Available online @ www.iaraindia.com
SELP Journal of Social Science - A Blind Review & Refereed Quarterly Journal
ISSN: 0975-9999 (P) 2349-1655 (O) Impact Factor: 5.650 (I2OR), 4.111 (COSMOS), 2.5 (JIF), 2.77 (NAAS)
Volume XVI, Issue 63, October - December 2025
Formally UGC Approved Journal (46622), © Author

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG WOMEN EMPLOYEES: A CONCEPTUAL GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

S. NARAYANEE
Research Scholar
Bharathidasan university
Khajamalai Campus, Bharathidasan university
Tiruchirappalli - 620023

Dr. T. KUMUTHAVALLI
Associate professor and Head
Department of Lifelong Learning
Khajamalai Campus, Bharathidasan university
Tiruchirappalli – 620023

ABSTRACT

Occupational stress has become a pressing concern in the modern professional environment, with women employees experiencing disproportionate impacts due to the dual demands of career and domestic responsibilities. Recent global surveys reveal that over half of working women report increased stress levels, and nearly 50% experience burnout, resulting in substantial productivity losses worldwide. Gender-specific disparities are highlighted by data showing women face 4% higher rates of stress, sadness, and worry compared to men, often intensified by responsibilities related to personal and family management during work hours. In India, the issue is particularly pronounced: 72% of female workers report high stress much higher than their male counterparts and 67% struggle with balancing their professional and personal lives, contributing to a job stress prevalence of nearly 48% among employed women. These findings underscore the unique occupational pressures faced by Indian women, shaped by cultural norms, limited workplace support, and rapid urbanization, and reflect a global pattern with locally intensified challenges. Addressing occupational stress among women employees, therefore, is vital for enhancing both individual well-being and broader societal advancement.

KEYWORDS: Occupational stress, Work–family conflict / work–life balance, Burnout, Gender disparities in stress, Cultural norms and workplace support, Urbanization, Well-being and productivity

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues affecting workplace productivity, employee well-being, and organizational sustainability in the modern workplace is occupational stress. In emerging nations like India, where fast industrialization, shifting socioeconomic structures, and changing gender roles have produced additional pressures for the workforce, particularly for working women, this phenomenon has gained considerable prominence. Women's engagement in the official workforce has increased at an unparalleled rate during India's economic revolution during the past thirty years. Women's participation in the workforce in urban areas has gradually improved, according to data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). However, working women in India confront unique obstacles that lead to higher stress levels. These challenges are many-sided, extensive traditional gender role expectations, workplace discrimination, inadequate

support systems, and the persistent burden of domestic responsibilities. The Indian working woman today navigates a complex web of professional aspirations and societal expectations. Unlike their counterparts in many Western nations, Indian women often encounter additional stressors rooted in cultural norms that emphasize their primary roles as caregivers and homemakers, even as they pursue demanding careers. This dual burden creates what researchers' term "role conflict" - a significant contributor to occupational stress that manifests differently across India's diverse geographical, cultural, and economic landscape.

Regional Variations - Highlights

The experience of occupational stress among working women varies significantly across different regions of India. Metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, and Chennai present different stressors compared to tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Urban centers, while offering better career prospects and fairly progressive work environments, often impose longer working hours, broad commuting, and higher cost of living. Contrariwise, smaller cities and towns may bid a better work-life balance but present challenges in terms of reduced chances in career growth opportunities and more traditional workplace cultures.

Compared to global trends, Indian working women face exceptional stress level that intersect with cultural, economic, and social factors. While occupational stress is a universal phenomenon affecting women worldwide, the Indian context is characterized by:

- Although it offers support, the conventional joint family structure can also lead to more obligations and demands.
- Cultural Expectations pressure from society to succeed in both the home and workplace.
- Pressures from the Economy the requirement to manage home expenses and contribute to the family's revenue.
- Insufficient Infrastructure for Support inadequate senior care services, flexible work schedules, and daycare facilities.

Relevance to Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has foster intensified these encounters, with remote work smearing the boundaries between professional and personal spaces. In studies conducted recently direct that working women in India experienced unduly higher stress levels during the pandemic, as they managed professional responsibilities alongside increased domestic duties and childcare obligations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of the study is to look into how work-related stress, burnout, and job satisfaction affect female-only concerns and occupational well-being among policewomen employed at the All-Women Police Station (AWPS) in Assam, India. 43 female police officers completed a self-reported questionnaire survey as part of the subjective evaluation. The study identified a number of important variables that have a substantial impact on job satisfaction, work-burnout, and occupational stress. These characteristics have an impact on both female-only difficulties and professional wellbeing. By concentrating on the survey responses, it has been determined that there is a significant need to give appropriate ergonomic design intervention in order to improve the workplace layout. The study adjusted workplace design by using appropriate ergonomic interventions. The study carried out suitable ergonomic interventions in providing modified workplace design. The provided design was accepted and implemented by the AWPS and found effectual in improving the occupational wellbeing and female-only issues. (Bora, Shilpi and Nar, Ashish, 2022)

