

## **Impact of Spiritual Well-being on the Stress of Working Mothers**

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** The drastic changes in the working environment as a result of industrialization, urbanization and globalization along with marriage and child rearing have stocked up immense pressure on working mothers, especially Indian women. The Indian society is passing through a transitional stage of conflicting traditional and modern value systems. Multiple roles, that are expected to be fulfilled, leave a working mother stressed and anxious, more so if the family is not supportive. Thus, physically they are overburdened with work and psychologically they feel guilty of ignoring their families. Spiritual Well-being is an efficient tool to enhance the search for a purpose of life by expanding one's own support network which equips him/her to lead a healthier life by finding a context to life which has been distorted or lost due to continuous stress. Since, there are no studies exploring the relation between stress and spiritual well-being among the working mothers, I have selected this study to learn the impact of spiritual well-being on the stress of working mothers.

**Materials and Methods:** The study has adopted a quantitative, correlational design. The study has a sample size of 100 working mothers of 25-45 years of age in Ernakulam, Kerala. The tools used for the study are Stress Questionnaire developed by ISMA (International Stress Management Association, UK) and Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS). The personal data sheet included socio-demographic details such as age, working hours per week, number of children, number of dependents, type of job and whether they are being helped in parenting and other household chores. The correlation between stress and spiritual well-being was calculated, compared and studied.

**Result:** Statistical analysis with Karl Pearson's Formula proved a negative correlation ( $r = - 0.17$ ) between the scores of Stress & Spiritual Well-being of the working mothers.

**Conclusion:** The study revealed a significant decrease in stress with an increase of spiritual well-being of working mothers implying that spiritual well-being can be a key coping resource to deal with stress.

**Keywords:** Stress, Spiritual Well-being, Working Mothers

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

No human being remains immune to stress which is often aggrandized due to life's complex demands. Liberal educational and employment resources have attracted a wide population of women to work outside their homes. The elevation in the number of mothers in the workforce has been widely documented.<sup>1</sup> This often causes imbalance in time budgeting, conflicts within self, adverse self-evaluation, failure in maintaining satisfactory family relationships and problem in re-allocating household tasks and sharing in childcare.<sup>2</sup> The emotional and behavioral spillover affects all domains of life. Work-Family Conflict (WFC) occurs when role demands from work and family are mutually incompatible, such that meeting role expectations in one domain makes it difficult to meet the role expectations in the other domain. WFC can thus be understood as inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect.<sup>3</sup> Spiritual well-being which has been conceptualized as "the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness"<sup>4</sup>, can be used as an efficient coping tool. It is the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness.<sup>5</sup> It is achieved through a dynamic and integrative growth process which leads to total realization of the ultimate purpose and meaning of life." A person who experiences spiritual well-being has the potential and resources to become a fully capacitated individual. Having meaning and purpose in life, a sense of belonging to a sublime source, having faith in God's help in stressful situations, and benefiting from spiritual supports help to deal with stressful life events, suffering, loss and pain.<sup>6</sup> The current study aims to investigate the impact of spiritual well-being on the stress of working mothers in Ernakulam, Kerala (India).

## II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

**Study Design:** Quantitative study, which uses the correlational design.

**Study Location:** The locale of the study is Ernakulam district in Kerala (India).

**Study Duration:** December, 2019.

**Sample Size:** 100 working mothers.

**Sampling Procedure:** Based on the researcher's limitation and accessibility, convenient sampling, a type of non-probability sampling technique was adopted in the study. In the first stage, a list of churches in Ernakulam district was prepared. Two churches were selected on the accessibility and convenience of the researcher in Ernakulam district. By using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 100 participants were selected from these churches for the study.

**Tools of Data Collection:** Personal Data Sheet consisting of socio-demographic variables such as age, working hours per week, number of children and the number of dependents; ISMA (International Stress Management Stress Association) Stress Questionnaire; Spiritual Well-Being Scale.

### **Inclusion Criteria:**

1. Subjects within the age group of 25-45 years.
2. Subjects who are living with one or more children and their spouse.
3. Subjects who are working in the geographical limits of Ernakulam district.

