



Practice of relaxation techniques amongst working women

¹ Shweta Nahar, ² Reshma Gurav

¹ Clinical Physiotherapist, Department of Musculoskeletal Sciences, MGM College of Physiotherapy, Kamothe, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

² Associate Professor, Department of Musculoskeletal Sciences, MGM College of Physiotherapy, Kamothe, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

Relaxation techniques are often employed as one element of a wider stress management program. Working women have to perform dual tasks at working place as well as at home which requires sufficient time and high level of energy and that increases not only physical stress but also mental stress. Hence our aim was to find out the prevalence of relaxation techniques in working women along with the commonest stress factor amongst them and the various relaxation techniques practiced by them. This was a cross-sectional study with a purposive sampling of 70 working women. Yoga (79%) was practiced majorly followed by meditation (71%). Despite of awareness, women were restricted from doing relaxation due to lack of time (75%) followed by lack of energy (69%). The present study concluded that relaxation techniques are helpful, cost-effective, and are most needed. It is very much advisable to all working women for their well-being.

Keywords: relaxation techniques, working women, yoga, meditation, stress

1. Introduction

Women are playing a vital role in the economic and social development of the nations all over the world. Today working women are constantly under stress to maintain balance between home and workplace. Women are more likely than men to experience physical symptoms of stress, such as fatigue, irritability, headaches and depression.¹ Women are also more to cope with job stress like men. The stress is higher in working women in comparison to housewives. Working married women have to face more difficulties in their lives like they experienced more stress and depression as compared to non-working married women^[1].

Relaxation technique is any method, process or activity that helps a person to relax; to attain a state of increased calmness or otherwise reduce levels of anxiety, stress or anger. Relaxation techniques are often employed as one element of a wider stress management program and can decrease muscle tension, lower the blood pressure and control heart and breath rates, among other health benefits^[2].

Research has indicated that removing stress helps to increase a person's health. It has been noticed that, stronger ties between health and stress exist, and showed benefits from a wider range of relaxation techniques^[3]. Relaxation techniques can be used for the following purposes; anger management, anxiety attacks, cardiac health, childbirth, depression, high blood pressure, immune system support, pain management, stress management, and in addiction treatment.

India is currently experiencing a rapid epidemiological transition from communicable to non-communicable diseases. Rapid industrialization and urbanization with subsequent rise in standard of living, obesity, stress, sedentary lifestyle, addictions, etc. are posing a growing concern to the health^[4].

The role of religious practices, meditation, yoga, in the modulation of coronary risk factors such as smoking cessation, weight control, hypertension, dyslipidemias, diabetes, endothelial dysfunction and stress has been evaluated^[5]. Repeated practice of different techniques related to relaxation will increase physical and psychological comfort and at the same time create conditional relaxation responses in various systems^[6].

Working women have to perform dual tasks at working place as well as at home which requires sufficient time and high level of energy. The various household activities (cooking, maintaining house, family/social functions), taking care of parents and children, combined with official duties and responsibilities increases not only physical stress but also mental stress in them.

Hence the aim of this study was to find out the prevalence of relaxation techniques in working women.

The objectives of this study were stated as,

- To measure the awareness of relaxation techniques in working women.
- To find out the commonest stress factor amongst them.
- To find out the relaxation techniques practiced by them.
- To find out the commonest factor restricting practice of relaxation.

2. Materials and methods

The Physiotherapy Research Committee of MGM Institutes of Health Sciences approved the study prior its commencement. 70 working women from the community of an official setup were participated. An informed consent was obtained from them. Working women from official setup were included in the study, and women working from home were excluded. The

self-made validated questionnaire was used for the study. Women were explained about the questionnaire that has to be filled for the research and were interviewed for the same.

The components of questionnaire were included; the categorization of work type, existing stress, the causative factors of stress, the psychological disturbance, de-stressing activities, awareness of relaxation techniques, performing relaxation techniques, and the restricting factors for performing relaxation techniques.

Data were analyzed using IBM Statistics SPSS V.16.

3. Results

In the demographic data (Table 1), the majority of working women was of middle age group with the mean age of 38 years and married (75%). The working professions in our study were service in bank 74% (52/70), doctors 14% (10/70) and teachers 12% (8/70). Mean duration of work among the study population was 7.6 hours ($\pm 2.3SD$) with the break time of 50.14 minutes ($\pm 2SD$). Around 70% used public transport while commuting.

Table 1: Demographic details and work profile

A] Mean age	38 years
B] Profession	Total 70 working women
Service in bank	52 (74%)
Doctors	10 (14%)
Teachers	8 (12%)
C] Mean working time	7.6 hours ($\pm 2.3SD$)
D] Mean break time	50.14 minutes ($\pm 2SD$)

70% women had moderate type of work while 19% had heavy type of work both at workplace and at home (figure 1).