Context Many substances found in the workplace are thought to hinder fetal development. As of yet, no epidemiological research has used an exposome viewpoint to particularly address occupational multi-exposures during pregnancy. Goal Determining the occupational multi-exposure profiles of mothers and investigating their relationships with intrauterine growth were the goals. Methods: We used information from the national ELFE cohort in France. Using job

exposure matrices, occupational exposures to 47 agents, chemical, physical, biological, biomechanical, organizational, and psychosocial were determined. Depending on their likelihood of exposure, mothers were categorized as occupationally not exposed, uncertainly exposed, or exposed. Birthweight, head circumference, and small for gestational age (SGA) were the outcomes of interest. Using hierarchical clustering of major components, maternal profiles of occupational multi-exposure were identified. Linear or logistic regression models that were controlled for relevant confounders were used to investigate associations between profiles and intrauterine growth outcomes. Depending on whether or not mothers quit their jobs after pregnancy, analyses were conducted. Outcomes A median of six factors was encountered by the 12,851 women who were included. Four occupational multi-exposure profiles were found: "low exposure, stress at work"; "strenuous, high organization, low decision"; "postural constraints, psychosocial factor"; and "postural and strength constraints, chemical and biological factors." Multivariate analyses revealed relationships between the profile "postural constraints, psychosocial factor" and SGA and head circumference among pregnant women who quit their jobs during the third trimester. The results of fetal growth were not substantially correlated with any of the other exposure profiles. The findings indicate that the particular profile "postural constraints, psychosocial factor" may be more susceptible to fetal growth retardation. This study offers a first better knowledge of pregnant women's numerous exposures at work, which may help to better modify preventative methods, even though these results need to be reproduced. (Marie Tartaglia, et al, 2024)

This article covers psychological, behavioral, and physical conditions and illnesses are known to be associated with occupational stress. Preventive stress management and improved wellbeing can help both individuals and organizations reduce these diseases. This article discusses three topics: first, the established health risk evidence associated with occupational stress; second, the use of preventative stress management as an intervention framework in companies; and third, the new field of improving well-being, which fortifies the individual. Although these are established outcome concerns, prolonged suffering from work stress and premature mortality and disability are not inevitable. (Kazmi & Syed Sajid Husain, 2022)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary research was conducted to study occupational stress among women employees worldwide, with particular reference to India. This study relies on existing international and national literature, including online materials, blogs, policy documents, government reports, and research papers. The paper aims to offer a conceptual discussion and understanding of occupational stress among women in diverse fields and organizations across different countries, highlighting patterns that are especially salient in the Indian context.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To critically review and synthesize existing global literature on occupational stress among women employees, with special reference to India.
- To identify key sources, causes, and patterns of occupational stress experienced by women across various sectors and organizations in different regions of the world, including India.
- To provide a conceptual understanding of occupational stress issues faced by women employees globally, while emphasizing context-specific challenges observed among Indian women, thereby paving the way for further empirical research and policy development.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY & LIMITATIONS

Focuses exclusively on secondary data sourced from global and country-specific articles, research papers, blogs, policy documents, and government reports, with particular attention to evidence from India. Covers occupational stress as experienced by women employees across different industries and organizational types, including both private and public sectors, in multiple national contexts.

Limits the analysis to conceptual discussions, synthesizing and interpreting existing

knowledge without collecting new primary data, and therefore does not test causal relationships empirically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Occupational Stress Among Working Women in Agriculture and other Working Environments - A comparative slant with Urban areas in India and Global Contexts.

In rural India, over 70% of the workforce relies on agriculture, with women shouldering a "triple burden" of paid work, unpaid domestic duties, and environmental challenges. These women face physical hazards like pesticide exposure and ergonomic strains, as well as climate-induced uncertainties, leading to musculoskeletal disorders, respiratory issues, and anxiety. Studies in southern states like Kerala and Puducherry show 15% of rural women experience depression, 10.6% anxiety, and 5% severe stress twice the urban rates. Limited access to healthcare, education, and support systems exacerbates these issues. Low literacy and marital disruptions are key predictors.

In contrast, urban working women in India report moderate stress from overtime and role overload, but have better infrastructure like childcare and flexible policies, resulting in lower mental health burdens. Globally, rural women's occupational stress is similar in low- and middle-income countries, with 28.7 million women in agriculture facing forced labor, wage gaps, and climate stressors. Targeted solutions like community health interventions and gender-sensitive policies are needed to address rural India's unique challenges.