### **Exclusion Criteria:**

1. Subjects who are older than 45 years of age.
2. Subjects who are single parent or are away from husbands/family.
3. Subjects who are unemployed or are homemakers.

### **Procedure Methodology**

Ethical consideration was fulfilled by obtaining informed consent from the working mothers prior to data collection and confidentiality was assured to them. At first, a self-introduction of the researcher followed by the presentation of the study purpose to the working mothers was given and a good interpersonal relation was developed. Survey was conducted using self-reported questionnaire. The respondents filled the questionnaire in the prescribed order. Each participant took about half an hour to fill the questionnaire. After the data collection, each variable was coded numerically, according to the scoring procedure for the statistical analysis.

### **Scoring Procedure**

For ISMA Stress Questionnaire, a score of 1 was given for each YES and a score of 0 was given for each NO. All the 25 items were positively stated; therefore higher the score showed higher stress and lower the score showed lower stress among the working mothers.

For the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, a score of 5 was given for 'strongly agree', 4 for 'agree', 3 for 'not sure', 2 for 'disagree' and 1 for 'strongly disagree'. The reverse scoring was followed for the positively stated items. There were four negatively stated items out of 25, for which direct scoring was done. Thus, it was such that higher the score, higher was the spiritual well-being and lower the score lower was the spiritual well-being.

### **Statistical Analysis**

After the coding, the appropriate statistical tests were implemented.

- Baseline data containing sample characteristics would be analyzed using frequency and percentage.
- Chi-Square test was used to find the association between the level of stress and socio-demographic variables.
- Co-relation between the level of stress and level of spiritual well-being was calculated using Karl Pearson's co-relational formula ( $r$ ). Among the two variables, one is dependent (stress) and the other is independent variable (spiritual well-being). In this study, Karl Pearson's co-relation co-efficient was employed for the analysis of impact of spiritual well-being on the stress of working mothers.

## III. RESULT

The association of level of stress with socio-demographic variables was investigated by using Chi-Square test. Table No. 1 shows that among 100 samples, 15 were between the age of 25-30 years, 41 were between the age of 31-35 years, 22 were between the age of 35-40 years and 22 were between the age of 41-45 years.

**Table No. 1:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Samples According to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25-30 Years	15	15%
31-35 Years	41	41%
36-40 Years	22	22%
41-45 Years	22	22%

Table No. 2 shows that among 100 samples, 41 of samples had less than or equal to 40 working hours per week, 47 had 41-50 working hours per week and 12 had above 50 working hours per week.

**Table No. 2:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Samples According to Working Hours per Week

Working Hours per Week	Frequency	Percentage
≥ 40 Hours	41	41%
41-50 Hours	47	47%
Above 50 Hours	12	12%

Table No. 3 shows that among 100 samples, 49% had one child, 46% had two children and 5% had 3 children.

**Table No. 3:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Samples According to Number of Children

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage
1	49	49%
2	46	46%
3	5	5%

Table No. 4 shows that among 100 samples, 32% had 0-2 dependents, 57% had 2-4 dependents, 8% had 4-6 dependents and 3% had 6-8 dependents.

**Table No. 4:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Samples According to Number of Dependents

Number of Dependents	Frequency	Percentage
0-2	32	32%
2-4	57	57%
4-6	8	8%
6-8	3	3%

Table No. 5 shows that among 100 samples, 65% worked in private sector, 27% were government employees and 8% were self-employed.

**Table No. 5:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Samples According to Type of Job

Type of Job	Frequency	Percentage
Private	65	65%
Government	27	27%
Self-Employed	8	8%

Table No. 6 shows that among 100 samples, 25% were being helped by their spouse, 8% were helped by their in-laws, 13% were helped by parents, 13% were helped by their maid, 20% were helped by both spouse and maid, 9% were helped by both spouse and in-laws, 3% were helped by in-laws and maid and 9% did the parenting and household chores by themselves.

