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(REVIEW ARTICLE)

MENTAL WELL-BEING AMONG WORKING WOMEN: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF WORKPLACE CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Workplace challenges is a significant issue in the work environment that can have negative impacts on the mental health of women in the workforce. Job demands, work–family conflict, lack of career opportunities, gender-related inequities can pose a challenge to sustaining psychological health and professional well-being. This research intents to analyze the link among occupational stress and mental health among working women by doing systematic literature review. The six main themes that are addressed in the review are workload and job demands, job life equilibrium, workplace relationships and social support, job security and career development, gender discrimination and workplace inequality, and work environment and organizational culture. The reviewed literature, overburdened workload, lack of social support, lack of security, discrimination, and negative organizational culture could lead to psychological distress and emotional exhaustion, and therefore to burnout. Supportive leadership, flexible working, equitable career prospects, positive working relationships, and inclusive policies can be factors that support psychological health, in contrast to the above. The review highlights the need to intervene on organizational level and to use individual coping strategies when addressing workplace challenges. It also highlights the need for additional empirical studies in various occupational and organizational setting to grasp the unique experiences of working women. The results could feed into organizational policies and work practices for the reduction of occupational stress and psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction and professional growth of women.

Keywords: Workplace challenges, Psychological Well-Being, Working Women, Work–Life Balance, Organizational Support.

1 INTRODUCTION

Workplace challenges is a significant issue in the modern workplace due to the rise in job demands, shifting working environments, and the ever-rising expectations of performance from employees(Lukan et al., 2022). Occupational stress can occur when an individual's perceived ability or resources in the job environment are not adequate to meet the

demands of the job (Lazarus, 1984). Workplace conditions are a relevant field of occupational health studies, as they are linked to negative psychological consequences, such as emotional exhaustion, psychological distress and burnout (Seidler et al., 2014)(Ryff, 1989). Positive aspects of work include income, purpose, social relations and opportunity for achievement, and negative working conditions can have a detrimental effect on these aspects of well-being (Sonnentag et al., 2023). An understanding of occupational health, therefore, requires attentions to both the stressors found in the workplace, and the resources available to employees to support their psychological health (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Occupational stress can be caused by many factors of the work and life environment (WEL) (Lukan et al., 2022). Factors related to workload, long working hours, less organizational support, job insecurity and limited career prospects are relevant stressors that can impact psychological health of employees (Aronsson et al., 2017). Besides, personal and professional incompatibility because of care responsibilities, and have negative consequences on women's well-being (Cavagnis et al., 2023). The following factors are of special interest here: workload and demands of the job, as they could lead to prolonged psychological stress, if they are too high, too close through time pressure or if there are not enough resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The systematic review and meta-analysis found links between some of the adverse working conditions and burnout symptoms, and that organisations should consider how to tackle these occupational stressors (Aronsson et al., 2017). Likewise, studies on psychosocial working conditions highlight the importance of looking at the work intensity as well as the adequacy of resource for employees and the differences between the jobs (Gynning et al., 2024).

Psychological health can be affected by workplace relationships and organizational support.(Gerhardt et al., 2021) has linked negative interpersonal experiences, such as conflict at work and lack of social support, to poor health and well-being. In addition, gender-specific workplace experiences need to be explored carefully as there is conflicting evidence on whether there are differences in the exposures of occupational stressors between women and men (Fida et al., 2023). To help understand women's experiences at work it is important to consider their work–life balance. (Cavagnis et al., 2023) identified the factors of personal resources, family support and workplace support as relevant factors that might influence working women exposure of professional –family conflict and mental health. Evidence also revealed that workload, staffing shortages and resources availability were relevant workplace stressors in women health care workers (Sriharan et al., 2021).

