



PERCEPTION OF STRESS CAUSES AND EFFECTS AMONG WORKING MOTHERS ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

¹Dr Mamatha, ²Mr Chethan, ³Mr Prashanth Alison, ⁴Ms Sheryl Preethika, ⁵ Ms. Mokshitha S

¹Associate Professor, ²Assistant Professor, ³Assistant Professor, ⁴Assistant Professor, ⁵Assistant Professor

¹School of Business and Management, ²Department of Commerce, ³Department of Commerce, ⁴Department of MBA, ⁵Department of Commerce

¹St. Aloysius (Deemed to be University) Mangaluru, India, ²Maps College, Mangaluru, India, ³Maps College, Mangaluru, India, ³St Agnes College (Autonomous), Mangaluru, India, ³St Agnes College (Autonomous), Mangaluru, India.

Abstract

In today's world, working mothers' shoulder dual responsibilities by actively engaging in the workforce and simultaneously taking on substantial household duties. Due multifaceted role like juggling work obligations, taking care of the household chores, taking care of children, and trying to live up to social expectations, naturally makes them more prone to stress. If left unattended, the increased stress levels have a negative effect on their family relationships, work performance, mental and physical health. There is little research explicitly addressing how working mothers view the causes and effects of stress, especially from a variety of demographic perspectives, in spite of substantial awareness of negative effects of personal and professional stress. To be more precise, perceptions and experiences of stress can differ greatly depending on age, income, occupation, and education. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize these demographic variations in order to create focused, efficient stress management strategies. The purpose of present study is to investigate and compare how working mothers from different demographic backgrounds perceive the causes of stress, both personal and professional, as well as the effects of stress. A sample of 100 working mothers of Mangaluru city has been chosen as respondents for the study. Stratified random sampling was used for data collection, and for the analysis of the data SPSS has been used. Mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution were used to summarize responses. ANOVA, Independent Samples t-test were also used to examine the relationships and to test the hypothesis. The results of the study help institutions, mental health professionals, and policymakers to create more inclusive support systems, such as childcare facilities, flexible work schedules, and mental wellness programs.

Index terms: working mothers, workplace, stress management, mental health.

1. Introduction

In the present era the role of women has changed drastically with increased number of women engaging in the workforce and also fulfilling their family responsibilities. Working mothers are more frequently susceptible to stress because of the dual role assumed by them. In order to meet social expectations, working mothers often are exposed to distinct difficulties of work life balance such as juggling work obligations, taking care of the home, raising children and so on in comparison to their male counterparts. This leads to increased stress levels, which can negatively impact their mental and physical health, work performance, and family relationships if left unattended. According to the World Health Organisation, “Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional or psychological strain. Stress is your body's response to anything that requires attention or action. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way you respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to your overall well-being”. Despite growing awareness of personal and professional stress, only few studies have tried to explicitly examine how working mothers perceive the causes and effects of stress from demographic perspective. Demographic factors such as one's occupation, age, education, and income, stress can be experienced and perceived very differently by different individuals. To create efficient, focused stress management interventions for this important population, it is essential to identify these variations. The objective of this study is to investigate how working mothers from varied demographic backgrounds perceive the causes of stress - both personal and professional, and the effects of such stress on physical and mental well-being. Identifying how different working mothers perceive stress can help institutions, policymakers, and mental health professionals create more inclusive support systems, such as childcare facilities, flexible work schedules, peer support groups, mentorship, career reentry support and mental wellness programs in order maintain work-life balance, mental and physical health and enhance the overall performance among working mothers.

