

TIME-USE AND STRESS IN MARRIED WORKING WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

As more and more women join the work force, they continue to be responsible for care giving work at home leading to a work-family conflict. Married working women have the additional responsibilities of homecare, childcare and elderly care, in addition to their work. Consequently, their time use depicts a greater number of unpaid hours in these roles, limiting their time for relaxation, social interaction and leisure. This directly leads to higher stress levels. Primary data is collected using a structured questionnaire and the responses collected online. Additional information is collected through various secondary sources. The study analyses the stress levels at home of 134 married working women residing in Delhi NCR. The data thus collected is presented through tables and graphs and is analyzed using regression analysis. The stress levels are analyzed taking into consideration, various factors like family structure, job level, time use per day and support system at work and home. The study concludes that availability of support systems at home and availability of time for self-relaxation and leisure are significant factors in reducing stress at home. These factors overcome the additional responsibilities of care giving in a multi-generational family home.

Keywords: Married Working Women, Stress, Care Giving, Time-Use.

Introduction

Women take the disproportionate responsibility for the unpaid household and caregiver work, leading to work-life conflicts and increasing stress levels. Consequently, women are less likely to be employed in the labour force. The inequality also leads to women preferring some jobs in which they can meet the demands of care giving including part time jobs. The need to manage home and care giving roles also leads to pay inequality.

At work, women face lack of leaves for childcare and elderly care. Most of the workplaces are not conducive to childcare and lack support mechanisms like creches and day care. Long working and irregular hours and non-flexible schedules take a toll on the health and general well-being of the working woman and work-family conflict. The responsibility for childcare and elderly care in many cases places a large economic burden on the family with the working women taking the option of leaving the job.

A 2015 survey of more than 9,500 women by Thompson Reuters and Rockefeller foundation in G20 countries¹ found out the work-life balance has the highest priority for women. In Russia, South Korea, China, Japan, and India, 44% of the women mentioned that managing work and home commitments is the tightest challenge they face. It was also found that worst workplace inequalities are faced by the women in India and Turkey.

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Unpaid Work

Unpaid work may be in the form of household work and caregiving as well as volunteer work. It is seen in all societies and households and is a part of everyday life. It has great role in supporting families, households and communities, yet unpaid work is generally invisible and is ignored in policies and statistics. The value of unpaid work could be equivalent to at least half of a country's GDP by some estimates (ILO, 2007)ⁱⁱ. However, the unpaid work is not measured in the GDP.

Worldwide, women undertake more unpaid work than men. A survey which was done in Argentina, India, Republic of Korea, Nicaragua, South Africa and United Republic of Tanzania (Budlender, D, 2008)ⁱⁱⁱ found that women perform double the unpaid work compared to men. In India, the women worked on unpaid work for care giving, ten times more compared to men.

GDP and market economy is measured through internationally standardised System of National Accounts (SNA). The SNA generally measure only few types of unpaid work like contribution in family business and ignores household and care giving work. Hence the unpaid work, done mostly by women, is not counted in national statistics.

