

Understanding Stress Causes and Management Among Salaried Professionals in Punjab, India

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1. Introduction

Physical and mental exertions of a human being are necessary for contributing to livelihood of his family. With the advancement, economic race and emerging social problems at various levels have further aggravated to even otherwise increasing stress in life. Level of stress also varies with mental make up, family circumstances, pressures from society, type of profession, working environment etc. Each of these stress-determining parameters is a complex subtotal of variables. Diversity is the law of nature and no two individuals working under similar circumstances have exactly the same set of such variables. Some people are sensitive to small hurdles while others do not and try to evade, escape and even endure such barriers. Those who are less emotional, you will naturally experience less tension, anxiety, and nervousness. Yet, everyone requires relaxation in terms of leisure, sleep, entertainment, amusement etc such that his working efficiency is enhanced.

Stress management also involves managing work loads and communication, taking frequent breaks with quiet environment and avoiding long and late hours work to avoid stress, for extended periods of time. Although it is rather difficult to change habit, but if possible by improving interpersonal relations a big cause of stress goes off and one becomes more acceptable to oneself and others. Meditation has also been realized as having calming

influence on the body, which also reduces an important source of stress. Obviously, meditation has high place of priority as remedial measure of stress management.

Many experts suggest that it is the rhythm of the music or the beat that has the calming effect on us although we may not be very conscious about it. They point out that when we were a baby in our mother's womb, we probably were influenced by the heart beat of our mother. We respond to the soothing music at later stages in life, perhaps associating it with the safe, relaxing, protective environment provided by our mother.

Playing music in the background while we are working, seemingly unaware of the music itself, has been found to reduce the stress. Even the ancient and medieval religious books such as Ramanya, Mahabharta, Quran, Guru Granth Sahib were written in poetry so that the preacher through music be able to express and communicate public in more effective and better way and should have soothing effect on their body.

Some people resort to unhealthy ways of coping with stress such as smoking, too much drinking, overeating or under-eating, viewing TV or computer for hours, taking pills or drugs to relax, too much sleeping, lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence etc. These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but prove damaging in the long run.

The different types of stresses faced by salaried class in Punjab and measures taken by them to minimize it and its impact on time management, working efficiency, health and other factors may be studied with the following objectives;

2. Objectives of study:

- a) To study the time spent and the type of activities performed by respondents with their socio-economic background.
- b) To examine the impact of various stress minimizing processes as a trade-off with economic performance and their impact on health, particularly on psychological aspects- behaviour within and society out of family.
- c) To analyze the impact of stress management on efficiency in terms of working atmosphere in the occupation, particularly interaction with colleagues.

3. Hypotheses of study

- a) Level and type of stresses vary widely with the age, level of education, family structure etc.
- b) Stress management has positive repercussions on health, family atmosphere and work efficiency.
- c) Entertainment as stress management measure is more relevant with younger people.

4. Methodology

This study is carried out by Desh Bhagat Institute of Management and Computer Science and the study will be carried by institute itself. A sample of 94 respondents across disciplines, age groups and other major socio-economic parameters was selected randomly from teachers of Ludhiana and Fatehgarh districts of Punjab. A questionnaire was prepared and finalized after pre-testing. Stress is generally referred to as the personal response that one has towards different daily occurrences and how these responses can make life more challenging. A stress management questionnaire aims to establish how people manage their stress and identify how stress affects their performance in various areas of their lives. The data were compiled and subjected to various statistical tools to arrive at pinpointed inferences. Using various regression models, the level of stress quantified through scoring was regressed against socio-economic parameters as given below;

$$S = f(X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_4 + X_5 + X_6 + \dots + X_n)$$

Where

S = Stress level measures in overall score

X_1 = Age of the respondent in years

X_2 = Level of education measured in years of schooling with technical education allotted higher score.

X_3 = Type of family as dummy variable: nuclear & joint

X_4 = Family size

X_5 = Type of occupation as dummy variable

And so on

4.1 Scoring process

Since the parameters of stress are qualitative, it is essential to quantify them by allocating score of response to each question. The response was obtained in alternatives provided as high, medium, low and no stress. High stress level was rated as 1, medium stress as 0.67 and low as 0.33.

