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BLEKINGE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
VT 2014

Division of industrial economy

*Program in Social Science for Communication and Learning*

# Same same but different

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*A comparative study about perceived stress among working women and men.*

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BACHELOR THESIS IN PSYCHOLOGY

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# Abstract

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The purpose of our research was to make a comprehensive and comparative study. We wanted to examine the working men and women with and without children living at home and how they perceive stress at work and family demands. Perceived stress may occur when men and women with children are torn between work and family demands. We discuss the various coping strategies with focus on age and gender, and examine whether there are differences between full-time and part-time working women and men, and their perceived stress level. We also examine how women and men under the age of 40 use more coping strategies than women and men over the age of 40. To measure coping we use occupational health services Preventive stress test for employees. The results show correlations between men with children and stress when it comes to family demands. Women with children living at home are experiencing more stress related to workload and the thought that it is harder to recover from stress than men with children living at home. When it comes to coping strategies, we found no significant relationship between women and men under 40 and women and men over the age of 40. Participants in the study were 53 women and men both with and without children living at home aged under and over 40 years old.

**Keywords:** *allostatic load, coping, coping-strategies, parenting stressors, stress and gender, work-family conflict, work-related stress.*

# Abstrakt

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Syftet med vår forskning var att göra en övergripande och jämförande studie. Vi ville undersöka arbetande kvinnor och män med och utan hemmaboende barn och hur de uppfattar stress på arbetet samt familjekrav. Upplevd stress kan uppstå när män och kvinnor med hemmaboende barn slits mellan arbete och familjekrav. Vi diskuterar olika copingstrategier med fokus på ålder och kön samt undersöker om det finns en skillnad mellan hel- eller deltidsanställda kvinnor och män och deras upplevda stressnivå. Vi undersöker också hur kvinnor och män under 40 år använder mer copingstrategier än kvinnor och män över 40 år. För att mäta coping använder vi företagshälsovården Prevent's stresstest för anställda. Resultaten visar korrelationer mellan män med hemmaboende barn och stress när det gäller familjekrav. Kvinnor med barn som bor hemma upplever mer stress som rör arbetsbelastning och de tycker att det är svårare att återhämta sig från stress än män med barn som bor hemma. När det gäller coping strategier hittade vi inget signifikant samband mellan kvinnor och män under 40 år och kvinnor och män över 40 år. Deltagare i studien var 53 kvinnor och män både med och utan hemmaboende barn i åldersspannet över och under 40 år.

**Nyckelord:** *allostatisk belastning, stresshantering, stresshanteringsstrategier, föräldraskapsstressorer, stress och kön, arbete- familje konflikt, arbetsrelaterad stress.*

We are all humans, men and women, with or without children and regardless of age. But we are also individuals with different features and needs. We respond differently on external influence, managing demands and stress on various ways. We are same same but different. The intention with our research is to do a study to examine working women and men with and without children living at home and how they perceive stress at work. We have no detailed description or definition of the term children living at home. It only refers to children living at home. We also investigate how women and men under the age of 40 are using more coping strategies than women and men over the age of 40.

In a rapidly changing society, where the labor market craving for competent and updated work force, the strain and the pressure on each and every worker increase. At the same time, many urge to establish a family, and when the family demands come across the demands at work a work-family conflict emerge. This conflict is strongly connected to stress and to how we can manage stressful situations, so-called *coping*, which has received more attention during the years. Because of the impact and how stress effects each person depending on individual features and circumstances of life, it is important to enhance our knowledge about the subject. Stress is something that we have experienced or will experience sometime during our lifetime. Lazarus (1966) describes stress as follow: "Stress occurs when an individual perceives that the demands of an external situation are beyond his or her perceived ability to cope with them."(pg. 9). Ganster and Rosen (2013) on the other hand, define stress in three ways: It can be a characteristic of the external environment that acts on the individuals. Or, the individual's reaction to environmental impact, such as demands and challenges. It can also be a reciprocal action between the two, where they interact with each other. Previous studies shows that there are situational characteristics that help create a stress reaction and this means an atmosphere of high achievement, social evaluation and little or no control on the situation. Individuals have a strong need to preserve their social values, self-esteem and status and are extra vigilant for threats that might compromise these concepts. Psychological stress triggers one of the main neuroendocrine stress system in humans.