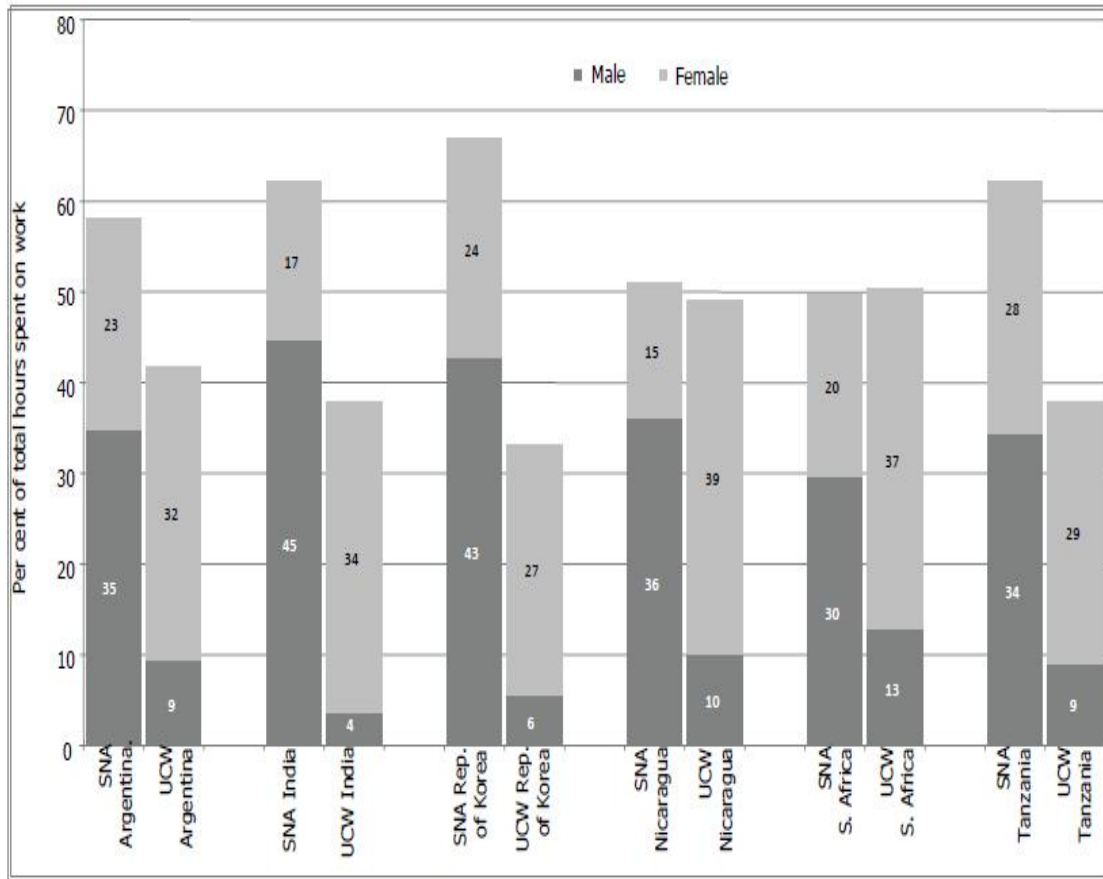


Figure 1: Composition of hours spent on SNA and unpaid care work by sex

Source: D. Budlender: *The statistical evidence on care and non-care work across six countries*, Gender and Development Programme Paper No. 4 (Geneva, UNRISD, 2008),

Time-Use

Time-use in the social sciences is used to derive outcomes like economic welfare, well-being and health. The data collected for various activities like paid work, leisure and physical activity can be multiplied by the time spent on these to arrive at such an analysis. This analysis further provides a method of estimating economic growth, gender equalities and other social factors^{iv}.

A comparison of Time-use data in different countries segregated by gender is given in figure 2