Table 4.1: Process adopted for scoring the stress response

Stress level	Score
High	1.00
Medium	0.67
Low	0.33
No stress	0.00

5. Importance of study

With the commercialization and monetization of human activities including time and economic race, stress on human mind and body is increasing at an alarming rate. This has been creating a number of serious health hazards, social tension and conflicts of various kinds. It is pertinent to mount such a study to highlight the kind of stresses and effectiveness of various measures taken to manage such stresses by the people. This would also highlight suggestions which would be guidelines for others facing similar consequences and policy measures which could have far reaching impact on easing the situation.

6. Results

6.0 Activity-wise Time allocation

Time management is very important aspect of human life. The salaried class has more or less set time table. Various diversified activities performed by every person during the day & night. As depicted in Table 6.0, the average time allocated to occupational job was 7.24 hours

and another 1.78 hours used for studies preparing for class lectures. Sleeping consumed an average of 6.38 hours. The next important activity to which about one-fifth of the time was devoted was multifarious activities within the family. The rest of the time was used for a number of other activities which may be treated as rather relaxing included attending social ceremonies and friends & relatives, listening music, reading newspaper, playing meditation etc.

Table 6.0; Average time allocated to different activities

S. No.	Activity	Time in hours	% of time
1	Occupational work	7.24	30.16
2	With Family	4.48	18.66
3	Sleeping	6.38	26.56
4	Friends/relatives	0.87	3.63
5	Listening music	0.87	3.63
6	Studies	1.78	7.40
7	Reading newspaper	0.62	2.60
8	Playing & relaxing	0.54	2.24
9	Meditation	0.40	1.65
10	Net surfing	0.56	2.32
11	Others	0.28	1.15
	Overall	24.00	100.00

6.1 Causes of Stress

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in life. This is not as easy as it sounds because true sources of stress stem from own stress-inducing thoughts, feelings, and behaviours emerging from habits, attitude, and excuses. Sometimes, until accepting the responsibility for the role played in creating or maintaining it, the stress level will remain beyond control.

The various reasons of stress were broadly categorized into economic, social psychological and others. Relative contribution of each reason is presented in Table 6.1. It was interesting to note that about 41% of stress score was attributed to economic reasons. The social causes

contributed to stress to the extent of 32.5%. Some psychological parameters were responsible for stress to the tune of 20.5%. Yet another 6.2% stress emerged from some other reasons specified by the respondents. This prompted us to further hypothesize that for most of social, psychological and other reasons, economic variables could be the base. In other words, the causes of stress are interwoven. Correlation matrix was thus prepared which is presented in Table 6.2. From this Table it is clear that correlation coefficient between economic and social reasons were highly correlated with correlation coefficient as 0.683. Similarly high and significant correlation was observed between economic and psychological and social and psychological parameters. This indicates that stress minimization to a great extent is possible through economic support.

Table 6.1: Score of main causes of stress

	Economic reasons	Social reasons	Psychological reasons	Others reasons	Overall score
Score	12.09	9.61	6.05	1.85	29.60
% stress attributed	40.83	32.45	20.45	6.25	100.00

Table 6.2: Correlation matrix

	Economic	Social	Psychological	Others
Economic	1.000			
Social	0.683	1.000		
Psychological	0.565	0.659	1.000	
Others	0.406	0.426	0.410	1.000

6.1.1 Economic factors

Though directly the respondents are not in business but the family problems get shared and exert stress even on the service group as well. As evidenced above, most of the stress problems emerge from economic constraints. Various economic parameters which are responsible for such problems are presented in Table 6.1.1. Nearly 13.4% and 11.0% are the contributions of shortage of funds and indebtedness. Long working hours, problems

pertaining to business expansion, administrative problems and too much traveling together accounted for about 37% of stress. Non-availability of raw material and marketing of finished products also pose stress on the respondents.