The individual occupational stressors and employee well-being, this research is spread through various occupations, research methods, and outcome measures(Lukan et al., 2022). Synthesis of findings from reviews of work-environment risks and burnout shows the need to take into account differences in the quality and consistency of the findings. (Aronsson et al., 2017; Lukan et al., 2022). A systematic review can thereby facilitate the structuring of the available data, gather surface data of the stressors that are common in workplaces and clarify the relationship between these stressors and the well-being of working women. Therefore, this review attempts to systematically review the relationship between occupational stress and psychological well-being of working women in the context: workload professional environment and social support, career stability and career development, gender discrimination workplace inequality, and work environment an organizational culture. The review aims to integrate the available evidence on each of these themes, and to draw out themes, gaps in knowledge and implications for organizational practices to support psychological well-being of women.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

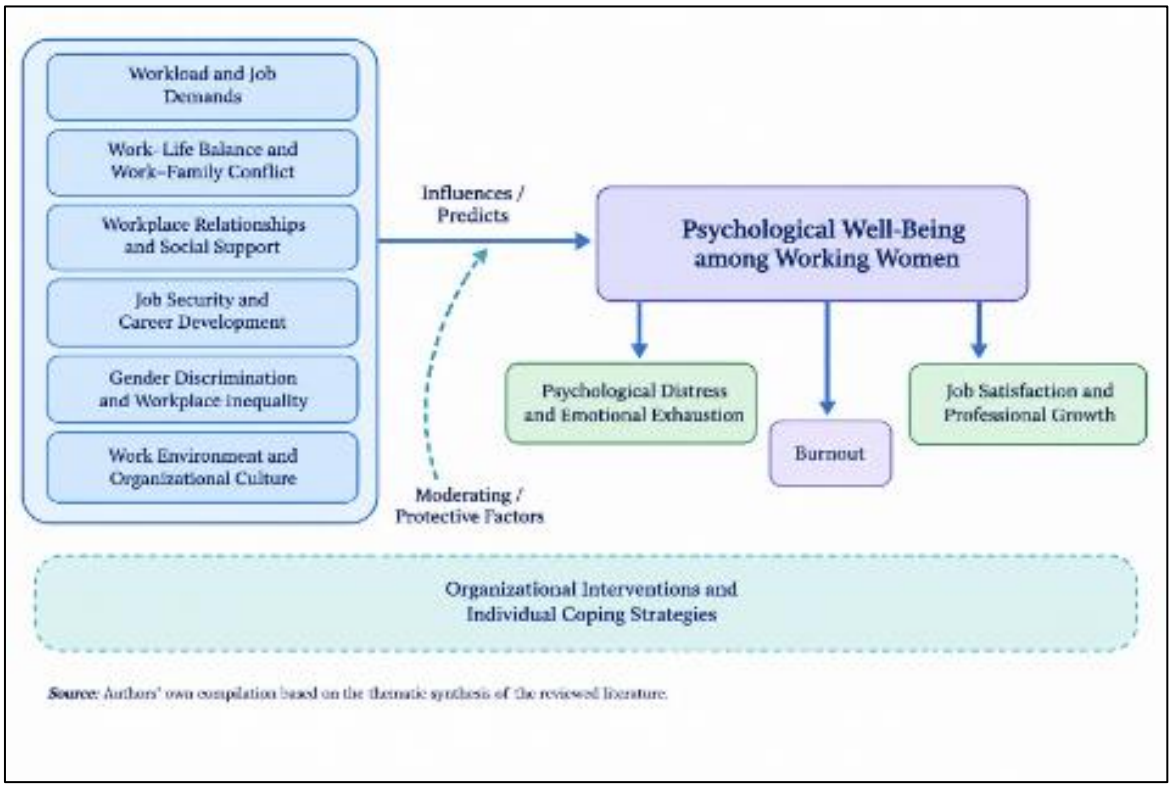


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Workplace Challenges, Psychological Well-Being, and Coping Strategies among Working Women

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study is systematic literature review regarding study on workplace challenges and mental health of working women. Articles published in open access journals are retrieved from Google Scholar and other scholarly databases, selected based on pre-established inclusion/exclusion criteria, and thematically analyzed to provide insight into stressors, well-being outcomes and gaps in the research.

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Workload and Job Demands

One of the factors affecting occupational stress and psychological health of working women is workload and job demands. Overwork, time pressure, long working hours and role overload can be factors that cause psychological strain and burnout (Aronsson et al., 2017; Mauno et al., 2023). Increase in work intensification means employees work harder and faster, which result in low chances for recovery (Mauno et al., 2023)(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Long working hours is an important issue with regard to occupational health and wellbeing as it can impact mental wellbeing and restrict opportunities for rest and recovery. Some psychological demands can lead to burnout, especially when employees do not have sufficient resources in their workplace to handle their duties(Rugulies et al., 2021). The need to take into account job demands as well as available resources is emphasised in the literature by longitudinal evidence (Fagerlind Ståhl et al., 2018). For women healthcare professionals, workload, lack of staff and resources are considered stressors in the workplace that can lead to burnout. The results indicate that it is important to look at organizational conditions when analyzing women's occupational well-being (Sriharan et al., 2021).