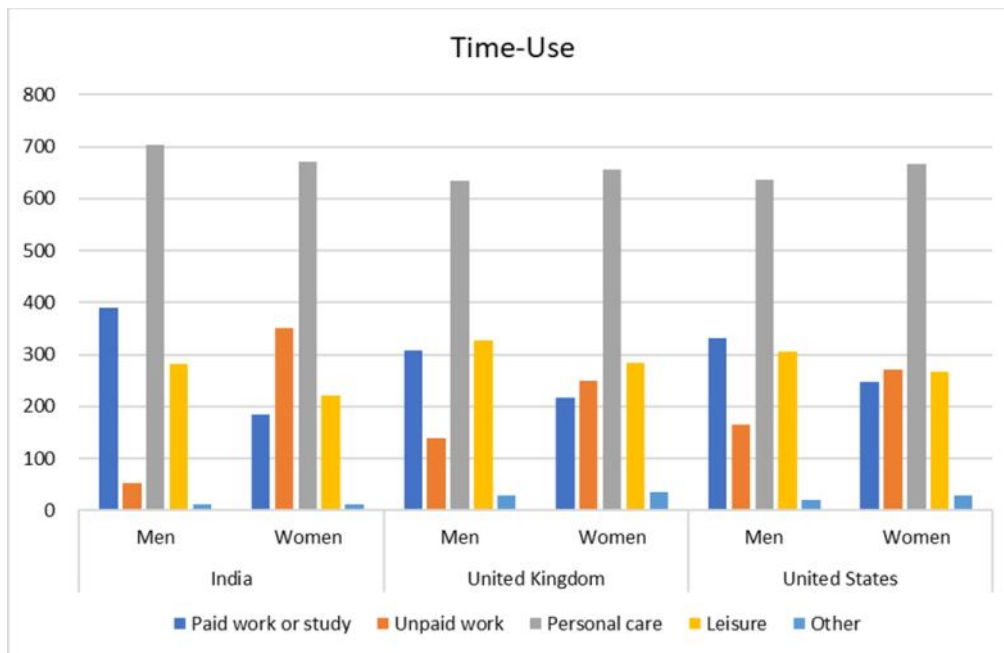


Figure 2: Time-Use in Different Countries by Gender

Source: OECD Stats. Accessed on 25 Dec 2021

Literature Survey

(Jung, 2021) conducted a study in Korea by using data from different time use surveys in 204, 2009 and 2014 to examine the difference in time use through a generation and differences due to gender. The study concluded that women in a dual income family, spent less time on relaxation and social interactions, while spending more time on caregiving and household activities.

(Hertog & Kan, 2021) uses data from the 2006 Japanese survey on time-use with a sample of 23,226 couples. They found that working women devote more time to care giving for older relatives than working men.

(Jonsson et al., 2020) uses data from multinational time use study on 26,815 women and 32,881 men located in multiple countries in Europe and the US. They conclude that women sacrifice significantly higher paid and unpaid working hours to devote time to child care, than men.

(Chandel & Shekhawat, 2019) found that in India, married working women undergo stress and have difficulties in balancing personal and work life.

(Dhanabhakya, 2014) conducted a study of 500 married working women from private and public sectors each from Bangalore in India, and found that there is a positive correlation between professional job roles and stress and conflict between work and family.

(Aye et al., 2016) did a survey of 201 of married secondary school female teachers in Nigeria. They concluded that long working hours and taking office workload at home resulted in stress amongst the respondents causing other stress related issues.

The long working hour culture in certain occupations may result in women quitting work altogether. Even after a short break, it may be difficult for women to continue working without suffering a penalty (Aisenbrey et al., 2009). For instance, in a 2014 poll conducted in the United States, 61 per cent of women said that they were not working because of family responsibilities. Three quarters of homemakers would consider working if they could work flexible hours or from home (Cain Miller and Alderman, 2014).

The literature review suggests that not many studies have been done on married working women in India. This study aims to cover this gap by studying the stress levels of married working women at home in Delhi NCR region.

Objectives of the Study

The following hypotheses is examined in the study

The Stress at Home is dependent on family structure, Paid and Unpaid Working hours, Leisure and Relaxation time, support systems at home and at work and stress related to work.

Methodology

The study is based on a survey of 134 married women in Delhi NCR. The survey is conducted using a structured questionnaire and the responses collected online. Secondary data collected from websites, reports and published material is also used.

Data has been presented through tables and graphs and has been analysed using multiple regression techniques.

As the study is based on a sample of 134 respondents, the results are suggestive. The study uses the data for married women in Delhi NCR and the sample for the study is limited by the geographical and socio-economic factors.

Data Analysis

Charts and tables have been used to analyse and present the data. The data analysis has been grouped in sections on respondents' profile, their time use, respondent's stress at home and data analysis using multiple regression.

Respondents' Profile

The profile of the respondent married women is presented through following charts.