Table 6.1.1: Economic parameters contributing to stress

Parameters	Score	%
i) Shortage of funds	0.495	13.42
ii) Labour management	0.378	10.87
iii) Marketing of products	0.298	8.51
iv) Non-availability of raw material	0.319	9.46
v) Problems pertaining to business expansion	0.321	9.37
vi) Long working hours	0.440	13.79
vi) Other administrative problems	0.355	10.37
vii) Indebtedness	0.374	11.01
ix) Too much traveling	0.450	13.19
x) Others reasons	0.064	3.37
Overall	3.4929	100.0

6.1.2 Social factors

As presented in Table 6.1.2, family stresses dominated the social causes contributing to the problem to the extent of 16.06% related to health of the respondents and their family members. Stress pertaining to lack of disposable funds to meet the domestic needs at time of requirements accounted for 11.63% of social problems. The shortage of time, financial and other resources required for care of elders exerted another 17.17% of social stress. The education of children is another stressful event realized by the respondents. To be more specific, attention to be paid to the school children with respect to homework, attending to

games, holidaying, school fees etc added to stress of parents by another 13.18%. Dealing with friends, relatives and neighbours also added to worries of the respondents.

Table 6.1.2: Social parameters contributing to stress

Parameters	Score	%
i) Tension with neighbours	0.291	10.41
ii) Problems with relatives	0.342	11.74
iii) Dealings with friends	0.342	12.02
iv) Family stresses: about health	0.484	16.06
v) Family stresses: lack of disposable funds	0.332	11.63
vi) Family stresses: about care of elders	0.496	17.17
vii) Family stresses: education of children	0.371	13.18
viii) Other disputes	0.199	7.81
Overall	2.8564	100.0

6.1.3 Psychological factors

Psychology of a person has its outcome from a large variety of environmental factors surrounding him/her. The urge of dominance in terms of money and assets, beauty and physical strength and rating and power in the society are some major factors structuring the mental make up. This has again a high association with economic and social parameters as well apart from other factors. The unpleasant behaviour faced while acting and interacting with the society has dominance over the stress causing psychological factors (Table 6.1.3). Being fed up from certain health problem, psychological balance was also jolted. Dissatisfaction from living conditions, sense of negativism, criticism and jealousy of various types are the other psychological factors bothering the respondents.

Table 6.1.3: Psychological parameters contributing to stress

Parameters	Score	%
i) Criticism/ jealousy	0.275	16.25
ii) Sense of negativism	0.335	18.89
iii) Fed up from certain health problem	0.381	20.82
iv) Unpleasant behaviour of others	0.433	24.16
v) Dissatisfaction from living conditions	0.326	18.89
vi) Other psychological reasons	0.000	0.97
Overall	1.7500	100.0

6.1.4 Other contributing factors

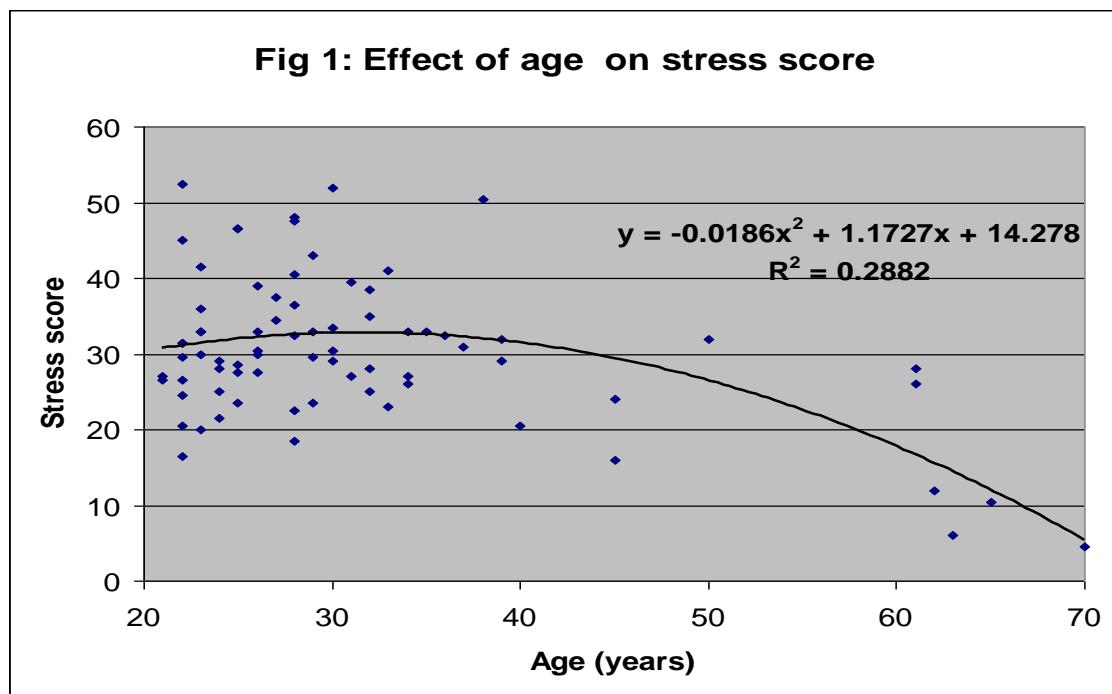
It may be viewed from Table 6 that apart from the above mentioned reasons, some other reasons such as natural calamities beyond the control and market vibrations making the family budget and business relations highly volatile escalated the stress on the respondents.

