

# **ASSESSING THE STRESS LEVEL OF SELECTED WOMEN**

By  
**LAVANYA. T**  
(07 PIR 03)

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  
AVINASHILINGAM UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN  
COIMBATORE – 641 043

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN**

**INTERIOR DESIGN AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

APRIL 2009

# Certificate

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SIGNATURE OF THE  
HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT



SIGNATURE OF  
THE GUIDE

# **Acknowledgement**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The investigator wishes to express her sincere thanks to **Thiru.T.K.SHANMUGANANDAM, B.A., B.L., Chancellor,** Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore, for providing an opportunity to carry out this academic exercise leading to the award of Master of Science in Home Science-Resource Management.

The investigator expresses her thanks to **Dr. (Tmt.) SAROJA PRABAKARAN, M.A., Dip. Ed. (Madras), Ph.D. (Mother Teresa), Vice Chancellor and Director of Hall of Residence,** Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore, for the facilities provided to carry out the study.

The investigator owes her sincere gratitude to **Dr. (Tmt.) GOWRI RAMAKRISHNAN, M.Sc. (Madras), M.Phil., Ph.D. (Avinashilingam), Registrar,** Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore, for her constant support.

The investigator also thank to **Dr. (Tmt.) SATHYAVATHI MUTHU, M.Sc., Dip. Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D., Dean, Faculty of Home Science,** Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore, for her constant help and support at all times of need.

The investigator feels highly elated in manifesting her glowing sense of gratitude to her esteemed guide **Dr. (Tmt.) A. VENMATHI, M.Sc., Dip. Ed., M.Phil. (Madras), Ph.D. (Avinashilingam), Professor, Department of Resource Management,** Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore, for innovative, excellent, intellectual guidance, meticulous supervision, valuable advice, untiring help and constant encouragement and learned counsel in each and every minute offered throughout the course of the research.

The investigator would like to preface this note by expressing her respectful thanks to all staff of Resource Management, who provided information for to the research.

The researcher expresses her deep and loving thanks to her **PARENTS THIRU. S. THANGAVELU** and **TMT. A. BHUVANESWARI, BROTHERS, SISTERS** and **FRIENDS** for their affectionate encouragement during the course of her research.

Last but not the least her special attribute at the feet of **GOD ALMIGHTY** for His immense blessings to make this study a success. She thanks God for his manifold mercies to carry out the research successfully.

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# **Introduction**



# I. INTRODUCTION

***“A women under stress is not immediately concerned with finding solutions to her problems but rather seeks relief by expressing herself and being understood”.***

**- John Gray**

Stress is nothing more than a socially acceptable form of mental illness. Stress is simply the adaptation of our bodies and minds to change. The modern world which is said to be a world of achievement is also a world of stress. One finds stress everywhere whether it be within the family, business organization/ enterprise or any other social or economic activity. Right from the time of birth till the last breath down an individual is invariably exposed to various stress feel situation (Singh, 1999). Thus it is not surprising that interest in the issue has been rising with the advancement of the present century, (John, 2005).

In a complex and competitive world where survival and success pose a big challenge, there are excessive pressures on the mental as well as physical faculties of every human being resulting in stress (Patnaik, 1994). The term stress is commonly used to refer to all sorts of difficulties tension, pressure, general illness, worry, anxiety and frustrations that put pressure on people. It is something that everyone feels from time to time, a problem that can be recognised from experience (Price, 1995). Stress is defined as the inability to cope with a perceived threat to one's mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well being, from a medical point of view, the stressor is the cause and stress is the physiological stress response the body makes to the stressor (National Safety Council, USA, 1995)

Hans Selye (1997) was one of the founding fathers of stress research. His view was that “Stress is not necessarily something bad-it all depends on

how you take it. The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial while that of failure humiliation or infection is detrimental.

The highly urbanized, industrialised and organised society places stress in one form or another on most of the people who belong to it (Wilson, 1994). Stress is an unavoidable part of living, because every organism faces challenge from its environment and from its own needs. These challenges are “problems” it must solve, if it has to survive and thrive. The rapid pace of our lives, overcrowded living conditions, too many depends on time, interferences with personal ambitions, the world of choice dissatisfaction in family life, degradation of higher values of life and frustrating job conditions all contribute to the modern stress equation (Chaudhuri, 2000).

Different things cause stress in different people. Very often stress results from an accumulation of many different pressures which build up gradually without noticing. The stress affects a person physically-heart pumps faster, blood pressure raise, palpitations, headaches, dizziness and insomnia; mentally-affect thinking ability, negative, thinking and worries. Emotionally-inability, impatience, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety, self-doubt, panic, despondency, feelings of inadequacy, insecurity hopelessness, unhappiness and depression and behaviourally-less sociable, less caring, more hostile and insensitive towards others. More over stress can create personality disorders, eating disorders, peptic ulcers, coronary heart disease, allergies, muscular and skeletal pain and respiratory disorders (Caple, 2002).

Stress is a subject which is hard to avoid. The term is discussed not only in our everyday conversations but has become enough of a publish issue to attract widespread media attention whether it be radio, television, newspapers or magazines (Posen, 2006).

The family seems caught up in a pervasive sense of urgency, with no opportunities to relax. Tensions mount, emotions build and misunderstandings give way to sharp words and explosive outbursts. Social change has led to the

break down of the old traditional extended family which used to support its members through times of stress and crisis. This leaves the individual more vulnerable to the ill-effects of life's stress (Balachandran, 1998 and Davis and Sharma, 2000).

Although everyone experience challenges in life only a few could accept them as a normal part of life (Goutam and Kamal, 1990). Many feel themselves over worked, pressurised and squeezed, often to the point of physical illness or emotional misery. Today's life stresses are increasing while cultural coping methods are falling into disuse in families (Vasantraj, 1991 and Keshav and Kaushal, 1992).

Stress is an inescapable consequence of everyday living and everyday social inter action. Generally, in the rush of managing work with home leads to stress among women. As women progress towards various phases in life, hormonal balances affect chemical vulnerability to stress. Stress in women can disturb their whole life as it leads to many negative health and emotional consequences. Women can win over stress by devoting some time for themselves and indulging in activities which they like to do.

Family life management is always recognised as the foundation that keeps the family radiant with cheer and peace. Women, the pivot of the family shoulder different responsibilities of homemaking managing food, clothing shelter maintenance, resource use and foster good family relationships in the welfare of all.

In Indian society all the major aspects of women's life and their role are determined within the boundaries of the family based on her married life (Kapur, 1999). With changes towards the fast moving society on a global scale women have started taking up jobs or careers outside the home. She is contributing to the family income which is needed to raise the standard of living of the family but at the same time she has to engage in the unpaid labour of love, the house work and family care (Jain, 1995).

In an Indian family the working women is most likely to be in a nuclear family and so has to manage all her work alone. The women are willing to sacrifice everything-time, money and their rights in the name of preserving family peace. The shared role pattern may solve many of the conflicts and dilemmas of family life (Sharma, 1995).

The homemaking responsibilities appear to be highly demanding, time consuming, conflicting and there are innumerable factors that act as stressors causing varied levels of stress in family life. Indian women in the name of exclusive responsibility of a dual career and belonging in two systems, carry stress as a burden (Parikh and Shah, 1994). Human resource management, a phase that has come into greater vision during this past decade, represents a new world view that people and their potential should be fostered to the maximum for general growth and development.

Stress can produce exhaustion, anxiety and other negative feelings as well as hasten the aging process in women. Effective stress management can counteract these effects and enable a woman continue her work without damaging for health and well being. A woman must always ensure that she gets the right nutrition proper exercise and sleep. She can also schedule her activities to maximize working hours and use breaks to recharge her energies. Lastly she should find time to unwind from work pressures, relax and get on with her personal life (Broderick and Angela, 2002).

Over half the women with children younger than three have jobs. Working women still do 70-80 per cent of the chores at home. These and other factors are causing an increase in chronic stress among woman. Exercise is one way to relive stress. This and other means of coping with stress are discussed (Brody and Liz, 2000).

The need to study stress as a problem in life is increasingly felt in the medicine and psychological courses of study. It is not surprising that interest in stress has been rising with the advancement of the present century and recently the concept of stress has grabbed the attention of all. In India there is dearth of systematic study regarding issues of women (Burke and Weir, 1995).

Realising the impact of stress on creating hazards in family life, the resource management course has modified its syllabus to include this impending problem in its management course as situation requiring awareness. As there is no indepth research study on stress among in the field of Resource Management a study on “Assessment of Level of Stress Among Women”, had been planned with the following objectives to :

- Know the personal profile of selected women
- Understand the awareness of women on stress
- Find out the general stress status of women.
- Assess the level of stress among employed and unemployed women.
- Analyse the factors affecting the stress level of women.

It is hoped that the results of study would add to the knowledge on the level of stress of employed and unemployed women and the factors responsible for inducing stress among women. It may act as a pointer towards evolving strategies for stress management so as to lead a stress free peaceful family life.



# **Review of Literature**

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature pertaining to the study on “Assessing the Stress Level of Selected Women” is reviewed under the following headings:

- A. Concepts of Stress
- B. Effects of Stress
- C. Stress Among Women
- D. Coping Strategies to Control Stress

### **A. Concepts of Stress**

Stress is an avoidable consequence in the life of every individual. Stress is an effect and not a cause but the effect is felt only within the individual. It is a condition of strain on one’s emotions, thought processes and physical well being (Rathus, 2000). It threatens one’s ability to cope with the life’s condition and environment adequately (Davis, 2001).

Agarwala et al (2000) indicated that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, stress was equated with force pressure or strain exerted upon a material object or person which resists these forces and attempts to maintain its original state. The concept of stress in the modern sense is not easily found in the traditional texts of Indian culture and tradition. However Rao (1999) has traced the origin of Indian thought by pointing out that there are two Sanskrit words “klesa” and “dukha” which approximate stress of the modern times.

Derived from the latin word “stringere” stress was popularly used in the seventeenth century to mean hardship, strain, adversity of affliction. It is a psychological and physiological state which results when certain features of an individuals environment, including noise, pressures, monotony, or the

general climate which attack or cause specific harmful effect on the person. Selye (2000) the famous stress researcher defines stress as any external event or any internal drive which threatens to upset the organisms equilibrium. It is a response, mediated largely by the autonomic nervous system and the endocrine system to any demand made on the individual.

Stress is viewed as an imbalance between the demands of the environment and the ability of the individuals to adapt to the situation (Gordon, 1999). Stress is a pattern of specific and nonspecific responses an organism makes to stimulus events that disturb its equilibrium and exceed its ability to cope (Cooper 1995, Zimbardo 1999 and Atwater 1996). A stressor which leads to stress is an environmental events (stressors) that summon the coping mechanisms of the individual or it can refer to biological responses (stress responses) within the individual that are a result of these events (Parker 1995).

Chronic stress is defined as a state of arousal, continuing over time in which demands are perceived by an individual as greater than the inner and outer resources available for dealing with them (Powell and Tagleston, 2002) According to Zimbardo (1999) living organisms adjust themselves to handle and maintain a reasonable input of stimuli is insufficient or excessive for the individual it can be considered as stress.