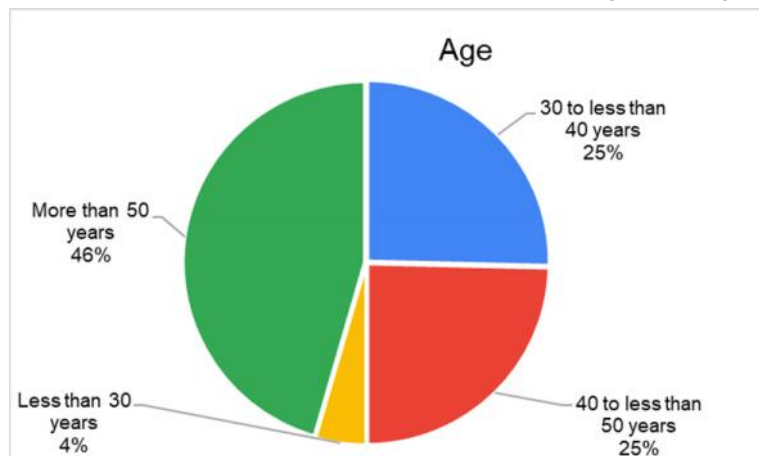


Figure 3: Age of Respondents

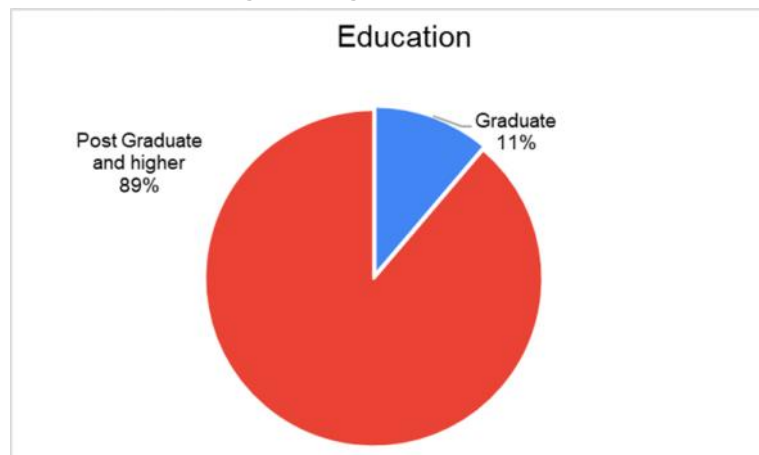


Figure 4: Education Level

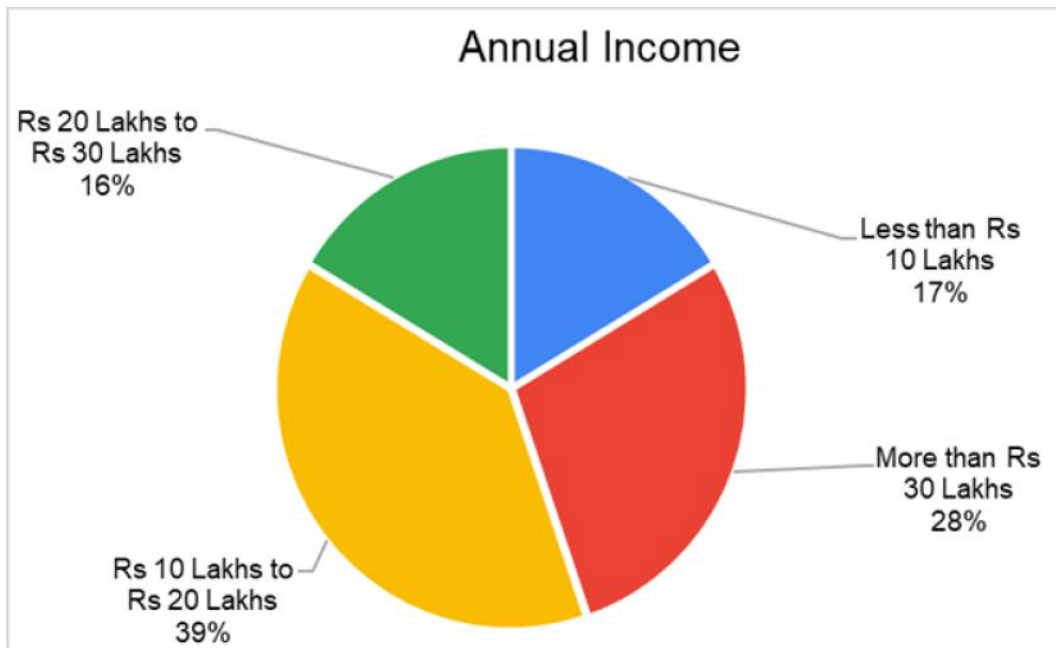


Figure 5: Annual Income

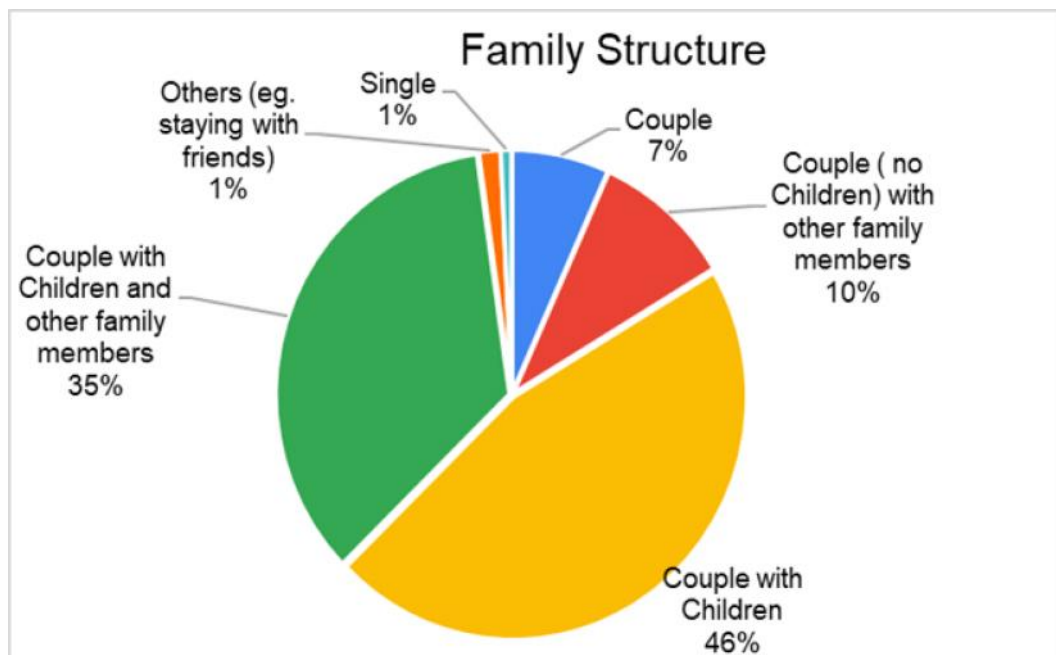


Figure 6: Family Structure

More than 50% of the respondents fall in the age group below 50 years (Fig 3) and most are having postgraduate or higher qualifications (Fig 4). A large number of respondents report an annual income more than Rs 30 lakhs (28%) while those earning less than 10 lakhs are only 17% (Fig 5). Most respondents (46%) live in a nuclear family structure having a couple and children while 45% live in a joint family with other family members (Fig 6).

The data shows that the respondents belong to the middle and upper middle class of the society and the results may be skewed due to this.

Time Use per Day

35% of Women work for more than 8 hours per day and 32 % work for less than 6 hours a day.

