

Challenges, Perceived Stress of Working Professional Mothers and Its Impact on Job Satisfaction in South Gujarat– An Observational Study

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Abstract

Background and introduction-

Women are the backbone of the society. She plays a vital role in the economic development of the country and her contribution is as equal as their male counterparts. Advances in technology plus evolving work and the role of family for women in India have changed the contribution to the business environment of 21st century. By analytical study, it is found that the stress level in working women increase in direct proportionally to their age. This may be because of the additional responsibilities imposed on elder women both in family as well as at workplace. Also the number of working hours affects the stress level of working women² This paper is an attempt to assess the stress levels among working professional mothers from India, from various geographical area and various fields, and to identify the risk factors of their perceived stress. The study also aims to identify problems faced by working mothers in child rearing .

Aims and objectives-to determine challenges faced by working mother, To evaluate perceived stress of working mothers & To determine impact of challenges and perceived stress on job satisfaction.

Methodology-It was a cross sectional study conducted in working professional mothers of south Gujarat. Data was collected using structured questionnaire and perceived stress scale (PSS-4) for assessing stress. The form was made available on internet so as to approach wide spectrum of professionally working mothers. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) measures the level to which a respondent considers his or her life stressful. perceived stress scale 4-item version (PSS-4) was used to assess working mothers' perceived stress.¹The form was made available on email, wats app and other social media so as to approach a wide spectrum of professionally working mothers. Attempts were made to cover various professions such as teaching, doctors, IT professionals, banking and finance professionals and business women. Data was collected by convenient sampling.

Result- google form questionnaire was sent to 200 working mothers from south Gujarat , working in different occupational fields. Out of these, 116 responses were collected. Demographic characteristics of working mothers in the study included age, educational status, marriage status, socioeconomic status, type

of family and total no. of children., other associated factors were also evaluated like person helping in child rearing , lack of family support and inability to exclusively breastfeed child for 6 months etc.

Conclusions: In spite of family support for childrearing, most of the professional working mothers are experiencing perceived stress. Work environment flexibility and efficient social support to reduce stress is recommended. At the same time, need of stress buster measures is essential for effective balance of motherhood and profession.

Keywords: Challenges, Working professional mothers, Perceived stress, Job satisfaction, Childrearing.

1. Introduction

Women are integral to economic development, contributing across diverse professions including medicine, law, IT, banking, and academia. However, societal expectations continue to assign household and caregiving duties primarily to women, creating a dual burden. Rising living costs and educational expenses further necessitate dual incomes, intensifying the challenges faced by working mothers. The financial demands for Indian families are rising day by day. Higher cost of living, increasing expenses on education of children, increasing cost of housing properties in India force every family in India to look for ways and means of increasing. as sports, medical, law, military, academics, politics, bank, top level corporate positions etc. Although working women handle their professional life in facing competition and challenges at work place and personnel life in managing household work, handle children, family, cooking, social responsibilities are still considered as the duty of women only. They have to take up a full day job plus handle all household activities that they handled as homemaker. Due to such multitasking efforts of woman increased stress becomes by-product for her. Sometimes, the relationship with her Spouse becomes unbalanced, if proper balancing act is not delivered in both personal and professional life.

Previous studies suggest that stress levels among women increase with age and working hours, reflecting cumulative responsibilities. This study investigates the challenges faced by professional mothers, evaluates perceived stress, and explores its impact on job satisfaction.

2. Methodology

Design: Cross-sectional observational study. Population: Working professional mothers across India. Sampling: Convenience sampling via online distribution (Google Forms, email, WhatsApp, social media). Instrument: Structured questionnaire (demographics, occupational details, family support, child-rearing practices), Perceived Stress Scale – 4 item version (PSS-4). Sample Size: 200 invited; 116 responses analyzed. Variables: Age, education, marital status, socioeconomic status, type of family, number of children, breastfeeding practices, family support, job satisfaction indicators

3. Results

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AGE	28	45	34.97	5.504
STRESSSCORE	7	18	12.16	3.322
SUPPORTSCORE	5	16	11.04	3.540
SATISFACTIONSORE	4	12	7.53	2.390
NO. OF CHILDREN	1	2	1.50	0.502
WORKINGHRS	6	10	8.29	1.194

