INTRODUCTION

Stress should be a powerful driving force, not an obstacle.
~ Bill Phillips.

Women are the nerve centre of the family life and all the activities of the family are centered around her. It is a general belief that the role of women is to build and maintain the homely affairs and take care of the household, chores. Traditionally, the major responsibility of women has been perceived to be the maintenance of the family including home and childcare and the breadwinning being the main responsibility of the men. Today, women are in a state of transition caught between the illusory safety of traditional role on one hand and the challenge to realize their potential outside on the other hand. However with more and more women entering the workforce and pursuing careers these clearly defined gender roles were forced to change (Sevim, 2006). Gainful employment outside the home was found to be much easier and acceptable for the unmarried women than married women. However, women continue to remain in job after marriage and quite a few women accepting role of a married working women are all recent phenomena. Marriage does not always put an end to a career of woman, but enables her to bear the dual burden of home and job.

Women have a lot of balancing to do between home and workplace and balancing between social and personal requirements especially during the expanding stage. The expanding family stage covers a long period. This period includes a number of substages. Expanding families begin with the arrival of the first child and continues until the youngest child reaches adulthood and leaves the home. The first substage is designated as child bearing and pre-school stage at a rapid pace (Nickell and Dorsey, 2002). During this period major changes take place. As each child is born, the family expands further. It needs more food, money, clothes and space. This stage is often a long period. It can
be a very difficult time for parents as they have to cope with all the extra demands of living which ultimately leads to stress. Parents have to make decisions about issues such as sharing the added workload in the home and hence need to rearrange their work schedules. The other major issues being maternity, menopause, parenthood, gender roles, conditions at home and workplace besides familial and social support often blight women’s lives in the long run (Rajasekhar and Sasikala, 2013).

The expanding family covers a long period compared to the beginning family, lasting from the birth of the first child and ends when the last child leaves the home (Powell, 1994). The first sub stage is known as child bearing and preschool and is also marked by the accumulation of goods. During this period parents take necessary steps to make adjustments with their relations and new child as well. The parents have to shoulder different responsibilities to keep pace with rapid change of the situation. In this sub stage parents are primarily concerned with the educational and health needs of the children, creating an environment in which the children will have a feeling of belongingness. Parents need to provide nutritious food, suitable clothing and adequate housing to children for physical development as well provide opportunity for contacts outside the home for social and emotional development (http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/family/family-life-cycle-3-main-stages/47660/).

Married working mothers not only take care of their children but also maintain satisfying relationship with their mate and other family members. This in turn brings developmental attitudes that influence future family living (Nickell and Dorsey, 2002).

In today’s scenario the husband and wife both work towards creating a balance with their work life as well as at home with their children. One has to fulfill the demands at work followed by various demands at home. Most conflict arises with the working mother, who has to play the multiple roles of a cook, maid, tutor, nurse as well as cater to the demands of office work. This can leave a working woman stressed and anxious; more so if the family is not supportive. Working mothers perform most of the household chores, since childcare costs can eat up much of their wages. Even when both parents are working, the
responsibility of care for sick children falls on the mothers. Working mothers derive tremendous satisfaction from this dual role, but the tension it creates can be overwhelming at times (Culbreth, 1999). Women’s access to jobs once has been a political issue, but in today’s tough economic climate working is now a necessity for most mothers. The bulk of families can no longer afford to live on one wage. Despite women’s greater participation in the workforce, most men have yet to increase their share of domestic duties. Yet, they mean that the majority of working mothers are responsible for housework and looking after their children.

Working mothers dread the possibility of their child getting sick since most employers provide only paid sick leave for unwell employees. This means that many working mothers have to take annual leave or unpaid leave in order to stay at home to take care of their sick children. The key findings of a study published in Family Matters in 1991 indicates that even when both parents are working, the responsibility of care for sick children usually falls on the mother, as the reasons for this include that the father earns a higher wage and his job responsibilities are deemed to be more important than his counterparts. Besides, the employers expect the mothers to stay at home to take care of their sick children than a father. Patriarchal division of labour relegates household tasks and childcare to women since women’s domestic roles are viewed more important than career. This affects the career perspective and prospects of women directly. The dual burden is further enhanced because of lack of flexible working arrangement, lack of childcare benefits, acute shortage of crèches and daycare facilities. Changes are taking place, as a result of which more number of women are recruited for managerial jobs. Working mothers require more flexible working hours, parental leave, workplace facilities for ailing children, and more understanding from employers. Good system of management and good work culture are the best form of stress prevention (WHO, 2004).