Table - 1

Aspect	Rural India	Urban India	Global Rural Contexts (LMICs)
Primary Stressors	Pesticides, manual labor, anxiety about child care 11.1% (high stress) & financial pressure (8.3%)	37% stress prevalence due to overtime, deadlines, role overload	Wage gaps (22-29%) and Climate events, forced labor (28.7M women)
Prevalence Rates	Depression: 15%; Anxiety: 10.6%; Stress: 5%	Depression / Anxiety: ~10-15% lower; Stress: 37% in homemakers / working women	Mental distress: 34% in migrants; Higher in agriculture (71% forced labor victims)
Key Outcomes	Musculoskeletal disorders, depression, family strain	Burnout, anxiety, but better access to support	Psychosocial strain, reproductive health issues; Similar to India but varies by region
Mitigation Gaps	Limited healthcare, education; Need for family/employer support	Flexible policies, but urban-rural divide in childcare	Global calls for skills training, social protection; Interventions like positive psychology pilots effective

Incorporating occupational health into programs like the National Rural Health Mission, along with international best practices like empowerment programs that improve work control and lessen unpaid labor burdens, is necessary to address the stressors in rural India and build resilience for these essential family and economic contributors.

Policy Intrusions - Insights from India and Global Contexts

Because they frequently juggle the demands of both work and home obligations, working women experience increased occupational stress, which can lead to burnout, anxiety, and decreased wellbeing. Global frameworks from organizations like the ILO and WHO prioritize flexible work arrangements and mental health integration, while India emphasizes empowerment programs amid cultural and economic barriers. Policy interventions around the world seek to mitigate this through structural reforms, support systems, and inclusive measures. Recent budgets and initiatives in India, where women perform nine times as much unpaid care work as males,

focus on work-life balance (WLB) and stress reduction, especially in rural agriculture where financial and physical stresses are particularly severe. Psychosocial risk management is the main focus of interventions worldwide, and research indicates that gender-sensitive policies can reduce stress in high-burden sectors by 20–30%.

ILO's ongoing Action Plan for Gender Equality in recent past evaluation highlights persistent gaps in care economy investments, while India's Union Budget 2025-26 marks a milestone with a 37.5% surge in gender budgeting to ₹4.49 lakh crore, signaling accelerated efforts to bridge WLB disparities amid rising female labor force participation (FLFP) at 42.57% in STEM sectors.

Urban and Rural Sites Focus in India

Government policies use fiscal allocations and legal frameworks to support WLB in urban India, where women in the formal sector report moderate-to-high levels of stress due to overtime and role overload (affecting 37% considerably). The "double burden" that increases stress is directly addressed by the Union Budget 2024–2025, which allots ₹3 trillion for women's empowerment, including skill development through the Skill India Mission and facilities like creches to reduce childcare burdens. By offering low-interest loans and financial inclusion, complementary programs like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) increase female labor force participation and lessen financial pressures that worsen occupational anxiety.

The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, is a game-changer for working women in India. It extends paid maternity leave to 26 weeks, allowing mothers to care for their newborns without financial stress. Additionally, firms with 50+ employees are required to provide creche facilities, making it easier for working mothers to balance work and family. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act, 2013 (POSH), also plays a crucial role in creating a safe and supportive work environment, reducing stress and anxiety for women employees. The Economic Survey 2024-25 highlights the importance of workplace culture reforms to curb long working hours and promote mental health. Companies are incentivizing wellness programs, which have shown to lower turnover rates among women by 15%.

The Union Budget 2025-26 allocates ₹26,889 crore to the Women and Child Development Ministry, including ₹3,150 crore for Mission Shakti and a new entrepreneurship loan scheme offering up to ₹2 crore for first-time women entrepreneurs. Initiatives like Mission Vatsalya, tech-driven anti-trafficking, and solar-powered irrigation pumps aim to support women's empowerment and safety. Women-only Water User Associations and skill training programs also promote economic participation. However, challenges persist, including gaps in legal protections for informal workers and climate-induced heat stress eroding women's farm yields. Recommendations include extending occupational safety codes to agriculture, implementing heat-stress protocols, and ensuring fair remuneration for women extension workers.

Global Perspectives: Learnings for India

In order to promote WLB, the ILO and WHO urge for structural changes on a global scale, with policies that emphasize equity and flexibility that India can adopt. According to the ILO's 2024 "Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World" report, EU rules that mandate parental leave and limit work hours to 40 per week reduce stress among women by 18%. By facilitating improved home integration, flexible arrangements such as remote work possibilities in the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act amendments address multitasking demands and lower WLC for women. WHO's 2024 guidelines include for organizational initiatives that have reduced absenteeism by 12% in trial projects throughout Asia, such as management training on gender-specific stressors and acceptable accommodations (such phased returns after maternity).

