

An Analysis of Stress Management Strategies for Newly Mothers in the Education Sector

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Abstract

This study explores the stress management strategies employed by newly minted mothers in the education sector, examining both the challenges they face and the coping mechanisms they adopt. The paper aims to identify effective strategies to mitigate stress and improve work-life balance for this demographic, with a particular focus on teachers, administrators, and other educational professionals. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys, the research highlights the psychological, emotional, and physical pressures experienced by new mothers in education and suggests best practices for supporting their well-being in the workplace. This research aims to provide valuable insights that can inform policy changes and support initiatives within the education sector, ultimately promoting the well-being of newly parenting working women and enhancing their professional effectiveness.

1. Introduction

The transition to motherhood is a life-altering experience that brings joy but also considerable challenges, especially for women working in high-demand professions. The education sector is one such field where the pressure to balance professional responsibilities with the demands of parenting can be overwhelming. For new mothers, these challenges often result in significant stress that can affect their personal well-being, job performance, and overall quality of life. This research aims to assess the specific stressors faced by new mothers in education and explore the coping strategies they employ to manage these pressures.

1.1. Background of the Study

Maternity and motherhood in the workplace, particularly in education, have been understudied, with few resources directed toward understanding the stressors associated with balancing these roles. Previous research has highlighted the general stress experienced by new mothers but lacks a focus on the context of the education sector. Educators and school staff often face unique pressures, including demanding work hours, emotional labor, and the need for constant engagement with students, which can be exacerbated by the demands of raising a child.

1.2. Research Objectives

- To identify the specific sources of stress experienced by newly mothered individuals in the education sector.
- To evaluate the strategies employed by new mothers in managing stress.
- To provide recommendations for policy changes and organizational support for new mothers in education.

- To investigate the role of social support from family, peers, and community networks in the stress management processes of these women.

2. Literature Review

The literature review explores existing research on stress in the workplace, with a focus on the education sector and new mothers. It addresses the physiological, emotional, and psychological implications of stress and examines the social and cultural factors that shape women's experiences in the workplace. Key themes include:

Stress hit maximum to working women when it frequently entails making challenging decisions and pressing family obligations emerge, such as skipping a crucial meeting to pick up ill kids from school, taking a day off to drive ageing parents to doctor's appointments, or skipping a client dinner to go to a child's dance recital. Unfortunately, the professional cost of these decisions can be substantial and may prevent people from moving up the corporate ladder despite their best efforts. Studies are showing in India as compare to other countries people have more organizational stress as happiness in job is given comparatively less importance (Vajpayee2017; Vajpayee et al 2022). Hence a culture of happiness needs to adopt to remove stresses from women's life.

Joshi et al,(2004) found that Physical and emotional health might suffer as women attempt to balance demanding employment, family obligations, and even personal health issues and financial anxieties. Working women concept in India always lies with less importance as life is in phase of acculturation to adopt new challenges of life **Mishra et al, 1996;**

The factors such as job insecurity, long hours, continuous change and unrealistic deadlines can cause serious problem for women employees working in the educational institutions **Vijayadurai and Venkatesh, (2012).**

Patro and Kumar (2019) found that reducing psychological and mental problems, reducing consequences of stress on work productivity, unable to manage work stress, fear of experiencing health problems and improving job satisfaction are the reasons of attending stress management programs.

Jeyaraj (2013) revealed that the teachers of government and aided schools expressed that they are victims of a high level of occupational stress. It is perceived that lack of interaction, time pressure for completing the syllabus, social status, heavy workload, poor working conditions, sufficient and mutual co-operation are the major sources of occupational stress.

Aditi and Kumari (2005) identified that women teachers are facing lot of problems like overweight, body ache, and psychosomatic effect etc. These women working in under stress because of they have to perform various roles. The expectation is high from women's if they working as college teachers.

They have the pressure of balancing work and family.

Bhatia and Goyal (2018) revealed that the job stressors affecting the employees included role conflict and ambiguity, lack of promotion opportunities and feedback, lack of participation in decision making, excessive workload, unsatisfactory working conditions and interpersonal relations.

Dua and Sangwan (2016) found that female teachers are more vulnerable to stress as stress is caused by many factors including poor working conditions, scarcity of resources, heavy workloads and lack of administrative and family support system.

Kumari and Saradadevi (2016) found that most of the working women are feeling stress as they are facing more family problems, and unable to balance the family and job. Some working women living with in-laws are not getting proper family support.

Sri (2019) identified that the main causes of stress among women employees are workload and working shifts when measures with age of the respondents and measurements of stress.