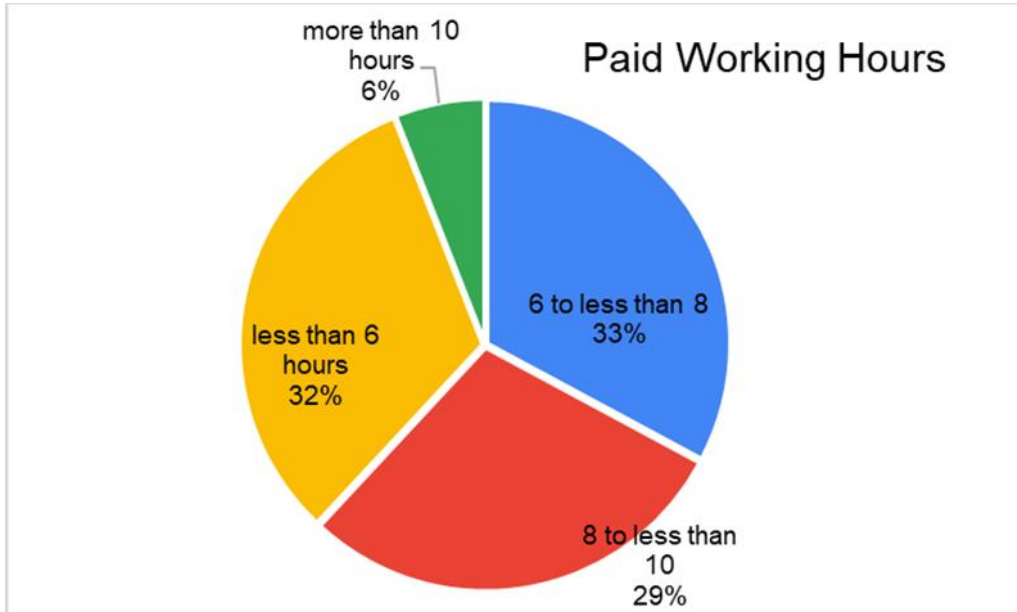


Figure 7: Paid Working Hours

The analysis of time-use data shows that a significant number of hours are spent at home for unpaid work for caregiving and also for work, while at home. The number of hours spent on self for relaxation and leisure is generally less than 2 per day. A significant number of unpaid hours are spent at home for office work (Fig 8).

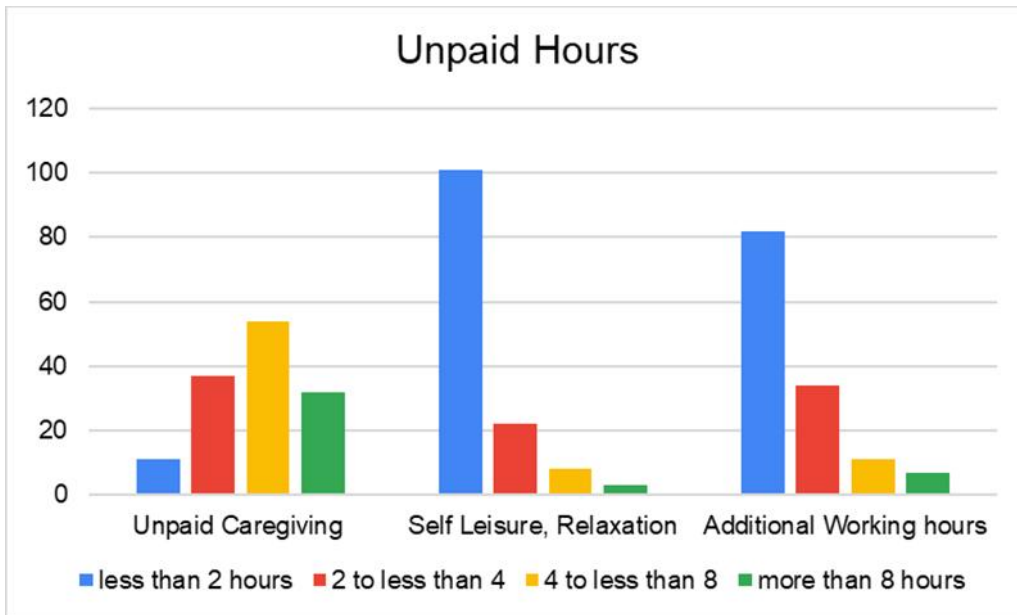


Figure 8: Unpaid Hours

Stress at Home

The study finds that 29% of respondents report being stressed at home, while 14% do not report any stress at all. Almost 40% have reported average stress levels (Fig 9).