The constitutional vulnerability of the person and the adequacy of his cognitive defence mechanism determine whether he undergoes stress or not to any trying situation (Lazarus 2000) Chaudurai (2000) considers stress as a generalized physiologic and psychologic reaction to anything that threatens a person's general survival Baum (1990) visualises stress as a negative emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological cognitive and behavioural changes that are directed or accommodating its effects.

Any life change and event that exert pressure on the individual make him feel stressed (Holmes and Rahe 1998) Insel and Roth (2000) are of the opinion that the sum of biological reactions to any stimulus pleasant or unpleasant physical or mental internal or external that tends to disturb the organisms homeostasis is termed as stress. Stress disrupts or threatens to disrupt a person's normal physical or psychological functioning whether at home or at work Burch fied 1997 and Lazarus and Folkman (2000).

Goldsmith (1996) assesses that stress may recur when a person feels threatened and stress may be increased when the potential harm is high. Viswanath (1997) reports that the stressful situation sometimes may be true or imaginary, According to Davis (1997) mild stress tends to stimulate performance in most persons but excessive stress can lead to physical and emotional disorders and lowered effectiveness. What produces stress in one person may have no effect what so ever in someone else (Stewart,1995) Jeyakumar (2002) emphasizes that the result out of stress is the negative feelings in certain individuals towards life and its challenges.

Stress is one of the most compelling bio psychological aspects of illness and disease. Stress as a positive factor makes people to adjust to life's situations and reorganize themselves (Rathus 1999) stress leads one to assess whether personal resources are sufficient to meet the demands of the environment (Pervin 1999) Lazarus and Launier 2000 ; Lazarus and folk man, 2002).

Though one expects to lead a simple and easy flow of family life obstacles do happen and challenges one's life situation which may result in stress (Goldsmith 1998) when family life gets out of control due to inability to manage with the available resources or by very many external demands that could not be met the resultant stress may induce worry, tension and a feeling to run off from family care and management stress conditions whether internal or

external require coping mechanism to avoid stress experienced by individuals or family (Hamilton 1994).

Stress is the mental, physical and emotional reactions you experience as a result of demands of your life. You must have experienced stress at one time or another whether you know its definition and types or not. In medical terms stress is described as “a physical or psychological stimulus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions that may lead to illness” when you are under stress your adrenal gland releases corticosteroids which are converted to cortisol in the blood stream. Cortisol have an immune suppressive effect in the body (Kabur 1995).

According to Lazarus, stress is a feeling experienced when a person thinks that “the demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” Your body tries to adjust to different circumstances or continually changing environment around you. In this process, the body is put to extra work resulting in “wear and tear”. In other words your body is stressed. Stress disturbs the body’s normal way of functioning.

Most of us experience stress at one time or another. Without stress there would be no life. However excessive or prolonged stress, can be harmful. Stress is unique and personal. A situation may be stressful for. Someone but the same situation may be challenging for others for example arranging a world level symposium may be challenging for one person but stressful to another. Some persons have habit of worrying unnecessarily.

Stress is not always necessarily harmful Hans selye said in 1956, “Stress is not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it. The stress of exhilarating creative successful work is beneficial while that of failure humiliation or infection is detrimental”. Stress can be therefore negative positive or neutral. Passing in an examination can be just stressful as failing.

Sometime we know in advance that doing a certain thing will be stressful but we are willing to doing that for example while planning a vacation to a hill station you know that it would be stressful at certain times. But you are willing to face those challenges.

People often work well under certain stress leading to increased productivity. Many times you do not know in advance and the stress. Periods may be sudden the situation may not be under your control. Too much stress is harmful. You should know your level of stress that allows you to perform optimally in your life.

### **Types of Stress**

Stress may arise due to physiological and psychological factors (Gilmer 1999 and Quinn, 1998). physiological stress is felt when there is disturbance of the structure or functioning of bodily mechanisms. Accidents surgeries, burns, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, pain, lack of sleep and terminal illness which make demands on entire physiology can cause physiological upsets. But in psychological stress, the bodily tissues are not directly assaulted. Such stress arises when some events threatens the individual because of the way it is interpreted. Anger joy, fear or a combination of all these may result in psychological stress.

Miller and smith (1997) classified stress as acute and chronic stress. Acute stress comes from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future. Acute stress is thrilling and exciting in small doses but too much is exhausting in small doses but too much is exhausting. Episodic acute stress comes from lease less worry. Chronic stress is the grinding stress that wears people away day after continuously. It destroys body mind and even life in the long run. It comes when a person never sees a way out of a miserable situation.

Selye (2001) considers three types of stress – distress, eustress, and neustress. Distress is an unpleasant stress state believed to cause illness. Eustress is a state believed to be pleasant and beneficial. Neustress is a stress which has neither a happy or positive ending nor a sad or negative ending.

To kalia (1998) stress can be psychological situational and environmental.

- Psychological stresses are created by emotional status of lust, hatred, greed, fear, jealousy depression etc.
- Situational stresses are the result of unwholesome interpersonal transactions which may include conflicts, competitiveness aggression etc.
- Environmental stresses are occasioned by natural calamities, extremes of temperatures etc.

According to mccubbin and patterson (2000) stress can be normative including the predictable developmental changes over the life span of individuals and non normative lowering up the unanticipated situations that a family experiences resulting in a state of instability such as accidental injury or loss of employment. Nagendra and Nagarathna (1998) grouped stress as temporary stress and prolonged stress while temporary demands an immediate adaptation process prolonged stress is long standing leaves a deep seated subconscious impression and requires a long time to get over.

Stress can be generated as direct stress from smaller social system such as the family neighbourhood or social clique or it can be indirect stress emerged from a wide society which is too impersonal and too complex to provide all citizens sufficient opportunities for meaningful life(Howard,1998).

Rice and Tucker (1998) classified stress as internal resulting from role changer regarding division of responsibilities in a household and external

originating in the social or business environment . Cotrell (1994) earmarks that when there is more work to be accomplished than ones capacity it is over load stress and when there is lack of stimulation or activity it can be termed as deprivational stress or stress from underload. At water (1996) termed these two status as hyper stress or excessive stress and hypostress or insufficient stress to indicate the overload and underload stress respectively.

## **B. Effects of Stress**

Different things cause stress in different people. The too much stress affects us:

**Physically:** The heart pumps faster, making the heart pound and blood pressure rise; some people experience palpitations. Muscle tension increases, leading to headaches, dizziness, jaw ache and even insomnia. The mouth goes dry, digestion slows causing “butterflies” in the stomach. Breathing is faster and less efficient which can lead to over breathing (hyperventilation) and breathlessness. Changes in the flow of blood to the skin can cause sweating, blushing or clammy hands and feet.

**Mentally:** A certain amount of stress can be mentally stimulating but too much can affect our thinking ability. Thoughts may become jumbled and confused. Thinking becomes focused on worrying. We may become preoccupied with problems. It becomes much harder to make decisions or find solutions to problems. Thinking negatively and fearing the worst increases worry and stress.

**Emotionally:** People respond to stress in many different ways. Common emotional effects are irritability, impatience, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety, self-doubt, panic, despondency, feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, hopelessness, unhappiness, emotional withdrawal and depression. Behaviourally: Stress can change people’s behaviour towards one another. We may become less sociable, less caring, more hostile and insensitive towards others. When stress

is accompanied by anger we may become less tolerant, fly off the handle easily and provoke rows. Many people respond to stress by eating, drinking or smoking much more than is usual: some engage in risk taking behaviour. Students often complain that when they feel stressed they find it hard to concentrate, feel tired all the time, perhaps start to miss lectures and deadlines and feel they can't cope.

The effects of stress can dramatically impact lives for better . . . or worse. The extra rush of adrenalin released during acute stress gives us a needed burst of speed when we flee from danger or an extra surge of power when we decide to stand and fight. However when we fail to release stress by coping with life's situations, it build's up until we either explode or collapse. (Atwater 1995).

The consequence of stress can cause specific disorders in both mind and body. In addition to raising levels of the stress hormones, adrenaline and corticosterone a buildup of stress can cause headaches digestive problems eating disorders insomnia, fatigue and lower our resistance to other illness like colds and flu.

When we are deluged by a sequence of stressful situations our bodies don't have to make the decisions necessary to deal with stress in a healthy manner. This is episodic stress over time unrelieved stress like episodic stress, can result in increased heart rate respiration and blood pressure which in turn put undue stress on bodily organs such as the heart and lungs. Eventually our body gives up the fight unable to flee from our problems we develop more significant problems like heart disease high blood pressure stroke and other illnesses. (Brown and Lent, 1999).

Just as each individual differs from the next in his or her responses there is no set limit as to how much stress each of us can endure. Each of us seems to be endowed with our own stress "thermometer" when the mercury rises or

plummets in order to stay healthy we need to have a planned strategy to manage stress. Knowing and using a few stress management tips can make all the difference in the consequences of stress.

The stresses generate autonomic arousal and related hormonal secretions which do irreversible damage to bodily tissues and systems (verma, 1999). The relation ship between stress and disease in human beings is still controversial. Some research continue to seen only physical factors lie at he root of some of most troubling afflictions (morris, 1999). All medical problems even up to 75 percent may directly attribute to stress (Brown and Lent,2000). People react to stress in a wide variety of ways. It is the 'flight or flight syndrome' that alerts he body for a physical battle to escape from situations by giving different physical actions (Elizabeth,1997). Some people show modes increase in physiological arousal while others show significant physical symptoms and may exhibit anxiety. In extreme cases people become so aroused anxious and disorganized that psychologists say their behaviour beomes maladaptive or maladjusted (lefton 2001).

Psychological stress has been linked to numerous illness including insomania and stroke but in recent years most attention has focused on heart disease. Stress or frustration on the job or in personal or family life seems to increase the risk of coronary diseases (frieal man, 2000 and glass 1997). The symptoms of stress induced illness may suggest disease in any part of the body and patients often express multi-symptoms (Hamilton, 1994).

When considering the psychophysiological mechanisms of stress, the stress response, it is immediately apparent that coping with stress, especially chronic stress, is not effortless. The stress response is a very complex and complicated set of functions that is mainly controlled by the brain. When a demand for change is perceived as threatening, a series of electrical and chemical activities begin to unfold within the brain. Eventually, these activities affect every part of the body. These obstetrics, pediatrics, psychology and

psychiatry, experiments on animals show that maternal, fetal or neonatal experience can determine the stress responses of the developing offspring for life. If this is indeed correct, it could predispose children to have behavioral problems, such as hyperactivity, or cause them to suffer from depression in later life (Lifepositive, 2002).

Medical reports indicate that the most common symptoms among survivors of stress events are nausea, diarrhoea, short temper, inability to sleep and concentrate, headaches, backaches, neck pains, skin rashes, indigestion, fatigue and constipation (Leff, 1999; Brown 2000; Cohen et al 1994 and Cohen 1996). Specific diseases related to stress include high blood pressure, insomnia, attacks of heart and kidney diseases and ulcers. Recent evidence suggests that stress is also related to cancer (Davis, 1998).

Various symptoms related to the different physiological conditions of the body are pointed out by Plotnik (1993) as given below; Heart and respiration – pounding heart and short shallow breaths.