## Stress and Gender

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Previous studies and measurements on stress-related elements are based on the research of adult men. Therefore, the results of men's responses were considered as the norm for human stress (Aronsson & Rissler, 1998). But in the early 1970's the first studies of stress on both men and women began and were performed by Marianne Frankenhaeuser and her colleagues (Aronsson & Rissler, 1998). These first studies indicated that women are more patient to stress related situations than men, and the result establish that women have a more frugal way of coping with different demands and achievements. Later studies on physiological reactions have compared men and women in real-life situations, and they show that the differences between the genders are small or non-existing. In studies of occupational stress and gender, it is important to consider the factor of interaction between paid and unpaid work. According to Aronsson and Rissler (1998) women have a considerable workload at home than men. Also self-reports of stress imply that women suffer more from, both physical and mental symptoms, than men and have a substantial difficulty to unwind after work. This validates and point at the differences between women and men concerning the family role demands and divergences in responsibility (Aronsson & Rissler, 1998). There are several complicated methodological factors in comparing females and males from an occupational health perspective. Former studies have revealed two important factors, the research between the genders and the presence of genders. When it comes to perception and interpretation, and the gender segregation in the labor market and within occupation, there are an evident picture of a division between the genders appears (Johansson, Thomsson & Berg, 1996; Aronsson & Rissler, 1998). The result of former research shows that men are likely to get more challenged by achievement tasks than women. But women, on the other hand, respond more on stress when it comes to personal relationships and social skills.

## Age and Gender-related Coping Strategies

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In a study made by Meléndez, Mayordomo, Sancho and Tomás (2012) a correlation between age and gender was found. The coping strategies were social support, avoidance,

negative self-image, and religion. The results of the study suggest that family, connection with friends, faith (religion) and a negative self-image are strategies that increase with age. The researchers also claim that the age of the individuals had no effect on neither problem-solving strategy or to seek social assistance, except at a high age where there was some influence. Rauschenbach et al. (2013) mean that most age-related theories forebode that older workers perceive less stress than their younger colleges. This proposition indicates that older workers have more control over their job due, for example, career advances. Older workers can use job control to avoid stressors and employ coping strategies. Rauschenbach et al. (2012b; Rauschenbach et al., 2013) found out that the use of control strategies increases with age. On the other hand, the studies Rauschenbach et al. (2013) have found imply that older workers might experience increased stress at work, on account of perceived discrimination and negative bias in the shape of age stereotypes. Furthermore, it turns out that there are differences between the genders in terms of coping. Women have a higher negative self-image and are using more focus on emotions as a coping strategy. This strategy becomes maladaptive when used in a longer process. Women are using more avoidance strategies to a greater extent than men. Mostly young men are using avoidance strategies, but the usage of these strategies decrease when they get older. Older men are using more problem-solving strategies.

## Work-Family Conflict and The FAAR Model

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Van der Lippe and Peters (2007) suggest that many individuals are torn between family relationship and working relationship. Not only to the household requires some responsibility but also the expectation of the work and that the standards of parenting has increased. The women in Van der Lippe and Peter's study reveals that they are experiencing difficulty in balancing the dual responsibility of work and parenting, and also highlights the subjective differences in which coping strategies they are using. According to Crompton (2002, 2006) are part-time work, get help with responsibility for the children, inflexible workplaces, lack of informal support, prevailing gender and organizational culture, the factors which highlight the sharp conflict between work and parenting. In turn, this has an impact on the quality of life on individuals and to overlook difficulties in combining work and parenting

role. Wattis, Colin, Standing and Yerkes (2013) conducted a study that confirms that women find it difficult to balance the demands of work and parenting. The women were often stressed and tired and had no time for either leisure or time alone. It turned out that some women felt that leisure time and time alone was the amount of the time they spent with the children and was particularly peculiar to women with demanding work where these women felt a strong need to compensate for long hours by spending all their free time with their children.

