

UDC: 005.32;

005.336.1:159.944.4-055.2

JEL: L26, D54, J2

COBISS.SR-ID: 211195404

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

## Women in Business Environment: Types of Stress Women Are Exposed



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### ABSTRACT

*Time management is a skill that all people, regardless of age, gender and job, can benefit from. This article is aimed at studying the causes and effects of stress and how to manage stress effectively with a focus on women. First, a study was done to examine the causes why stress occurs and the potential consequences of stress. This is followed by a search on methods to manage stress by managing a work-life balance and by effective time-management. The desire to succeed does make people prone to accepting stress as a part of life and career, but, the long term effects of stress are quite unpleasant. In addition, our study showed that men and women react to stress in totally different ways. The method used for this study was a study of the existing literature and its interpretation in the present context.*

**KEY WORDS:** *women, entrepreneur, stress, time-management, success, conflict, work-life balance*

*„To manage time means to control time and work, instead of allowing time to control us“*

*(Schiffman & Greist-Bousquet, 1992)*

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## **Introduction**

Stress and fatigue undermine almost every aspect of an individual's capability, whether, it is in decision- making, alertness or ability to solve problems, either personal or work related. The entrepreneurial context is known as stressful because initiating and running one's own business which requires significant risk taking .In line with this, entrepreneurs face the possibility of loss of these assets as well as the vagaries of the marketplace (Buttner, 1992).

It is a fact that business competition is becoming more and more intense. Increased free trade, outsourcing of jobs, recession etc., have lead to difficult and stressful times in almost all industries. And unfortunately, it is the quality of life of the employees that is sacrificed the most to meet the demands of the economy. It has become a norm for the employees to work longer hours, longer days and longer weeks and the outcome is constant fatigue among the employees. Organizations and employees, both are under constant pressure to increase income while keeping costs in check. The goal is to do things better and faster at a lower cost, these constraints do cause a quite a significant stress to the employees. The results are higher performance, increased salaries, faster growth and higher profits. But, there are abundant negative effects as well, like, burnout, turnover, aggression, depression, broken families and other unpleasant side effects of stress at work.

Some experts even maintain that there is no need for women to compete with men in certain typically male jobs, such as managerial or entrepreneurial jobs, and thus be alienated from their nature-endowed instinctive roots (Radovic Markovic, 1998). In their attempt to depart from the "kitchen" environment and go out and work and earn for their family, which is in a large number of communities considered to be an urgent need, women most often do not reduce their family obligations in favour of business ones, but only multiply them (Radovic Markovic, 1998).

Work related stress has become a common phenomenon of modern lifestyle. However, men and women react to stress in totally different ways. Irrespective of the profession a person is in, he/she feels a certain amount of stress and the professional stress faced by the individuals affects their physical health and ultimately the health of the organizations. In line with this, many countries spend large funds to alleviate stress effects (a large amount of research conducted in the USA has shown that USA \$ 50-70 billion are lost annually due to stress induced illnesses) (Radović-

Marković, 2012). It is our opinion that the society should pay more attention to identification and an efficient elimination of stress causes, rather than to alleviating their effects, which frequently prove to be “difficult to cure“ and cost considerably more, both financially and in any other senses.

## **Theoretical Overview**

We live in a rapidly changing world where uncertainty dominates employment and social interaction. Moreover, we have gone through a period of unprecedented greed and speculation resulting in a dog-eat-dog competition where more powerful companies are constantly eating up smaller and weaker competitors (Krumov, et. al. 2011). In addition, research suggests that role conflict, job versus non-job conflict, role overload and concern for quality will be negatively related to entrepreneurs' work satisfaction (Buttner, 1992). Time management is the act or process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness and efficiency. It requires planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on activities. It is designed to increase efficiency and to maximize the benefit obtained from a set of activities. Stress management refers to the wide spectrum of techniques and therapies aimed at controlling a person's stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. Many times, it is poor time management, either at work or at home with everyday activities that cause many people's stress. When people can improve their time management skills, they can then lower the amount of stress in their life and be able to better manage it. There are a number of causes for stress. The main stressors that are responsible for causing stress among people running after success are the demands of their profession, lack of security and overload of work. Those who are “stressed for success“ are subject to role conflict and role ambiguity. Leadership styles and personalities also contribute to stress among people who are constantly stressed for success (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009).