**Table No. 6:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Samples According to Being Helped in Parenting and other Household Chores

Being Helped in Parenting and other Household Chores	Frequency	Percentage
Spouse	25	25%
In-laws	8	8%
Parents	13	13%
Maid	13	13%
Spouse and Maid	20	20%
Spouse and In-laws	9	9%

In-laws and Maid	3	3%
None of the Above	9	9%

Table No. 7 shows that among 100 samples, 4% were less prone to stress, 46% more prone to stress and 50% were most prone to stress.

**Table No. 7:** Frequency and Percentage of Level of Stress of Working Mothers

Level of Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Less prone to Stress	4	4%
More prone to Stress	46	46%
Most prone to Stress	50	50%

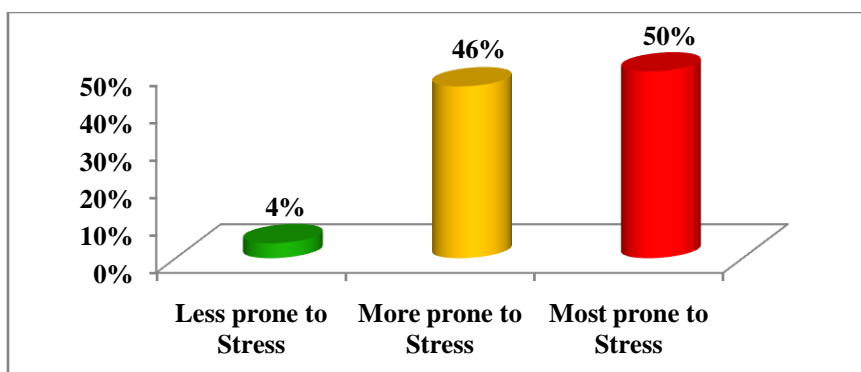


Table No. 8 shows that among 100 samples, 5% scored between 75-85, 25% scored between 85-95, 34% scored between 95-105, 29% scored between 105-115 and 7% scored between 115-125 on the spiritual well-being scale.

**Table No. 8:** Frequency and Percentage of Score of Spiritual Well-being of Working Mothers

Score of Spiritual Well-Being	Frequency	Percentage
75-85	5	5%
85-95	25	25%
95-105	34	34%
105-115	29	29%
115-125	7	7%

(Note: Class interval in Score of Spiritual Well-being mentioned in the above table is made according to the lowest and the highest score of working mothers obtained on the Spiritual Well-Being Scale)

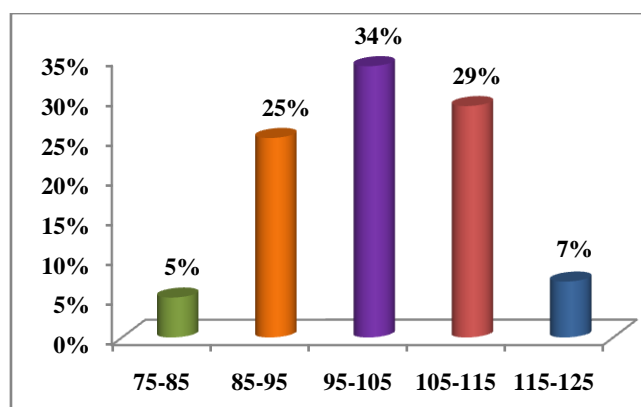


Table No. 9 shows a significant inverse relation between Stress score & Spiritual Well-being score of working mothers. Statistical analysis with Karl Pearson's Formula proved a negative correlation ( $r = -0.17$ ) between the scores of Stress & Spiritual Well-being. The test reveals a significant decrease in stress with an increase of spiritual well-being of working mothers. It implies that higher the level of spiritual well-being, lower the level of stress among working mothers.