Training programmers and yoga and meditation causes low stress for the respondents when compared to the educational qualification of the respondents with measurements of stress.

Zhou, et al. (2018) found that women's perceptions of both work-to- family conflict and family-to-work conflict were significantly negatively related to mental health. Additionally, the results showed that negative affect and perceived stress were negatively correlated with mental health.

The results indicated the sequential mediating effect of negative affect and stress in the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health was significant, which supported the sequential mediation model.

GeoPoul (2010) indicated that different role stress was experienced by teachers. The study suggested that other programmes in holidays should be reduced in schools and the teachers could get enough time to engage with their families and maintain work-life balance, in addition, service of qualified counsellors should also be arranged in schools, thereby reducing the stress level of teachers in schools.

The science and technology professionals, administrators and self-employed women teachers and bankers who experience comparatively low role stress.

Suganya and Rajkumar (2016) identified that teachers having less experience and inadequate facilities faced more stress. The private sector faculty faced more stress compared to public sector business school faculty. The main factors of stress are work overload, poor infrastructural facilities, conflict with management and peer, student interaction and inadequate salary.

(Horner KL, 1996) stated that A review of the literature regarding stress levels among Social Work graduates suggested that, when left unaddressed, stress can manifest in more serious symptoms beyond low morale. Of particular concern was data from a recent study, which suggests that 34% of Social Work students reported high levels of depressive symptoms, 12% had a history of suicidal ideation, and 4% reported having recent thoughts about suicide

Carver et al (2010) discusses student's levels of stress in correlation to their locus of control. They found that students with very high levels of severe stress associate their stress levels to chance, whereas students with mild or moderate stress levels do not associate too much of their stress to chance.

(Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000) Beyond the boundaries of the work environment, socio-economic and demographic changes to the workforce have blurred the lines between work and personal stress. Over the past few decades these changes have included an increase in the number of women in the workforce, a rising divorce rate and subsequent single parent households and a rise in the number of working mothers in both full and part-time employment

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe occupational stress as the taxation of a person's adaptive resources because of job demands. Stress can therefore be understood as the period of adaptation when an imbalance between job demands and the response ability of the worker occurs. If the imbalance continues to be unrelieved, the long term effects would eventually lead to burnout being experienced by the person.

Greenglass, Burke & Konarski (1998) stated that an individual's burnout levels depend not only on stressful events in the work environment, but also on the availability of coping resources.

Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) have found that stress is potentially manageable through systems of social support in the work place by administrative management, superiors and colleagues.

Srinivasan, (2014) describes Teachers want to work hard to achieve good results. Teachers are the builders of a nation and the creators of a responsible generation. They have a significant impact on human behavior. Aside from their parents, the children spend the most of their time with teachers and teachers have an impact on the child's development.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik, (2016) identified Many countries around the world are experiencing a teacher shortage. This issue is becoming more prevalent as a result of teacher turnover. Many teachers leave the classroom for reasons other than retirement. Working conditions that are stressful are one of the reasons people leave the teaching profession. Indeed, recent research from various nations reveals that teaching is a highly demanding occupation and that teacher stress is a worldwide phenomenon. Teacher stress may be harmful for both teachers and educational quality. Teacher stress affected teacher self-efficacy, job happiness, and commitment levels.

Sultana et al., (2012) stated Teacher stress can have a negative impact on both the teachers and the quality of instruction. Teaching, on the other hand, is an extremely stressful and demanding job due to the enormous obligations and the deeply deep-rooted feeling of accountability. Our work life is the most important element in our everyday life; the impacts of our professional lives have significant effects for our social lives. As a result, stress factors have a huge influence and shape our personal and professional lives in a variety of ways.

Mearns and Chain,(2003) found that Stress is commonly defined as the body's non-specific response or reaction to external pressures or disturbing occurrences in the environment. It is the process by which humans perceive and respond to environmental risks and challenges. Stressors are personal and environmental situations that generate stress. In recent years, there has been a great deal of interest in the subject of teacher stress. Several factors have been associated to teacher occupational stress. The most important of these factors are as follows: business obligations, a wide range of activities within the school environment, a lack of

professional recognition, discipline issues in the classroom, bureaucracy, lack of assistance, heavy workload, and time constraints.

Sultana *et al.*, (2012) shared that various experts have consistently recognized the necessity to investigate the factors that contribute to teacher stress. The private sector has surpassed the public sector as the second largest provider of education. People's discontent with the quality of education in government schools drove the necessity for private schools. Some private schools have been opened to give students with much-needed educational opportunities. The private sector, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with providing high-quality education. Over the previous few decades, the private sector's share of education has grown significantly. The number of schools, as well as the proportion of children enrolled in these institutions, has increased substantially.