Table 6.1.4: Other parameters contributing to stress

Parameters	Score	%
i) Natural calamities	0.270	50.86
ii) Market vibrations	0.248	47.99
iii) Others	0.004	1.15
Overall	0.5213	100.0

6.2 Results of Regression analysis

The effect of sex, education, family size, age and other variables on stress score was examined with the help of regression analysis. Various types of regression models were tried but almost all variables except age of the respondent were found to be non-significant. Further analysis revealed that quadratic form of function with effect of age on stress score was best fit (Fig 1).



The equation came out to be:

$$y = -0.0186x^2 + 1.1727x + 14.278 \quad (R^2 = 0.2882)$$

This showed that up to certain level of increase in age, the stress goes on increasing and then declines at a fast rate as the person matures, possibly because of more rationality in thinking and tackling the situation. The first derivative of the above equation equated to zero worked out to 32 years as the age of maximum stress after which starts diminishing.

7. Consequences of stresses

It is but natural that various types of ill-effects on normal life as a consequence of these stresses are common. The respondents observed direct impact on health, decision making and behavioral aspects. Tension, pain, headache and exhaustiveness accounted for about 40% of overall score (Table 7.1). Frustration and getting frequently irritated and angry were some other serious fallouts of stress. These effects had multiplier effects because it affected the hasty and wrong decisions within family, with business and others in the social set up and also tell upon the decisions of other family members.

Table 7.1: Consequences of stresses realized by the respondents

Type of problem faced	Score	Per cent of overall score
Tension/ pain	0.23	21.90
Headache/ Exhaust	0.19	18.10
Frustration	0.31	29.52
Irritated/ angry	0.30	28.57
Family decisions	0.02	1.90
Business decisions	0.00	0.00

8. Evading, escaping and enduring stresses

It may seem that there is nothing you can do about your stress level. But you have a lot more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you are in control of your life is the foundation of stress management. Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun plus the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges (1).

Human being is not a machine and needs relaxation and leisure as well. Through various measures, stress is minimized. As expected, multiple responses were provided by the respondents. The compiled information in terms of relief experienced out of various measures is shown in Table 8.1. The following are measures specified to be adopted by the respondents.

- i) **Leisure:** Every one has to trade off between work and leisure depending upon capacity and circumstances. Mostly the respondents felt relaxation within family followed by relaxation with friends and keeping alone.
- ii) **Talking to friends & family:** It was considered an important method to divert the attention for relaxing mind. Without speaking out one's mind and sharing with sincere friends and family members, building up of pressure may at a time lead to explosive situation.

- iii) **Meditation** as a means for mind diversion also scored 31.96 though actual time devoted for this purpose was small.
- iv) **Reading:** Resorting to studying technical material could also help to tide over the problem and reading magazines, newspapers etc changed the direction of thinking for a while.
- v) **Yogic exercises:** The recent trend for relaxing the muscles and mind, some yogic exercises provided on TV and by fellow persons, typically by Baba Ramdev has set in. Some persons reported it as an effective measure to minimize stress.
- vi) **Music:** Listening to music, singing along and playing music also provided relief to many respondents, thus scoring 35.43, 15.69 and 14.04 respectively.
- vii) **Medicines:** Yet a few respondents seek cure from this problem by taking medicines for mind rest.
- viii) **Walking:** A combination of physical exercise and mind relaxant walking with friends, with family members and even alone obtained a score of 5.32, 38.33 and 25.37 respectively.
- ix) **Playing:** Depending upon the physique, interest of the respondents and circumstances, playing cards, playing with children and playing other games such as badminton, chess, table tennis, football etc were also followed.
- x) **Domestic work:** Particularly female respondents preferred household chores such as caring for children and elders, cooking, cleaning, house decoration etc to pass their time and get their mind away from stressful thinking of their problems.
- xi) **Gardening:** Quite a number of respondents, mostly male, got enjoyment to counter stress by gardening viz. planting, irrigating, training and weeding seasonal flower and decoration plants, shrubs and even fruit plants and vegetables. It not only relieved them of stress but also improved the house environment apart from adding aesthetic value.