- Muscle - feeling of pain in neck, shoulders and back.
- Skin - skin blemishes, pimples, oiliness and perspiration.
- Eating - feeling a compulsion to eat or losing one's appetite.
- Stomach - feeling of discomfort, pain, pressure, acidity and churning.
- Muscle tension - trembling, unsteady voice.
- Fatigue - feeling tired or exhausted, having little energy.

### **C. Stress Among Women**

Everyone encounters pressures and stressors in different stages of life time. Some people allow these pressures to create serious maladjustments while others cope effectively. People under extreme stress show disorganized behavior if their stress is not relieved they become too exhausted to adapt. At this point they again become extremely alarmed and then give up. The result is maladjustment with drawl and in some extreme cases even death (Selye, 1999).

Boss (1993) visualizes four types of consequences from stress situations. Depletion of energy reserves lowered resistance to illness increased dissatisfaction and pessimism increased absenteeism and inefficiency at work. The accumulation of stresses is more likely to influence psychiatric disorder than the pressure of any single stress (Langer and Piper 1995) further studies indicate that the greater the stress the risk of the manifestations of a major mental disorder regardless of socio economic status (Grilger, 2000), but it has been noted that this research has not settled the issue of whether stressed life events can actually cause mental disorders or only cause transient symptoms (Rubins, 2001). Physical stressors and job stressors have a statistically significant correlation with depression (Griegeri, 1997).

Succuzzo (1999) considers frustration conflict and pressure to be the net result of psychological stress. Frustration occurs when one person is blocked from obtaining something which is wanted conflict occurs when choice making appears difficult between two or more important goals. But a feeling of pressure sometimes challenges to speed up activities.

The impact of stress on body are that legs twitch in bed, frequently have cramps aches and pains in the back of the neck, shoulders, and back, hands often tremble sigh often suffer from stomach trouble tummy feels

knotted sleep is difficult wake in the early hours get very hot at night and heart seems to skip a beat.

The social impact of stress are that people are more different than usual people make too many demands and feel that too much change is happenings and there is no one to confide in life . As there is no social contract one has no socialization and do nothing but work and sleep.

The emotional impact of stress is reflected in a person that they rarely laugh can't reach with the same feeling and appear very near to tears often. Further they are upset by least little things. They do not any body and life is flat for such people (Stewart, 1993).

'Maslach (1997) has identified the impact of stress in work place as **Emotional exhaustion** : affected persons feel fatigued, tense and apathetic many suffer from various physical complains, they feel "used up" and have an :I don't give clamn any more " attitude towards work.

Depersonalization or detachment from others stresses people coldly treat others as it they were objects and find it difficult o care about them.

Reduced personal accomplishment when stressed they do poor work and feel helpless hopeless or angry. Their self-esteem suffers and they yearn to change jobs or careers often.

Stress has an impact in a person's life style many respond to stress by over eating, drinking excessively or taking tranquilizers, other become impatient detached or filled with despair. These reactions further decrease a persons creativity or productivity at home or at work. (Davis (1997) and (Gordon 1995)

Negative conditions at work for woman (work overload, unpleasant social environment, lock of authority) have been related to their perception of increased. Stress at home (Altrochi, 1991).according to sears and Galambos,

(1992). Woman's work stress spill over in to their material adjustment and low material satisfaction.

#### **D. Coping Strategies to Control Stress**

Atwater (1994) defines coping as taking charge directing and controlling responses to stressors, there by modifying the overall stress. Coping is best considered as a form of problem – solving when the person is no entirely clear about what o do (Roedigger, 1996). To Santrock (2000) coping involves managing taxing circumstances expanding effort o solve life's problems and seeking o master or reduce stress.

Coping is viewed as having two major functions the regulation of emotional distress (emotion – focused coping) and the management of the problem that is causing the distress (problem – focused coping) Fockman and Lazarus, 1990 and Sahu and Misra 1995) coping is technically called as “stress management (Baradhan 1996) the different stages in coping with stress as related to Bernstein et al (1991)

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Task</b>
1. Assessment	- identify the sources and effects of stress
2. Goal setting	- list the stressors and stress responses to be addressed designate which stressors are and are not changeable.
3. Plaming	- list the specific steps to be taken to cope with stress.
4. Action	- Implement stress – coping plans.
5. Evaluation	- Determine the changes in stressors and stress responses.
6. Adjustment	- After coping methods to improve results if necessary.

### ➤ **Managing Stress**

The key to success is to think positively; take control of your stress and anxiety by learning effective techniques to combat it. Relaxing bodily tension in order to reduce the physical sensations of stress is a good place to start. If your body is free of tension your mind tends to be relaxed. This helps you concentrate and study, take decisions and solve problems. When you are relaxed, you can view each task as a positive challenge and use stress as a stimulus to help you to carry it out giving you a relaxing glow of achievement afterwards.

### ➤ **Looking after yourself**

Be kind to yourself. Give yourself “me time” in which you can choose what you want to do: rest; do nothing, try a relaxation technique, message or yoga; have a long hot bath; spend time with friends; treat yourself to something special. Taking proper breaks and eating well to help to combat stress.

### ➤ **Confronting the problem**

Try to stand back and look at the problem carefully. Break it down into manageable parts. Talk it through with someone else, brainstorm solutions, or get help if you need it. Try to manage your time effectively and learn to say “NO”. Avoidance won’t make the problem go away and can often make worse. Leaving everything to the last minute is a major source of stress for students. Think about why you are finding it hard to get started: uncertainty about how to do the assignment, fear of being judged or failing? Starting a piece of work effectively reduces stress levels as it frees your mind, putting the thoughts of failure back into perspective. If you’ve had a row or a misunderstanding with someone, it rarely helps to avoid the issue. Talking it through with the other person or with someone outside the situation, often helps you express your

feelings, regain a sense of proportion and identify a way of resolving the differences.

➤ **Find some distractions**

Sport and physical activity helps you to relax physically and also releases endorphins in the body which produce a real feeling of well-being. Walk, cycle, swim, join a gym or a sports team. Joining a club or society, maintaining an existing hobby or learning something new, talking to other people. . . can all help you to take a mental and physical break.

➤ **Express yourself**

Talk about it, write about it, shout or moan about it: expressing your feelings can help to relieve stress. Acknowledging a problem to yourself and to others can be the first step in dealing with it. Sometimes having a good cry or bashing a pillow can release emotional pressure and calm your feelings of anxiety.

➤ **Tackling Anxiety**

Anxiety is a normal response to danger or stress: it prepares us for coping with stress. Anxiety is only a problem when it is out of proportion to a situation or goes on for too long. Then our thoughts may become muddled and we may experience physical symptoms such as rapid breathing, racing heart, sweaty palms, tense muscles. Anxiety can lead to panic attacks. Learn how to breathe efficiently and practice it in order to prevent over breathing (too much oxygen in the blood). This causes a series of unpleasant physical symptoms i.e. tingling hands and face, muscle cramps and tremors, dizziness, breathing difficulties and feelings of fatigue. These sensations can be controlled by breathing slowly and smoothly through the nose, filling the lungs completely.

### ➤ **Breathing Exercise**

Place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach. As you breathe in through your nose allow your stomach to swell. This means that you are using the diaphragm to breathe in and allowing air right down into your lungs. Try to keep the movement in your upper chest to a minimum and keep the movement gentle. Slowly and evenly breathe out through your nose. Repeat and get a rhythm going. You are aiming to take 8-12 breaths a minute: breathing in and breathing out again counts as one breath. Practice until it becomes a habit and switch to regular breathing when you next become anxious. Learn how to really relax and develop a skill which will enable you to reduce unnecessary physical tension whenever you need to. Information sheets thoughts because worrying thoughts keep the anxiety going then the symptoms of anxiety maintain the worrying thoughts. Try simple distraction techniques such as physical exercise or refocusing your mind by concentrating hard on one thing to absorb all your attentions.

### ➤ **Panic Attacks**

A panic attack is the body's natural "fight or flight" reaction to a sudden threat. If there is no real external threat, the adrenaline pumping around the body is experienced as a panic attack: the heart beats fast and hard, we may sweat, feel faint or nauseous. All these symptoms can be very frightening. If you experience a panic attack, it is important to remind yourself that none of these feelings can harm you-you are not going to have a heart attack, faint, or be sick. Although you may feel very strange, no-one else is likely to notice anything wrong. Try to deepen your breathing and relax. Distract yourself by thinking about something else or focusing on an item in the room. Block any panicky or worrying thoughts. As you manage the panic in this way, your brain and body begins to recognize that there is no real danger, the supply of

adrenaline to the blood is cut off and the symptoms will subside. Follow the breathing exercises above to help you manage your panic attack

➤ **Stress management tips**

Taking a deep breath or two adds oxygen to your system which almost instantly help you relax. In addition taking a moment to step back can help you maintain your composure which in the long run is what you need to work rationally through a stressful situation. (Elizabeth 2000) start with “take a deep breath” and

- 1) count to ten (or more or less as the situation warrants)
- 2) stand up stretch. Remember relaxation is the opposite of stress
- 3) stand up and smile. Try it! You” feel better!
- 4) Take a short walk. If you’re at work take a bathroom break or get a glass of water.

Do something that changes your focus. When you come back to the problem, chances are it won’t seem nearly as insurmountable.

- 5) In the book *Gone with the wind*, *Scarlet O’Hara* says, “I can’t think about that right now. If I, do I’ll go crazy. I’ll think about that tomorrow”.

➤ **Stop and Smell the Roses:**

“Things happen” and sometimes “bad things happen to good people”. If we let them stressful events can build up wall us in and eventually stop us from enjoying the good things in life.

**1) Take the time:** Too often we put the pleasantries of life on the back burner, telling ourselves we don’t “have time” or can’t make time” for them. However actually time is the only thing we do completely own. While we can’t “make” a

day that's longer than 24 hours. Each of us starts the day with exactly that amount of time. Take a part of your time to recognize the good things in your life.

**2) Sleep on it:** Every coin has two sides and every issue has both pros and cons. List them both then put the list away and take a second look tomorrow. Sometimes "sleeping on" a situation changes the minuses to pluses.

➤ **Other tips:**

- Get a good night's rest
- Eat healthily
- Listen to your favorite music
- Plan out your time and prioritize

Talk to a friend about your problems, don't hold it in.

# **Methodology**

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### **III. METHODOLOGY**

In today's society where women are more evenly found going beyond the male folk, they are clearly noted as the more responsible folks too. They are mothers, daughters, wives and above all the career women. You will find a woman after the whole day's office struggles, coming back to home and start making the dinner, then her task ends attending the household chores, only to get up in the morning and start another exhausting vicious cycle of balancing work and home. Infact, she hardly gets the time for herself. So, stress is obvious. Stress management in women is becoming a very important but often ignored task in today's society. Stress management in women has become important because more women are merging as career women. Women need to be prepared to handle life's challenges. They are exposed to very stressful life events. Stress reactions can be handled with support coworkers, care givers, friends and relatives. One such attempt was made through this study to find out the level of stress among employed and unemployed women. The procedure pertaining to the study on "Assessing the Stress Level of Selected Women" consisted of the following steps.

