- Trauma & Abuse: Women are statistically more vulnerable to experiencing trauma and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, which can trigger severe, long term, chronic stress

HOW DOES STRESS IN WOMEN DIFFER FROM STRESS IN MEN?

While everyone experiences stress, it can affect women and men differently. For example, the American Psychological Association's 2023 stress in America study found the following:

- Women reported a higher average level of stress than men.
- Women were more likely than men to say that they could have used more emotional support.
- Women felt more disturbed by financial worries than men.
- Women were more likely than men to rank family responsibilities and relationships as major stressors in their lives.

Researchers believe that biological factors like hormones may affect how each sex experiences stress differently.

The Symptoms of stress in women

There are many symptoms of stress. Everyone reacts to stress in unique ways. Common symptoms of stress in women include:

1. physical:- Headache, difficulty sleeping, muscle tension, pain, overeating / undereating, skin issues, drug and alcohol misuse, lack of energy, less interest in sex.
2. Emotional:- Anxiety, depression, anger, unhappiness, irritability, feelings of being out of control, mood swings, frustration.
3. Mental :- Forgetfulness, worry, can't make decisions, negative thinking, lack of focus, boredom, loss of interest in things that you usually enjoy, no motivation.
4. Occupational: work overload, burnout, long hours, tense relations, poor concentration.
5. Social:- Less intimacy, isolation, family problems loneliness

How does stress affect women health?

When you feel stress for a long period of time, it's known as chronic stress. It can cause health complications like:

- Severe or frequent headaches, (migraines)
- Heart conditions (High blood pressure, heart disease and heart attack).
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Mental Health conditions (panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, major depression)
- muscle tension and pain
- Obesity (stress-related weight gain)...

- Stroke.
- Suppressed immune system. [difficult to recover after an illness].

How can women better manage stress

Women can manage stress by prioritizing practicing healthy self-care coping strategies . Here are some suggestions to get started.

- Cognitive reframing:- instead of saying "I need to do this", say " I get to do this "
- Eat well-balanced meals,
- Enjoy nature.
- Exercise ex participate in a physical activity that gets your body moving."
- Get enough sleep [Seven to nine hours/ night).
- Practice, relaxation techniques (like yoga, meditation, deep breathing)
- practice gratitude..
- Schedule time for yourself to do activities/hobbies you enjoy.
- Spend time socializing with friends and family
- Start Journaling.

Next you can follow some tips that focus on your mental wellbeing:

- Identify the sources of your stress.
- Count to 10: If you're angry about a situation, try walking away and counting to 10.
- Accept and care for yourself like you do for others.
- Find Social support.
- Do a digital (social media detox)
- Seek help

REFERENCE

- [1].Fleming, R. Baum, A & Singer, J.E (1984).- Toward an integrative approach to a study a stress, Journal of personality and social psychology. 46,939-949.
- [2].Ford, M.T. B.A Heinen and K.L. Langkamer, 2007. Work and family satisfaction and conflict. A. Meta analysis of crass-domain relations, J. Applied psychology. 92; 57.80
- [3].Godchel, R. J. & Baum, A (1983) An Introduction to health prychology, Reading MA Addison Wesley
- [4].Lazarus, R.S. f Folkman, S. (1984), Stress, Appraisal and coping. Werewolf trots
- [5].Yourkin, FL.2010, work family Spillover, division of labor and relationship satisfaction, MSC. Thesis, Ohio state university
- [6].Sarason, I. G. Johnson, JH. & Sigel J.M (1978). Assessing the life of impact charge Development of life Experiences Survey, journal a consulting and clinical psychology 46,932-946.