Ailaan, (2017) found In Pakistan; the private sector is playing a significant role in the promotion of education. Enrollment in the private sector is expanding because it provides a higher quality of education than the public sector. According to NEMIS data, there were 17,093 private elementary schools in the country in 2012/13. In addition, the private sector had 25,658 middle/lower secondary schools and 17,696 high schools. At the primary level, 4.8 million (34%) of children aged 5–9 are enrolled in private sector schools. Private schools are anticipated to enroll 34% of males and 33% of girls.

Yusoff, (2010) indicated that In the early 17th century, the term “stress” was re-used to denote “grief, control, discomfort, and difficulty. This term was revised in the nineteenth century and it refers to a significant influence on one's physical object or on another. It is now possible to declare that stress is a global trend and that it is the product of either a high-quality or a low-quality lifestyle experience. Stress is commonly defined as the body's non-specific response or reaction to external pressures or disturbing occurrences in the environment. It is the process by which humans perceive and respond to environmental risks and challenges. As a result, stress is simply described as emotional disturbances or changes brought about by stressors.

McCarthy, (2019) describe Teaching is a hard job and teachers become stressed when the demands of the circumstances surpass their ability to cope with these demands. Since World War II, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women entering the work field. As a result, more women are finding themselves in the position of having to be both employees and mothers.

Ferguson *et al.*, (2017) identified Many women are increasingly using their right to work, something previous generations were denied. Many women work for financial reasons, as families can no longer survive on one income. Working women have highlighted concerns regarding the relative contributions of job and family to women's psychological well-being. Women were more likely than males to experience stress as a result of not having enough time to spend with their own children, caring for family and friends, or engaging in recreational activities. Furthermore, women were more likely than men to feel disorganized as a result of work and home duties. When compared with their male colleagues, women reported workload and stress as much more influential in their intention to leave the teaching profession

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of stress management among new mothers in the education sector.

3.1. Research Design

- **Quantitative Approach:** A survey is distributed to new mothers working in various educational institutions, including schools and universities of Raipur District of State Chhattisgarh. The survey will gather data on their perceived stress levels, coping strategies, and the availability of institutional support.
- **Qualitative Approach:** In-depth interviews with a select group of new mothers are conducted to explore their personal experiences and the specific challenges they face. The interviews will focus on their stressors, coping techniques, and suggestions for improvements in workplace policies.

3.2. Data Collection Tools

- Survey questionnaires are including Likert scale items, open-ended questions, and demographic information.
- Interviews have been semi-structured to allow for deeper exploration of individual experiences.

