

INFLUENCE OF AGE ON STRESS LEVELS – A STUDY ON WORKING WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Demographic characteristics of individuals such as age, gender, and tenure have long been considered important variables in psychological research. Factors like income, age, nature of work, type of organization, personality type etc., also determine stress. Age is a factor that influences individual both physically and psychologically. The present paper analyzed the influence of age on stress among working women. The study found that age had an influence over stress score. Thus, the results of the study are consistent with the earlier studies made by Anesh Maniraj Singh (2012) and Robert S. Bridger et al., (2013). As against this, the results are inconsistent with the findings of Anju and Kumkum Singh (2014), who observed that there was no significant difference between age groups and occupational stress.

Keywords: stress, working women, influence of age

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Various studies showed significant relationship between stress and personal health, which can play a major role in determining the physical and psychological health of an individual as well as success of an organization. There is a negative relationship between stress and performance. When the stress is high, performance is low. Individuals experiencing stress tend to focus on the unpleasant feelings and emotions instead of on the task at hand and consequently their performance suffers. Prolonged or repeated exposure even to mild levels of stress may have harmful effects on health and this may interfere with effective performance. Therefore, Managers today must find the ways to better manage the behaviour of people in their organizations.

During the 21st Century, women are stepping out of their homes into the world of employment. But, social condition is slow to change. As a consequence, working women's role expectations are often conflicting and difficult to fulfill. The cumulative effect of various factors contributes to the stress, anxiety and emotional trauma among working women. Stress experienced by working women during the performance of the familial role can take a severe psychological and physical toll in terms of organizational role performance. Across the globe, working women, especially those in the peak stages of their family life cycle, are grappling with the herculean task of balancing their organizational and familial roles.

Demographic characteristics of individuals such as age, gender, and tenure have long been considered important variables in psychological research (Cohen, 1993; Griffeth et al., 2000; Sturman, 2003). Landy and Trumbo (1976) argued that factors like income, age, nature of work, type of organization, personality type etc., also determine stress. In a meta-analytic study on role ambiguity and role conflict, Jackson and Schuler (1985) found age to be negatively correlated with both, thus providing support for the idea that age has a negative effect on perceived stressors. Reddy and Ramamurthy (1991) demonstrated that stress was found to be considerably influenced by age-related factors.

Literature Review

Pearlin and Skaff (1996) note that stressors vary with age and stage in the life course and the nature and type of stressor to which people are exposed may vary depending on the age at which they were exposed to them. These sentiments are also echoed in aging research (Elder et al., 1996). George (1996) points out that stress research has not adequately taken age into account in the examination of the effect of social factors such as stressors and resources on illness. Jex (1998) argued that age affects the meaning and level of threat associated with stressors.

Winefield & Jarret (2001) and Judy M. Hogan et al. (2002) argued that age was an important variable in measuring stress and older staff-report less stress. The study made by Chandraiah et al. (2003) observed that age variable was negatively correlated with occupational stress. Anitha Devi (2007) observed that the older professional women experience lower life stress and role stress, while younger people experience more stress as compared to older people.

Arie Shirom et al. (2008) observed negative relationship between age and role ambiguity. In a study by Nazira Paruk and Anesh Maniraj Singh (2012) found that there is a significant relationship between the age and stress; and the different age groups felt the effects of stress differently. Robert S. Bridger et al., (2013) argued that younger population is found to be more vulnerable to stress. Adriana Ortega et al., (2013) observed that young professional women in Malaysia reported high levels of stress.

Anju and Kumkum Singh (2014) observed that there was no significant difference between two age groups and occupational stress of nurses. Bassma A. Ibrahim et al., (2014) conducted a study to examine the job stress among the workers and found that most of the younger age group are found to be facing high job strain. The study made by Mei-yung Leung et al. (2015) found significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in the stress scores for the age groups.

Bassma A. Ibrahim et al., (2014) conducted a study to examine the job stress among the workers. The study showed a high prevalence of high job strain among the workers. Most of the younger age group are found to be facing high job strain. Further, it is striking to note from the study that workers with shorter duration of employment had high job strain. Further, statistically significant association was found between social support and high job stress.

Mohd Zubair Kales (2014) studied the occupational stress amongst teachers of professional colleges. The study compared the occupational stress of male and female Teachers as well as junior and

senior teachers. It has been revealed from the study that both female and male teachers are found to be experiencing high workload. Both male and female teachers have shown similarity on stress index as far as dimension of responsibility is concerned. The findings further revealed that both junior as well as senior teachers experience high workload. Both the groups of teachers are same on the area of role ambiguity of Occupational Stress Scale.