Laborers in India can suffer from workload, work–life imbalance, job insecurity and gender-related problems at work. Given the overlapping pressures, it is crucial to explore occupational stress in the context of social and organizational setting (Chandrasekaran et al., 2025). The link between job demands and psychological well-being could vary by job, since job demands, emotional demands, and organizational support vary in different jobs. A multi-professional study in healthcare shows the value of investigating the demands and available resources (Gynning et al., 2024). Women's exposure to specific job stressors also might be different, but it must not be assumed that women have higher workloads in all work circumstances. Gender differences in exposure to workplace stressors should be explored, as suggested by

a systematic review (Fida et al., 2023). Cognitive demands and low control in the job are psychosocial work factors that play a role in mental health of young workers. The results of the younger generations, however, should be used with caution for younger and older working women(Van Veen et al., 2023). In general, workload and job demands are significant factors to be considered in the study of occupational stress and psychological well-being of working women. Future reviews need to separate quantitative workload from emotional load and need to consider the nature of the working hours while reviewing the role overload from the aspects of protection of independence, staffing, and career stability (Aronsson et al., 2017; Sriharan et al., 2021).(Dhanasekaran & Thavaraj, 2024)

4.2 Work–Life Balance and Work–Family Conflict

Personal and professional equilibrium is the capacity working women to balance their work and personal/family duties. These challenges can help increase occupational stress, emotional fatigue, and have a negative impact on one's psychological health, especially if work responsibilities conflict with family roles (Sirgy & Lee, 2018b) . (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) .Working long hours and having high job demands can reduce time for family, rest, and personal activities (Rugulies et al., 2021)(Amstad et al., 2011). Women who work may feel more stress if they are asked to take care of their children, the home, and their families while they are employed. Inequalities in domestic duties can exacerbate work–family conflict and make it difficult to achieve positive psychological health (Allen et al., 2020). Flexible working arrangements may be useful to employees in this regard. The benefits of flexibility, however, will depend on the policies, management support, and if flexibility is available without negative career consequences for employees(Kelly et al., 2014) .

Mentors,organizations that are perceived as supportive can help employees to better handle multiple demands and achieve a healthier work–family balance (Kossek et al., 2011). Another way that work–family conflict can affect psychological health is by causing ongoing stress or by preventing adequate rest (Amstad et al., 2011) .Policies for family-friendly work, such as parental leave and flexible working, can help minimise professional/family life conflicts. However, the effectiveness of these policies will rely on their availability and enactment in the workplace (Kelly et al., 2014). Therefore, work–life balance should be looked at not just as a personal responsibility but as an organizational and social problem. The psychological outcomes of working women may be influenced by a combination of workplace demands, family expectations, gender roles and access to support (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). Overall, balance in work and life and work–family conflict are important aspects. The need to explore the relationship between competing responsibilities, organizational flexibility, supervisory support, and family arrangements, as these factors relate to psychological well-being, and conditions that support women in managing their work and family roles effectively through a systematic review(Amstad et al., 2011; Kossek et al., 2011) .

4.3 Workplace Relationships and Social Support

Workplace relationships and social support are important factors influencing occupational stress and psychological well-being among working women(Gerhardt et al., 2021). Positive interactions with supervisors and peers can offer emotional, practical and informational support, while negative interpersonal interactions and lack of support can lead to stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Positive relationships with supervisors can help employees challenging responsibilities and occupational condition. Additionally, supervisor support can plays an important role in positive organizational climate by enhancing communication, trust, and perceived organizational caring (Kossek et al., 2011). Another key resource in managing occupational demands is through coworker support. Support from colleagues, who share duties and tasks, provide assistance and encouragement, can help employees to deal with stressful situations and lower the sense of work isolation (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). By contrast, psychological stress and diminished job satisfaction can result from conflict in the workplace, poor communication and interpersonal relationships. Negative relations with co-workers can lead to a negative workplace climate where employees find it more challenging to carry out their work duties effectively (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). Social support can also be a buffer against negative impacts of stress. (Cohen & Wills, 1985) developed the stress-buffering hypothesis, which suggests that social support acts as an emotion- and resource-attributing buffer to alleviate the harmful effects of stressful experiences. (B.Pathinettampadiyan & Dr. H. Samuel Thavaraj, 2025)