2. Review of Literature

Saritha Joseph et al., (2022), Stress among working mothers is prominently related with demographic variables such as religion, income, presence of working family members, and health status. Majority of working mothers experience mild stress, but these factors can increase susceptibility to higher stress levels. **C. Ikpeama, (2024)**, The level of education, family size, and income impact stress among working mothers. Career progression pressures and the need to balance work and family duties are major contributors to stress. **Sandra M. Travasso et al., (2014)**, Low-income working mothers, especially those lacking spousal or social support, are at complex risk for severe depression and suicidal ideation. Social support and job contentment can lessen these negative outcomes. **Zahra Nadri et al., (2024)**, Working mothers may experience lesser stress than stay-at-home mothers, particularly in terms of social acceptance and positive social outlook, which can aid alleviate stress and anxiety. **C. Limbers et al., (2020)**, Moderate physical activity can lessen the negative impact of parenting stress on quality of life, especially regarding social relationships and environmental fulfilment. **Ridhi Rajgariah et al., (2021)**, Working mothers report complex parenting stress than non-working mothers. Coping strategies such as religious coping, behavioral disengagement, and acceptance differ between groups, highlighting the need for workplace mental health interventions. **E. Sabbath et al., (2015)**, Shared job strain and challenging family circumstances, such as single motherhood and low job control, are linked to higher long-term mortality risks among working mothers. **Zahra M. Clayborne et al., (2021)**, Prenatal work stress is associated with improved risk of depression and anxiety during pregnancy and postpartum, emphasizing the need for workplace strategies to help maternal mental health.

3. Research Methodology

The present study has been conducted using both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected through the structured questionnaire from the working mothers in various sectors. The questionnaire was distributed through online forms and personal interview to offices where mothers were working. A sample of 100 working mothers of Mangaluru city has been chosen as respondents for the study. Stratified random sampling was used to select the respondents for the study across demographic variables such as occupation, age, education, and income. Mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution were used to summarize responses. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) to test differences across multiple groups (occupation, education, income). Independent Samples t-test for two-group comparisons (age groups) were also used to examine the relationships and to test the hypothesis. Secondary data were collected through referring various journals, web sources, previous research articles.

4, Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the personal and professional causes of stress among working mothers.
2. To examine the perceived effects of stress on the well-being of working mothers.
3. To analyse perceptions of stress causes and effects across different occupations, age groups, educational background and income levels.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

H1: There is no significant difference in the perception related to personal and professional causes for stress and effects of stress among working mothers from different age groups

H2: There is no significant difference in the perception related to personal, professional causes for stress and effects of stress among working mothers across various occupations

H3: There is no significant difference in the perception related to personal, professional causes for stress and effects of stress among working mothers with different educational levels.

H4: There is no significant difference in the perception related to personal, professional causes for stress and effects of stress perception among working mothers with varying annual income levels.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Independent Sample t test

H1: There is no significant difference in the perception related to personal and professional causes for stress and effects of stress among working mothers from different age groups

Table 6.1: Group statistics

	Age of respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Personal causes for stress	26-35 years	36	3.0062	.67453	.11242
	Above 35 years	64	2.9913	.88984	.11123
Professional Causes for stress	26-35 years	36	2.9861	.66597	.11099
	Above 35 years	64	3.0781	.83352	.10419
Effects of Stress	26-35 years	36	3.3384	.63007	.10501
	Above 35 years	64	3.1534	.86984	.10873

Table 6.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Personal causes for stress	Equal variances assumed	1.544	.217	.087	98	.931	.01485	.17072	-.32394	.35364
Professional Causes for stress	Equal variances assumed	.569	.452	-.568	98	.571	-.09201	.16205	-.41359	.22957

Effects of Stress	Equal variances assumed	5.454	.022							
	Equal variances not assumed			1.224	91.712	.224	.18497	.15116	-.11526	.48521

From the Independent sample t test, we can observe that there exists no difference in the perception of personal and professional causes for stress and effects of stress between respondents of two age groups at 5% level of significance as p values are greater than 0.05 which leads to the conclusion that there is no impact of age of the working mothers on the personal and professional causes for stress and effects of stress.