The signs of stress are quite varied like its causes, it could be physical, emotional, mental, and social/behavioral are physical symptoms. Physical symptoms of stress appear as headaches, muscle soreness, shortness of breath, fatigue and exhaustion, sleep disturbance etc. Emotional symptoms of stress include low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, emotional outbursts, while mental symptoms of stress include poor concentration, negative atti-

tude, procrastination, indecisiveness, lack of interest etc. There are many additional sources of stress derived from the workplace itself. In this context, satisfaction with the conditions of employment is an important factor not only for the well-being of the individual worker, but indeed to the efficient functioning of the workplace (Krumov, et. al. 2011). In comparative studies between entrepreneurs and employees, entrepreneurs are found have greater commitment (Felfe & al., 2008).

### **Nature of Stress**

Stress has traditionally been thought of as a simple problem. In reality, however, stress is a complex phenomenon and often misunderstood (De Frank and Ivancevich, 1998). Stress can be defined as a person's adaptive response to a stimulus that places excessive psychological or physical demands on him or her (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009). Stress affects different people in different ways; it depends upon their personalities. The two types of personalities have been observed and studied by social scientists and given the names Type A and Type B personalities (Lifepositive, 2014). Type A people are extremely competitive and are highly committed to work and have strong sense of urgency. While the Type B people are less competitive, less committed to work and have a weaker sense of time urgency. Research has shown that Type A personalities are not necessarily more successful than Type B people (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009). Hence, it can be implied that being in stressful situations does not necessarily lead to more success. Another important individual difference between individuals that determines their stress levels are hardiness and optimism. Hardiness is a person's ability to cope with stress and people with hardy personalities tend to manage stress better than people with low hardiness (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009). Optimism is another personality difference between individual that lets people handle stress differently. Business people with more optimism or positive outlook tend to handle stress a lot better than people with pessimism or negative outlook (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009). In addition, the person has organized herself or himself well, he/she should help others – collaborators, bosses and colleagues to get well organized themselves. It is necessary that they be trained to function much more efficiently, with as small a waste of time as possible, without unnecessary breaks and work interruptions (Radović-Marković, 2012).

## **Workplace Stress**

Stress is the objective conditions of work, any requirement that pushes the worker beyond his ability to cope (Krumov, et. al. 2011) .Job stress can be caused by a complex set of reasons. Some of the most visible causes of workplace stress are job insecurity, high demand for performance, technology challenges, and culture at workplace, role ambiguity and role conflict (Lifepositive, 2014). Economic instabilities, downturns, recessions are forcing organizations to reorganize their structures and as a result employees may be threatened with job losses. Unrealistic expectations from the employees, especially during restructuring of organizations put unhealthy and unreasonable demands on the employees at every level, from CEO to a mere executive. The increasing use of technology across the organization sometimes poses challenges for the older generation of employees or those who are not very technology friendly. Workers working with heavy machinery face the stress associated with being alert all the time. Often employees are stressed because they have to keep pace with constantly changing technological breakthroughs and improvisations, forcing employees to upgrade their skills all the time or face the danger of being obsolete at their workplace. Workplace culture can sometimes cause immense stress to employees, if they cannot adjust themselves to the culture (Lifepositive, 2014). One of the leading causes of stress is the inability of individuals to meet the demands of family responsibilities simultaneously with work and career demands (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009). Demands from both sides can be extreme and one of the methods of effectively handling the stress caused by work-life conflict is to recognize the possible trade-offs and be prepared to make these tradeoffs. Some of the strategies for handling work-life stress could be working for companies that allow flexible working hours, have the option of working from a remote location. Furthermore, by creating a positive working environment and by increasing the level of satisfaction among employees, the best basis for realization of well set working tasks in an efficient and adequate way will be enabled.

### **Are Women Stressed More Than Men in the Workplace and Business Environment?**

Woman, no less than man, aspires to achieve the ultimate, both from the point of view of needs and from the point of view of value. In many communities, however, these needs are not duly understood and recognized.

Instead, women tend to be ruled by long established patterns of life and behaviour (Radović-Marković, 2012).

Emotional responses to stress often divide along gender lines, with men more likely to have a "fight or flight" reaction while women are more likely to have a "tend and befriend" response (Weber and Shellenbarger, 2013).