- A. Selection of sample
- B. Selection of tool
- C. Collection of data
- D. Analysis of data
- E. Presentation of data

#### **A. Selection of sample**

Hundred women – 50 employed and 50 unemployed were selected from Erode for the study using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling method involves deliberate selection of sample units that confirm to some predetermined criteria, this is also known as judgement sampling (Kothari,

2002 and Ranganathan 2005). The investigator's discretion and judgement based on the criteria fixed would help in the sample selection.

## **B. Selection of tool**

Questionnaire cum Stress Assessment Scale was selected to assess to stress level of selected women. The tool consisted of background information of the woman like education, occupation, income, type of house size of family and details meaning, types, causes remedial measures of stress. The Stress Assessment Scale which was available in the website [www.stresstest.net](http://www.stresstest.net) was used which consisted of two parts. First part consisted of 20 questions which helped to judge how the woman were going in general. The second part was a Stress Test which consisted of three sections such as Quality of Life, Level of Functioning and Symptomatology.

- The Quality of Life section of Stress Test was used to measure both general life satisfaction and domains of quality of life. The four sub-dimensions of quality of life were autonomy, self-esteem, social support and physical health.
- The second section of Stress Test measured Symptomatology. The three factors included here were depression, somatization and penanoia.
- The third section of Stress Test measured self-reported Level of Functioning.

## **C. Collection of data**

Good rapport was developed with selected women. The women were contacted during their free time and relevant informations were collected. Prior permission was got from the concerned authorities to collect informations from employed homemakers.

#### D. Analysis of data

The scores were awarded for each item in the first part which had 20 items. The scores were added and the general stress level was assessed as very high to very low as shown in the Table I.

**TABLE - I**  
**STRESS LEVEL**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Stress level</b>
0 – 6	Very low
7 – 12	Low
13 –17	High
18+	Very high

The method of analysis of the second part of the Stress Assessment Scale is given below and the inferences were shown in Table II.

**Overall Score:** This score is a measure of overall emotional well-being which ranged between 1 and 5. Higher the average score lesser the stress level.

**Quality of Life Scores:** This is a measure of how happy or satisfied the women were with, their life, including overall self-esteem, health, friends and family and work or school. A higher score indicated that people were well-adjusted.

**Symptom Distress Score:** This score measures symptoms of depression, anxiety and hostility. A higher score indicated that they were well-adjusted.

**Level of Functioning Score:** This is a measure of how well one is able to get along in the community. A higher score indicated that people are well-adjusted.

The scores were added and found out the average and presented in Table II with the relevant inference.

**Table - II**

Average scores AND INFERENCE

<b><i>Inference</i></b>	<b>Average scores</b>			
	<b>Overall score</b>	<b>Quality of life score</b>	<b>Symptom distress score</b>	<b>Level of functioning</b>
Severely stressed and need intensive help	2.99	2.92	2.75	3.32
Need counseling	3.19	2.98	3.04	3.61
Need short term counseling	3.65	3.52	3.50	3.99
Functioning well no need for counseling	4.17	3.93	4.24	4.32

It is clear from the above Table that higher the score lesses the stress level and no need for any professional help.

- The scores obtained by the selected women were analysed against selected factors like education, occupation, income, type of house and size of family of the selected women in order to find out the factors enhancing the stress level.

#### **E. Presentation of data**

The data collected were consolidated, tabulated and statistically analysed and presented in the next chapter Results and Discussion.

# **Result & Discussion**

## **IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Stress is simply the adaptation of our bodies and minds to change. The difficulties, hardships and trials of life, the obstacles are positive blessings. They limit the muscles more firmly and teach self-reliance. All individuals feel stress, but each one feels it in different amounts and reacts in different ways. How women are stressed and reasons for stressful situations were studied under the study on “Assessing the Stress Level of Selected Women” and presented under the following aspects:

- A. Personal Profile of Selected Women
- B. Awareness on Stress
- C. Assessment of Stress Level
- D. Factors enhancing the stress

### **A. Personal Profile of Selected Women**

The personal profile of each individual has themselves influence on the performance building, achievements in life and stress situation character. The personal profile of 100 selected women-50 employed and 50 unemployed is presented under following headings:

- ❖ Age of women
- ❖ Educational status
- ❖ Occupational status
- ❖ Family income
- ❖ Size of the family
- ❖ Type of house

### ❖ Age of Women

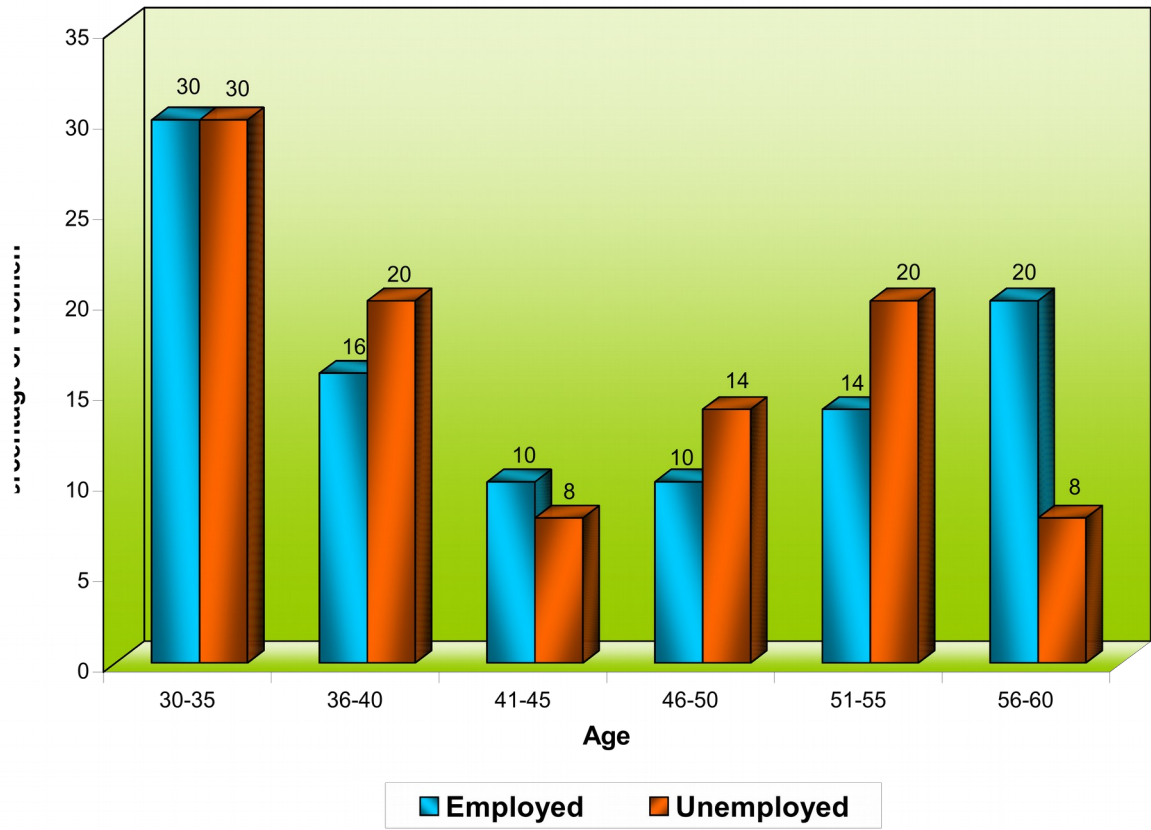
There is no age at which anybody is exempt from stress. Most of people are well aware that as a person chronologically ages, there are more responsibilities and situational stressors that become part of ones lives which subsequently can bring about consequences affecting ones well being (Bittman, 1999). Hence the age of selected women was found out and shown in Table III and Figure 1.

**TABLE - III**

AGE OF WOMEN

Age (Years)	Percentage of Women	
	Employed No:50	Unemployed No:50
30-35	30	30
36-40	16	20
41-45	10	8
46-50	10	14
51-55	14	20
56-60	20	8

It is clear from the above Table that the age of selected women ranged between 30 to 60 years. A majority of more than 60 per cent of employed women belonged to the age of group of 30 to 50 years where as 70 per cent of unemployed women belonged to the age group of 30 to 50 years.



**FIGURE – 1**  
**AGE OF WOMEN**

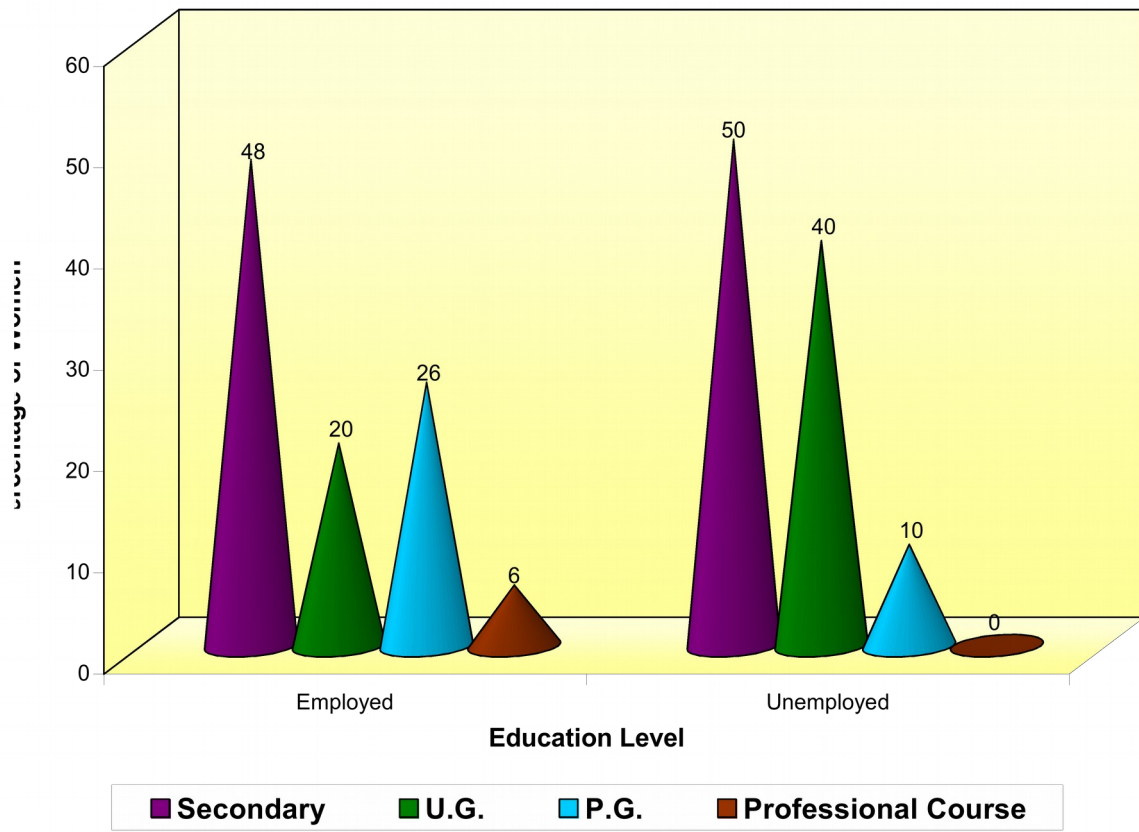
❖ **Educational Status:**

Education is the knowledge of putting one's potentials to maximum use. One can safely say that a human being is not in the proper sense till he is educated. It trains the human mind to think and take the right decision to lead a stress free life. Hence the information educational status is gathered and presented in Table IV and Figure 2.

