

Title : Impact of occupation on stress and anxiety amongst Indian women.

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Introduction:

High prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression in women has been recognized worldwide¹. In India estimated prevalence of common neurotic disorders is 20.7%, reported highest among all psychiatric disorders². The lifetime prevalence rates for any anxiety disorders is higher in women (30.5%) as compared to men (19.2%) (US National comorbidity survey)³. Thus, the present study aims 1) to assess anxiety and stress levels in Indian women and 2) to evaluate the impact of occupation on the prevalence of anxiety and stress.

Methodology:

A cross sectional study was performed from January 2013 to June 2014 on women in Gujarat, India. Total 605 apparently healthy women (aged 18-50 years) from different occupations, i.e. Students (n=194), Homemakers (n=207) and Working women (n=204) were enrolled in the study. Anxiety was evaluated using Spielberg's State and Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)⁴ scale and stress was assessed using International Stress Management Association (ISMA) questionnaire. Serum cortisol concentration was estimated by chemiluminescence immunoassay in a sub sample. Association of occupation with stress and anxiety was analyzed by generalized linear model adjusted with age. As important confounding variables age, BMI and stratification with present employment status were used. Analysis were performed using SPSS version 18.0 Significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results:

Amongst all, 26% women were most prone and 66% were more prone to stress. 35% women showed high anxiety level. Occupation showed significant association with stress and anxiety ($p < 0.05$). Generalized linear model indicated that occupation had a significant effect on anxiety ($p < 0.001$) and stress ($p = 0.01$). Homemakers had 1.2 times higher anxiety and 1.3 times higher stress as compared to the working women. However, BMI did not show significant association ($p > 0.05$) with anxiety and stress in women. Prevalence estimates of anxiety in women from different occupations revealed that 29% students, 40% homemakers and 30% working women had high anxiety levels; there was a trend towards higher anxiety levels in homemakers ($p = 0.06$). Prevalence of stress was also highest in homemakers; 37% of homemakers were most prone to stress followed by students (21%) and working women (19%) ($p < 0.001$). Serum cortisol levels did not differ significantly ($p > 0.05$) in the study population.

Conclusion:

Study reveals increasing rates of stress and anxiety in Indian women. Involvement in different activities outside home would help women achieve better mental health.

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