Table 1 MEAN AND S.D OF ALL VARIABLES

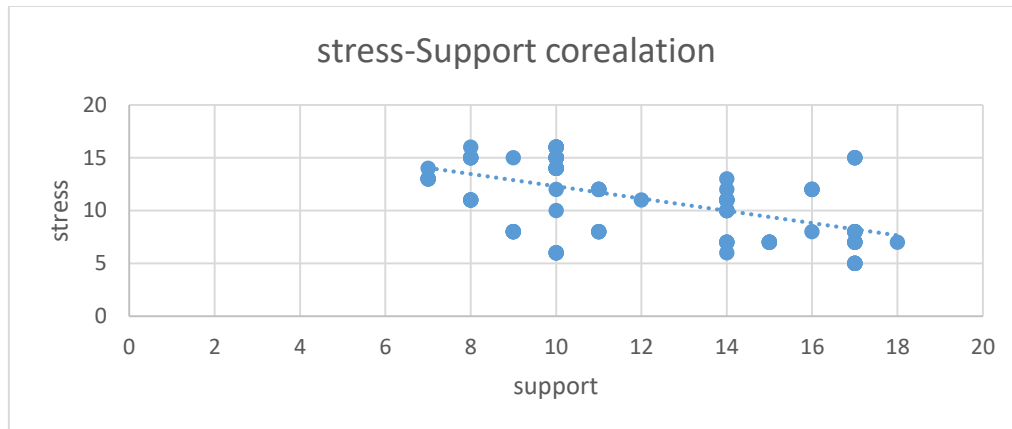
Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Distribution (n=116)
Age (years)	25–35: 40%; 36–45: 35%; >45: 25%
Education	Graduate: 55%; Postgraduate: 40%; Doctorate: 5%
Occupation	Teaching: 30%; Medicine: 20%; IT: 15%; Banking/Finance: 20%; Business: 15%
Family Type	Nuclear: 65%; Joint: 35%
Children	1 child: 60%; ≥2 children: 40%

Correlations				
Control Variables			STR ESS SCO RE	SATI SFAC TION SCO RE
WORKIN GHRS	STRESSCOR E	Correla tion	1.00 0	- 0.255
		Signific ance (2- tailed)		0.006
		df	0	113
	SATISFACTIO NSCORE	Correla tion	- 0.25 5	1.000
		Signific ance (2- tailed)	0.00 6	
		df	113	0

TABLE 3 SHOWS CORELATION BETWEEN STRESS SCORE AND SATISFACTION SCORE

FIGURE 1 SHOWS CORELATION BETWEEN STRESS SCORE AND SATISFACTION SCORE



Stress Findings

Age: Stress increased proportionally with age .**Working Hours:** Longer hours correlated with higher stress.**Child-Rearing:** Lack of exclusive breastfeeding and limited family support were significant stressors.**Job Satisfaction:** Stress negatively impacted satisfaction, though flexible work environments mitigated effects.

TABLE 4. SHOWS Relationship Between stress score and no. of children

Correlations				
Control Variables			STRESSSCORE	NO.OFCHILDREN
AGE	STRESSSCORE	Correlation	1.000	-0.077
		Significance (2-tailed)		0.413
		df	0	113
	NO.OFCHILDREN	Correlation	-0.077	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.413	
		df	113	0