**TABLE - IV**  
**EDUCATIONAL STATUS**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Percentage of Women</b>	
	<b>Employed No:50</b>	<b>Unemployed No:50</b>
Secondary	48	50
U.G.	20	40
P.G.	26	10
Professional Course	6	-

The above Table shows that a majority of employed women (48 per cent) and 50 per cent of unemployed women had higher secondary education. Post graduates were less among unemployed women. Only six per cent of employed women completed professional course.



**FIGURE – 2**  
**EDUCATIONAL STATUS**

### ❖ Occupational Status

Occupations are those activities that reflect cultural values and are meaningful to individuals while meeting human needs for self-care, enjoyment and social participation to lead a stress free life. The occupational status of employed women is given in Table V and Figure 3.

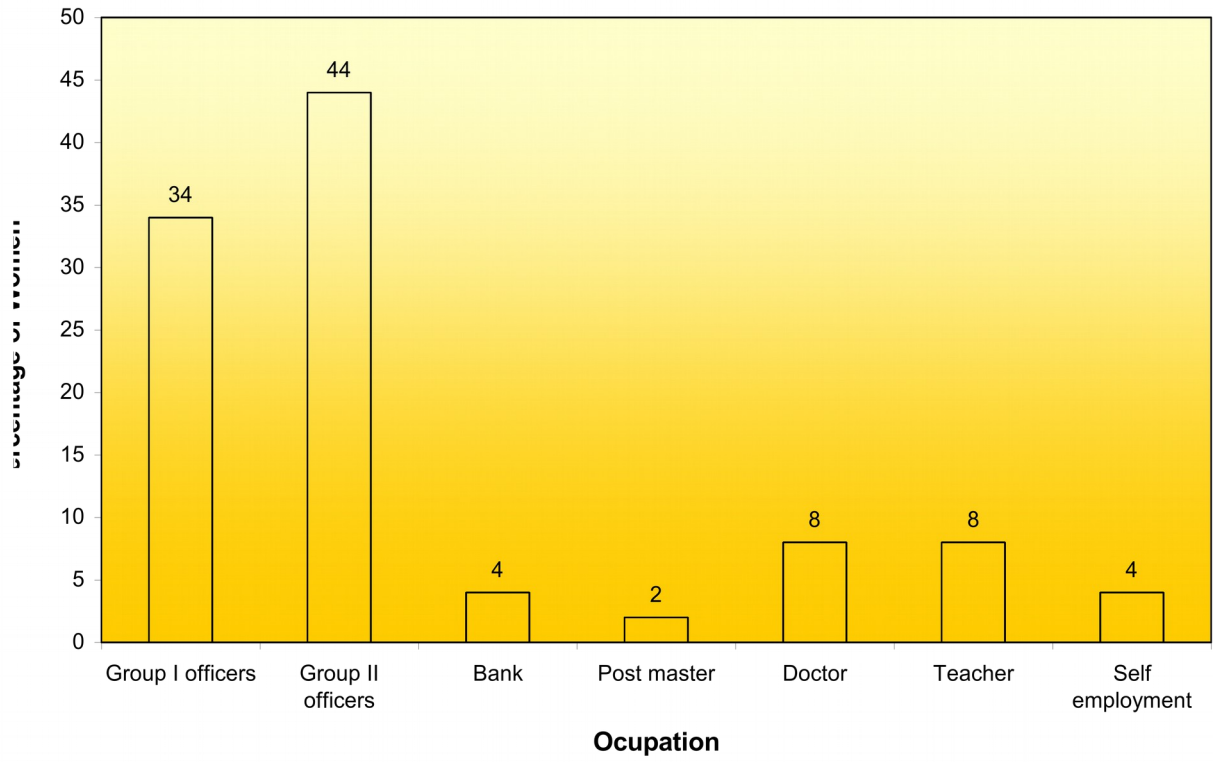
**TABLE - V**

#### OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Percentage of Employed Women</b>
Group I officers	34
Group II officers	44
Bank	4
Post master	2
Doctor	8
Teacher	8
Self employment	4

It is clear from the above Table that a majority of selected employed women (44 per cent) were group II officers like, Typist, Steno, Assistant, Junior Assistant.

Thirty four percent of women employed as group I officers like Deputy Commissioner, Deputy Collector, Thasildar, Deputy Thasildar, Revenue Divisional Officer, District Backward Class Officer Agricultural Officer.



**FIGURE – 3**

**OCCUPATIONAL STATUS**

### ❖ Family Income

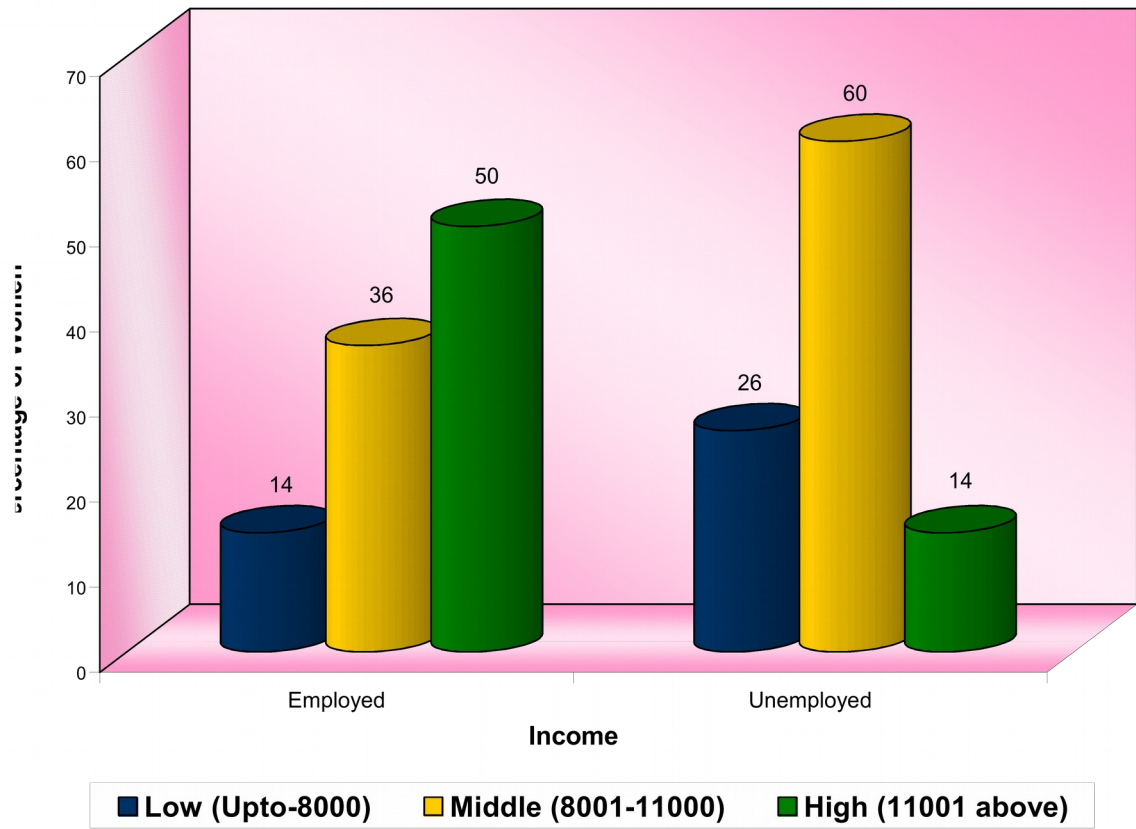
Income of a family shows the purchasing capacity which will help them to lead a happy and satisfied life without stress. Table VI and Figure 4 shows the income group to which the selected women belonged.

**TABLE - VI**

#### **FAMILY INCOME**

<b>Income (Rs)</b>	<b>Percentage of Women</b>	
	<b>Employed No:50</b>	<b>Unemployed No:50</b>
Low (Upto-8000)	14	26
Middle (8001-11000)	36	60
High (11001 above)	50	14

It is clear from the above Table that 50 per cent of the employed women belonged to high income group earning Rs.11001 and above where as 60 per cent of unemployed women belonged to middle income group earning Rs. 8001 to 11000. The dual earning had the impact on the family income. The family income was group based on the classification as low, middle and higher, as given by Khanna and Medsker (2006).



**FIGURE – 4**  
**FAMILY INCOME**

### ❖ Type of House

Type of house of the selected women is shown in Table-VII.

**TABLE - VII**

TYPE OF HOUSE

Types	Percentage of Women	
	Employed	Unemployed
Own House- Individual House	96	42
Rented-Twin Houses	4	58

It is clear from the above Table that 96 per cent of employed women and 42 per cent of unemployed women lived in own individual house. Whereas 58 per cent of unemployed women lived in rented house. The economic condition of employed women were higher which helped them to own a house.

### **B. Awareness on Stress:**

Stress is the physical and mental response of the body to demands made upon it. It is the result of our reaction to outside events, not necessarily the events themselves. Very often stress results from an accumulation of many different pressures which build up gradually without noticing. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Everyone must be aware of good and bad stress, causes, symptoms and how to come out of stressful situations. The selected women were asked whether they felt stress in their life. More than 70 per cent of employed women expressed that they experienced stress in their day to day life whereas only 58 per cent of unemployed women experienced stress. The selected women were asked to

express their opinion about stress and the result is presented under the following aspects:

1. Stressful situation in life
2. Symptoms of stress
3. Measures to tackle stress

### 1. Stressful Situation in Life

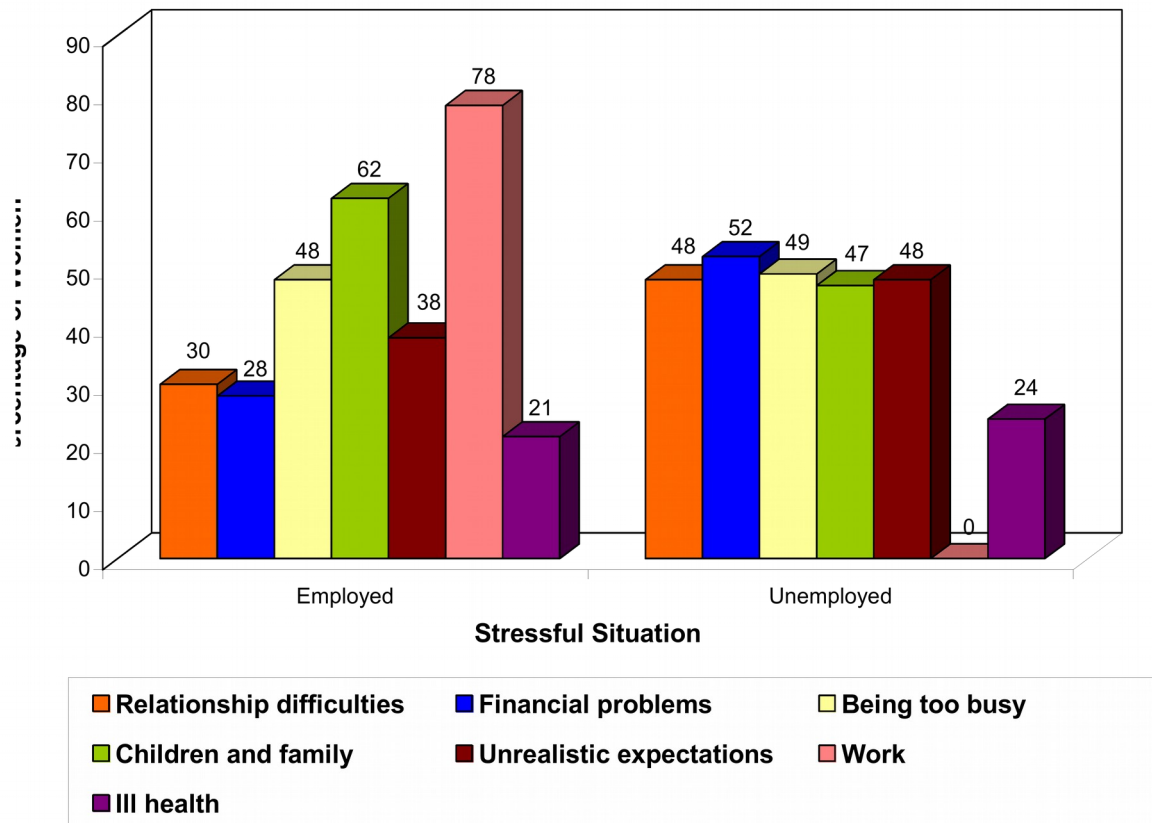
The selected women were asked to point out the stressful situation which they came across in their life and is shown in Table VIII and Figure 5.