Table 8.1: Measures to minimize stresses

Method	Relative score (Per cent relief)
Relaxing in leisure time: alone	32.54
Relaxing in leisure time: With family	46.89
Relaxing in leisure time: With friends	33.76
Talking to friends/ family	45.30
Meditation	31.96
Studies	26.71
Reading newspaper	20.61
Yogic exercises	17.66
Listening music	35.43
Singing	15.69
Playing music	14.04
By taking Medicines	8.38
Walking: Alone	25.37
Walking: With family members	38.33
Walking: With friends	50.32
Playing cards/ games	26.89
Playing with children	43.03
Playing other game	25.85
Domestic work	36.18
Gardening	28.18
Others	1.30

8.1 More about music as a stress reliever

Amongst numerous ways of stress management, listening, singing and playing music plays a prominent role. Music can affect the body in many health-promoting ways. Music can be one of the most soothing or nerve wracking and an increase in deep breathing measures. However, one can use music in the daily life and achieve many stress relief benefits for oneself and for the family and society. One of the great benefits of music as a stress reliever is that it can be used while conducting regular activities so that it really does not take time away from the busy schedule. Music provides a wonderful backdrop for the life through

finding increased enjoyment from what he is doing and also reduces stress from day's labour. Music is believed to reduce heart rates and to promote higher body temperature - an indication of the onset of relaxation. Combining music with relaxation therapy has also been rated to be the more effective than doing relaxation therapy alone.

It got fascinating for the researchers to highlight the details of the specific type of music, time of music and even ill-effects of music apart from relief it provided.

It is attention-grabbing to note that light music had less attraction as compared to serious songs, instrumental music, religious songs and other types of songs which attained almost equal score in the survey. The respondents were adults and mature enough to prefer less of light music. The most appropriate time for listening music was while relaxing at leisure. There is change of situation as moved from listening songs on radio to from TV. Only audios on radio was used during even working hours, while taking meals and doing household chores but now visuals on TV do not allow perform even light work alongside. Some ill-effects of listening to songs on health of the respondents and their family members apart from loss of work were also specified.

Table 8.2: Stress management through music

Preference for the music type	Average score	Per cent of overall score
a. Light music	1.26	12.44
b. Serious songs	2.32	22.90
c. Instrumental music	2.23	22.01
d. Religious songs	2.03	20.04
e. Others	2.29	22.61
Suitable time for listening music		
a. Working hours	0.04	3.45
b. While taking meals	0.17	14.66
c. While relaxing at leisure	0.73	62.93
d. Other time	0.22	18.97
Ill-effects of music		
a. Health	0.13	34.21

b. Your family	0.11	28.95
c. Others	0.14	36.84

9. Summary

Labour and management are most important factors of any production activity which involve human factor and gets subjected to physical and mental exertions. The stress on human mind has a number of consequences and is minimized through various measures. This paper was therefore an attempt to highlight such factors in case of salaried class under Punjab conditions. A sample of 94 respondents picked from teaching institutions was taken and a questionnaire prepared for this purpose was administered for meeting this objective. It was brought out that various economic, social and psychological reasons are together responsible for the stress. Social and psychological reasons are highly associated with the economic factors. Age is an important parameter negatively correlated with stress. The economic race with the generation almost at 30 is much higher than other age groups. The measures adopted to minimize the stress included leisure, talking to friends & family, meditation, reading, yogic exercises, music, medicines, walking, playing, domestic work and gardening. It was interesting to note that the respondents had preference for specific types of music at leisure time and even reported some ill-effects of music apart from relief it provided.

REFERENCES

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