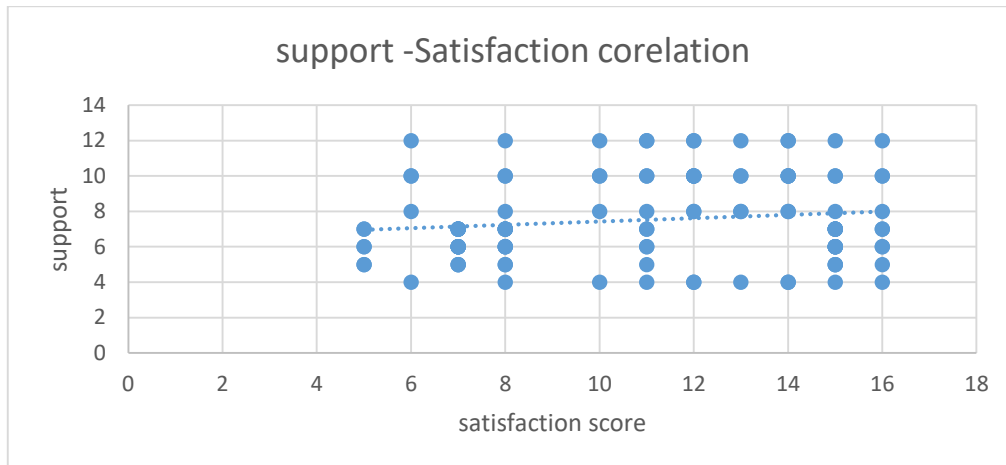


FIGURE 2 SHOWS CORELATION BETWEEN SUPPORT SCORE AND SATISFACTION SCORE

FIGURE 3 SHOWS CORELATION BETWEEN SATISFACTION SCORE AND WORKING HOURS

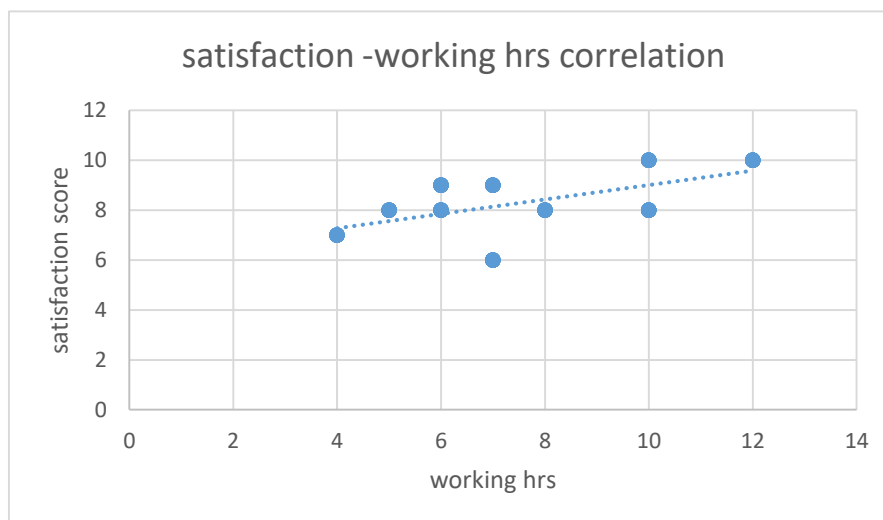
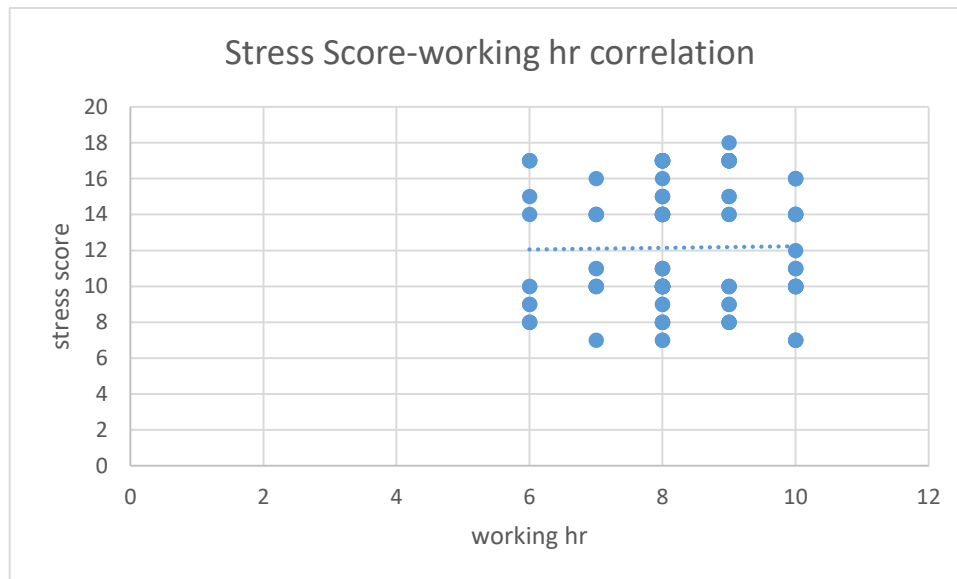


FIGURE 4 SHOWS CORELATION BETWEEN STRESS SCORE AND WORKING HOURS



4. Discussion

This study highlights the persistent stress experienced by professional mothers despite family support. The dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities contributes to reduced job satisfaction.