Matjasko and Feldman (2006) made an interesting finding in their study which shows that working time is not a stressor for parents which are one of the coping strategies in Van der Lippe and Peters (2007) study. Matjasko and Feldman (2006) argues that many fathers today see themselves as the primary provider of the family, and fathers are also using more active coping strategies. Men with children also seem to actively solve their problems rather than dwell on them. Hill (2005) shows that working time and work-related stress indicate of typical stressors and the study shows that there are no evidence that spending time with our children is to be seen as a stressor. To spend more time with the children reinforces the perception that work promotes parental role, which in turn promotes that the individual can handle more individual stress.

According to Major et al. (2002), family gathering after work and school are helping the family members unwind and recovering. But at the same time, are the parents' demands and home-based chores remaining and can be the source of the work-family conflict. Especially parents with young children and infants perceive stress over the work-family conflict situation (Major et al., 2002). Matsui's et al. (1995) research concluded that parental demands are related to absenteeism, tardiness and increased stress. The length of the workday is also an important factor when it comes to stress related to work and home life. Workers who try to balance work and family along with many working hours may be troubled by negative consequences. The struggle to fulfill both the demands at work and at home developed a new sort of conflict. This conflict is time-based and implicate that you can only accomplish one role (e.g. worker and parent) at the time (Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002). Patterson (2002) uses the Family Adjustment and Adaption Response (FAAR) Model to underscore the relationship between family stress theory and the perspective of family resilience. The FAAR Model elucidates the balance between family demands and family capabilities and how the family members can adjust or adapt to the situation. This is called

*regenerative power* in stress theory. However, occasionally situations emerge when the demands exceed the family capability, which leads to poor adaption, so called *vulnerability* (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 2002).

## Measurement of Stress

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Allostatic load (AL) contains the adaptive processes of how the human body tries to protect itself from environmental stress (Li et al., 2007). The research by Selye (1955) regarding stress concepts evolved the allostatic load model (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). The AL model has developed into being the most central organizing theory for understanding the physiology of stress and it describes the relationship between daily stress and health (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). The AL model consist of three features, but this study will only concern one of these; The primary AL called, *Initial Adaption*, contain psychological (tension, anxiety), physiological (cortisol) and psychosomatic (sleep disturbance, fatigue) factors (See appendix 3). The AL model separate the two phenomena – acute and chronic stress responses. An acute response is needed for the adaption to different kind of current demands and it may have a caring effect if it is followed by rest and resilience. Recurrent stress responses and an extended activation of stress may increase bodily resources (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Various types of dysregulation in the bodily system can over time result in an allostatic load (Hasson et al., 2009). Previous findings concerning allostatic load is that allostatic load is higher in older individuals (Crimmins et al., 2003; Hasson et al., 2009) and in persons with lower education (Karlmanngla et al., 2006; Hasson et al., 2009).

## Purpose and Hypotheses

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The family- work conflict and stress are two current issues in our society. Previous studies on stress are considerably about women and stress, gender and stress or family-work conflict and stress. Most of those studies are based on men and women in equal occupations and family situation. The aim with our research is to do an overall and comparative study and examine working women and men with and without children living at home and how they

perceive stress at work and family demands. We also investigate how women and men under the age of 40 are using more coping strategies than women and men over the age 40.

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): Women with children living at home perceive more stress at work than women without children living at home.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): Men with children living at home perceive more stress at work than men without children living at home.
- Hypothesis 3 (H3): Women with children living at home perceive more stress at work than men with children living at home.
- Hypothesis 4 (H4): Women and men under the age of 40 use more coping strategies than women and men over the age 40.

## Method

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### Participants

The participants of the survey were 53 women and men. 33 (62, 3%) working women and 20 (37, 7%) working men both with and without children living at home. The selection of the survey participants were made by an available selection. 27 (50, 9%) were women with children living at home and 11 (20, 8%) men with children living at home. Women without children living at home were 6 participants (11, 3%). Men without children living at home were 9 (17%). 59% of the women with children living at home work full time in contrast to the women without children staying at home where 83% of the women work full time and 67% of them also have a managing role. Only 30% of the women with children living at home have a managing role. Among the men it is 58% of the men with children living at who have a managing role at work, and 38% of the men without children staying at home. Up to 92% of the men with children living at home work full time in contrast to 75% of the men without children living at home. (See Table 2). It is an equal quantity of both men and women who have a high school degree (47.2%) and university exam (47.2%) as the highest education. Among women with children living at home 4% have elementary school as the highest education, 37% have a high school degree and 59% have a university exam. 33% of the women without children staying at home have an elementary school degree, 50% have a high

school degree and 17% have a university exam as the highest education. Among men with children living at home none of the men have lower degree than high school, 58%, and 42% have a university exam as the highest degree. Among the men without children living at home, there were an equal number of men who have an elementary school degree (12.5%) respective university exam (12.5%). Remaining 75% of the men have a high school degree. No one interrupted the survey and the annexes are translated from Swedish to English.