**TABLE - VIII**  
STRESSFUL SITUATION IN LIFE

S.No	Situation	Percentage of women *	
		Employed	Unemployed
1.	Relationship difficulties	30	48
2.	Financial problems	28	52
3.	Being too busy	48	49
4.	Children and family	62	47
5.	Unrealistic expectations	38	48
6.	Work	78	-
7.	Ill health	21	24

\* Multiple response

The above Table clearly shows that majority of employed (62 per cent) and unemployed (47 per cent) expressed that taking care of children and family members created stress in day to day living. Unemployed women expressed that financial problems were more stressful when compared to employed women. Unemployed women expressed that they had relationship difficulties which caused stress in life when compared to employed women. A majority of employed women experienced stress in life because of work.



**FIGURE – 5**

**STRESSFUL SITUATION IN LIFE**

## 2. Symptoms of Stress

The signs and symptoms of stress overload can be almost anything. Stress affects the mind, body and behaviour in many ways and everyone experiences stress differently. The symptoms of stress as expressed by the selected women are shown in Table IX and Figure 6.

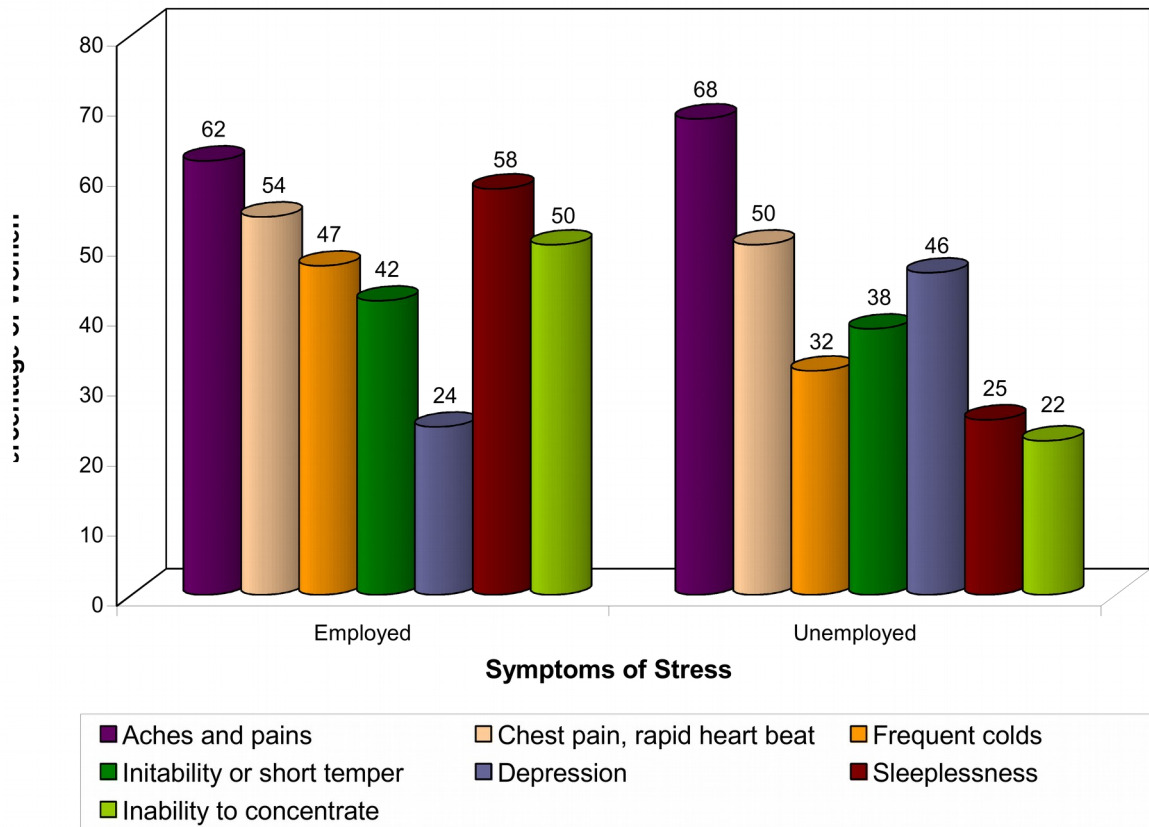
**TABLE - IX**

### SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

S.No	Situation	Percentage of women *	
		Employed	Unemployed
1.	Aches and pains	62	68
2.	Chest pain, rapid heart beat	54	50
3.	Frequent colds	47	32
4.	Initability or short temper	42	38
5.	Depression	24	46
6.	Sleeplessness	58	25
7.	Inability to concentrate	50	22

\* Multiple response

It is clear from the above Table that they could explain the symptoms experienced when they were tensed. A majority of employed women (62 per cent) and unemployed women (68 per cent) had head ache and body pain when they were exposed to stressful situation.



**FIGURE – 6**  
**SYMPTOMS OF STRESS**

### 3. Measures to Tackle Stressful Situation

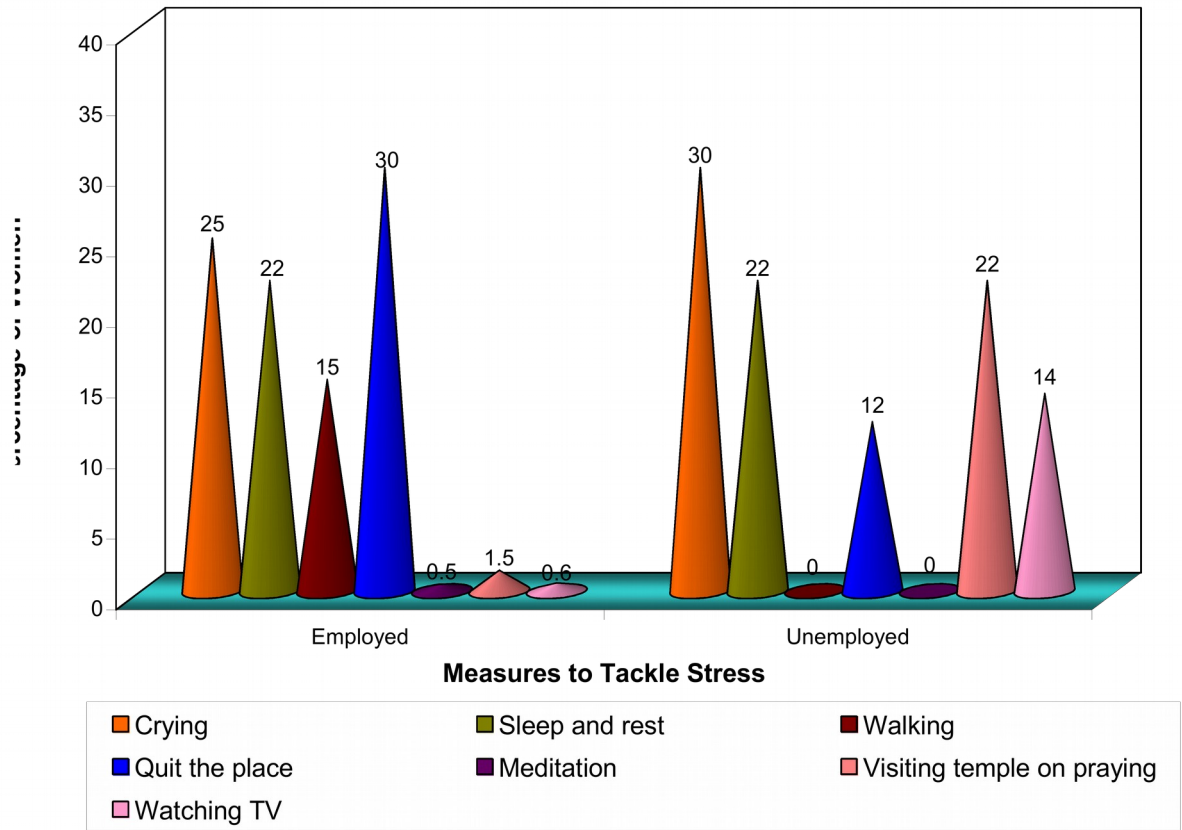
Among selected women 46 per cent of employed and 58 per cent of unemployed did not answer how to tackle stressful situation. Table X presents the measures to tackle stressful situation as pointed out by the remaining women shown in Table X and Figure 7.

**TABLE - X**

MEASURES TO TACKLE STRESS

S.No	Measures	Percentage of women *	
		Employed N=27	Unemployed N=21
1.	Crying	25	30
2.	Sleep and rest	22	22
3.	Walking	15	-
4.	Quit the place	30	12
5.	Meditation	0.5	-
6.	Visiting temple on praying	1.5	22
7.	Watching TV	0.6	14

It is clear from above Table that a majority of employed (25 per cent) and unemployed (30 per cent) women pointed out that crying was a remedial measure used by them to tackle the stressful situation. Quit the place when they faced any stressful situation was indicated by majority of employed women than unemployed women. The positive method of relieving stress like meditation was not common among selected women.



**FIGURE – 7**

**MEASURES TO TACKLE STRESS**

### **C. Assessment of Stress Level**

Stress is an inescapable consequence of everyday living and everyday interaction. In the scientific and medical literature the list of physical diseases contributed to by stress is ever increasing. Everyone experiences stress on a daily basis, but a label of normalcy does not make it benign. It can lead to serious health problems and it deserves attention (Caple, 2002). Women have to juggle between family and office work. In the rush of managing work with home leads to stress among employed women. In order to find out the stress level of working women and compare with unemployed women, a study on Assessing Stress Level of Women was undertaken and the salient findings are given under the following aspects:

1. Stress assessment general
2. Level of stress of women

#### **1. Stress Assessment General**

A simple Stress Assessment Scale consisting of 20 questions to judge how women were doing was used. The scores obtained by the women were statistically analysed and given in Table XI and Figure 8.