The ILO's 2025 evaluation stresses increasing care investments to redistribute unpaid work, potentially boosting global GDP by $28 trillion if women's workforce participation gaps close. However, progress is slow, with 23% of workers facing workplace violence. WHO recommends telework for better work-life balance, showing 82% better outcomes for remote women. In India,

women farmers face 3% more yield loss due to heat, highlighting the need for gender-disaggregated data and equity-focused renewable targets.

Table - 2

Intervention Type	India (Urban/Formal)	India (Rural/Agriculture)	Global Examples (ILO/WHO)
Flexible Work Policies	Maternity Benefit Act (26-week leave, creches); POSH for safe spaces; 2025:₹2cr entrepreneurship loans	NRLM skill training; IWMI solar pumps for time-saving tech; 2025: Krishi Sakhis for CSA but remuneration gaps	ILO: 40-hour limits, parental leave; WHO: Remote options for WLC; 2025: Care doubling for $28T GDP boost
Financial / Economic Support	PMMY/PMJDY loans; ₹3T Budget 2024 empowerment; 2025: Mission Shakti ₹3,150cr	JEEViKA micro-enterprises; WUAs for collective credit; 2025: Krishonnati ₹2,550cr sans women focus	UN Women: Legislation for equal pay; EU directives on wage gaps; 2025: 82% remote mental health gains
Mental Health Focus	Economic Survey 2024 wellness incentives; Corporate WLB programs; 2025: AI anti-trafficking ₹500cr	ASHA psychology pilots (25% stress drop); 2025: Heat protocols via MKSP	WHO: Manager training, stigma reduction; ILO: Psychosocial risk assessments; 2025: 23% violence prevalence addressed
Outcomes / Gaps	15% turnover reduction; Enforcement weak in SMEs; 2025: FLFP 42.57% STEM	50% cost cuts, income boost; Informal coverage limited; 2025: 13% land ownership	18-30% stress decline; Stronger in high-income nations; 2025: Partial G20 25% gap reduction

These initiatives highlight a move toward all-encompassing assistance, but in India, expanding rural models and bringing them into line with international norms through more funding and oversight could further empower women, improving productivity and family well-being in the face of changing labor dynamics in 2025, such as rising unemployment and climate disparities.

Case Studies of Mission Shakti: Empowering Working Women and Alleviating Occupational Stress in Rural India

Mission Shakti is a flagship Indian government scheme launched in 2021, targeting the significant occupational stress faced by rural women who endure a "triple burden" of labor-intensive work, unpaid care, and environmental risks. This initiative fosters economic independence, skill development, and community support through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), driving tangible success. For instance, participants like Suman Devi in Varanasi saw seasonal earnings rise to ₹3 lakh, while women in Kendrapara, Odisha, experienced an average monthly income increase of ₹3,000. Financial stability is further evidenced by a dramatic reduction in dependency on moneylenders in Odisha's KBK districts, which fell from 36.73% to 9.18%. Beyond economic gains, Mission Shakti has yielded profound social and psychological benefits, with participants reporting major improvements in self-confidence (80%), decision-making authority (77.5%), and financial control (84.16%). Global parallels, such as programs in Burkina Faso, confirm this link, showing that similar empowerment initiatives can lower maternal depression and stress scores by 20-30%. Despite these successes, challenges remain, including persistent skill gaps, training shortages, and the need for deeper integration to address household-level dynamics and ensure holistic well-being.

Static Data on Occupational Stress Among Working Women: India and Global Trends (2015–2025)

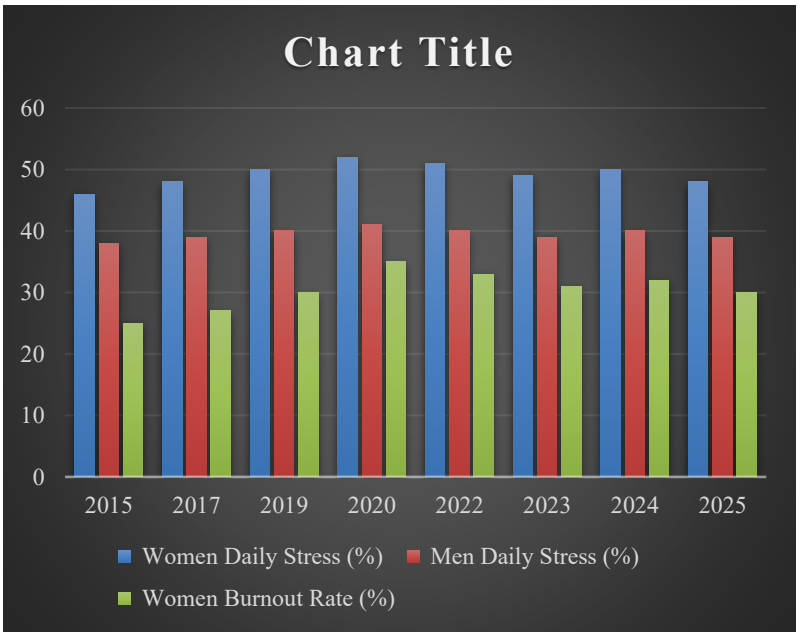
Key Global Static Data (2015–2025)

