

# Factors Affecting Perceived Stress

**Ms. Archana Bharti**

**Research Scholar, Deptt. of Psychology, Patliputra University, Patna**

**Dr. Pranay Kumar Gupta,**

**Associate Professor, Department of Psychology  
College of Commerce, Arts & Science, Patna**

## *ABSTRACT*

Stress is our body's response to any kind of demand or threat. It disturbs the equilibrium of our body. This paper aims to highlight the role of perceived Stress in Working Women's well-being. It is a descriptive study based on review articles. Stress may be of two types- Actual stress and perceived stress. Perceived stress means how an individual feels and thinks about the general stressfulness of their life and their ability to handle such stress. It is a person's evaluation of his/her environment as threatening and overwhelming. It may be affected by Person's confidence to deal with the problem, personality, coping resources, and social support. The perception of how self-effective the person is in coping with demands from the external environment and the perception of helplessness and lack of control when facing stress also affects perceived stress. Married working women face more perceived stress than unmarried working women. One explanation may be that In Indian culture after marriage bride leaves her parent's house and lives with her husband in his house. Adjusting to a new family is quite challenging and stress-producing. Another probable explanation may be the responsibilities associated with marriage. Married working women have to look after their children, husbands, elderly in-laws, and other family members and do domestic work. At the same time, they also have to pay attention to their office work. The education level of a person has been found to be associated with perceived stress. It is concluded that perceived stress is a complex concept that affects a person's well-being.

**Keywords: Stress, Actual Stress, Perceived Stress, working women and Well-being.**

### **Introduction:**

The term Stress originated from the Latin word "stringers", meaning "to bind tight". Stress is our body's response to any kind of demand or threat. It disturbs the equilibrium of our body. It produces physical, behavioural, cognitive, and emotional Symptoms. There are two types of stress: eustress and distress Eustress is good. It improves our performance and motivates us. It arises from enjoyable events, for example- attending a party. While distress is bad. It arises from overwhelming demand, losses or threats, for example- loss in business. It deteriorates performance and produces unpleasant feelings. Stressors are the events that produce stress. Stressors may be real or imaginary. It plays an important role in health and illness (Vibe et al., 2012). Hans Selye (1956) gave the concept of the response model of

stress. The way we deal with the stress is called coping. There are two types of coping: emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In problem-focused coping person tries to fix the problem itself. While in emotion-focused coping try to fix emotions that arise from stressful situations, like- Anger, anxiety, fear, frustration, depression etc. Stress is linked to various health problems and illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and rheumatoid arthritis (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007; Johnson, Perry, & Rozensky, 2002). It releases certain hormones in the body. Hans Selye gave the concept of General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) in 1978. It is a set of Physiological changes that take place in all the organisms in response to

stress. GAS has three phases. The first phase is the Alarm stage. Here the body prepares itself for immediate action by stimulating the sympathetic nervous system. Arousal of the sympathetic nervous system releases hormones that prepare the body to face stress. If stress continues then the second stage, the resistance stage begins. Here our body uses all the available resources to cope with the stress. Continuous exposure of the same stressor or different stressors leads to the third stage, exhaustion. Here body's ability to resist the stressor weakens and susceptibility to illness increases. In severe cases, prolonged exposure to stress may result in death (Baron)

It may be of two types- Actual stress or perceived stress. Actual stress arises in the present moment. It is the normal reaction of a person to everyday pressures. For example- Money loss, failure, health issues, etc. Perceived stress means how an individual feels and thinks about the general stressfulness of their life and their ability to handle such stress. It is a person's evaluation of his/her environment as threatening and overwhelming. It may also be defined as the feeling or thought that a person is experiencing at a given point of time (Phillips, 2012). It may be affected by Person's confidence to deal with the problem, personality, coping resources, and social support (Phillip, 2013). There may be individual differences in perceived stress because a person may experience high perceived stress in a particular situation while another person may experience low perceived stress in the same situation.

Perceived stress is a psychological state that exerts influence on a person's cognitive ability (Potter et al., 2009). It has been found that there is an association between perceived stress and increased stroke and depression (Booth et al., 2015, Maiden et al., 2014). The Severity of perceived stress depend on the individual's coping skill (Walton). It affects a person's well-being (Rai et al., 2021). Married working women have more perceived stress as compared to unmarried working women (Rai et al., 2021). Perceived stress is related to the self-efficacy and workload of an individual (Al-Sowaygh, 2013). It also affects Physical, Psychological and Social health (Tung et al., 2014).