Since the turn of the century, the status of women in India has been changing due to growing industrialization, urbanization, spatial mobility and social legislation (Devi, 2007). The social status of women in India is comparatively lower than many other countries of the world. But in urban areas,
Introduction

with the spread of education and increase in number of working women outside their homes, the situation is gradually changing. With the spread of education and awareness, women have shifted from kitchen to higher levels of professional activities (Vijaydurai and Venkatesh, 2012). Women have risen above well defined role of a housewife and have gradually evolved into the dual and more self-fulfilling role of a working women and a housewife. The professional activities held by women are referred as white collar job. In many countries white collar women is a person who performs professional, managerial and administrative work in an office. White collar work is performed in an office cubicle in an administrative setting (William, 2014). It is commonly understood that white collar work requires mental effort rather than physical effort. White collar workers are generally thought to enjoy greater autonomy, cleaner and safer workplace, and higher skill jobs compared to their counterparts performing blue collar physical labour and pink collar service work (Herbert, 2003). Contrary to this woman managers face a dual burden work and family which creates a lot of stress, strain and role conflict.

Life today is becoming increasingly complex and tension ridden which becomes a great source for stress. Stress is a term widely used in the biological, physical and social science. Stress is basic to life, no matter how wealthy, powerful, or happy one might be. Mild stress can be stimulating, motivating and sometimes even desirable but continuous stress will definitely affect the body. Stress has an impact on individuals and can affect people with different types of occupations and of all ages irrespective of sex, nationality, educational background and occupation. However, too much of stress, with strong response is harmful (http://hydesmith.com/de-stress/about-stress.html).

Stress has become a universal phenomenon. In both workplace and at home, stress situations are at an all time high. Work, family and home are not separate and these issues are to be balanced. The barriers between work and home life are less clearly defined due to the advances in technology, changing the work environment. D’souza et al., (2005) expressed that the specific stress experienced often depends on the nature and demands of the setting in which
people live. In modern life, occupations are governed by these settings, leading to professions to experience different types of stress at different levels of degrees. Factors such as job insecurity, long working hours and unrealistic deadlines cause serious problem for working women. Stress is caused whenever any event, internal or external, is perceived as making demands over and above the resources possessed by women (Rajasekhar and Sasikala, 2013). Individual level stressors are directly associated with a person’s work responsibility (Buelens et al., 2002).

Stress is a condition of tension (mental or physical or both) which results in emotional loss and pain according to dictionary of psychology (Lai, et.al., 1996). In today’s world, stress is considered as any sort of physical hardship, torture and pain in an individual's personal or professional life. Stress can change the attitudes, behaviors and thoughts of the people. It affects their efficiency and ability to make decision. Stress exists in all families, organizations and workplaces (Sayiner, 2006). According to WHO, (2004) there is often confusion between pressure, challenge and stress.

Women experience work-related stress, particularly when tensed and distressed and feel the inability to cope up with both family and work. Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances, which is often made difficult to cope with its demands and pressures when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues. At work place coping with demands, time management, and completion of tasks before the deadlines are the problems which needs to be handled skillfully. Identifying the causes for stress is the first step in learning to deal with stress. Therefore, it is important to understand the causes and risks of occupational stress. Li et al., (2008) found that child care responsibilities, working hours, monthly salary and organizational family friendly policy were positively related to the conflict component of work-family balance; whereas new parental experience, spouse support, family-friendly supervisors and co-workers had significant positive effects on the facilitation component of work-family balance.
Introduction

A recent survey showed that 70-90 percent of women feel stressed at work place and outside. Depression, the only one type of stress reaction, is predicted to be the leading occupational disease of the 21st century, responsible for more days lost than any other single factor. Globally, 23 percent of women executives and professionals, say they feel “super stressed” (Rajasekhar and Sasikala, 2013). Excessive stress can cause problems for physical and psychological wellbeing which results in behavioral change. In women, stress can affect physical health, psychological wellbeing and social relations (Chaudary and Khan, 2014). Stress has a morbid nature and it could combine heart disease, being prone to viral infections, problems with digestive system, anger, hopelessness, depression, stealing behavior, absent mindedness, wishful destruction, job turnover, drug abuse and problems with law and order (Naseem and Khalid, 2012). Stress is responsible for restlessness, sleep difficulties, depression, headache, apart from a series of psychosomatic ailments and a psychiatric problem. Stress makes a person more susceptible to disease, which aggravates any existing illness or chronic conditions such as heart disease, depression, ulcers, irritable bowel disease, diabetics, common cold and urinary tract infections. People tend to seek comfort from stress by engaging in behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse smoking or overeating, which have negative physical and emotional health consequences (Rajasekhar and Sasikala, 2013).

Life and stress are interwoven with each other however, in small quantities, stress is considered good. It can motivate and help to be more productive. To reduce and cope with the work place stress, stress management techniques can be adopted. Communication lies at the core of this connectedness. Communication is a powerful means of defusing stress (Sherman, 2009). One method of counteracting the harmful effects of the psychological stress is the possibility of regular elicitation of the relaxation response. The practice of yoga as a tool and techniques can expand conscious awareness into the unconscious part of the mind in order to become aware of the patterns and habits which lead to stress. Meditation is recognized for its myriad health benefits, and is widely practiced as a way to counteract stress.
Physical exercise is necessary in order to keep the body healthy, both physically and mentally and is the best antidote for stress. It provides recreation and mental relaxation. Walking is the most efficient form of exercise which can be safely followed throughout life. Stress and strain can be prevented by regular vigorous walking (Rajesekar and Sasikala, 2013). Less the stress better off are health-wise. However, low levels of stress interfere with performance in today’s complex world (Baron, 2007).