Organizational support is especially important in the case of working women with conflicting demands on their professional and family activities. Flexibility and support from supervisors and policies can help employees gain access to flexibility and support which can decrease personal professional challenges and increase mental health (Kossek et al., 2011). Employee relationships within the workplace can also have an effect on employees' emotions and involvement. When positive relationships are maintained, it can help to create a sense of belongingness and trust; however, when interpersonal issues last for a prolonged period, it can lead to emotional exhaustion and detachment from work (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Interpersonal mistreatment and workplace bullying are more extreme examples of negative relationships in the workplace. It has been suggested that negative psychological consequences are linked to workplace bullying, thus making it important to have organisational policies in place to prevent it and adequate complaints mechanisms (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). In a workplace context in which gender barriers are present, access to support from like-minded professionals and equitable managerial treatment could be especially

significant for working women(Fida et al., 2023). The impact social support as this can differ across occupations and organizational contexts (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). workplace relationships and social support are important dimensions in understanding occupational stress and psychological well-being among working women. To determine how workplace relationships can bring about stress or help employees maintain their psychological health, a systematic review should differentiate between supervisor support, coworker support, organizational support, and negative interpersonal experiences (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Gerhardt et al., 2021; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012).

4.4 Job Security and Career Development

Among working women, job security and career development are important factors that affect their occupational stress and psychological well-being. Job insecurity is defined as workers' apprehension about maintaining their job, and career development is defined as their apprehension of promotion, professional development, skill development, and career advancement. The fear of losing one's job negative impact on the mental health of workers, leading to concerns about financial security, job prospects, and self-worth. (Sverke et al., 2002)found in their meta analysis that job insecurity is linked to negative employee attitudes, and to health-related outcomes. Women can also feel dissatisfaction at work if they do not have access to a wide range of career advancement opportunities. Promotion opportunities, mentoring, and gender norms can be barriers to professional development that may hinder continued career growth. Studies on gender and career progression have continued to underscore the need to focus on workplace obstacles to women's career prospects (Eagly & Carli, 2018).

Uncertainty related to employment can be especially troubling if workers feel that they are not getting the compensation they deserve for their hard work and productivity. A gap between effort and rewards in the work context could be a determinant of negative health consequences (Siegrist, 1996). Rewards may be salary, recognition, promotion opportunities and job security. Organisational practices may have an impact on employees' sense of job security and career opportunity. Clear job selection and evaluation processes, equitable performance feedback, training and professional development opportunities, and equal access to opportunity opportunities could enhance workers' sense of fairness and potential for advancement. On the other hand, vague advancement policies could raise uncertainty and dissatisfaction (Eagly & Carli, 2018). Job security and career advancement should then be assessed in tandem with workplace equality, pay, and opportunities for professional growth, for working women (Eagly & Carli, 2018; Siegrist, 1996). Literature review indicated that unemployment and lack of employment prospects are important factors of occupational stress and mental wellbeing. It study’s the links between job insecurity, effort–reward imbalance, career barriers and psychological distress, and what organizational practices can help women achieve career stability and well-being (Siegrist, 1996; Sverke et al., 2002).

4.5 Gender Discrimination and Workplace Inequality

Gender discrimination and workplace inequality are significant factors that affect working woman's occupational stress and psychological health. Discrimination against a person on the basis of gender might include equal pay, restricted promotion, gender stereotyping, harassment, and unequal treatment in the workplace(Sverke et al., 2002). These experiences can lead to psychological tension and contribute to employees' feelings of unfairness, belonging and professional insecurity (Shore et al., 2011). A gender gap in employment can impact women's career paths and experiences in the workplace (Eagly & Carli, 2018). Women can face discrimination in leadership roles, professional development opportunities and performance assessment. These barriers can cause frustration and stress in employees' careers, especially when they feel that their career growth is based on factors beyond their control (Heilman, 2012). Harassment or discriminatory treatment in the workplace may also have negative effects on psychological health.(Indhirapratha et al., 2024) The employees who faced persistent mistreatment can become anxious, emotionally drained and less satisfied with their job. The study of workplace bullying has shown that negative workplace experiences are associated with adverse mental health outcomes (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012).

