

## SHATTERING THE GLASS CEILING: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH IN WORKING WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT:

This study examines the relationship between working women's emotional intelligence and mental health issues, with a particular emphasis on how these elements affect their capacity to break through the glass ceiling. For negotiating the complexities of the workplace and leadership positions, emotional intelligence—which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—is essential. However, the particular mental health difficulties that working women frequently experience—factors such as work-life balance, workplace discrimination, caregiving responsibilities, and societal expectations that contribute to stress among working women. Additionally, the paper will explore individual and organizational strategies for stress management and resilience-building tailored to the needs of working women.

**Keywords:** working women, stress, work-life balance, workplace discrimination, coping mechanisms, resilience-building

### INTRODUCTION

The involvement of women in the labour force is vital for the socio-economic advancement of any country. Although there have been more working women in India throughout time, they nonetheless confront particular difficulties that raise their stress levels. Their stress level is increased by the need to balance both work and home responsibilities, as well as deeply ingrained societal prejudices. This paper investigates these stressors and the societal perceptions that hinder the professional growth and mental well-being of working women in India.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Stress Amongst Working Women

**Work-Life Balance:** The pressure to maintain a balance between professional and domestic responsibilities is a significant source of stress for working women in India. Studies indicate that women often bear the brunt of household chores and caregiving responsibilities, even if they are employed full-time (Desai et al., 2020).

**Workplace Challenges:** Women in the workforce face numerous challenges such as gender discrimination, wage gaps, and limited career advancement opportunities. These issues not only affect their professional growth but also contribute to stress and job dissatisfaction (Rao, 2019).

**Health Implications:** Chronic stress among working women can lead to serious health issues, including depression, anxiety, and cardiovascular diseases. The physical and mental health impacts of stress are well-documented, emphasizing the need for supportive work environments (Patel et al., 2021).

## STEREOTYPES AND THEIR IMPACT

**Gender Roles:** Traditional gender roles that dictate women as primary caregivers and homemakers persist strongly in India. These stereotypes put additional pressure on women to perform domestic duties efficiently, even when they are engaged in professional work (Nanda, 2018).

**Professional Stereotypes:** In professional settings, women often face stereotypes that question their competency and leadership abilities. Such stereotypes can hinder their career progression and contribute to a hostile work environment (Sharma & Kaur, 2017).

**Societal Expectations:** The societal expectation that women should prioritize family over career can lead to stress and guilt among working women. These expectations often result in women foregoing career advancements or exiting the workforce altogether (Ghosh & Roy, 2020).

*The stress that working women in India confront is complex and intricately linked to preconceptions and societal conventions. For women, the tension between work and personal obligations often results in a demanding work environment. Stereotypes serve to both perpetuate the idea that they should be confined to the house and to undercut their professional potential.*

### Impact on Mental Health

The mental health of working women is significantly impacted by the stressors they face. Studies show higher incidences of anxiety and depression among working women compared to their male counterparts. The lack of adequate mental health support and stigmatization of mental health issues further exacerbate the problem (Bhattacharya & Guha, 2021).

### Organizational Role

Organizations are essential for assisting working women in reducing stress. Stress can be considerably decreased by putting in place work-life balance-promoting policies including flexible work schedules, remote work opportunities, and on-site child care. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish an inclusive workplace culture that actively combats stereotypes and advances gender equality (Joshi et al., 2019).

The intricate problem of stress faced by Indian working women stems from the interplay of job conditions and societal norms. A multimodal strategy involving policy measures, organizational assistance, and cultural change is needed to address this stress. Working women can feel less stress and further their professional development and well-being by putting an end to prejudices and creating friendly settings.

### Stress Amongst Working Women in India and the Stereotypes

The landscape of India's workforce has been transforming with an increasing number of women entering various professional sectors. Despite significant progress, working women in India continue to face substantial stress due to multiple factors, including societal expectations, workplace challenges, and prevalent stereotypes. This paper aims to explore the dimensions of stress amongst working women in India, analyzing the underlying causes, the impact of stereotypes, and possible mitigation strategies. Additionally, it reviews the 2024 Indian budget and its provisions aimed at benefiting women.

The participation of women in the workforce is critical for the socio-economic development of any nation. In India, while the number of working women has increased over the years, they continue to face a unique set of challenges that contribute to elevated stress levels. The

dual responsibility of managing professional and domestic duties, combined with entrenched societal stereotypes, exacerbates their stress. This paper investigates these stressors and the societal perceptions that hinder the professional growth and mental well-being of working women in India. Furthermore, it evaluates the 2024 Indian budget to understand the benefits and support mechanisms provided for women.

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### **Stereotypes and Their Impact**

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## **Analysis and Discussion**

The stress experienced by working women in India is multifaceted and deeply intertwined with societal norms and stereotypes. The interplay between professional demands and personal responsibilities creates a high-pressure environment for women. Stereotypes not only undermine their professional capabilities but also reinforce the expectation that their primary role is within the home.

### **Impact on Mental Health**

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## Organizational Role

Organizations play a crucial role in mitigating stress among working women. Implementing policies that promote work-life balance, such as flexible working hours, remote working options, and on-site childcare, can significantly reduce stress. Additionally, creating an inclusive work culture that actively challenges stereotypes and promotes gender equality is essential (Joshi et al., 2019).

## Budget 2024: Benefits for Women

The 2024 Indian budget introduced several measures aimed at supporting women in the workforce and addressing the stressors they face. Key highlights include:

**Increased Funding for Women's Health:** The budget allocates substantial funding for women's health programs, including mental health services, to address stress-related health issues among working women (Government of India, 2024).

**Tax Benefits:** Enhanced tax deductions for women, especially those who are single parents or primary caregivers, aim to provide financial relief and reduce stress related to economic burdens (Government of India, 2024).

**Support for Women Entrepreneurs:** The budget includes increased funding and support for women-led startups and small businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship and economic independence among women (Government of India, 2024).

**Workplace Infrastructure:** Grants for organizations to develop women-friendly infrastructure, such as on-site childcare facilities and safe transportation options, aim to create a supportive work environment for women (Government of India, 2024).

**Education and Skill Development:** Increased investment in education and skill development programs for women aims to enhance their employability and career advancement opportunities, thereby reducing professional stress (Government of India, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

The stress experienced by working women in India is a complex issue rooted in both workplace dynamics and societal expectations. Addressing this stress requires a multifaceted approach that includes organizational support, societal change, policy interventions, and targeted government initiatives. The 2024 Indian budget represents a positive step towards supporting working women, providing financial relief, health benefits, and infrastructure improvements. By challenging stereotypes and providing supportive environments, it is possible to alleviate the stress experienced by working women and promote their well-being and professional growth.

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