6.3 ANOVA Test

H2: There is no significant difference in the perception related to personal, professional causes for stress and effects of stress among working mothers across various occupations

Table 6.3: Test results of ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Personal causes for stress	Between Groups	7.006	3	2.335	3.812	.013*
	Within Groups	58.808	96	.613		
	Total	65.814	99			
Professional Causes for stress	Between Groups	19.586	3	6.529	15.708	.000**
	Within Groups	39.901	96	.416		
	Total	59.488	99			
Effects of Stress	Between Groups	4.424	3	1.475	2.444	.069
	Within Groups	57.926	96	.603		
	Total	62.350	99			

(* - Significant at 5% level of significance ** - Significant at 1% level of significance)

From the ANOVA, we can observe that there exists no difference in the perception related to causes of stress and effects of stress between respondents of various occupations at 5% level of significance as p value is greater than 0.05 which leads to the conclusion that there is no impact of occupation of the working mothers on the effects of stress. But there exists a significant difference in the perception related to personal and professional causes for stress between respondents of various levels of occupation at 5% and 1% level of significance as the p values are less than 0.05 (0.01) which leads to the conclusion that there is significant impact of occupation of the working mothers on the personal and professional causes for stress.

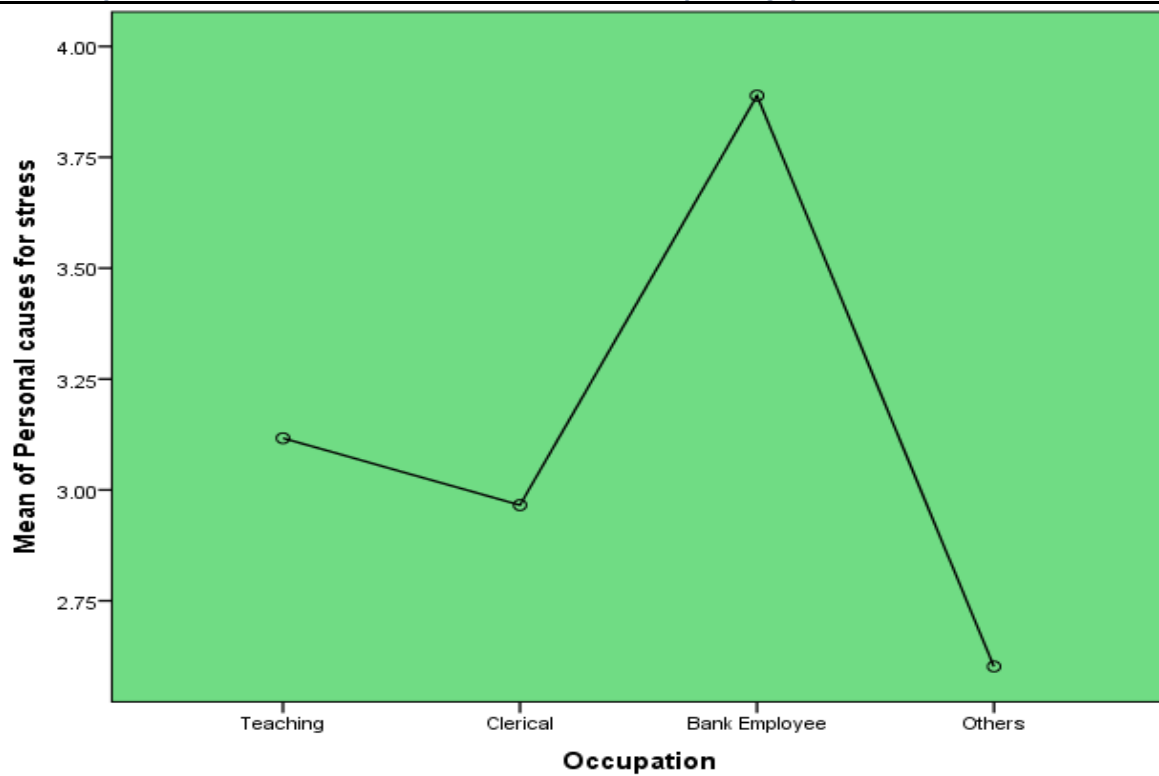


Figure 6.3.1: Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot for personal cause for stress between various occupations.

From Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot we can observe that there exist two groups of working mothers. One group bank employee mother who are at high level of agreement as far as perception related to personal causes for stress is concerned and the rest of the working mothers are at low level of agreement.

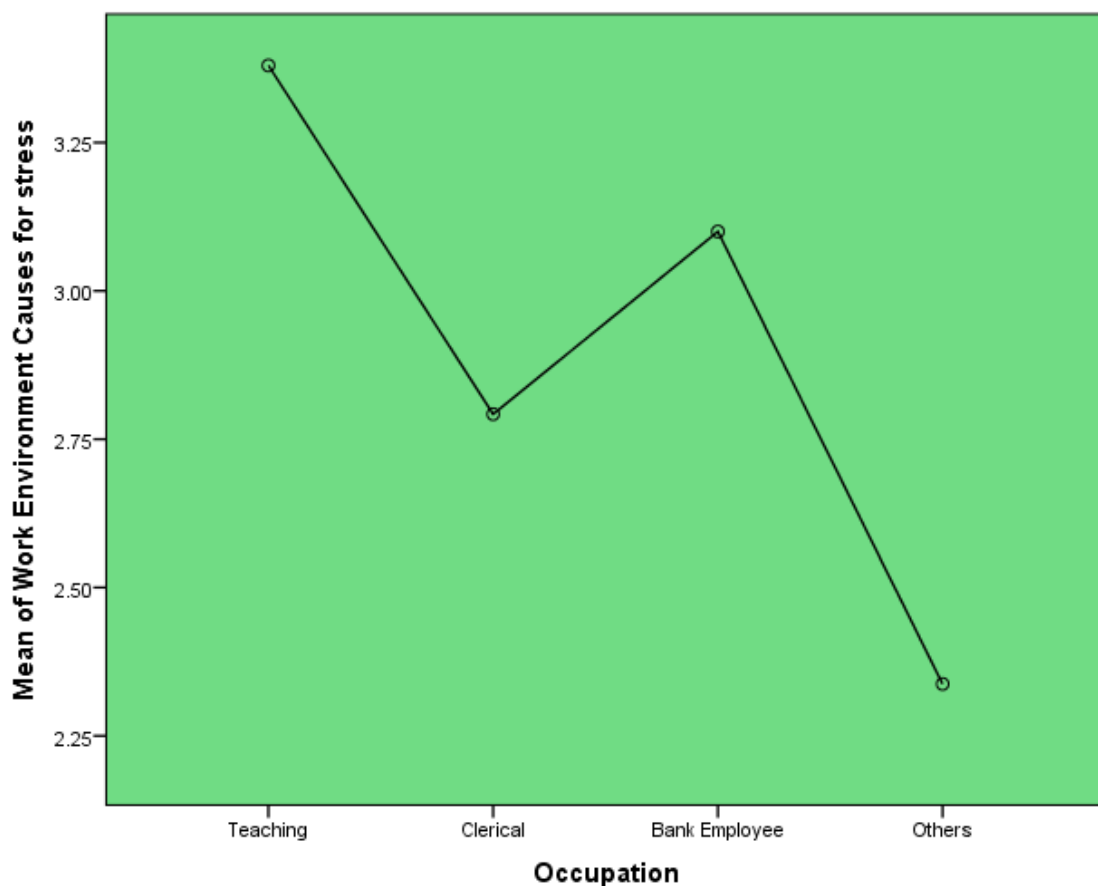


Figure 6.3.2: Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot for professional cause for stress between various occupations

From Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot we can observe that there exist two groups of working mothers. One group who are teachers, clerks and bank employees are at high level of agreement as far as perception related to professional causes for stress is concerned and the rest of the working mothers are at low level of agreement.