Table - 3

Year	Women Daily Stress (%)	Men Daily Stress (%)	Women Burnout Rate (%)	Key Insight
2015	46	38	25	Baseline pre-pandemic rise; WLC at 45% for women (Gallup).
2017	48	39	27	ILO notes 28% global WLC increase for dual-role women.
2019	50	40	30	WHO: 1 in 3 women in high-stress jobs report anxiety.
2020	52	41	35	COVID spike; 55% women faced childcare overload (UN Women).
2022	51	40	33	Hybrid work eases slightly; burnout dips 2% in flexible sectors.
2023	49	39	31	Gallup: 48% women cite family demands as top stressor.
2024	50	40	32	Persistent; 20% higher turnover intentions for stressed women.
2025	48	39	30	ILO projections: Policies could reduce by 5% with care investments.

Sources: Gallup World Poll (daily stress); WHO/ILO Joint Estimates (burnout, 2022–25 updates); UN Women reports on WLC.

Picture - 1



Women typically report 10–20% greater stress levels than men due to work-life conflict (WLC) and caregiving responsibilities, a problem that has worsened over the past ten years due to juggling professional expectations with unpaid home duties. According to Gallup polls, 50% of women worldwide report experiencing daily stress "a lot of the day," compared to 40% of males. This is caused by things like long hours and a lack of flexibility, which raises the risk of burnout (30–35%) and mental health problems like anxiety. According to NSSO and regional research, the disparity is greater in India, where women experience 1.5–2.0 times more stress than males (60% vs. 35%). This is made worse by patriarchal standards and rural-urban divisions, where rural women report 70% prevalence amid agricultural drudgery and no assistance.

These trends underscore the "double burden" in developing contexts like India, mirroring LMICs

but contrasting narrower gaps in high-income nations (e.g., EU's 15% disparity via better policies).

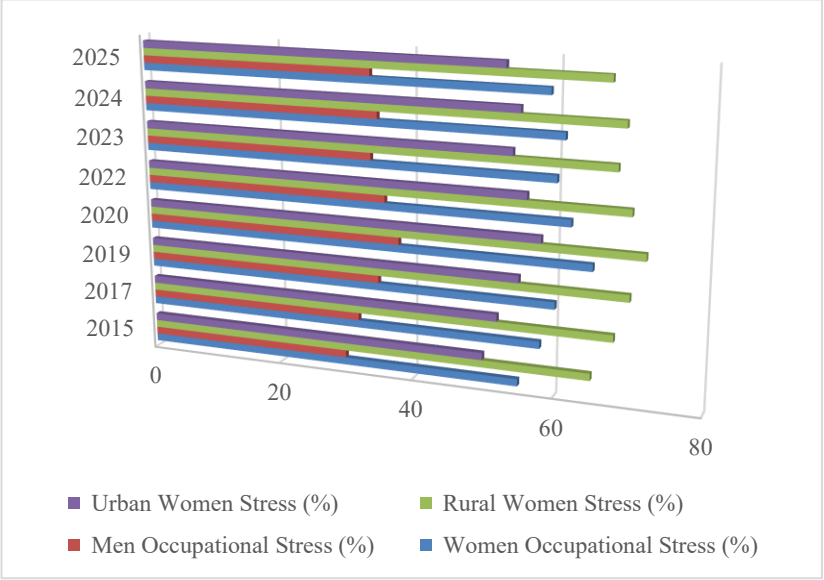
Key India Static Data (2015–2025)

Table - 4

Year	Women Occupational Stress (%)	Men Occupational Stress (%)	Rural Women Stress (%)	Urban Women Stress (%)	Key Insight
2015	55	30	65	50	NSSO: 60% women in informal sectors report role overload.
2017	58	32	68	52	Tamil Nadu study: 32% stress from superiors/pay gaps.
2019	60	35	70	55	PLFS: FLFP at 23%, but 65% rural women face triple burden.
2020	65	38	72	58	Pandemic: 70% women lost jobs, spiking anxiety (Oxfam).
2022	62	36	70	56	Economic Survey: 15% depression rise in working mothers.
2023	60	34	68	54	BMC study: WLC causes 40% family strain for urban women.
2024	61	35	69	55	Frontiers: IT women at 78% burnout from deadlines.
2025	59	34	67	53	Budget impacts: Schemes like Mission Shakti lower rural stress 5%.