A new survey by the American Psychological Association (2013), found that "one-third of employees experience chronic stress related to work" and that work stress is especially acute in women. According to the American Psychological Association, which surveyed 1,501 employed adults, women are more likely to report that they feel tense during work (37 percent of women versus 33 percent of men) and less likely to feel there are enough opportunities for internal career advancement (35 percent of women versus 43 percent of men). Women are also less likely to report feeling valued by their employer than men (48 percent of women versus 54 percent of men). Women report higher levels of work stress than men, as well as a gnawing sense that they are underappreciated and underpaid (Weber and Shellenbarger, 2013). The recent study, conducted by researcher Cook (2014) showed that lack of sleep may be a major issue for entrepreneurs and managers of over-stressed employees. In addition, low salaries, lack of opportunity for advancement can trigger work stress. Women managers in male-dominated fields sometimes find the stress of juggling family responsibilities intolerable (Weber and Shellenbarger, 2013). Namely, a large burden of obligation and need to be successful in more than one segments of life and to step out of traditionally assigned roles reduces their resistance to stress (Radović-Marković, 2012).

### **Types of Stress Women Are Most Frequently Exposed to in Business Environment**

Using technology initiates a new and dynamic work environment characterized by multiple employers at the same time in different locations, leading to phenomenal change in the scope for entry of women in the field of entrepreneurship. Such new work environment entails stressful opportunities with uncertain outcomes. Demands at work act as a major source of stress arising from multiple roles of women entrepreneurs.

There are a large number of stressogenous factors arising from the business environment. They may include (Radović-Marković, 2012):

- too much or too little work;

- complexity of work goes beyond personal abilities, qualities, knowledge and work experience;
- changes in business policy;
- lack of clear business goals;
- increased responsibility for the employees, financial assets or equipment;
- lack of business certainty;
- lack of opportunities for promotion in their job and being assigned tasks below their education level or work potentials;
- lack of relevant information, support and counselling from other employees;
- inadequate reward for the work performed and lower wages in comparison with men for the same type of jobs;
- lack of clear plan for job promotion;
- pressure from the bosses or seniors in the organization;
- poor organization of work and chronic lack of time to complete all business tasks;
- insufficient work space;
- noise and other.

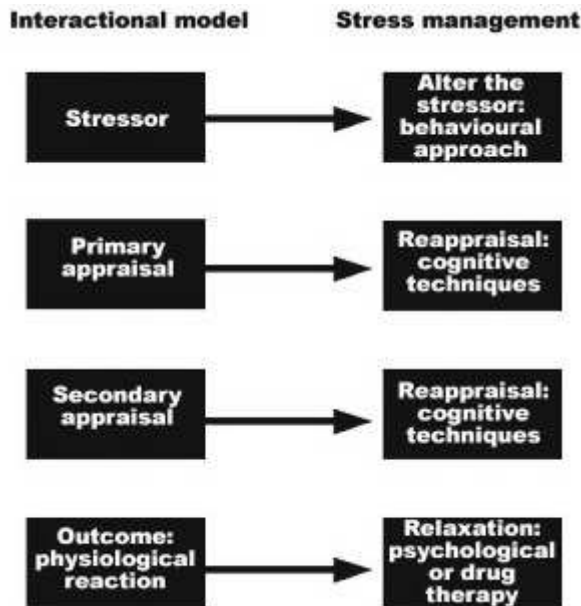
According to research (Radović-Marković, 2012), the impact of one or a number of factors may result into disturbances such as lack of concentration, chronic tiredness, incompetence in decision-making, loss of self-confidence, change in habits and in daily business activities etc. Certain cases of highly intensive stress may result in chronic health problems and even grave diseases. Women under stress may be more likely to turn to foods with higher fat and sugar content than men, as one possible explanation for the results.

### **How Does Stress Management Have an Impact on the Worker's Sense of Well-being?**

Work stress has an impact on the worker's sense of well-being and negative moods (Krumov, et al. 2011). The first step towards stress management is recognizing stress. Stress can build up gradually and the person under stress may not be aware of it till stress reaches critical levels. Although, stress may not be eliminated completely, it can be managed to keep

it at healthy levels and prevent distress. The key steps in managing stress include identifying the cause of stress (external, relational, internal) (Fig.1).

