

A Study on Mental Health of Working Women and the Coping Strategies: A Review

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Abstract

This paper explores a comprehensive review of research on the mental health problems experienced by working women and the coping strategies they employ to navigate these challenges. The surge in women's workforce participation has brought focus on the distinct pressures and demands they encounter in balancing work and personal life responsibilities. The review of existing research brings together key insights from various studies exploring the multifaceted nature of emotional well-being concerns among employed women across different occupational settings, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The review highlights the diverse factors contributing to the mental health concerns of working women, including work-family conflict, gender discrimination, job insecurity, role overload, and limited access to resources and support systems. Moreover, societal expectations, cultural norms, and organizational structures often exacerbate these challenges, creating additional barriers to women's mental well-being in the workplace. To address these difficulties, working women employ diverse options of coping strategies to manage stress, enhance resilience, and maintain psychological well-being. These coping mechanisms encompass both individual-level strategies, such as mindfulness practices, time management techniques, and seeking social support, moreover organizational interventions, such as adaptable work schedules, guidance initiatives, and supportive workplace policies. Furthermore, the review discusses the relevance of addressing structural inequalities and promoting gender-sensitive policies to foster a favourable work setting that fosters the mental health and overall well-being of working women. By synthesizing knowledge from past research, this paper brings attention to the urgency for balanced strategies that incorporate the intersectionality of gender, work, and mental health, and advocates for proactive interventions to create more inclusive and supportive workplaces for women. Overall, this review contributes to the growing body of literature on gender and mental health by synthesizing empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks, sharing significant observations for academicians, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and organizational leaders seeking to promote gender equity and strengthen emotional well-being of working women.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Working Women, Coping Strategies*

Introduction

Women represent a valuable pool of talent for key roles and positions within both familial and societal structures. Nowadays, women are increasingly contributing to the economy of their families and are assuming significant positions across diverse business sectors. In contemporary society, women's participation in the workforce has significantly increased, marking a profound shift in traditional gender dynamics.

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However, this transition brings forth a range of challenges, particularly concerning the psychological state of working women. Juggling professional responsibilities alongside familial duties often places considerable strain on their psychological well-being. As such, understanding the elements affecting psychological health working women and identifying effective coping strategies becomes imperative. Enhancing human resources effectiveness hinges on achieving a balance among factors like workforce, workloads, organizational systems, and work environment. Neglecting to harmonize or address these elements can lead to workplace concerns such as discomfort, burnout, physical ailments, as well as psychological well-being challenges, ultimately undermining work performance and productivity (WHO;2020). The stressors related to career development had a notable connection to psychopathological symptoms. Specifically, female workers facing barriers in career advancement exhibited a considerably higher risk of experiencing such symptoms Merijanti et al (2023). Research from the leading psychological organization in the U.S. indicates that women tend to experience more frequent and intense stressors compared to men. Hence, they are more vulnerable to experiencing a range of mental symptoms stemming from this stress (APA 2015). The emergence of psychopathological symptoms among workers can be attributed to stressors present in their workplace, which are significant potential hazards that should be pre-emptively addressed (WHO;2020). It's observed that individuals facing workplace stressors often decline to seek expert assistance owing to the stigma surrounding psychological well-being at work. If this reluctance persists, the situation could deteriorate over time and impact broader segments of the population (Maulik PK,2017).

Relevance of the Study

The study's significance lies in its exploration of the mental well-being of working women, a topic often overlooked in society. Through a review of existing literature, it uncovers the challenges women face in the workforce and the coping strategies they use. This understanding is vital for formulating tailored solutions and support systems. Additionally, the research empowers women by validating their experiences and providing tools for resilience and seeking support. Overall, it contributes to promoting gender equality and creating more inclusive workplaces and societies.

Purpose of the study

The study seeks to investigate the mental health condition of females in the workforce and their coping strategies. Through a literature review, it seeks to uncover insights into the intersection of gender, work, and mental health, informing tailored policies and interventions.