Women's competence and leadership skills can also be assessed differently due to gender stereotypes. (Heilman, 2012) discussed how gender stereotyping and gender role incongruity can be a source of discrimination at work. These biases can place further pressures on women who want to be recognized, promoted, and put in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2018). Organizational policies are important for solving these problems. Transparency in the recruitment and promotion process, equal-pay policies, strong anti-harassment measures and easy access to grievance procedures can help to foster fairness in the workplace. In addition, it is important that organizations foster inclusive leadership and provide people with a safe environment to report discrimination without fear of repercussions (Shore et al., 2011). In general, issues of gender discrimination and workplace inequality are significant themes to consider when exploring occupational stress and psychological wellbeing amongst working women(Ka et al., 2026) .A systematic review should assess the nature of the relationship between discriminatory practice and psychological distress, as well as between harassment, gender stereotype, and gender inequity in career opportunities; and explore what organizational interventions are effective in facilitating the achievement of gender equality and employee well-being (Heilman, 2012; Shore et al., 2011).

4.6 Work Environment and Organizational Culture

Factors that can affect occupational stress and psychological well-being of working women include their work environment and organizational culture. Work environment refers to the physical environment, workload, management, relationships and policies while organizational culture represents shared values, norms and practices that influence the behaviour of employees. There is evidence that good working conditions are conducive to health, whereas poor working conditions and a lack of resources in the organization are at the same time associated with psychological strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Communicating, supportive boss, positive reinforcement,feedback can help decrease the stress at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Conversely, poor supervision and lack of clarity can lead to more uncertainty and emotional burnout(Seidler et al., 2014). Another key facet of the work environment culture is organizational justice. Fairness in decision making, reward distribution, and interpersonal treatment may affect an employee's psychological experiences in the workplace (Colquitt et al., 2001).Good organizational practices can thus help to create a better work climate(Shore et al., 2011).

Occupational autonomy and participation in the workplace may also affect occupational stress. If workers can determine how to organize and execute their tasks, they might better be able to manage competing demands. However, a lack of decision-making power and poor decision-making engagement could lead to psychological stress (Karasek Jr, 1979). Psychological safety is also key, as workers feel safe sharing their concerns, asking for help, and opening up about challenges at work without fear of being shamed or punished. (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) showed that psychological safety is a relevent factor for team learning and work interaction. An open communication culture can help employees deal with stressors before they escalate to larger issues (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). The organizational culture can also create conditions for the effective implementation of flexible working arrangements, equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policies when it comes to working women. An inclusive culture is more than a policy; it's a consistent management practice, and a fair treatment throughout the organisation (Shore et al., 2011) . In general, work environment and organizational culture have an important role in the study of occupational stress and psychological well-being of working women (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Colquitt et al., 2001) . The following organizational conditions should be the basis of a systematic review and evaluation for organizational conditions that are correlated to healthier employee outcomes: leadership support, workplace equity , autonomy, mental health and inclusive workplace strategy(Colquitt et al., 2001; Edmondson & Lei, 2014)

5 CONCLUSION

The importance of occupational stress as a factor contributing to psychological well-being among working women in various occupational environments is of great concern. Based on this review, six broad factors are identified which are related to occupational stress: Workload and job demands, Work–Life Balance and Work–Family conflict, Workplace relationships and social support, Job security and Career development, Gender discrimination and Workplace inequality, Work environment and Organizational culture. These factors can lead to mental exhaustion, emotional stress, dissatisfaction with work and burnout. The review identifies that the issue of occupational stress does not only relate to the individual but also depends on the organizational practices, employment conditions and gender-related inequalities. Good leadership, positive work relationships, flexible working practices, equal career opportunities, and welcoming policies can contribute to promoting healthier workplaces. Hence, organisations should apply appropriate methods to minimise stressors in the workplace and ensure employees' psychological health. In addition, future studies should explore the interplay between these factors in various occupations and organizations. Further empirical research is required to examine specific issues of working women and to develop interventions which will be effective. Finally, it is important to note that interventions dealing with occupational stress should be comprehensive and include individual coping resources, organizational support, and gender-specific policies. These can help to enhance the psychological health and well-being of working women, boost job satisfaction and provide them with ongoing professional growth.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding this manuscript.

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