H3: There is no significant difference in the perception related to personal, professional causes for stress and effects of stress among working mothers with different educational levels.

Table 6.4: Test results of ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Personal causes for stress	Between Groups	5.678	4	1.420	2.243	.070
	Within Groups	60.136	95	.633		
	Total	65.814	99			
Work Environment Causes for stress	Between Groups	12.818	4	3.204	6.523	.000**
	Within Groups	46.670	95	.491		
	Total	59.488	99			
Effects of Stress	Between Groups	9.290	4	2.323	4.158	.004**
	Within Groups	53.060	95	.559		
	Total	62.350	99			

(*- Significant at 5% level of significance **- Significant at 1% level of significance)

From the ANOVA we can observe that there exists no difference in the perception related to personal causes for stress between respondents of various educational levels at 5% level of significance as p value is greater than 0.05 which leads to the conclusion that there is no impact of educational levels of the working mothers on the personal causes of stress. But there exists a significant difference in the perception related to professional causes for stress and effects of stress between respondents of various levels of education at 1% and 5% level of significance as the p values are less than 0.01 (0.05) which leads to the conclusion that there is significant impact of educational levels of the working mothers on the professional causes for stress and effects of stress.

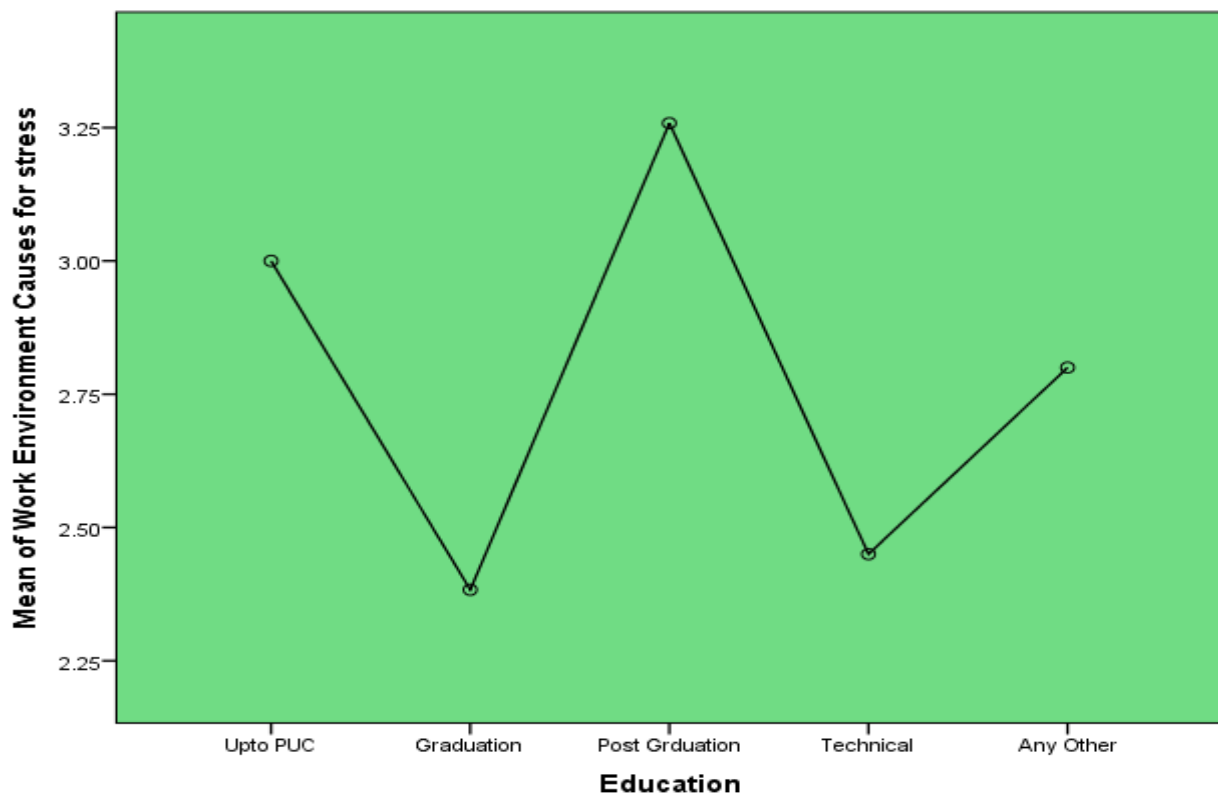


Figure 6.4.1: Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot for professional cause for stress between various educational level

From Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot we can observe that there exist two groups of working mothers. One group who are with PUC, post-graduation and other qualification, are at high level of agreement as far as perception related to professional causes for stress is concerned and the rest of the working mothers are at low level of agreement.