Research Methodology

Duration of the Study: The review was conducted over a period of more than a decade from 2011 to 2023. During this time, a comprehensive search and analysis of relevant literature was undertaken to explore existing research on mental health challenges faced by working

women and the coping strategies employed. Geographical Coverage: The literature reviewed for this study included national and international research.

Hypotheses Framing and Testing: As this paper is a review-based study, no hypotheses were empirically tested. However, the review was guided by certain thematic questions, such as:

- What are the common mental health issues faced by working women as reported in previous studies?
- What coping strategies are most frequently identified and recommended in the literature?

Literature Review

S.Muhammad et.al.(2011) emphasised that stressful life events and conflicts among career and household duties have detrimental effects on women's physical and mental health, leading to stress, burnout, depression, and various health problems. Long work hours exacerbate stress-related issues, contributing to burnout, which manifests as diminished energy and interpersonal difficulties. Women dealing with burnout often experience feelings of powerlessness and a lack of control. Studies suggest that enhancing the quality of both work and family life can improve overall well-being. Effective stress management, known as positive stress, not only promotes women's health but also boosts job performance. X. Yu et al.(2014) explored that teachers under psychological stress, particularly from demanding workloads, may become dissatisfied, miss work frequently, or leave their jobs. A survey on school teachers explored the links between work stress, self-efficacy, and job burnout. Observations indicated that occupational pressure and self-efficacy both significantly impact job burnout, with self-efficacy playing a partial mediating role. This study reinforces the need for strengthening self-efficacy to improve teachers' occupational psychological wellness.

A.M.Sultana et.al.(2014),Shueh-Yi Lian & Cai Lian Tam(2014),aimed research on workplace stress among females in Malaysia suggests that they undergo greater stress compared to men, with inadequate support for working mothers. Coping strategies' effectiveness varied, influenced by problem nature and individual dynamics. Resilience emerged as crucial for adapting to and surviving job stressors, enhancing future resilience. However, there's a gap in understanding work stress among Malaysian women and mothers, as well as the link between psychological resilience and coping mechanisms, and stress, pointing to opportunities for further research. Chanderkant Gorsy et.al.(2015), teaching, once revered, faces challenges impacting teachers' mental health due to economic shifts and job market trends. This study, focusing on public school teachers, found gender disparities, with male teachers showing better mental health, and urban teachers reporting higher well-being than rural counterparts. Recognizing teachers' pivotal role, understanding their mental health is crucial for both professional development and societal progress. A Bahri & K Ayça (2016) investigated those 258 private elementary school teachers in Sakarya used both exploratory and statistical techniques