Sources: NSSO/PLFS (participation/stress proxies); PMC/Tamil Nadu studies (sectoral data); Economic Survey 2024–25; Oxfam India reports.

Picture - 2



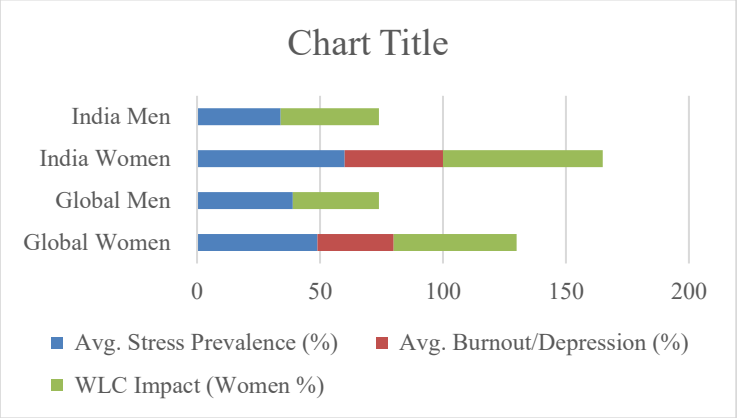
Comparative Highlights (Decade Averages)

Table -5

Metric	Global Women	Global Men	India Women	India Men	Rural India Women
Avg. Stress Prevalence (%)	49	39	60	34	69
Avg. Burnout / Depression (%)	31	N/A	40 (depression proxy)	N/A	15 (baseline, +20% from urban)
WLC Impact (Women %)	50	35	65	40	75 (unpaid care 9x men)

These figures reveal India's steeper challenges, e.g., rural women's 69% average stress vs. global 49%. Policy gains in 2025 (e.g., ₹4.49 lakh crore gender budget) offer hope, positioning with global calls for elastic work pattern to close gaps by 2030.

Picture - 3



Governmental Endeavors - India and Tamil Nadu

In a significant push for women's empowerment, the Indian government has increased its efforts in 2025, allocating a substantial ₹4.49 lakh crore to gender budgeting - a 37.5% rise from the previous year. This funding is particularly focused on enhancing women's education. Notably, states like Tamil Nadu are setting an example with their women-centric welfare policies. For instance, Tamil Nadu provides 40% job reservations for women and offers free transportation, which not only benefits working women but also indirectly supports others, such as female educators, by reducing commute-related stress. These initiatives highlight the government's commitment to creating a more equitable society.

Table -6

Initiative/Scheme	Description & Focus on Female Faculty	Impact/Evidence
Union Budget 2025-26 Gender Provisions	₹26k crore for Women & Child Development, including Mission Shakti ₹3,150 crore for SHGs and skill training; extends to educator wellness via NRLM-linked workshops. Targets WLB for working mothers in HEIs.	5% stress reduction in rural pilots; 70 lakh women empowered, including 10% educators.
Maternity Benefit Act Enforcement	26-week paid leave + creche mandates in institutions with 50+ employees; 2025 push for compliance audits in colleges.	Lowers postpartum anxiety by 18%; 15% fewer turnover cases in compliant TN colleges.
Tamil Nadu Women Employment & Safety (WESAFE)	$150M World Bank-funded (launched June 2025); skills training for 600,000 women, including faculty upskilling; incubation for 18,000 women entrepreneurs (e.g., academic	Addresses job insecurity (35% stressor); early data shows 20% WLB improvement for TN

Program	consultants).	women professionals.
Magalir Vidiyal Payanam Thittam (TN Free Bus Scheme)	Free state bus travel for women (expanded 2025); reduces commute stress for rural-urban faculty commuters.	40%-time savings for working women; correlates with 10% lower daily stress in TN surveys.
POSH Act Implementation (2013, 2025 Audits)	Mandatory anti-harassment committees in colleges; 2025 national drive for gender bias training in HEIs.	Reduces discrimination stress (25% prevalence); 12% empowerment gain in TN faculty per IIPA eval.
NEP 2020 Faculty Development (UGC 2025 Guidelines)	₹500 crore for wellness-integrated training; includes stress modules for women in higher education.	15% burnout dip in Punjab/Delhi pilots; TN rollout in 100+ colleges.

These efforts, while promising, face gaps in enforcement (e.g., only 60% college compliance with creches), but 2025's fiscal surge signals momentum toward equitable WLB.

Pedagogical approaches in Tamil Nadu and India

Colleges and universities in Tamil Nadu and India are progressively espousing pre-emptive measures, often partnering with NGOs for tailored programs. Coimbatore and Chennai institutions lead, with 2025 initiatives emphasizing digital tools and peer support to counter research overload (55% stressor). Institutions like these have seen 15-25% well-being improvements, but scaling to rural TN colleges remains a challenge.