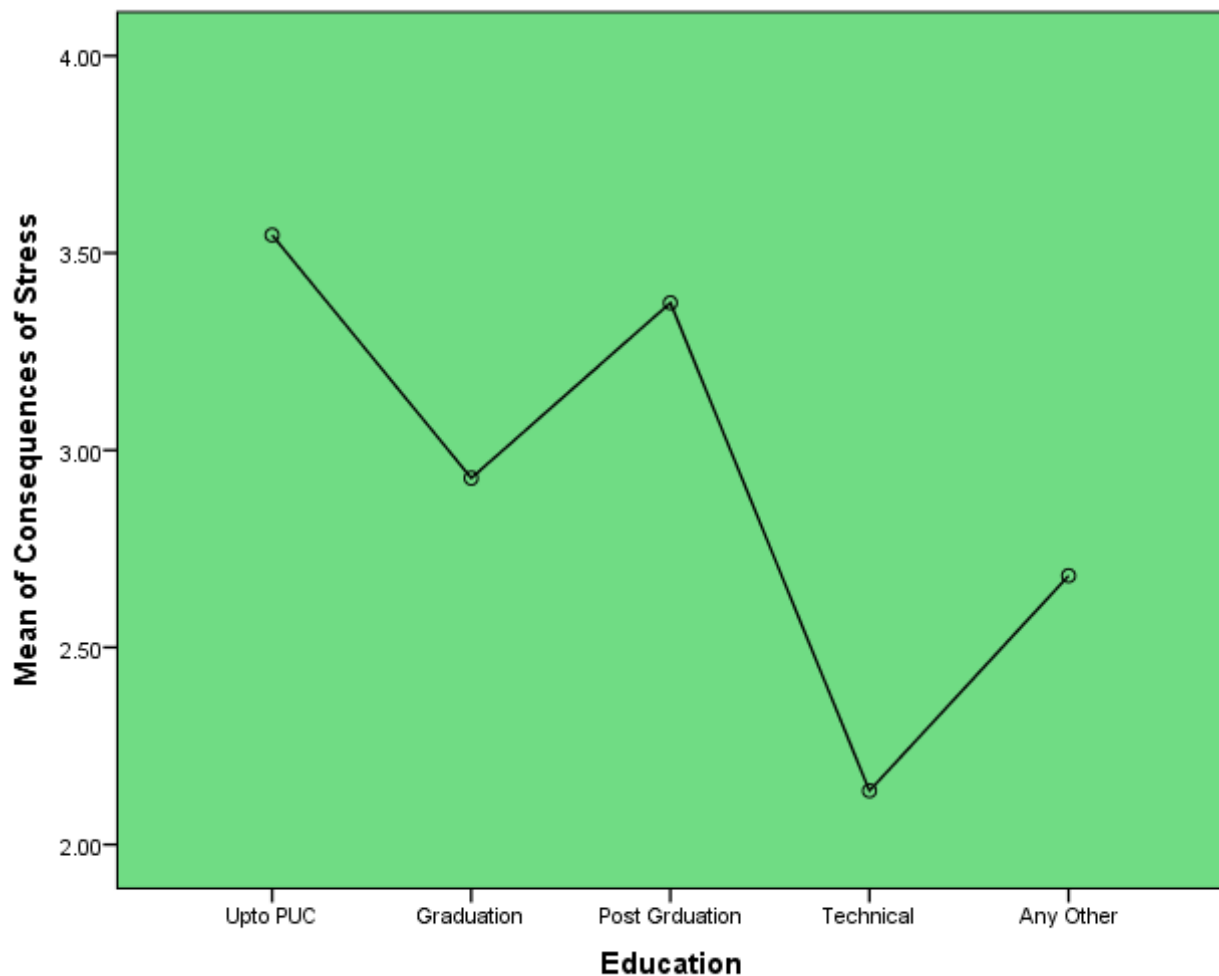


Figure 6.4.2: Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot for effects of stress between various educational level

From Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot we can observe that there exist two groups of working mothers. One group who are with PU, Graduation, and post-graduation qualification, are at high level of agreement as far as perception related to effects of stress is considered and the rest of the working mothers are at low level of agreement.

H4: There is no significant difference in the perception related to personal, professional causes for stress and effects of stress perception among working mothers with varying annual income levels.

Table 6.5: Test results of ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Personal causes for stress	Between Groups	7.949	4	1.987	3.263	.015*
	Within Groups	57.865	95	.609		
	Total	65.814	99			
Work Environment Causes for stress	Between Groups	.369	4	.092	.148	.963
	Within Groups	59.118	95	.622		
	Total	59.487	99			
Effects of Stress	Between Groups	1.977	4	.494	.778	.543
	Within Groups	60.374	95	.636		
	Total	62.350	99			

(* - Significant at 5% level of significance)

From the ANOVA we can observe that there exists no difference in the perception related to professional causes for stress and effects of stress between respondents of various levels of annual income at 5% level of significance as p value is greater than 0.05 which leads to the conclusion that there is no impact of levels of annual income of the working mothers on the professional causes for stress and effects of stress. But there exists a significant difference in the perception related to personal causes for stress and effects of stress between respondents of various levels of annual income at 5% and 5% level of significance as the p value is less than 0.05 which leads to the conclusion that there is significant impact of levels of annual income of the working mothers on the personal causes for stress.