## Survey

53 people who participated in the study answered a questionnaire with 22 claims within categories, *workload*, *coping-strategies*, *resilience* and *family demands* (See appendix 3). The inquiry began with purpose and instructions on how the inquiry would be completed (appendix 2) followed by ten different background questions about gender, age, education, number of children, age of the child/children, employment rates and employment conditions (appendix 3). We have chosen not to have a qualitative part in the inquiry with open questions then Trost (2012) points out that it can be difficult to deal with this material, and that the loss of that type of single questions often become very large.

## Ethics

There are specific research ethical principles within the humanities and social sciences. It is important to think about these ethical aspects. There are four main requirements for general research; information requirement, consent requirement, confidential requirement and the utilization requirement (Swedish Research Council). In our study, we have taken into account all of these four aspects. Information requirement means that participants have been informed that participation is voluntary and that they have the right to cancel their participation if they so wish without giving any reason. We have also taken into account, on giving respondents approved participation and that it's on their terms. Confidential requirement, which is the third requirement, means that the study will be treated as confidential information, which we have taken into account and we will erase all material as soon as the thesis is approved. Utilization requirement is the last requirement and requires that the information will only be used for the current study, which we have taken into account and stated in the cover letter (appendix 2).

## Procedure

We tested the questionnaire on five people before we transferred the questionnaire to surveygizmo.com (Web Poll) to see if any deficiencies could be detected. We discovered that it was sensitive to answer a precise age so we changed the age question to "ten years-term" 31-40 for example, which according to (Trost, 2012) to avoid the question of age must be perceived as rude. Then we published information letter (see appendix 2) and the link to the questionnaire in the authors facebook statuses with the desire that the participants would share and disseminate information and the survey further so more research participants would be able to participate in the study. During twelve hours the survey were answered by 41 people. After about three days, we published the information and the link to the survey again in order to try to achieve a larger population. After seven days, we closed the inquiry.

We have developed four dependent variables (DV) based on the responses from the survey we transformed all the participant's experiences and created categories that represents the DV and are encoded as a quota scale.

All claims consist of ordinal data. The independent variables in the study are age groups, gender, women with and without children living at home and men with and without children living at home, that we have coded as nominal data.

## Results

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This section includes the observed correlations that are linked to our hypotheses and purpose. The two tables are designed to clarify and give an overview of the variables used, as well as our analyzes. At the correlations we used a factor analyze to maximize the variance of factors over the variables that belong together. The bivariate is not normally distributed therefor we used Spearman's correlation, which coefficient is a statistical measure of the strength of a monotonic relationship between paired data. In the sample it is denoted by  $r_s$  and \* \* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) and \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Finally, we present the results of the analyzes that answers on our statements are true or not.

### Observed Correlations

Women and men both under age of 40 and over age of 40 (coping). Under age of 40: weak correlation between variables, measures to resolve problems and avoid problems  $r_s = -.345^*$ ,  $p = .034$ , working overtime and main stress factors emerge at work  $r_s = .527^{**}$ ,  $p = .001$ . Over 40: act on improvement and emotional support from family and friends  $r_s = .846^*$ ,  $p = .000^*$ .

### Factor Analyze

22 questions were factor analysed using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. The scree plot analysis (see Figure 1) yielded three factors explaining a total of 50.26% of the variance for the entire set of variables. Factor 1, which was labelled *Workload2*, had an Eigen value of 6.222 and explained 28,28% of variance. The four questions, 11, 17, 18 and 29 had all a greater value than 0.5 and the questions 17 and 18 both had a factor value over 0.8. Factor 2, which was labelled *Coping* had an Eigen value of 2.735 and explained 12.43% of variance. In *Coping* included questions 15, 16, 24 and 25, all with a factor value over 0.5 and only question 16 stands out with a factor value over 0.8. Factor 3, which was labelled *Family demands2* had an Eigen value of 2.102 and explained 9.55% of variance. The four questions included have all a factor value greater than 0.5 and questions 31 and 32 have a factor value over 0.8.