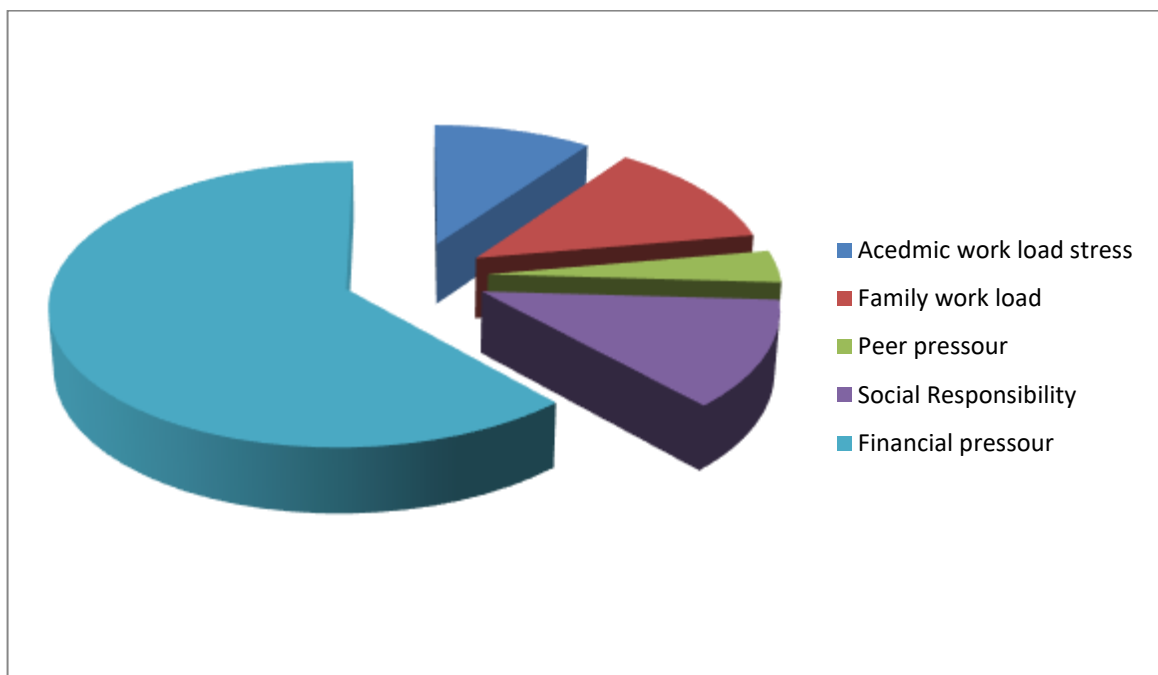
3.3. Sample Size and Participants

- The sample consists of 200 new mothers from schools and universities across various educational levels.
- Participants are selected based on their recent maternity leave status (within the last 12 months) and will be employed in a full-time or part-time capacity in the education sector.

3.4. Data Analysis

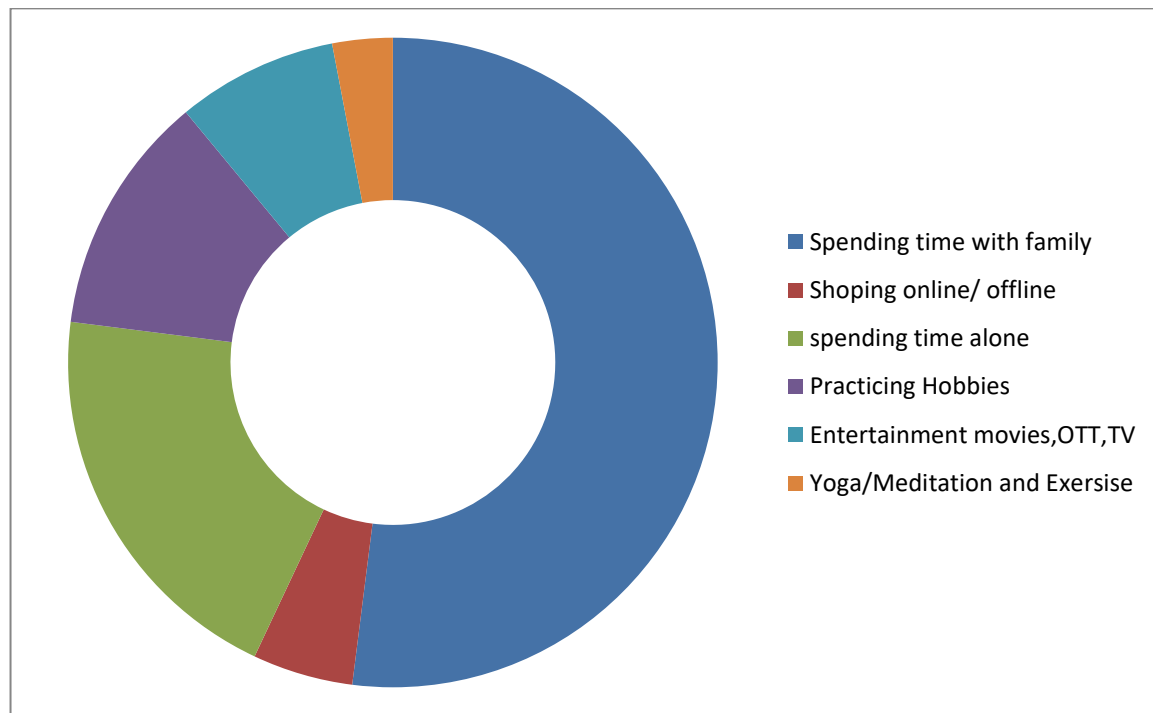
- Quantitative data have been analyzed using statistical methods to identify common stressors and evaluate the effectiveness of different coping strategies.
- Qualitative data has been analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and personal experiences of stress management.

Identification of the specific sources of stress experienced by newly mothered individuals in the education sector