to identify stress sources and coping mechanisms. Quantitative analysis identified stress from school administration, teaching duties, and facilities. Qualitative data revealed additional stressors such as lack of resources, insufficient supervision, professional boredom, and student behaviour problems. Teachers coped by maintaining a positive attitude and spending time with loved ones. This study sheds light on the specific stressors experienced by private school teachers and the strategies they use to manage stress. Gahlawat, S.(2017), examined the mental well-being and job satisfaction of 100 secondary school teachers, evenly split among public and private institutions in Sonipat district. Using standardized measures, observations are that public school teachers, aged 30-40, displayed better mental well-being and greater job satisfaction compared to teachers in private schools. M.Srisailamaiah(2017), Examined the psychological well-being of 130 Secondary school educators, taking into account aspects like gender, urban/rural location, and employment sector. Employing mental Health Assessment Tool, findings showed that government teachers, females, urban residents, and non-language instructors exhibited higher mental health levels. Statistical analysis highlighted how employment sector, gender, location, and subject type impact high school teachers' mental well-being. Stefanie Gisler et.al.(2018) , examined the impact of work-life conflict, particularly work-family conflict, on employees' health, considering its impact on psychological, physical, and behavioural well-being. Ghausia Taj Begum and Meena Osmany (2019), revealed a strong positive link between work-life balance and psychological well-being among female managers, along with a negative correlation with psychological distress. Differences among females at the managerial level in the private and public sector are noted with regard to work-life enhancement, distress, and mental health. These findings underscore the importance of tailored strategies to address work-life balance challenges in both sectors, considering their distinct organizational environments. Şahin A. & Gök R.(2020) ,suggested that humor climates in schools influence teachers' perceived stress levels. Analysing data from 387 teachers using the Humor Climate Scale and the Perceived Stress Scale, it highlights constructive humor climates, characterized by positive humor and supervisor support, as prevalent. However, negative and destructive humor climates, such as negative humor and outgroup humor, predict higher perceived stress/distress levels among teachers. This underscores the impact of adverse humor climates on teacher well-being. Atteh E. at.al.(2020), highlighted the significant impact of both work-related and family-related stress on individuals' careers, with work-family conflict posing a central challenge. It finds a positive correlation between job stress, parental stress, and conflicts in the family workplace, underscoring the health implications. Effective management of these conflicts is vital for boosting employee engagement and preventing burnout. Understanding the impact of work-family conflict on female teachers and its link to job satisfaction is crucial, especially considering the growing appeal of the teaching profession to younger women. T.Elena et.al.(2020), investigated professional burnout among female teachers, examining its relationship with different aspects and coping mechanisms. Analyzing data from 209 teachers, it reveals an inverse relationship between age/experience and emotional burnout indicators. Teachers suffering from increased burnout often employ ineffective ways to cope, while individuals with lower burnout levels utilize adaptive approaches. These findings aim to support the formulation of more effective burnout prevention programs for educators. Zhou et al.(2021),the study of 223 elementary and high school teachers in Shandong province examined how work-family conflict impacts occupational well-being. Utilizing questionnaires, it measured work-family conflict, occupational well-being, and psychological

capital, exploring the latter's mediating role. Analysis revealed a negative correlation between work-family conflict and occupational well-being, with psychological capital playing a mediating role. Dr.Mathiyarasan.M et.al.(2021),despite progress, discrimination against women continues in many areas. This research seeks to thoroughly investigate the issues experienced by working women, emphasizing the socio-economic variables affecting their well-being and security. Using real-time data, face-to-face interviews, and online surveys, the research investigates workplace harassment, difficulties in balancing work and personal life, and discriminatory practices. The goal is to propose strategies to improve the security and well-being of women both professionally and personally, contributing to the conversation on gender equality. C K Gupta et.al.(2021), investigated the effect of conflicts between professional and personal life on the psychological well-being of female teachers, specifically examining Job-family strain and Family-Work Conflict. It aimed to explore how these conflicts contribute to lower life satisfaction and increased internal conflict, addressing a gap in previous studies on the teaching profession. The results showed that FWC was more significant than WFC, with family responsibilities causing more conflict for teachers than work responsibilities. Kee Pau et.al.(2022), Teaching is commonly acknowledged as a highly stressful profession, with prolonged stress adversely affecting teachers' physical health, mental well-being, and professional efficiency. This study examines psychological well-being and well-being of secondary teaching professionals in Malaysia, categorized by age and gender. Results show an increased rate of burnout, particularly in personal accomplishment, work-related stressors, and effective scheduling. Tiredness emerged as a prevalent manifestation. The results highlight the need for psychological interventions and self-care programs to address potential risks of poor mental well-being of middle and high school teachers in Malaysia. P.Keerti & Chaudhary A.K.(2023), aimed to explore the mental wellness of women in education in both public and private schools in Udaipur city. The study comprised 300 female teachers, with 150 from public schools and 150 from private schools. The findings showed that women educators in public schools exhibited a higher prevalence of somatic (physical) illnesses but fewer mental health symptoms compared to their counterparts in private schools.