*Figure 1: Stress Management*



Source: [http://www.uwic.ac.uk/shss/dom/newweb/images/Stress\\_management\\_concepts.gif](http://www.uwic.ac.uk/shss/dom/newweb/images/Stress_management_concepts.gif)

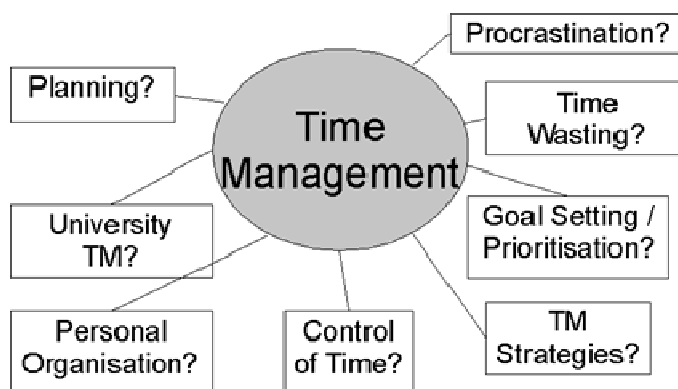
Next, the person under stress needs to identify his/her current coping reactions and try to change either his/her reactions or the factors that cause stress (Stress and Time Management, 2014). Many strategies for helping individuals manage stress have been proposed. Exercise is one of the methods for effectively managing stress. Research has shown that people who exercise regularly are less prone to stress and less likely to be depressed than people who do not exercise (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009). Another method of managing stress is relaxation, one must sleep well and rest so as to maintain his/her energy levels (Fig.1). Joining yoga or meditation classes also help individuals relax and effectively manage their stress levels (Lifepositive, 2014).



## Coping With Stress :Time Management

Time management is often recommended for coping with stress. A large amount of research worldwide deals with the problem of how to manage time in a most efficient manner (Radovic Markovic et. al., 2008). Research has shown that if an employee manages his/her time effectively on a daily basis, a lot of stress can be eliminated or eased (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009). One popular and effective way of managing stress by managing time is to make a to-do-list in the morning, which lists all the tasks that the person aims to complete by the end of the day. In the next step, the person would group the tasks in three categories: critical activities that must be performed, important activities that should be performed and optional or trivial things that can be delegated or postponed. And then, one could perform the tasks depending upon the priorities assigned to each task (Figure 2). This strategy has helped people to accomplish most important tasks every day and reduces stress significantly (Moorhead and Griffin, 2009). This practice also helps people learn the art of effective delegation while reducing stress.

*Figure 2: Time management*



Source:<http://kimbeasley.com/2013/04/26/effective-time-management-guide-entrepreneurs-home-based-business/>

## Conclusion

Stressed for success is a very common feature among the working population in the modern world. A competitive work culture combined with economic instability has forced organizations and individuals to aggressive-

ly compete against each other to be successful. But, success comes at a cost and the result is an immense amount of stress.

Often living in the conditions of repression the society and family impose on them (the prevailing attitude in numerous cultures is still that the woman's only duty is to take care about the children and the household), women become increasingly vulnerable due to the lack of opportunity to prove themselves in other domains of life and work. Some experts even maintain that there is no need for women to compete with men in certain typically male jobs, such as managerial or entrepreneurship jobs, and thus be alienated from their nature-endowed instinctive roots.

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## **Žene u poslovnom okruženju: Vrste stresa kome su one izložene**

### **APSTRAKT**

*Upravljanje vremenom je veština koja je od koristi za sve ljude, bez obzira na njihovu starost, pol i posao kojim se bave. Ovaj članak je usmeren na proučavanje nastanka i posledica stresa i kako se uspešno s njim nositi, sa posebnim osvrtom na poslovne žene. Naime, prvenstveno, rad se bavi ispitivanjem uzroka stresa i njegovim potencijalnim posledicama. Nakon toga razmatraju se metode za upravljanje stresom. Želja za uspehom ne čini ljude sklonim da prihvataju stres delom života i karijere, ali, dugoročne posledice stresa su vrlo neugodne, zaključuje autorka. Osim toga, istraživanje je pokazalo da muškarci i žene reaguju na stres na potpuno različite načine. Autorka se u svom radu koristila metodologijom zasnovanom na proučavanju postojeće literature i njenom tumačenju u ovom kontekstu.*

**KLJUČNE REČI:** *žene, preduzetnice, stres, upravljanje vremenom, uspeh, konflikt, radni i životni balans*

Article history: Received: 14 May, 2014

Accepted: 31 August, 2014