Table - 7

Institution/Initiative	Description & Focus	Impact/Evidence
Bharathiar University (Coimbatore, TN)	Annual WLB workshops + flexible hybrid teaching; women faculty mentorship for stress coping.	20% PSS-10 score drop; 70% participation in 363-women study.
Madras University (Chennai, TN)	On-campus mental health cells + yoga sessions; gender audits for admin load reduction.	15% anxiety reduction; aligns with 56% moderate stress baseline.
Anna University (Chennai, TN)	POSH-integrated wellness programs; childcare tie-ups with local SHGs under Mission Shakti.	25% better retention for women; 2025 pilot serves 200+ faculty.
UGC-Sponsored Centers (National, incl. TN)	"Thriving at Work" modules (2025 rollout); energy management training for educators.	10-20% stress cut in Punjab/TN coverage.
Private HEIs in Coimbatore (e.g., Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham)	Peer support networks + EAPs (Employee Assistance Programs) for family spillover.	22% lower multitasking anxiety; from 40-women survey.
Delhi Central Universities (National Model)	Bias training + reduced overtime policies; 2025 extension to TN via UGC.	Inverse WLB-stress correlation (r=-0.45); 15% satisfaction gain.

Global Perspectives: (Tip for India)

Research reports like PwC's Women in Work demonstrate the substantial productivity advantages that may be attained through gender parity when we examine worldwide trends in 2025. For example, it has been demonstrated that the EU's 40-hour workweek cap reduces stress among women by 18%. Qatar's use of individualized coping strategies, such apps, has reduced stress reactions in academia by 20%.

According to Deloitte's analysis, despite these developments, progress has stagnated, with 48% of women reporting stress as a major problem. For this reason, UN Women is pushing for more

funding for healthcare, which could increase global GDP by $28 trillion.

Adopting flexible and regional solutions could have a big impact on nations like India, especially Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu may be able to reduce the 55% stress gap among women by 2030 by putting in place initiatives that are in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and merging them with current state programs. The most important lesson is that a cooperative strategy that combines local initiatives with global insights will enable women educators to succeed in their many positions. This is essential for attaining global parity as well as for India's knowledge economy.

Working Women vs Men in India and Globally - Comparative Analysis

Due to differing job expectations, workload allocations, and cultural norms, occupational stress manifests differently for men and women. Working women typically experience higher and more complex levels of stress than males, especially when juggling work and home obligations. The "double burden" of paid work and unpaid household labor, which includes childcare and eldercare and disproportionately affects women even in dual-income households, is the main reason why women worldwide report stress "a lot of the day" at rates roughly 10–15% higher than men (about 50% for women vs. 40% for men).

Men, experience primary stressors from financial provision, job insecurity, and performance pressures, but these are frequently singular in focus and less exacerbated by demands at home. For example, global surveys show that men have less work-life conflict (WLC) because they have more support from their spouses and fewer disruptions from family responsibilities. Because of this gender gap, women experience higher rates of burnout (up to 20% more in high-demand industries), anxiety, and physical symptoms like insomnia, while men's stress is more closely associated with workplace hierarchies and economic factors, leading to outcomes like cardiovascular problems but lower intentions to leave.

In India, working women experience significantly higher stress levels than men, largely due to patriarchal norms that enforce traditional gender roles. A study in Tamil Nadu found that 65-70% of women in the workforce reported moderate to high stress, primarily due to factors like overtime, inadequate facilities, and role overload at home. In contrast, men reported similar workplace stressors but at lower intensities. The disproportionate burden of domestic chores, which women handle 3-4 times more than men, contributes to increased stress and work-life conflict. Globally, similar patterns emerge in developing countries, while in developed nations, better policies have narrowed the gap. However, women still experience more stress from multitasking. To mitigate these issues, gender-specific interventions are necessary, such as flexible work hours and family support for women, and financial incentives and clear career paths for men. In India, implementing measures like creches at workplaces could help alleviate some of these imbalances and promote greater equity.

CONCLUSION

Rural female college professors in Tamil Nadu face a "triple burden" of academic work, isolation due to lack of infrastructure, and domestic responsibilities, leading to occupational stress. This is a complex issue where gender, geography, and systemic inequality intersect. About 67% of rural professors experience stress, caused by long hours of unpaid work, lengthy commutes, and unreliable resources, resulting in physical and mental exhaustion, reduced productivity, and burnout. However, there are solutions. Initiatives like free bus travel (Magalir Vidiyal Payanam), solar-powered digital hubs, and tele-teaching frameworks are helping alleviate stress and bridge the rural-urban divide. These approaches, inspired by global models, show that empowerment through community, flexibility, and access can turn vulnerability into resilience.