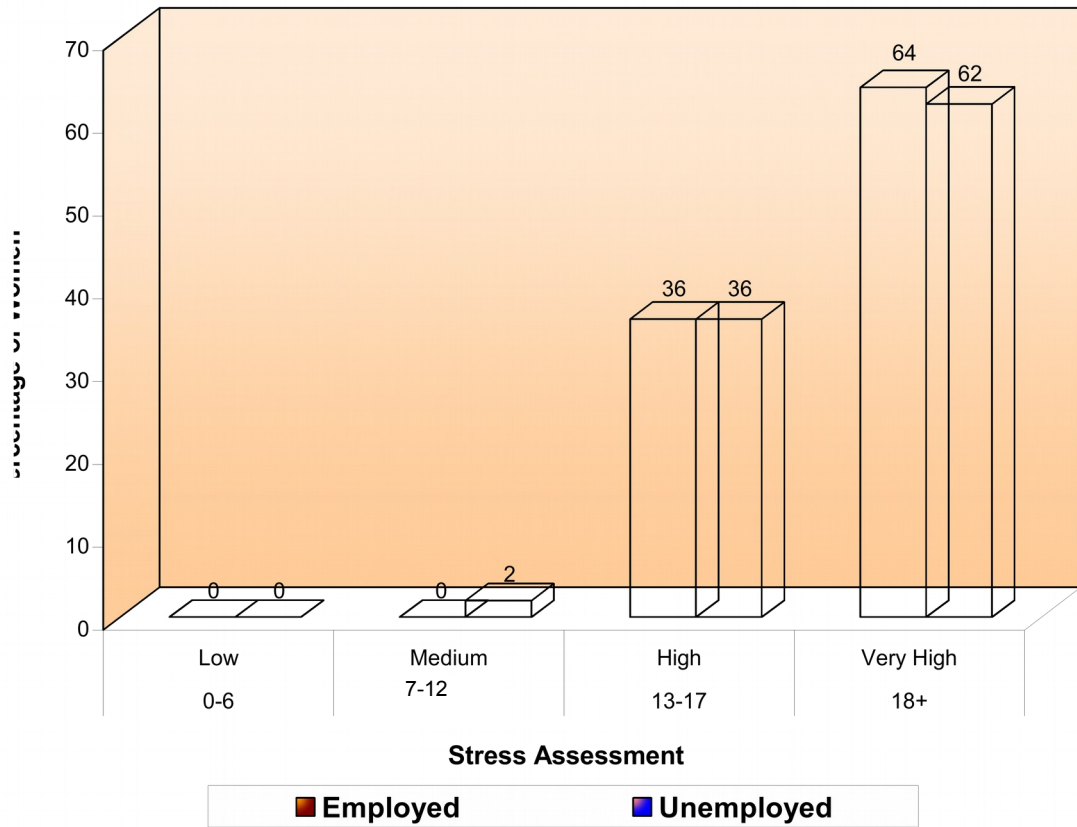
**TABLE - XI**

**STRESS ASSESSMENT GENERAL**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Level of Stress</b>	<b>Percentage of Women</b>		<b>t value</b>
		<b>Employed</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	
0-6	Low	-	-	0.594 NS
7-12	Medium	-	2	
13-17	High	36	36	
18+	Very High	64	62	

NS-Not significant

The above Table clearly shows that all selected women both employed and unemployed had higher side of stress level. The statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference among employed and unemployed women in general stress level.



**FIGURE – 8**

**STRESS ASSESSMENT GENERAL**

## **2. Level of Stress of Women**

Stress can be broadly defined as the result of any demand on the mind or body. A critical point is reached when the demand exceeds the person's belief that it can be personally managed. The level of stress generated by any given stressor will vary from person to person. Stress does not always have a negative consequence; low levels of stress can be motivational and very beneficial experiences contributing to the growth and development of the person. Acute and/or chronic stress can weaken every system within the body and leading us to be more vulnerable to injury and disease. Hence a detailed Stress Test was given to selected employed and unemployed women. The scores were analysed statistically and presented under the following aspects:

- a. Overall score
- b. Quality of life score
- c. Symptom distress score
- d. Level of functioning score

### **a. Overall Score**

The scores obtained by the employed and unemployed women in the Stress Test was statistically analysed to findout the difference in stress level among selected women and is shown in Table XII Figure 9.

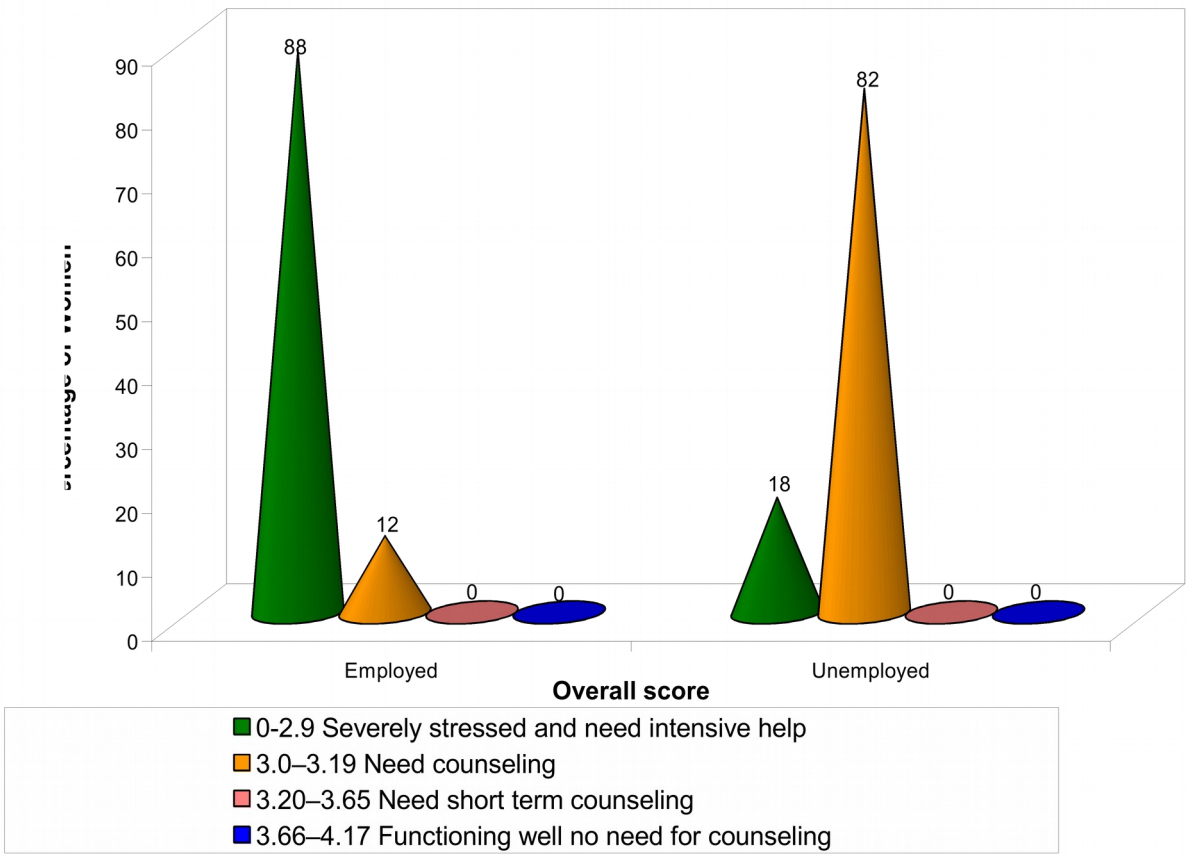
**TABLE - XII**

## OVERALL SCORE

Average Score	Level of Stress	Percentage of Women		t value
		Employed	Unemployed	
0–2.9	Severely stressed and need intensive help	88	18	7.732**
3.0–3.19	Need counseling	12	82	
3.20–3.65	Need short term counseling	-	-	
3.66–4.17	Functioning well no need for counseling	-	-	

\*\* Significant at 1% level

It is clear from the above Table that a majority of 88 per cent of employed women were severely stressed and need intensive help when compared to unemployed women. Working out side had great demand over their time and energy and dual responsibilities caused sever stress among employed homemakers. A majority of 82 per cent of unemployed women need counseling. There was a significant difference among employed and unemployed women at one per cent level.



**FIGURE – 9**  
**OVERALL SCORE**

## b. Quality of Life Score

This aspect of the Stress Test was generated to measure both general life satisfaction and domains of Quality of Life. This included four sub-dimensions of quality of life which were autonomy, self esteem, social support and physical health. The result is given in Table XIII.

**TABLE - XIII**

### QUALITY OF LIFE SCORE

Average Score	Level of Stress	Percentage of Women		t value
		Employed	Unemployed	
0–2.92	Severely stressed and need intensive help	4	8	5.091**
2.93–2.98	Need counseling	-	52	
2.99–3.52	Need short term counseling	92	20	
3.53–3.93	Functioning well no need for counseling	4	20	

\*\* Significant at 1% level

It is clear from the above Table that employed women were satisfied with their Quality of Life because of their economic independence, social behaviour and let out for their problems out side the house. More than 60 per cent of unemployed women were highly stressed and need some form of counseling because they did not have any let out and economic independence. The statistical analysis revealed that there was a significant difference among employed and unemployed women in Life Satisfaction at one per cent level.

### C. Symptom Distress Score

This score measures symptomatology, which includes depression, somatization and paranoia. The scores were statistically analysed and the result is given in Table XIV.

**TABLE - XIV**

SYMPTOM DISTRESS SCORE

Average Score	Level of Stress	Percentage of Women		t value
		Employed	Unemployed	
0–2.75	Severely stressed and need intensive help	10	56	4.055**
2.76–3.04	Need counseling	36	24	
3.05–3.50	Need short term counseling	44	-	
3.51–4.24	Functioning well no need for counseling	10	20	

\*\* Significant at 1% level

It is clear from the above Table that 56 per cent of unemployed women were severely stressed and needed intensive help where as the majority of 44 per cent of employed women needed only short term counseling. It is interesting to note that 10 per cent of employed and 20 per cent of unemployed women were functioning well and did not need professional counseling. There was significant difference between employed and unemployed women at one per cent level.

#### D. Level of Functioning Score

This section of Stress Test measures self-reported level of functioning. The scores obtained were statistically analysed and presented in Table XV.

**TABLE - XV**

#### LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING SCORE

Average Score	Level of Stress	Percentage of Women		t value
		Employed	Unemployed	
0–3.32	Severely stressed and need intensive help	84	36	2.985**
3.32–3.61	Need counseling	16	10	
3.62–3.99	Need short term counseling	-	44	
4.00–4.32	Functioning well no need for counseling	-	10	

\*\* Significant at 1% level

The above Table clearly indicates that how well women were able to get along in the community. A majority of 84 per cent of employed women were severely stressed and they needed intensive help where as only 36 per cent of unemployed women were severely stressed. A majority of 44 per cent of unemployed women need only short term counseling. This might be because that unemployed women could spend more time for social activities. There was a significant difference between employed and unemployed women at one percent level in Level of Functioning.