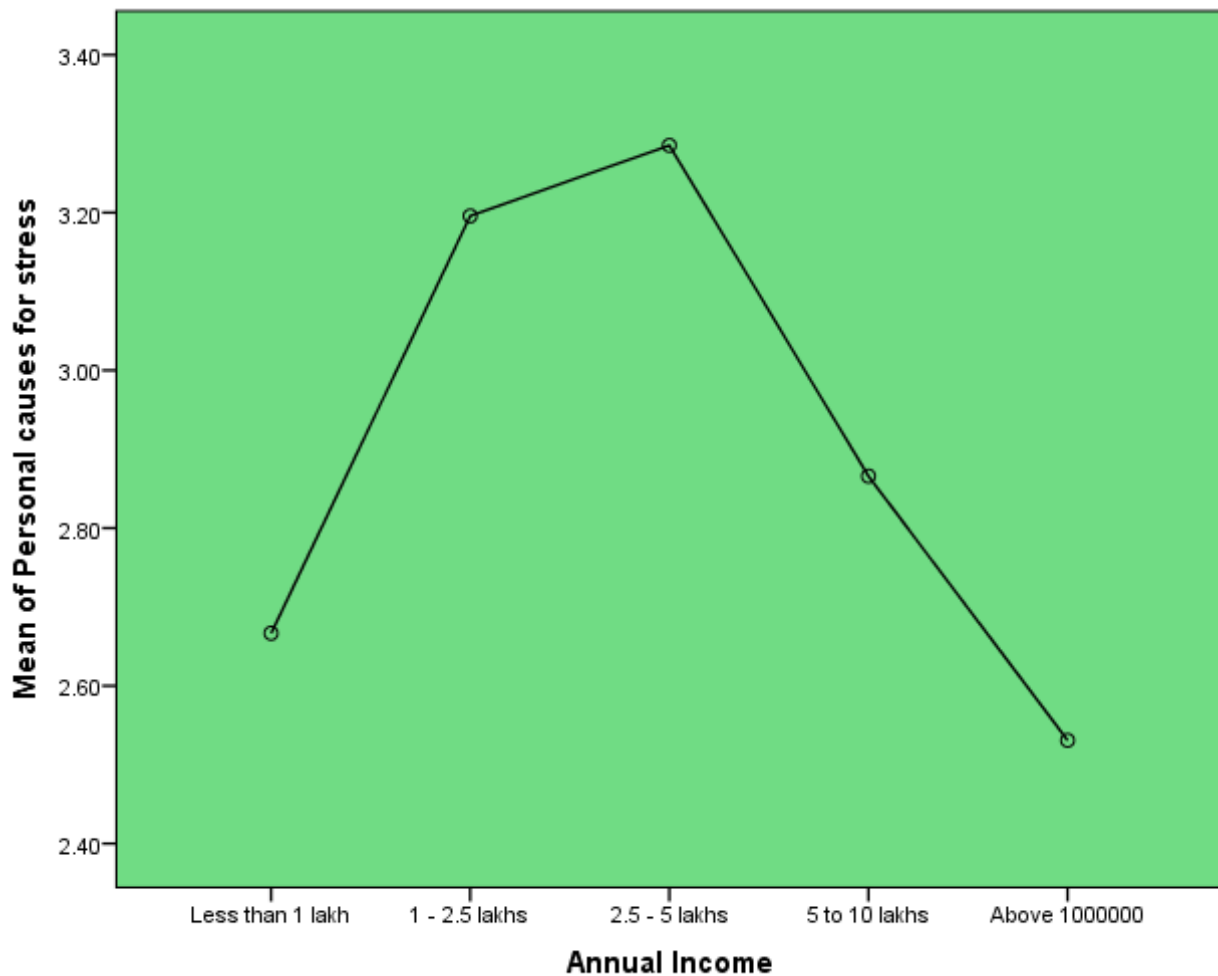


Figure 6.5.1: Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot for personal cause for stress between various income levels

From Post Hoc Analysis and Means plot we can observe that there exist two groups of working mothers. One group who are in the range of 1 to 5 lakhs annual income, are at high level of agreement as far as perception related to personal causes for stress is considered and the rest of the working mothers are at low level of agreement.

7. Conclusion

Despite improvements in workplace inclusion, emotional and logistical pressures persist - especially among women in roles that demand constant presence or accountability. This study highlights the multifaceted reality of stress experienced by working mothers as they steer the dual roles of career and family. While some stress causes are universal, others vary prominently across demographic profiles. It is a reality that working mothers today juggle professional duties alongside personal and familial responsibilities, often under societal expectations and time constraints. The study finds that age doesn't significantly impact how working mothers perceive stress. However, occupation does affect both personal and professional stress levels- particularly among bank employees and teachers. Education influences perceptions of professional stress and its effects but not personal stress causes. Income levels shape perceptions of personal stress but show no impact on professional stress or its effects. These variations suggest the need for custom-made support based on each

mother's occupational, educational, and financial background. To support working mothers effectively, organizations should offer flexible work arrangements to ease personal stress and invest in stress-relief programs tailored to occupation and income levels. Affordable childcare and family-friendly leave policies can reduce professional stress. Counseling and emotional support should be prioritized for high-pressure roles, while peer mentorship among mothers from similar backgrounds can encourage collective resilience and practical solutions.

8. Future Research

A possible direction for future research is to conduct a similar study among women's at managerial position at higher levels of organizational hierarchy.

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