The findings confirm that stress among working mothers in semi-urban India is widespread, with the majority reporting moderate levels and a notable proportion experiencing high stress. These results are consistent with Role Theory, which highlights the strain produced by multiple, often conflicting, role expectations³. The presence of high stress in nuclear families underscores the vulnerability of mothers who lack extended kin support, while the stress experienced in joint families suggests that additional role expectations may counterbalance the benefits of shared childcare⁴.

The study also supports global findings^{5,6} that occupational demands significantly affect stress, with healthcare and business mothers facing greater strain due to long hours and rigid schedules. In line with Indian studies^{7,8} the findings illustrate that domestic expectations and limited workplace flexibility remain central stressors for working mothers. However, unlike studies in metros, this research highlights the semi-urban context, where reliance on family support is critical but not always sufficient⁹.

Beyond this, the study revealed that the number of children significantly influenced stress levels, supporting the concept of role overload. Mothers with two or more children reported notably higher stress, with a medium effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 0.50$), indicating practical as well as statistical significance. This aligns with contemporary Indian research showing that caregiving intensity magnifies perceived stress, particularly in households without institutional childcare support¹⁰.

Occupational sector differences were also marked, with healthcare and businesswomen reporting significantly higher stress compared to educators and self-employed mothers. The ANOVA showed a moderate effect size ($\eta^2 \approx 0.13$), suggesting that job structure and sectoral rigidity meaningfully shape

maternal stress. This pattern mirrors global evidence ^{11,12} that workplace characteristics—such as autonomy, schedule flexibility, and workload intensity—are decisive stress factors.

Implications:

- **Workplace:** Flexible schedules, remote work, and supportive policies can reduce stress.
- **Family:** Shared caregiving responsibilities are essential.
- **Health:** Stress management programs (mindfulness, counseling, exercise) should be integrated into workplace wellness initiatives.

These findings align with prior literature emphasizing the need for systemic interventions to support working mothers. Moreover, the absence of affordable, community-based childcare facilities exacerbates stress for mothers in demanding occupations. The findings therefore call for multi-level reforms: at the family level, spousal involvement and shared parenting must be encouraged; at the workplace level, flexible scheduling, childcare provisions, and employee wellness programs should be implemented; and at the policy level, gender-sensitive labor laws and institutional childcare are urgently needed.

5. Conclusion

Professional mothers in India face significant stress that adversely impacts job satisfaction. Among the determinants studied, the number of children and occupational sector emerged as significant predictors of stress. Mothers with two or more children reported greater stress, supporting the premise of role overload as outlined in Role Theory. Addressing workplace flexibility, enhancing social support, and promoting stress management strategies are crucial for healthier work-life integration.

6. Limitations:

The study employed convenience sampling via online forms, which may introduce selection bias. Mothers with internet access and willingness to participate were overrepresented, potentially limiting generalizability. Although 116 responses were analyzed, the sample may not fully capture the diversity of working mothers across India's varied socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Stress levels and job satisfaction were assessed through self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by recall bias or social desirability bias. The study provides a snapshot of stress and job satisfaction but cannot establish causality or track changes over time.

7. Future Scope:

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to examine how stress and job satisfaction evolve across different stages of motherhood and career progression. Expanding the sample size and including participants from diverse regions and socioeconomic backgrounds will enhance external validity. Evaluating the effectiveness of workplace flexibility programs, stress management interventions, and family support initiatives can provide actionable insights for policy and practice. Cross-cultural comparisons between Indian working mothers and those in other countries may highlight unique

challenges and universal patterns. In-depth interviews or focus groups could provide richer insights into the lived experiences of professional mothers, complementing quantitative findings.

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