### **Perceived Stress and Women**

Women experience more perceived stress as compared to men. Studies have found that married working women experience more perceived stress than unmarried working women (Rai et al., 2021). No significant difference was found in relation to the job sector. Women working in both public and private sectors experienced perceived stress. While unmarried women experience low levels of perceived stress. One explanation may be that In Indian culture after marriage bride leaves her parent's house and lives with her husband in his house. Adjusting in a new family is quite challenging and stress-producing. Another probable explanation may be the responsibilities associated with marriage. Married working women have to look after their children, husbands, elderly in-laws, and other family members and do domestic work. At the same time, they also have to pay attention to their office work. Women whose husbands were employed reported low levels of perceived stress as compared to women whose husbands were unemployed (Eseigbe et al., 2023).

### **Perceived Stress and Mental Health**

Perceived stress also affects the mental functioning of a person and also causes psychiatric problems. It is an important risk factor for poor mental health (Bovier et al., 2002) It adversely affects concentration orientation and memory. Perceived stress was found to have a negative correlation with positive affect. It means those individuals who experience high perceived stress experience low levels of positive affect (Pieh et al., 2020; Salari et al., 2020; Huang and Zhao, 2021; Acoba, 2024). Reduction in perceived stress levels results in less negative feelings of anxiety, and depression (Whoqol Group, 1995). Perceived stress might be predictor of depression (Wang et al., 2019)

### **Perceived Stress and Physical Health**

Several studies have found that perceived stress affects the physical health of a person. People who experience perceived stress are more susceptible to the common cold, asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and rheumatoid arthritis (McEwen, 2006). A high level of perceived stress is linked to metabolic disorders (Eisenmann, 2003). High perceived stress negatively affects the physical fitness of a person.

Increased perceived stress results in decreased strength and endurance (Kaur & Agarwal, 2022).

### Factors Affecting Perceived Stress

#### Social Support

Social support may be defined as the perception or experience that one is loved and cared for by another person (Wills, 1991). It may involve receiving advice, instrumental support, and emotional support from others (Linley and Joseph, 2004). The stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) emphasizes the important role played by social support in perceiving and handling stress. Social support acts as a resource which is likely to reduce perceived stress.

#### Gender

Several studies have found gender differences in the stress perceived. Females have high perceived stress levels as compared to males (Vangara et al., 2022; Graves et al., 2021 and Deatherage et al., 2014).

#### Education level

The education level of a person also affects his/her perceived stress level. A higher educational level was found to be associated with high perceived stress. This is because due to high job demand and increased job responsibilities (Esieigbe et al., 2023).

#### Personality

Personality may be explained as one's way to, perceive and think about the environment and oneself. There are certain personality traits which are linked to perceived stress. Studies have found that neuroticism is associated with perceived stress (Vangara et al., 2022; Ormel et al., 2013 & Lahey, 2009). Perceived stress has a negative correlation with extraversion (Vangara et al., 2022). Agreeableness and Conscientiousness have a negative correlation with perceived stress.

#### Family

Perceived stress is also affected by the nature of the family that one belongs to – Nuclear or Joint family. A study reported that living separated from children and other family members in old age increases the perceived stress level (Prakash and Kumar, 2019).

### Management of Perceived stress

There are several Psychological techniques

which can help reduce Perceived stress like Activity Scheduling (maintaining daily routine activities and keeping oneself busy), Distraction techniques, Relaxation techniques, Deep breathing exercises, Replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts and by developing hobbies.

### Conclusion:

Perceived stress is a complex concept that affects a person's well-being. Perceived stress makes a person more sensitive to negative events. A person with high perceived stress is less adaptive. Such people have less mature reactions and have poor decision-making capacity. Perceived stress decreases emotional stability of the individual that affects his or her psychological well-being.