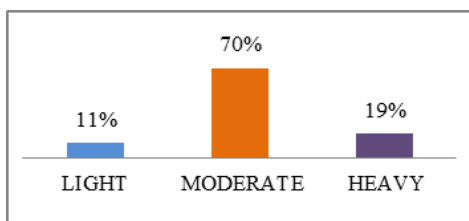


Fig 1: Work type at workplace and at home

63% women stated the presence of stress, and this perceived stress was actually due to job stress (91%) followed by those using public transport for commuting to and from work had increased stress (32%) (figure 2).

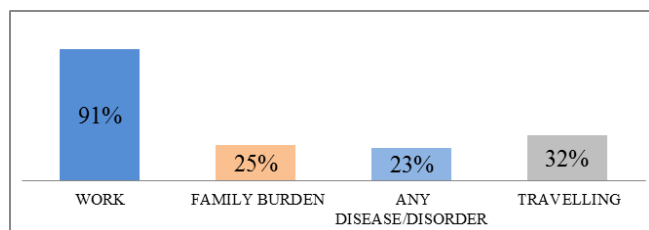


Fig 2: Stress factors for women

27% of women had psychological disturbance during work. 86% women were suffering from hypertension followed by

33% were suffering from diabetes mellitus.

63% (44/70) women were aware about relaxation techniques. 64% (28/44) women were performing relaxation techniques. Majority women perform yoga (79%) as a relaxation technique followed by meditation (71%), aerobic exercises (43%), body massage (39%), and least (4%) were swimming and progressive relaxation techniques (figure 3).

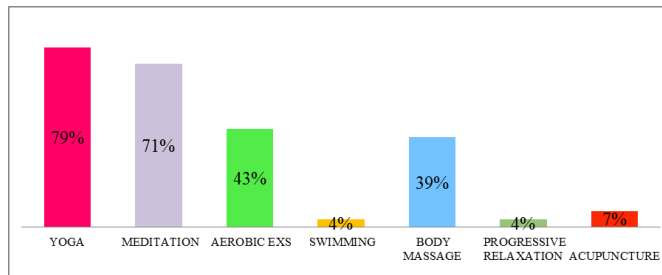


Fig 3: Type of relaxation techniques performed by women

43% women were performing relaxation more than two years and 18% women were performing relaxation only since 6 months. 80% women listens to the music to de-stress their stress levels followed by 63% women watches television and 44% were found reading as a de-stressing activity.

The major restricting factor for following relaxation was lack of time (75%) followed by the lack of energy (68%). (Figure 4).

4. Discussion

The practice of relaxation techniques in the current study was 63.6%, of which majority was practicing yoga (78.5%) followed by meditation (71.4%). These findings were suggestive with the corresponding studies. In the study of “Prevalence and practice of stress relaxation practices (SRP’s) in Ahmadabad city: A cross-sectional study”, the authors have concluded that people doing SRP’s were able to maintain balance between work and other activities than non-SRP’s group. Person’s participating in SRP’s was less likely to have diabetes mellitus and hypertension as compared with those who do not practice SRP’s [7].

The practice of yoga, a traditional Indian system is now gaining international acceptance for stress-coping skills. Yoga is considered to be one of the most important, effective and valuable tools available to overcome various physical and psychological problems. Yoga helps therapeutically in asthma, cardiac patients, multiple sclerosis, migraine, rheumatoid arthritis, and rehabilitation and promotes physical and mental health [8]. Relaxation techniques are helpful, cost-effective, and beneficial group methods in support of individual counselling. It is important scientifically, practically, and financially to promote stress management programs for the betterment of people [9].

Working women had higher level of stress than non-working women. These working women are stressed because they have to perform various roles. They have the pressure of balancing work and family. In another study, “The use of meditation-relaxation techniques for the management of stress in a working population”, the authors have performed three techniques of relaxation; clinically standardized meditation

(CSM), respiratory one method meditation (ROM), and progressive relaxation(PMR). They have concluded that, meditation groups had 78% compliance rate with treatment effect seen whether subjects practiced their techniques frequently or occasionally. Meditation training has considerable value for stress management programs in organizational settings^[10].

Women using public transport to commute had a three times higher risk of stress^[11]. It could be due to tiredness in long distances, standing for long in public transport and a constant fear of reaching safely at their destination in metropolitan cities like Mumbai. A randomized controlled trial of meditation for work stress, anxiety and depressed mood in full time workers, provides the preliminary evidence to support the use of meditation to reduce work stress and depressed mood. Meditation is a low-cost, non-commercial nature of the intervention, and has the low risk of adverse effects thus meditation is useful as a health enhancing strategy for significant socioeconomic benefit to working individuals and society^[12].

Body massage was performed by 39% of women in this study. In one of the study massage therapy showed behavioural and stress hormone changes including a decrease in anxious behavior^[13].