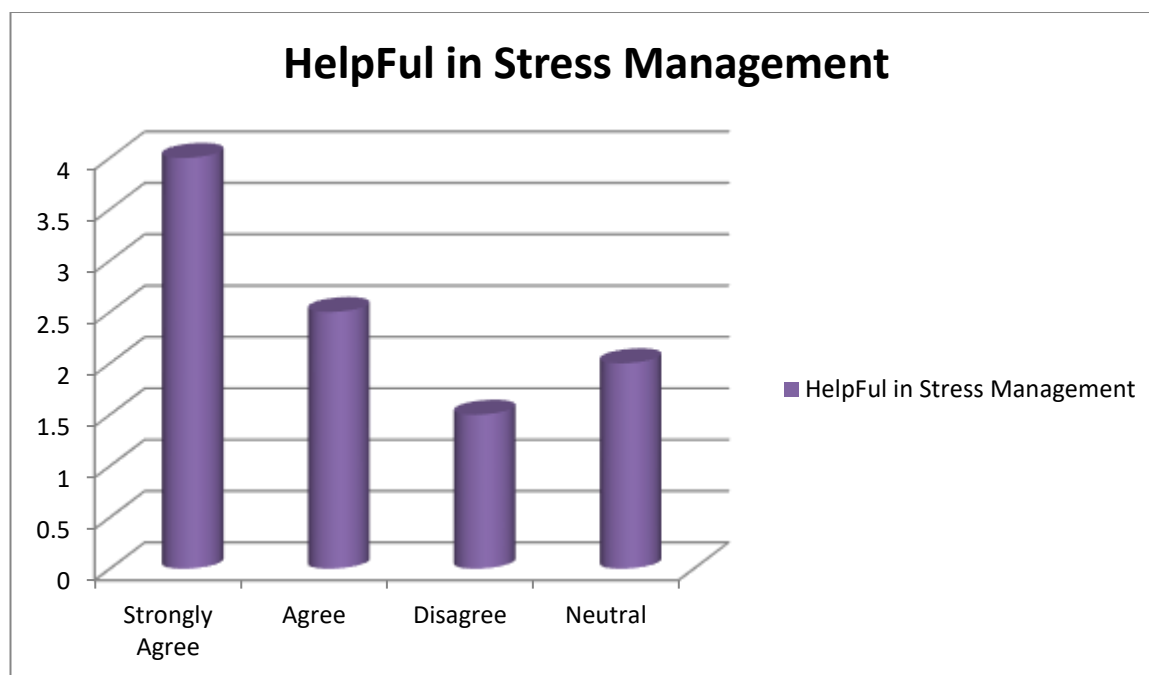
Above graph shows that newly mothers working in education sector of various schools and university most stress are about their financial pressure (62%) and second stress which is identified is their social responsibilities (12%), though they had to manage family and work place both third stress is their family work load (11%).

Stress Management technology or Stress Coping up Strategies



Above table shows that 52% of the female Employee who are new mothers like to spend quality time with their family and friends to cop up from their stress, 20% of them said they want alone time to manage their stress level and 12% practicing hobbies as cooking gardening also help them to manage their stress level.

Is Education Sector Employer is helpful to manage the stress level of Female newly mother Employee?



40% newly mother Employees strongly agree that they get help from the working environment of the school or university to control our stress level, 25% Agree that their employer help to control their stress.

4. Results

The results section will present the findings of the survey and interviews. This will include statistical data on stress levels, the most common stressors, and the most frequently reported coping strategies. Themes from the qualitative data will be presented to provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of new mothers in education.

- **Stress in the Education Sector:** The high demands of teaching, administrative work, and emotional labor are well-documented. However, the additional burden faced by new mothers in balancing family and career is often overlooked.
- **The Impact of Stress on Well-being:** Prolonged exposure to stress can lead to burnout, decreased productivity, and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.
- **Coping Mechanisms:** Research suggests that successful coping strategies for stress include time management, support from family and colleagues, and organizational interventions like flexible work schedules or parental leave policies.
- **Workplace Support Systems:** The effectiveness of institutional support, including maternity leave, flexible work hours, and professional counseling, in reducing stress and promoting well-being.

5. Discussion

The discussion will interpret the findings, comparing them with existing literature on stress management and workplace support for new mothers. It will assess the effectiveness of current strategies and identify gaps in institutional support. Additionally, this section will discuss how the findings can inform policy changes to improve the work-life balance of new mothers in education.

5.1. Implications for Practice

- Recommendations for educational institutions to provide better support for new mothers, including flexible working hours, mental health resources, and mentorship programs.
- The role of colleagues and school leadership in creating a supportive environment for new mothers.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

The study's limitations may include a limited geographic scope, potential biases in self-reporting, and the challenges of generalizing findings across different educational settings.

6. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the importance of addressing the unique stressors experienced by new mothers in the education sector. By identifying effective stress management strategies and recommending supportive institutional policies, the research aims to contribute to a healthier and more productive work environment for new mothers. The findings highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to stress management, one that includes both individual strategies and organizational support.

7. Recommendations

- Schools and universities should implement flexible work policies, including options for remote teaching, staggered hours, or part-time roles for new mothers.
- Institutions should establish peer support networks and provide access to professional counseling and wellness programs for staff.
- Leadership should be trained to recognize the signs of burnout and stress and create a culture that values work-life balance.

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