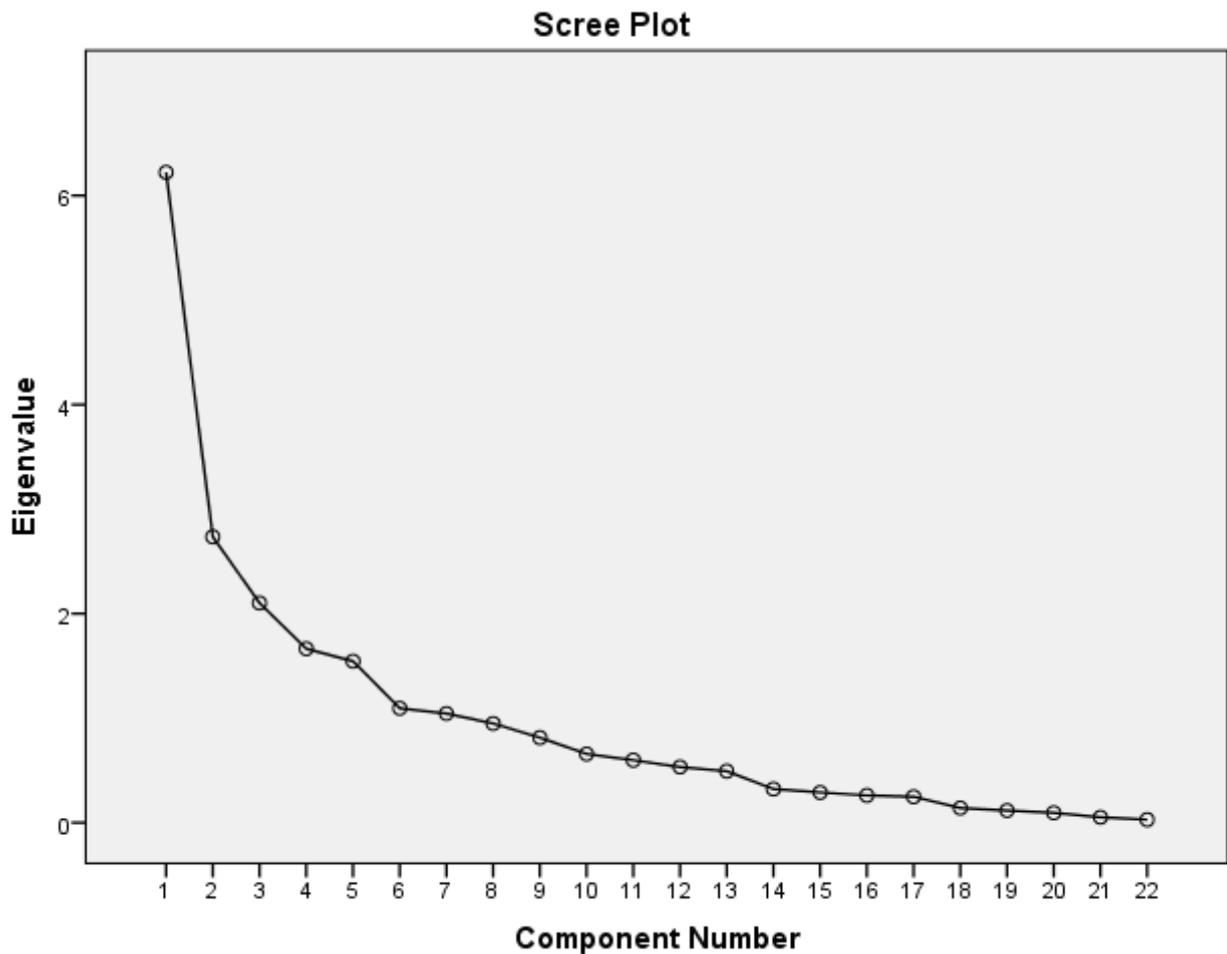


Figure 1. Scree plot for factors and corresponding eigenvalues

## Correlations for Subgroups

### Group 1 (Workload):

Women with children: working overtime and the ability to put work-related matters aside  $r_s = -.512^{**}$ ,  $p = .006$  (women without children is not significant), the ability to put work related matters aside and an acceptable amount of work  $r_s = .561^{**}$ ,  $p = .002$  (women without children no correlation). Women without children: working overtime and main stressfactors emerge at work  $r_s = .889^*$ ,  $p = .018$  (women with children not significant).