**Table No. 9:** Mean Score, SD and 'r' Value of Stress Score and Spiritual Well-Being Score

Variables	Mean score	SD	Correlation	Inference
Stress	12.74	4.91	-0.17	Negative correlation
Spiritual Well-being	100.27	9.98		

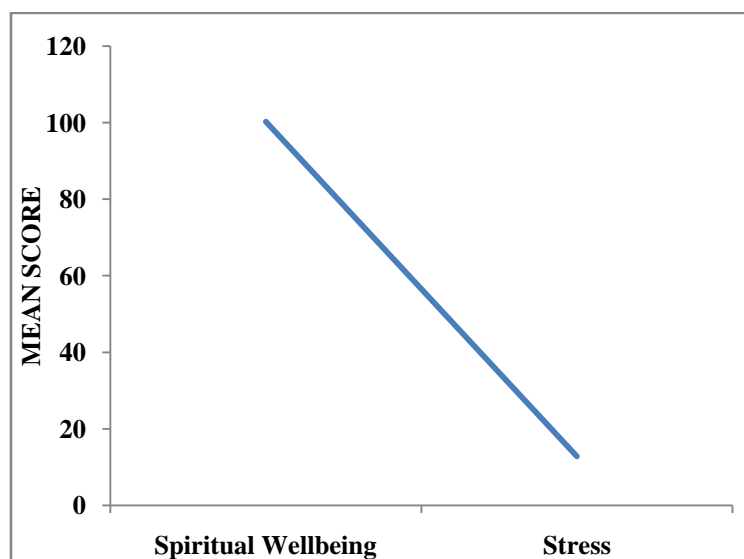


Table No. 10 shows the analysis of association between stress score and socio-demographic variables. The study findings suggest that number of dependants were found to have significant association with stress level in the study subjects ( $p \leq 0.05$  level). A study by Mazie Earle Wagner, Herman J.P. and Daniel S.P. Schubert also affirm that working mothers of large family size are at higher risk of several physical and psychological diseases.<sup>7</sup> The results confirmed that more family members may contribute higher level of stress for working mothers. There was no significant association found between other socio-demographic variables and stress score. The probable reasons for this could be small sample size and the vulnerability to selection bias and influences beyond the control of the researcher embedded in convenient sampling.

**Table No. 10:** Association of Level of Stress with Selected Socio-Demographic Variables

S. No.	Variables	Least prone to stress	More prone to stress	Most prone to stress	df	$\chi^2$
1.	<b>Age</b>				6	4.71
	(a) 25-30 years	0	8	7		
	(b) 31-35 years	3	16	22		
	(c) 36-40 years	1	9	12		
2.	<b>Working Hours per Week</b>				4	0.63
	(a) $\geq 40$ Hours	2	18	21		
	(b) 41-50 Hours	2	22	23		
	(c) Above 50 Hours	0	6	6		
3.	<b>Number of children</b>				4	0.4
	(a) 1	2	22	25		
	(b) 2	2	22	22		
4.	<b>Number of Dependents</b>				6	17.53 S
	(a) 0-2	4	15	13		
	(b) 2-4	0	30	27		
	(c) 4-6	0	0	8		
	(d) 6-8	0	1	2		

5.	<b>Type of Job</b>					
	(a) Private	2	34	29		
	(b) Government	2	9	16	4	3.91
	(c) Self-Employed	0	16	5		
6.	<b>Being helped in parenting and other household chores</b>		14			
	(a) Spouse	0	4	11		
	(b) In-Laws	0	4	4		
	(c) Parents	2	6	7		
	(d) Maid	0	10	7	14	14.55
	(e) Spouse and Maid	1	6	9		
	(f) Spouse and In-Laws	0	1	3		
	(g) In-Laws and Maid	0	1	2		
	(h) None of the above	1		7		

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Health is not merely the absence of disease but a positive state of physical, mental, emotional and social well-being.<sup>8</sup> Stress is among the leading causes of physical and emotional health decline in the realm of motherhood, and yet they continue to pour themselves into everything they do like unintentional martyrs, just because it is expected of them. A majority of the working mothers in the rush of fulfilling expected responsibilities and accomplishing multiple tasks are on the verge of losing their mental sanctity. Cooper and Marshall identify home-work interface as a major source of stress along with role in the organization, intrinsic to the job, relationships at work, career development, organizational structure and climate.<sup>9</sup>

In this study, stress was being checked upon its correlation with spiritual well-being. The study found a negative correlation ( $r = -0.17$ ) between the level of stress and spiritual well-being of the working mothers implying that with an increase of spiritual well-being there will be a significant decrease in their stress.