#### D. Factors Enhancing the Stress

The potential causes of stress are numerous and highly individual. What causes stress depends on one's perception of it. In order to find out the reasons for higher level of stress the variables like age, education, occupation, size of family, income and type of family were taken and statistically analysed against the scores obtained by the selected women. Among the factors selected size of family and type of family were left out because all selected employed and unemployed women belonged to nuclear family having one to four members. The factors were analysed and presented below:

### 1. Age Versus Stress Level

This part of the study sought to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the stress level exhibited by the women and their chronological age. There is no age at which we are exempt. The result is presented in Table XVI.

**TABLE - XVI**

AGE VERSUS STRESS LEVEL

Age (Years)	Employed		Unemployed	
	Average score	F-Value	Average Score	F-Value
30-35	80.73	0.700 NS	79.07	3.880**
36-40	82.63		81.80	
41-45	81.60		81.25	
46-50	82.60		79.29	
51-55	83.00		80.70	
56-60	81.70		81.50	

NS – not significant

\*\* - Significant at 1% level

Previous studies have shown that there is no significant relationship between an individual's stress level and the age of individual (Schulz and Schultz, 2003). The present study also showed the same in the case of employed women whereas there was a significant relationship between stress level and the age of women in the case of unemployed women at one percent level.

## 2. Educational Status Versus Stress Level

The score obtained by the selected women were statistically analysed against the educational status and the finding is shown in Table XVII.

**TABLE - XVII**

### **EDUCATIONAL STATUS VERSUS STRESS LEVEL**

Education	Employed		Unemployed	
	Average score	F-Value	Average Score	F-Value
Secondary	17.46		17.60	
UG	18.10	2.063 NS	17.75	0.742NS
PG and Professional	18.19		18.00	

NS-Not Significant

The study conducted by Yang, Nang and Jin, 2003 concluded that the educational level analysis suggest that the difference in the scores of stress and strain among various educational level show statistically significant. But the present study differed from this result that there was no significant influence of educational level on the stress level of selected women.

## 3. Occupational Status Versus Stress Level

Table XVIII presents the relationship between occupational status of women and the scores obtained in stress test.

**TABLE - XVIII**  
**OCCUPATIONAL STATUS VERSUS STRESS LEVEL**

Occupation	Employed Women	
	Average Score	F value
Group I	17.76	2827 NS
Group II	17.50	
Others	18.55	

NS Not Significant

It is clear from the above Table that there was no significant relationship between the occupational status of employed women and stress level.

#### **4. Family Income Versus Stress Level**

The relationship between family income of selected women and stress level was statistically analysed and presented in Table XIX.

**TABLE - XIX**

**FAMILY INCOME VERSUS STRESS LEVEL**

<b>Income Group</b>	<b>Employed</b>		<b>Unemployed</b>	
	<b>Average score</b>	<b>F -value</b>	<b>Average Score</b>	<b>F-value</b>
Low	80.86	0.461 NS	8.38	0.064 NS
Middle	82.22		80.27	
High	81.80		80.57	

NS – Not Significant

The previous studies conducted shows that the lower the income, the higher the levels of stress. But the present study revealed that there was no significant relationship between income and stress level. This might be because of the less variation in income.

# **Summary & Conclusion**



## V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Stress is like an iceberg. One can see one-eighth of it above, but what about what is below. Stress is nothing more than a socially acceptable form of mental illness. How one perceives a situation and how one react to it is the basis of one's stress. If one focus on the negative in any situation, one can expect high stress levels. If one try and see the good in the situation the stress levels will quality diminish (Pulsifer, 2004). Women work very hard and this causes stress and anxiety in them. Stress management in women is necessary because they are the pivot, the centre force that keeps on a family, work and their life together. There fore the stress level of the women should be studied before educate them on stress management methods. "Assessing the Stress Level of Selected Women" is one such study which was conducted to assess the level of stress with the following objectives to:

- Know the personal profile of selected women
- Understand the awareness of women on stress
- Find out the general stress status of women.
- Assess the level of stress among employed and unemployed women.
- Analyse the factors affecting the stress level of women.

Hundred women – 50 employed and 50 unemployed were selected using purposive sampling. Questionnaire cum stress Assessment scale was used which consisted of three parts – back ground information, stress level general scale and Stress Test. The informations collected were statistically analysed and the findings are presented below:

### □ **Personal Profile of Selected Women:**

- The age of selected women ranged between 30 to 60 years
- A majority of 48 per cent employed women and 50 per cent of unemployed women had higher secondary education
- Among selected employed women 34 per cent were group I officers and 44 per cent were group II officers.
- A majority of more than 80 per cent of employed women belonged to middle and high income groups. A majority of more than 80 per cent of unemployed women belonged to low and middle income groups.
- Ninety six per cent of employed women lived in own individual house where as fifty eight per cent of unemployed women lived in rented houses.

□ **Awareness on Stress:**

- In order to findout the awareness of women on stress they were asked whether they experienced stress in day to day life. More than 70 per cent of employed women and 58 per cent of unemployed women experienced stress in day to day life. Others were not in a position to realise the stress situations.
- A majority of 62 per cent of employed and 47 per cent of unemployed women expressed that taking care of children and family members created stress in day to day living
- The major symptoms of stress experienced by a majority of both employed (62 per cent) and unemployed (68 per cent) were head ache and body pain.

- Only 54 per cent of employed and 42 per cent of unemployed women answered the question on measures to tackle stressful situation.
- Majority of selected women pointed out that crying as a remedial measure to over come stress.

#### □ **Assessment of Stress Level:**

- All selected women showed higher side of stress level
- There was no significant difference among employed and unemployed women in general stress level.
- The result of overall score from Stress Test shows that 88 per cent of employed women were severely stressed and need intensive help where as 82 per cent of unemployed women were moderately stressed and need counseling
- There was a significant difference among employed and unemployed women in Life Satisfaction at one per cent level
- Fifty six per cent of unemployed women were severely stressed and needed intensive help regarding to Symptom Distress Score. There was a significant difference between employed and unemployed women at one per cent level.
- A majority of 84 per cent of employed women were severely stressed and they needed intensive help with regard to Level of Functioning scores where as a majority of 44 per cent of unemployed women need only short term counseling. There was a significant difference between employed and unemployed women at one per cent level.

- With regard to factors enhancing stress level the variables like education, occupation and income of the family were not significant, where as among unemployed women there was a significant relationship between stress level and age.

It is hoped that the result of this study will be useful to conduct future studies on stress among women.

The world events in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has led us to accept the inevitability of happenings and the powerlessness over everything, a condition that makes one feels stressful at all times. Life gets difficult to steer forth with never challenges coming up in one's lives. With this adding up of stress at home, on the roads, at work, in business and every where else, we need more internal calm and personal peace. Everyone needs to feel there is inner peace within all which needs to be brought out through meditation and yoga, through some quality time spent with the family, through some quantity of time spent for one self, through communion with nature as one is always reminded of the transcendence of life. Amidst our daily chores at home or in office a little bit of personal time is very much essential for all of us to have to know and feel ourselves better. Feel love within yourself. If you feel love within yourself you should soon have love from others too. Overall wellness is possible if we take life easy and live in joy. Your inner beauty would shine out to others if you are a relaxed and positive person in the true sense of the terms.

# **Appendix**

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## APPENDIX - I

### SCHEDULE TO ELICIT INFORMATION ON STRESS LEVEL OF SELECTED WOMEN

Name of the Investigator : .....

Name of the Interviewee : .....

#### I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Education level
  - a. Primary
  - b. Secondary
  - c. UG
  - d. PG
  - e. Professional course
  - f. Any other
  
2. Occupational status
  - a. Employed
  - b. Unemployed
  - c. If employed type of job
  
3. Income
  - a. Low income (5000-8000)
  - b. Middle income (8000-11000)
  - c. High income (11000 and Above)
  
4. Size of the family
  - a. Small (2-4)
  - b. Medium (4-6)
  - c. High (Above 6)

5. Type of house
- |          |                          |           |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| a. Owned | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Rented | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|----------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
- If owned,
- |                  |                          |               |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| a. Individual    | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Apartment  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Single storey | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Row houses | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Double storey | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. Any other  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## II. AWARENESS ON STRESS

1. Do you face stress in day today life?
- Yes
- No
2. What are the stressful situations in your life?
- .....
3. Indicate the symptoms of stress?
- .....
4. What are the measures to tackle stress?
- .....

## III. STRESS ASSESSMENT GENERAL

*(This test is not meant to replace a clinical assessment but to help you to judge how you are doing. If you score as stressed you may need to seek help)*

**Answer these twenty questions: Yes or No.**

1. Do you frequently neglect your diet?
- Yes
- No
2. Do you frequently try to do everything yourself?
- Yes
- No

3. Do you frequently blow up easily?

Yes

No

4. Do you frequently seek unrealistic goals?

Yes

No

5. Do you frequently fail to see the humor in situations others find funny?

Yes

No

6. Do you frequently get easily irritated?

Yes

No

7. Do you frequently make a “big deal” of everything?

Yes

No

8. Do you frequently complain that you are disorganized?

Yes

No

9. Do you frequently keep everything inside?

Yes

No

10. Do you frequently neglect exercise?

Yes

No

11. Do you frequently have few supportive relationships?

Yes

No

12. Do you frequently get too little rest?

Yes

No

13. Do you frequently get angry when you are kept waiting?

Yes

No

14. Do you frequently ignore stress symptoms?

Yes

No

15. Do you frequently put things off until later?

Yes

No

16. Do you frequently think there is only one right way to do something?

Yes

No

17. Do you frequently fail to build relaxation into every day?

Yes

No

18. Do you frequently spend a lot of time complaining about the past?

Yes

No

19. Do you frequently race through the day?

Yes

No

20. Do you frequently feel unable to cope with all you have to do?

Yes

No

#### IV. STRESS LEVEL – LIFE IN GENERAL

*The following items concern how you feel about your life in general.*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1. I am satisfied with my life.					
2. I feel good about myself.					
3. I am happy with the way I look.					
4. I have good relationship with my family.					
5. I have supportive friends.					

*The following items concern how you feel about your life in general*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
6. My health is good.					
7. I experience little physical pain.					
8. I have adequate physical strength.					
9. I enjoy my leisure time					
10. I am happy with my job/work.					

*The following items concern feelings you may have had during the last month.*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
11. I have feelings of hopelessness about the future.					
12. I feel worthless					
13. I feel blue					

14.	I feel weak in parts of my body					
15.	My heart pounds and races					

*The following items concern feelings you may have had during the last month.*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	
16.	I have to avoid certain things, places or situations because they frighten me.					
17.	I feel that people, in general are unfriendly and dislike me					
18.	I have urges to beat, injure, or harm someone					
19.	I feel that I am being watched or talked about by others.					

*The following items describe difficult or stressful situations you may have experienced during the last month*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	
20.	I have recently had a physical fight with someone					
21.	I have recently tried to harm myself or had a plan to do so					
22.	I have recently become upset or angry					
23.	I have recently broken things or destroyed property					

*The following items describe difficult or stressful situations you may have experienced during the last month*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	
24.	I am able to get around in the					

community on my own					
25. I can get help when I need it					
26. I take care of my home and living space					
27. I am functioning well at my work/school					