Findings

Stressful events and work-family conflicts harm women's health, causing stress, burnout, and illness. Balancing work and family improve well-being, while positive stress management boosts health and job performance. Psychological pressure, notably from demanding work, can lead to teacher dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover. Women teachers' employment positively impacts family economic well-being, particularly in low-income households where dual incomes mitigate poverty risks. Some researchs on workplace stress among females indicates higher stress levels than men, with insufficient support for working mothers, while varying coping strategies' effectiveness. Amid economic shifts and job market trends, teaching's revered status wanes, impacting teachers' mental health; gender disparities and urban-rural divides are evident, underlining the need to understand and support teachers' mental well-being for societal and professional advancement. Examined stressors and coping strategies among private elementary school teachers, revealing quantitative stress sources from administration, teaching, and facilities, and qualitative insights into resource inadequacy, supervision, professional boredom, and student behavior, with coping mechanisms including positive outlook and social support, offering unique insights into private school teachers'

experiences. Standardized measures showed higher mental well-being and professional gratification among government-employed teachers versus those in private schools. Higher emotional well-being among government teachers, females, urban residents, and non-language instructors, showcasing how employment sector, gender, location, and subject type influence high school teachers' mental well-being. There is a significant positive association between work-life balance and psychological well-being in female managers, noting sector-based disparities and advocating for tailored strategies to address work-life balance challenges. Humour climates in schools significantly impact teachers' perceived stress levels.

The substantial influence of both work-related and family-related stress on individuals' careers, with work-family conflict presenting a key obstacle. The study in relation to the mental well-being of working women and their adjustment strategies offers crucial insights into an often-neglected aspect of workplace well-being. By concentrating on the specific mental health challenges faced by women at work, the research fills an important gap in existing literature. The results emphasize the complex interplay of gender roles, societal expectations, and professional duties. Additionally, the study's identification and analysis of coping strategies used by working women have practical implications for enhancing emotional balance and resilience at work. Recognizing the relevance of organizational support, flexible work arrangements, and social networks in effective coping, the study provides valuable guidance for policymakers, employers, and psychological stability professionals. By addressing the mind wellness needs of working women and encouraging adaptive coping strategies, organizations can foster more inclusive and supportive work environments, benefiting both employees and employers.

Conclusion

The studies on the psychological well-being of working women and their coping strategies emphasizes the major difficulties encountered by women in the workforce and the significant priority to handle their mental well-being. By thoroughly examining key aspects including work-family conflict, job demands, and societal pressures, the study emphasizes the necessity of targeted interventions and support mechanisms. Additionally, identifying adaptive coping strategies like seeking social support, practicing mindfulness, and setting boundaries between work and personal life provides practical methods to enhance resilience and well-being among working women. Recognizing the unique needs of women in the workforce and implementing supportive policies and programs can help organizations create more inclusive and equitable workplaces that prioritize employee mental health. Ultimately, investing in the mental health of working women benefits individual employees, contributes to organizational success, and promotes societal well-being.

Limitations of the Study

As a review paper, the study relies entirely on existing literature, which may vary in terms of quality, scope, and methodological rigor. The findings are thus limited by the accuracy and depth of the reviewed studies. Due to time constraints and availability, the review may not include all relevant studies on the mental health of working women and their coping

strategies. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to working women in different cultural or socio-economic settings.

Further Scope of the Study

This review has provided a comprehensive understanding of the mental health challenges faced by working women and the coping strategies employed across different contexts. However, there is ample scope for further research in this area like, future research could involve primary data collection through surveys, interviews, or case studies to explore mental health issues and coping mechanisms among working women in specific professions, age groups, or socio-economic backgrounds. And there is a need for comparative studies between working women in urban vs. rural settings, or between different sectors (e.g., healthcare, education, corporate) to understand context-specific mental health challenges and coping responses. Furthermore, attention should be given to women such as single mothers, women with disabilities, or those working in informal sectors, whose mental health needs are often underrepresented in literature.

Policy Implications

Gender-sensitive mental health frameworks should be integrated into national and organizational policy agendas. Organizations should be encouraged or mandated to implement mental health support systems such as counseling services, stress management workshops, peer support groups, and flexible working arrangements, particularly for women juggling work and family responsibilities. Governments and private employers should adopt policies that promote work-life balance, including paid maternity/paternity leave, caregiving leave, remote/hybrid work options, and flexible hours, which are essential for reducing mental health strain.

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