Anju and Kumkum Singh (2014) studied the difference in occupational stress as related to gender, age and education of government hospital nurses. The study finds that there was statistically significant relationship between genders; male and female and occupational stress among nurses. Female nurses showed more occupational stress score. There was no significant difference between two age groups and occupational stress of nurses. There was no significant effect between two education group; low and high and occupational stress of nurses.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine the influence of age on stress.

Research Methods

The study is based on primary data collected through questionnaire from 500 working women from Andhra Pradesh. In this study, Analysis of Variance had been used to determine whether the stress score was influenced by the demographic variables such as age. Further, Post hoc test had been applied. Significance value less than 0.05 indicate existence of some relationship between the independent variable (demographic characteristic) and dependent variables (stress score). The results are depicted below.

Results and discussion

Age is a factor that influences individual both physically and psychologically. The entire sample is categorized into four age groups for the purpose of analysis. Table – 1 shows that the mean percentage score of the stress is seemed to be highest for the age group below 30 (94.71), followed by 40-50 age group with 92.87. Above 50 age group showed a mean score of 92.67 and it is 92.30 for 30-40 age group. Graphical presentation of the mean of stress score and age is made in Graph – I. From this it can be concluded that there is variation in mean score of stress between different age groups. To verify the difference that has been observed in mean percentage score is significant or not one way ANOVA (F-test) was conducted.

One way ANOVA was computed to explore the impact of age on stress. Analysis of Variance shown in Table - 2 represents that age had an influence over stress score. Thus, the results of the study are consistent with the earlier studies made by Anesh Maniraj Singh (2012) and Robert S. Bridger et al., (2013). As against this, the results are inconsistent with the findings of Anju and Kumkum Singh (2014), who observed that there was no significant difference between age groups and occupational stress. Box plot showing the relationship between age and stress is given in Graph – II.

For further analysis Post hoc analysis was conducted using the LSD test. Post hoc analysis showed that “below 30 years” age group differed significantly on the basis of stress score from the “30-40 years” age group and “40-50” years age group. However, no significant difference was observed between “below 30 years” age group and “above 50 years” age group (Table-3). Positive mean differed marked that these people (below 30 years age group) are younger and hence are more vulnerable to stress. Insignificant difference between “below 30 years” age group and “above 50 years” age group may be due to aging factor.

Table – 1

DESCRIPTIVES OF STRESS SCORE AMONG AGE GROUPS

Age group	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Below 30	225	94.7111	7.32846
30-40	95	92.3053	5.29366
40-50	138	92.8768	4.89220
Above 50	42	92.6667	6.05127
Total	500	93.5760	6.32932

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Graph – I

MEAN OF STRESS SCORE v/s AGE

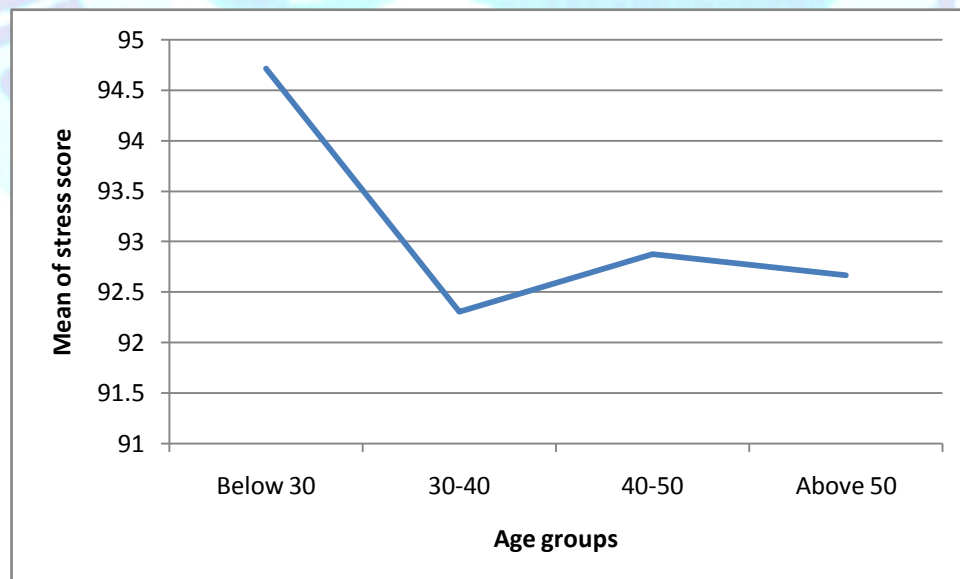


Table – 2
EFFECT OF AGE ON STRESS

ANOVA between Dependent Variable: Stress score &
 Independent variable: Age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	545.503	3	181.834	4.638	.003**
Within Groups	19444.609	496	39.203		
Total	19990.112	499			