In the workplace and at home, stress and other difficult situations are at an all time high. Work, family and home are not, separate and these issues are to be balanced. Stress is the physiological and psychological responses to situations or events that disturb the equilibrium of an organism that constitute stress. Stress results when demands placed on an organism cause unusual physical, psychological, or emotional response. In humans, stress originates from a multitude of sources and causes a wide variety of responses, both positive and negative. Despite its negative connotation, experts believe that some level of stress is essential for well-being and mental health (http://www.docfoc.com/stress-and-health-stress-stress-is-the-physiological-and-psychological-responses).

Women in India have proved their courage in the work domain. Behind such success lies struggle and freedom in the traditional social arena. Besides, changing roles of working women, maintaining the traditional work ethos of household have been given due regard. The Industrial Revolution in part was fuelled by the economic necessity of women to find waged work outside their home. The Industrial Revolution provided independent wages, mobility and better standard of living (Harwood, 2014). Women in India have come a long way after independence. Women today have acquired skills and capabilities of not just being a homemaker but being part with their male counterparts. Life is not a bed of roses for new generation of women, who pursue their dream career (Singh, 2014).

It is well displayed that due to the work and technological pattern women in developing countries involve themselves in paid work in addition to their
Introduction

Stress Management of White Collar Women in Expanding Families

household’s chores (Lai et al., 1996). Due to dual role and responsibilities women face additional work load and physical strain hence modern stress coping strategies should be incorporated to improve their work efficiently. It is necessary to take adequate and timely measures to handle stress because, if allowed to build up, can lead to psychological and physical health problems. Thus, a stress coping strategy is important because prevention is always better than cure.

Stress is common among career women. Stress has become a way of life these days and one cannot live without stress. Stress is the reactions of the people having excessive pressures due to demands placed on them (Rajasekhar and Sasikala, 2013). The growing awareness of work family issues has undoubtedly contributed to changes having very little empirical evidence to substantial positive impact on women’s careers (Nelson and Hitt, 1992). Indian women attributed higher levels of stress towards more opportunities, coupled with managing multiple roles. Competition is increased in every field of life and due to this competition stress among people keeps generating. Stress can arise from any situation or thought to lead to frustration, anger and anxiety. These ever-present pressures heighten the importance to study and understand occupational stress (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997). As detailed above, occupational stress impacts employee’s physical and mental health, as well as their job performance, job satisfaction, and intentions to turnover (Jex, 1998).

The present study examined the key reasons for stress and outlines some of the factors that can control stress by comparing a city in a developed and a developing country respectively. Even in United States women managers have not achieved equity with their male peers in terms of their ability to pursue career and have a family. Experiences of stress varies in severity based on the life style, working pattern, place of work, work relationship, family relationship and overall physical and mental health. In this context several literatures have proved that developed countries have far more designed interventions in terms of relaxation and relative therapies. Although research has been
Introduction

Conducted in developing countries, there are still not enough in-depth studies to fully analyse both cultural differences and behaviors which vary from one country to another.

Along with existing difficulties in controlling other more well-known occupational risks, there is lack of awareness of work-related stress, and shortage of resources to deal with it. Cultural aspects may need some attention when dealing with work related stress in developing countries. The study of stress among white collar working women is very important because it has an adverse impact on the productivity of the organization and also healthy family life. Year after year, findings from the stress in American survey have reinforced this relation. This study will give valuable information towards the many causes behind women’s depression and stress during marital adjustment (Barrera and Garrison, 1988).

Researchers have long known that there is a strong link between stress and overall health. Participants’ responses have revealed high stress levels, reliance on unhealthy behaviors to manage stress and alarming physical health consequences of stress; a combination that suggests the nation is on the verge of a stress induced public health crisis. Systematic research on occupation stress and job related strain in India is a recent phenomenon (Kang, 2004). Hence, with this background the present research work was undertaken with the following objectives.

Objective

1. Estimate the prevalence of stress among the selected samples.

2. Determine the physical and psychological well being of the selected samples.

3. Identify the stress coping technique followed by the selected samples.

4. Promote awareness to manage stress among the selected samples.
The Hypothesis framed for the study:

H1: Intervention Programme on stress management practices improved stress level of the selected samples.

H2: Intervention Programme on stress management practices improved health of the selected samples.

H3: Intervention Programme on stress management practices improved stress coping methods adopted by the selected samples.

The scope of the study is to recognize and identify the factors causing stress. An attempt is made to bring out the modern coping technique followed by the white collar women to overcome stress and improve health and performance of work, to face challenges in future.