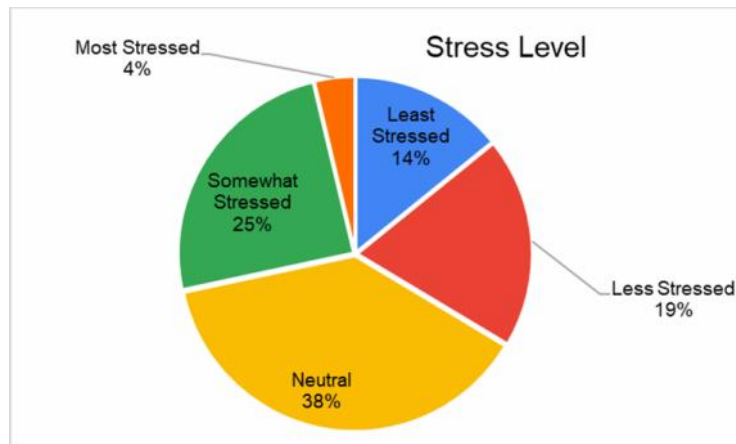


Figure 9: Stress Level

Factors affecting Stress Level at Home

Multiple regression was performed on the responses collected, to study the Factors affecting Stress Level at Home. The factors include family structure, job level, Time use per day and Support system at work and home (Table 1).

Table 1: Factors Affecting Stress Levels at Home and p values

Factors	P-value
Family Structure	0.86
Job Level	0.30
Paid Working Hours	0.98
Unpaid (caregiving) working hours	0.20
Leisure and Relaxation time	0.00
Flexible Working Hours	0.68
Workplace Support System	0.68
Home Support System	0.02
Work based Stress	0.17

The results show that the stress at home is affected majorly by the support system at home and the available leisure and relaxation time as the p values for these are less than the significance level of 5%. Hence the hypotheses that stress at home is affected by Leisure and relaxation time and Home support system is accepted. For other factors the hypotheses is not accepted.

Family structure which defines the composition of family members in terms of elderly and children, is not found to be affecting the home stress levels. This means that presence of suitable home support system and availability of time for relaxation compensates for the extra care giving responsibilities which may be required due to family composition.

The number of paid working hours also do not contribute to the home stress as long as time is available for relaxation and support systems at home are available. Similarly flexible working hours can also be managed with a good support system at home.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The analysis from the present study suggests that the main factors impacting stress at home for married working women are availability of time for relaxation and the support system at home.

The support systems at home including support from family and domestic helps makes up for additional care giving responsibilities and additional working hours, leaving time for the women to relax and rejuvenate. The work-based stress is also overcome and does not contribute to the stress at home as long as sufficient time for relaxation is available.

It indicates that married women who are working are able to manage both work and life well. Even with a stress of modern working life a large number of women are less stressed, indicating that the modern urban family has evolved to support the women as their responsibilities have increased.

As the scope of the study is limited to urban working women, further studies can be done on this topic to explore the effect of socio-economic factors and urban-rural divide on the stress levels at home. As almost 30% of women report high stress, proliferation of online home services portals like Urban clap would go a long way to further support the working women and relieve their stress levels.

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i <http://www.womenatworkpoll.com/>

ii ILO: *Overview of gender-responsive budget initiatives* (Geneva, 2007); and D. Elson: *Genderneutral, gender-blind, or gender-sensitive budgets? Changing the conceptual framework to include women's empowerment and the economy of care*, Gender Budget Initiative – Background papers (London, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999).

iii D. Budlender: *The statistical evidence on care and non-care work across six countries*, Gender and Development Programme Paper No. 4 (Geneva, UNRISD, 2008)

iv <https://www.timeuse.org/about-ctur>

v <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/14/upshot/us-employment-women-not-working.html>

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