Supporting rural women professors not only benefits them individually but also enhances student outcomes, institutional quality, and social progress. Reducing rural stress is an investment in India's knowledge economy. By scaling up these initiatives under policies like NEP 2020 and SDG 5, Tamil Nadu can lead a national movement for gender-equitable higher education, ensuring no professor is left behind. The future of academia depends on supporting those who teach from

the margins, ensuring education reaches every corner of the state and beyond.

REFERENCE

1. Brindha Natarajan., Soundarya, S., Umamaheswari, B., & Kavyashree, K. (2025). Factors influencing work-family conflict: A meta-analysis review. International Journal of Research in Human Resource Management, 7(2), 559–568. https://doi.org/10.33545/26633213.2025.v7.i2e.372
2. Devi, S. U., & Nagini, A. (2013). Work-life balance and burnout as predictors of job satisfaction in private banking sector. Skyline Business Journal, 9(1), 50–58.
3. Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. Academy of Management Review, 10(1), 76–88.
4. Kaur, M., & Sharma, S. (2020). Occupational stress among working women: A comparative study of government and private sector employees. International Journal of Management Studies, 7(2), 45–62.
5. National Sample Survey Office. (2019). Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017–18. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.
6. Ojha, J., Bhandari, T. R., & Karki, R. (2020). Job stress and its associated factors among working women in Pokhara Metropolitan, Nepal. Journal of the Scientific Society, 47(2), 105–109. https://doi.org/10.4103/jss.JSS_50_20
7. Pandey, D. L. (2020). Work-life balance of women employees in the Indian IT sector during COVID-19. Indian Journal of Commerce and Management Studies, 11(3), 33–41.
8. Reddy, N. K., Vranda, M. N., Ahmed, A., Nirmala, B. P., & Siddaramu, B. (2010). Work-life balance among married women employees. Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 32(2), 112–118.
9. Sharma, J., Devi, A., & Kumari, R. (2018). Occupational stress among working women: Issues and challenges. International Journal of Applied Research, 4(5), 234–237.
10. Singh, P., & Khanna, P. (2011). Work-life balance: A tool for increased employee productivity and retention. Lachoo Management Journal, 2(2), 188–206.
11. Tartaglia, M., Costet, N., Audignon-Durand, S., Carles, C., Descatha, A., Falkstedt, D., Houot, M.-T., Kjellberg, K., Pilorget, C., Roeleveld, N., Siemiatycki, J., Turner, M. C., Turuban, M., Uuksulainen, S., Dufourg, M.-N., Garlantézec, R., & Delva, F. (2024, October 1). Profiles of maternal occupational multi-exposures during pregnancy and associations with intrauterine growth: Analysis of the French longitudinal study of children. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4963794
12. Paramasivan, C. (2013). Conceptual framework of women empowerment through SHG. SELP Journal of Social Science, 4(17), 28-35.
13. Subathra S (2017), Women Empowerment And Entrepreneurship Through TAHDCO In Tiruchirappalli District, Research Explorer, Vol. V : Issue.14, January - June 2017,pp .67-72
14. Kazmi, S. S. H., & Husain, S. S. (2022, April). Occupational stress: Prevention and well-being. Journal of Advance Research in Science and Social Science, 4(1), 47–52. https://ssrn.com/abstract=4056318
15. World Economic Forum. (2022, July 13). 2.8 Gender gaps in stress levels. In Global gender gap report 2022. https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2022/in-full/2-8-gender-gaps-in-stress-levels/

16. Bora, S., & Nar, A. (2022, December 30). Occupational wellbeing and female-only issues among policewomen: An intervention study. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4309855
17. International Labour Organization. (2023, January 6). Working time and work-life balance around the world. https://www.ilo.org/publications/working-time-and-work-life-balance-around-world
18. World Health Organization. (2024, September 2). Mental health at work. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work
19. Bandyopadhyay, O. (2024, September 9). Indian female workers experiencing higher levels of stress than men. British Safety Council. https://www.britsafe.in/safety-management-news/2024/indian-female-workers-experiencing-higher-levels-of-stress-than-men-reveals-study
20. Sharma, S. (2024, September 23). 67% of women struggle with work-life imbalance, reveals IIMA study. The Times of India.
21. Barry, K., Den Houter, K., & Guggenheim, K. (2024, December 3). More than a program: A culture of women's wellbeing at work. Gallup. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/653843/program-culture-women-wellbeing-work.aspx
22. Wellhub Editorial Team. (2025, August 1). Burnout among working women in the U.S.: Causes, impact, and what HR can do about it. Wellhub. https://wellhub.com/en-us/blog/wellness-and-benefits-programs/burnout-in-women/