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Men with children: main stress factors emerge at work and working overtime  $r_s = .733^{**}$ ,  $p = .007$  (men without children are not significant), an acceptable workload and main stress factors emerge at work  $r_s = -.680^*$ ,  $p = .015$  (men without children are not significant) main stress factors emerge at work and the ability to put work-related matters aside  $r_s = -.685^*$ ,  $p = .014$  (men without children are not significant). Men without children: working overtime and the ability to put work-related matters aside  $r_s = -.841^{**}$ ,  $p = .009$ .

Women with children: acceptable workload and main stress factors emerge at work  $r_s = -.528^{**}$ ,  $p = .005$ . Men with children had similar value  $r_s = -.679^*$ ,  $p = .022$ , work overtime and an acceptable amount of work  $r_s = -.744^{**}$ ,  $p = .00$  (men with children is not significant), the ability to put work-related matters aside and work overtime,  $r_s = -.512^{**}$ ,  $p = .006$  (men with children is not significant). Acceptable workload and ability to put work-related matters aside  $r_s = .561^{**}$ ,  $p = .002$  (men with children is not significant). Men with children: the ability to put work-related matters aside and work overtime  $r_s = .733^*$ ,  $p = .010$ .

### Group 2: (Coping)

Women with children: acceptable workload and main stress factors emerge at work  $r_s = -.528^{**}$ ,  $p = .005$ . Men with children had similar value  $r_s = -.679^*$ ,  $p = .022$ , work overtime and an acceptable amount of work  $r_s = -.744^{**}$ ,  $p = .00$  (men with children is not significant), the ability to put work-related matters aside and work overtime,  $r_s = -.512^{**}$ ,  $p = .006$  (men with children is not significant). Acceptable workload and ability to put work-related matters aside  $r_s = .561^{**}$ ,  $p = .002$  (men with children is not significant). Men with children: the ability to put work-related matters aside and work overtime  $r_s = .733^*$ ,  $p = .010$ .

### Group 3: (Family demands)

Only women with children have significant correlations; take children to leisure activities and time alone  $r_s = .421^*$ ,  $p = .041$ , take children to leisure activities and housekeeping activities  $r_s = .723^{**}$ ,  $p = .000$ . But when it comes to all women and men with and without children, there is significant correlation – men are self-critical and are doing housekeeping activities,  $r_s = .525^*$ ,  $p = .017$ .

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of 22 dependent variables (Questions) and the four categories representing stress. Women (W), Men (Mn), Means (M), Standard deviations (SD), Correlation (r)**