Majority of working women in our study were aware about the relaxation techniques (63%), but despite of awareness, some were restricted from doing relaxation (36%) due to lack of time (75%) found to be the major restricting factor followed by the lack of energy (68%). The workplace is an important source of both demands and pressure causing stress. The workplace causative factors that have been found to be associated with stress and health risks are intrinsic to the job include long hours, work overload, time pressure, difficult or complex tasks, and poor physical work conditions. Increasingly, the demands on the individual in the workplace reach out into the homes and social lives of workers. Long hours, working away from home, high levels of responsibility, and job relocation especially in working women leads to undermine a good and relaxing quality of life outside work. In addition, domestic pressures such as childcare responsibilities, financial worries, and housing problems may affect women's robustness at work. Thus, the vicious cycle is set up and with the lack of energy and tiredness; it is difficult to spare time for one's stress management^[14].

The stress factors also showed the greater impact on restriction on performing relaxation, for which 'type of work' being the major stress factor (90.9%) followed by travelling aspect (31.8%). The responsibilities and the multifactorial tasks, insufficient time which showed direct impact on subject's energy level apparently affected on performance of relaxation in working women. The stress relieving activities compromises of listening music (80%), followed by watching television (62.8%). The study has suggested that listening to certain type of music, particularly new age music and classical music, can increase feelings associated with relaxation, such as peacefulness and a sense of ease^[15].

In the study of "Coping strategies for working women: Relaxation interventions", 72 working females have included in the relaxation interventions. It concludes that, yoga and aerobic exercise were perceived as more satisfactory stress

management treatment^[16]. Chaudhari *et al.* found that practicing relaxation techniques and exercises has shown to improve not only the stress levels but also the quality of life in female health care professionals^[17].

The music therapy is one of the adjuncts of relaxation used for stress management. In our study 80% working women listens to music as a de-stressing activity. Music listening has been suggested to beneficially impact health via stress-reducing effects. There is a potentially positive effect of music on the human body^[18].

The different relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation, aerobic exercises, and muscle relaxation should be used to manage the stress in everyday life. So as to curtail the stress level which is the cause of various diseases, therefore the stress management by relaxation techniques in working women is essential both in government and private organizations.

5. Conclusion

In the present study, women with practicing relaxation techniques are more likely indulging in sedentary occupation. Relaxation techniques are most needed in a current scenario. It is very much advisable to all working women for their well-being.

6. Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all the participants of the study.

7. Recommendations

Future researches should be planned to find out the population who are more likely to get benefit of relaxation techniques and health problems that can be prevented or treated with relaxation.

The health education and Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) campaign should be planned to make people more health conscious and to know the importance of relaxation in this challenging world of globalization and industrialization.

8. References

1. Kermene M. A psychological study on stress among employed women and housewives and its management through progressive muscular relaxation technique and mindfulness breathing. *J Psychol Psychother.* 2016; 6:244.
2. Daniel G. Relaxation: surprising benefits detected, *The New York Times*, 1986-2006.
3. Exercises and stress: Get moving to combat stress by Mayo Clinic, 2010.
4. Kishor J. National health programs of India; Chap.1.7th Ed. New Delhi: Century publication. 2007; 1:3.
5. Gupta R, Chandra H. Prayers, Mantra and Heart diseases. *South Asian J Prev Cardiol*, 2004, 8(3).
6. Cole R. Calif Relaxation: Physiology and Practice booklet. Synchrony Applied Health Sciences, 1994.
7. Nayak H. Prevalence & practice of stress relaxation practices (SRP's) in Ahmadabad city: A cross-sectional study *Int J Yoga.* 2011; 4:87-92.
8. Lehrer, Paul M, David H. Principles and Practice of Stress Management, Third Edition, 2007, 46-47.

9. Bhala B. Yoga in modern medicine. *Int J Altem Comlement, Med.* 1996; 14:9-10.
10. Carrigton P, *et al.* The use of meditation-relaxation techniques for the management of stress in a working population, *J Occup Med.* 1980; 22(4):221-31.
11. Parashar M, Panda M. Prevalence and correlates of stress among working women of a tertiary health centre in Delhi, India. *INJMS*, 2017, 77-81.
12. Manocha R, Black D, Sarris J, Stough C. A randomized controlled trial of meditation for work stress, anxiety and depressed mood in full-time workers. *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 2011.
13. Field T, Grizzle N, Scafidi F, Schanberg S. Massage and relaxation therapies' effects on depressed adolescent mothers. *Adolescence.* 1996; 31:903-911.
14. Michie S. Causes and management of stress at work. *Occup Environ Med.* 2002; 59:67-72.
15. Sims J. *Br J Gen Pract.* The evaluation of stress management strategies in general practice: an evidence-led approach. 1997; 47(422):577-82.
16. Long BC, Haney CJ. Coping strategies for working women: Aerobic exercises & relaxation interventions, *Behaviour therapy*, 1989.
17. Chaudhari A, Ray M, Saldanha D, Bandopadhyay A. Effect of progressive muscle relaxation in female health care professionals. *Ann Med Health Sci Res.* 2014; 4:791-795.
18. Thoma M, Marca R, Rebecca B, Finkel L, Ehlert U, Nater U. The effect of music on the human stress response. *Plos One.* 2013; 8(8):e70156.