Spirituality generates optimism, improves interpersonal relationships, creates support systems and enhances the quality of life. It provides a sense of purpose, and allows people to connect to something greater than them, and to release control.<sup>10</sup> Spirituality and religion can function at the level of situational meaning, or the meaning that evolves within the circumstances of a specific person-environment transaction.<sup>11</sup> It enhances meaning-making in relation to attitudes and beliefs about the world, self, and others. A spiritual process of meaning-making (or seeking significance in an event) can touch on all aspects of life, including work, interpersonal relationships, general philosophy of living, attitudes, and/or whatever that person's "God" may be.<sup>12</sup> Barbarin also suggested that, in stressful situations, spirituality enhances resilience and optimism.<sup>13</sup> Stoll has identified both vertical and horizontal components of spirituality. The vertical component involves an individual's relationship with a higher power (experiencing Divinity or Godliness) while the horizontal component is one's relationship with self, others and environment all of which could be collectively referred to as humanistic values and beliefs.<sup>14</sup> Thus, spirituality can be seen as a sense of meaning or purpose that one derives from a transcendent source<sup>15</sup> and also through the relationship one builds with self, nature and others in the society.

Individuals with high and low spiritual well-being portray substantially different personality profiles. G. Venkata Ramaiah also found that the high spiritual well-being group scored lower on neuroticism and higher on extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness than the low spiritual well-being group. Paloutzian and Ellison reported that spiritual well-being is positively related with the purpose of life, intrinsic religious commitment and self-esteem, while negatively related to individualism, individual freedom and loneliness. These results show that individuals with high spiritual well-being tend to portray more positive personalities in comparison with low spiritual well-being individuals.<sup>16</sup> A study conducted by Faiza Amjad and Dr. Iram Zehra Bokhary on "The Impact of Spiritual Well-being and Coping Strategies on Patients with Generalized Anxiety Disorder" that individuals with greater spiritual well-being were better able to cope with their anxieties by revealing that spiritual well-being has a direct and negative effect on the severity of symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). Ingersoll proposed that the spiritual dimension of meaning is expressed in the form of a sense of having a life worth living, a purposeful life, and of being at peace.<sup>17</sup> Spiritual well-being enhances the way of dealing ambiguities and uncertainties of life.

The stress of a working mother is often taken for granted by herself, her family and society because of the persisting conventional expectations hovering around the stereotypical figure of a mother. Developing healthy communication patterns within the family, reducing the significant gender gap in how mothers and fathers describe their household's distribution, spiritual resources such as meditation, prayer, liturgy etc. can act

as remedial measures. Eco-therapy, which includes adventure therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT), care farming, environmental conservation, green exercise therapy, nature arts and crafts, Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH), wilderness therapy etc. help one feel more grounded, provide an alternative perspective on life and help the mind and body to relax by reducing depression, anger, feelings of anxiety and stress and refresh one's mood, re-energize self-esteem and increase emotional resilience.<sup>18</sup> Spiritual well-being can thus, be used as an effective tool to extract meaning from difficult situations which enhances the coping ability of the working mother. Thus, if steps are taken to enhance the spiritual well-being of the working mother who seems to be the most vulnerable to stress, she would be better equipped to understand her roles, situations and its demands, enabling her to address them in a meaningful and efficient manner.

## V. CONCLUSION

The growing intricacies of life have added to the complexity and multiplicity of demands to be fulfilled by a mother both at homes as well as at work places. The stress in accomplishing these demands distorts her personality. The study found that stress is negatively correlated with the spiritual well-being of the working mothers. The findings of the study therefore suggests that spiritual well-being can be an effective coping measure for the working mothers helping them to remain connected to self, God, society and nature even amidst stressful life events and translate these situations into meaningful life experiences.

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