**Significant at 0.01 level

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Table – 3
MULTIPLE COMPARISONS USING POST HOC TESTS (LEAST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE) METHOD

Dependent Variable: Stress score
Independent Variable: Age groups

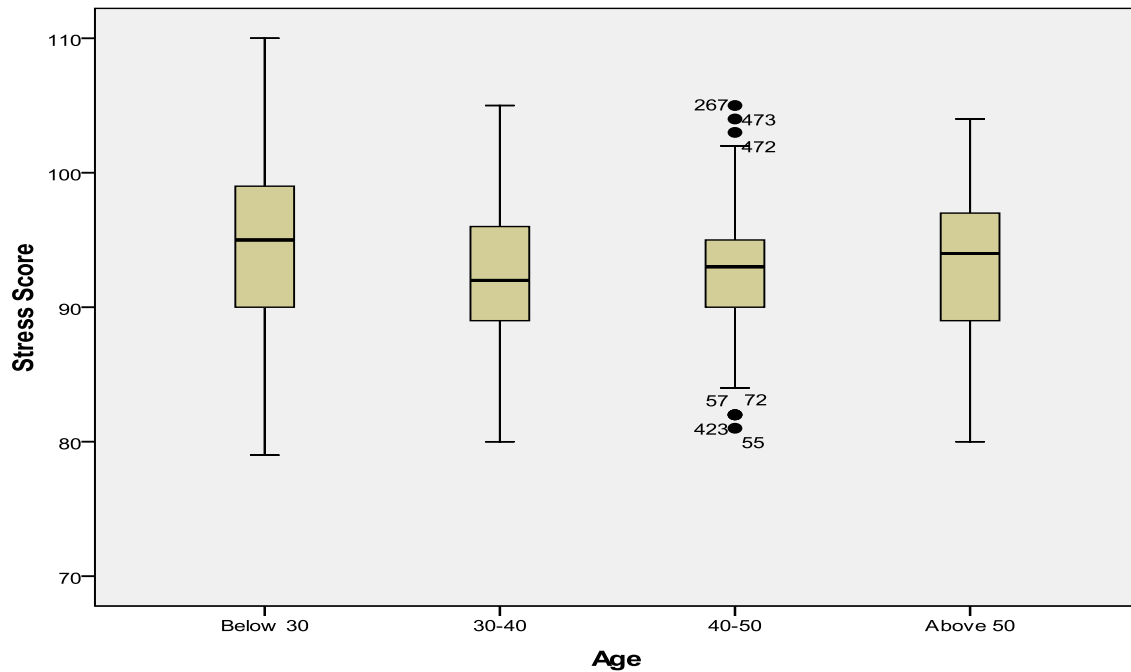
Age (I)	Age (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Below 30	30-40	2.40585**	.76609	.002
	40-50	1.83430**	.67699	.007
	Above 50	2.04444	1.05244	.053
30-40	Below 30	-2.40585**	.76609	.002
	40-50	-.57155	.83471	.494
	Above 50	-.36140	1.16020	.756
40-50	Below 30	-1.83430**	.67699	.007
	30-40	.57155	.83471	.494
	Above 50	.21014	1.10339	.849
Above 50	Below 30	-2.04444	1.05244	.053
	30-40	.36140	1.16020	.756
	40-50	-.21014	1.10339	.849

** . The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Graph – II

BOX PLOT SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND STRESS



Conclusion

The study found that age had an influence over stress score. Thus, the results of the study are consistent with the earlier studies made by Anesh Maniraj Singh (2012) and Robert S. Bridger et al., (2013). As against this, the results are inconsistent with the findings of Anju and Kumkum Singh (2014), who observed that there was no significant difference between age groups and occupational stress. This study has some limitations that could be addressed in future studies. The interpretation of the results should take account of the study limitations. The cross-sectional nature of this study does not permit the examination of causal relations. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the temporal relationship between the study variables and address possible reverse causations.

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