### References:

1. Acoba EF (2024) Social support and mental health: the mediating role of perceived stress. *Front. Psychol.* 15:1330720.
2. Ajayan, Aarsha. (2021). Effect of Perceived Stress on Work-Life Balance among Married and Unmarried Working Women. 10.25215/0904.074.
3. Al-Sowaygh ZH. Academic distress, perceived stress and coping strategies among dental students in Saudi Arabia. *Saudi Dent. J.* 2013; 25(3):97–105.
4. Apte, R., & Bhatt, S. (2023). Family Environment and Perceived Stress amongst Working and Non-Working Women. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 6(7), 38-48.
5. Chang, Y. S., Cheng, Y. C., Li, T. C., & Huang, L. C. (2022). Exploring Perceived Stress in Mothers with Singleton and Multiple Preterm Infants: A Cross-Sectional Study in Taiwan. *Healthcare (Basel, Switzerland)*, 10(8), 1593.
6. Deatherage S, Servaty-Seib H, Aksoz I. Stress, coping, and internet use of college students. *J Am Coll Health*, 2014; 62(1):40-46.
7. Eisenmann JC. Secular trends in variables associated with the metabolic syndrome of North American children and adolescents: A review and synthesis. *Am J Hum Biol.* 2003;15:786-94.

8. Graves, Bar & Hall, Michael & Dias-Karch, Carolyn & Haischer, Michael & Apter, Christine. (2021). Gender differences in perceived stress and coping among college students. *PLOS ONE*. 16. e0255634. 10.1371/journal.pone.0255634.
9. Huang, Y., and Zhao, N. (2021). Mental health burden for the public affected by the COVID-19 outbreak in China: Who will be the high-risk group? *Psychol. Health Med.* 26, 23–34.
10. Johnson, S. B., Perry, N. W., & Rozensky, R. H. (2002). *Handbook of clinical health psychology: Medical disorder and behavioral applications*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
11. Kaur T, Agarwal S.(2022).Correlation between Perceived Stress, Physical Fitness and Health Related Quality of Life in Young Adults,J Clin of Diagn Res. 16(6), YC01-YC04.
12. Liu, X., Zhao, Y., Li, J., Dai, J., Wang, X., and Wang, S. (2020). Factor structure of the 10-item perceived stress scale and measurement invariance across genders among Chinese adolescents. *Front. Psychol.* 11:537.
13. Maideen SFK, Sidik SM, Rampal L, Mukhtar F. 2014. Prevalence, associated factors and predictors of depression among adults in the community of Selangor, Malaysia. *PLoS* 10.1371; e95395.
14. McEwen BS. Protective and damaging effects of stress mediators: Central role of the brain. *Dialogues Clin Neurosci.* 2006;8(4):367-81
15. Ormel, J.; Jeronimus, B.F.; Kotov, R.; Riese, H.; Bos, E.H.; Hankin, B.; Rosmalen, J.G.M.; Oldehinkel, A.J. Neuroticism and common mental disorders: Meaning and utility of a complex relationship. *Clin. Psychol. Rev.* 2013, 33, 686–697.
16. Pieh, C., Budimir, S., and Probst, T. (2020). The effect of age, gender, income, work, and physical activity on mental health during coronavirus disease (COVID19) lockdown in Austria. *J. Psychos. Res.* 136:110186.
17. Potter GG, Hartman M, Ward T. 2009. Perceived stress and everyday memory complaints among older adult women. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping Int J.*; 22(4): 475-481.
18. Prakash, Shiv & Kumar, Saurav. (2019). Perceived Stress and Quality of Life of Elderly Living Separately from Their Adult Children-A Cross-Sectional Comparative Study.
19. Rai, Anamika & Suzen, Houshou & Pavi, Mehak. (2021). Exploration of Perceived Stress among Married and Unmarried Women Employees in Public and Private Sector. 2455-6211.
20. Salari, N., Hosseinian-Far, A., Jalali, R., Vaisi-Raygani, A., Rasoulpoor, S., Mohammadi, M., et al. (2020). Prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression among the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and metanalysis. *Globaliz. Health* 16, 1–11.
21. Vangara, Shanmukha Varalakshmi & Kumari, Anita & Kumar, Dhananjay. (2022). Evaluation of perceived stress and its correlation with personality traits in undergraduate students. *Asian Journal of Medical Sciences.* 13. 127-132.
22. Wang, S., Zhao, Y., Zhang, L., Wang, X., Wang, X., Cheng, B., Luo, K., & Gong, Q. (2019). Stress and the brain: Perceived stress mediates the impact of the superior frontal gyrus spontaneous activity on depressive symptoms in late adolescence. *Human brain mapping*, 40(17), 4982–4993.
23. Whoqol Group. The World Health Organization quality of life assessment (WHOQOL): Position paper from the World Health Organization. *Soc Sci Med.* 1995;41(10):1403-09
24. Wills, T. A. (1991). Social support and interpersonal relationships. In M. S. Clark (Ed.), *Prosocial behavior* (pp. 265–289). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