	Workload		Coping strategies		Resilience		Family demands	
	W	Mn	W	Mn	W	Mn	W	Mn
<b>11. An acceptable amount of work</b>	<i>M</i> 3.1 <i>SD</i> 1.1	<i>M</i> 3.5 <i>SD</i> 1.1						
<b>12. Time to perform job assignment</b>	<i>M</i> 3.1 <i>SD</i> 1.0	<i>M</i> 3.5 <i>SD</i> 1.3						
<b>13. No mental demanding work tasks</b>	<i>M</i> 3.2 <i>SD</i> 1.1	<i>M</i> 2.7 <i>SD</i> 1.2						
<b>14. Perceiving people's demands as acceptable</b>	<i>M</i> 3.7 <i>SD</i> .85	<i>M</i> 3.7 <i>SD</i> 1.1						
<b>15. Knowledge of work demands</b>	<i>M</i> 4.4 <i>SD</i> .78	<i>M</i> 4.8 <i>SD</i> .41						
<b>16. The ability to influence at work</b>	<i>M</i> 3.5 <i>SD</i> 1.0	<i>M</i> 3.6 <i>SD</i> 1.3						
<b>17. Main stress factors emerge at work</b>	<i>M</i> 3.6 <i>SD</i> .79	<i>M</i> 3.6 <i>SD</i> 1.2						
<b>18. Working overtime</b>	<i>M</i> 2.9 <i>SD</i> 1.2	<i>M</i> 3.0 <i>SD</i> 1.5						
<b>19. Support from family and friends</b>			<i>M</i> 3.7 <i>SD</i> 1.2	<i>M</i> 3.2 <i>SD</i> 1.4				
<b>20. Act on improvement</b>			<i>M</i> 3.6 <i>SD</i> 1.1	<i>M</i> 3.0 <i>SD</i> 1.3				
<b>21. Self-critical</b>			<i>M</i> 3.07 <i>SD</i> 1.752	<i>M</i> 5.07 <i>SD</i> 2.251				
<b>22. Consolation in religion and faith</b>			<i>M</i> 3.07 <i>SD</i> 1.755	<i>M</i> 1.4 <i>SD</i> .68				
<b>23. Avoiding problems</b>			<i>M</i> 2.8 <i>SD</i> 1.0	<i>M</i> 2.5 <i>SD</i> 1.5				
<b>24. Thoughts of arrangements</b>			<i>M</i> 3.7 <i>SD</i> .92	<i>M</i> 4.1 <i>SD</i> 1.3				
<b>25. Alert and well-rested</b>					<i>M</i> 2.9 <i>SD</i> 1.2	<i>M</i> 3.4 <i>SD</i> 1.3		
<b>26. Tending work schedule</b>					<i>M</i> 3.7 <i>SD</i> 1.1	<i>M</i> 3.8 <i>SD</i> 1.4		
<b>27. Using meal-break and pauses to resilience</b>					<i>M</i> 2.9 <i>SD</i> 1.3	<i>M</i> 3.0 <i>SD</i> 1.7		
<b>28. Energy left after work</b>					<i>M</i> 3.2 <i>SD</i> .81	<i>M</i> 5.09 <i>SD</i> 2.260		
<b>29. The ability to put work-related matters aside</b>					<i>M</i> 3.5 <i>SD</i> 1.2	<i>M</i> 3.5 <i>SD</i> 1.4		
<b>30. Housekeeping activities</b>							<i>M</i> 3.7 <i>SD</i> .84	<i>M</i> 3.0 <i>SD</i> 1.0
<b>31. The children's extracurricular activities</b>							<i>M</i> 3.5 <i>SD</i> 1.0	<i>M</i> 2.8 <i>SD</i> 1.3
<b>32. Alone time</b>							<i>M</i> 3.53 <i>SD</i> 1.881	<i>M</i> 3.7 <i>SD</i> .96

## Confirmatory Data Analysis on Four Hypotheses

Parametric assumptions were verified using descriptive data to find out if the population was normal. Histogram showed a normal distribution on IV women with children at home (50, 9%), and women without children at home (11, 3%). This despite the fact that data clearly showed a bias. To test hypothesis 1 (H1), that women with children living at home perceive more stress than women without children staying at home, a Mann Whitney U-test was performed. The data were not normally distributed and did not meet the requirements for a parametric test. No significance were found (*work load*  $U= 80$ , no significance, *coping strategies*  $U= -65$ , no significance, *resilience*  $U= 50$ , no significance, *family demands*  $U= .00$ , no significance). The analyze result do not correspond to hypothesis 1, which means that there are no difference in perceived stress among women with children living at home and women without children staying at home.

The other statistical analysis was conducted to test H2 "*Men with children living at home perceived more stress at work than men without children staying at home*" we used the Mann Whitney U-test, because of the skewed distribution among men with and without children staying at home. Dependent Variables (workload, resilience and family demands) against Independent Variables (men with and without children) gave rise to subsequent result; *workload*  $U= 24$ , no significance, *coping strategies*  $U= 23$ , no significance, *resilience*  $U=31$ , no significance and *family demands*  $U= 00$ ,  $p= .022$ . Hypothesis 2 coincide partially. Men with children living at home perceive more stress when it comes to family demands than men without children staying at home.

The intention with H3 was to see if there were significant differences between the genders, depending on whether they had children living at home or not. Histograms for the five variables were inspected separately. As the data were skewed, the most appropriate statistical test to use was also a Mann Whitney U-test, which is an independent, non-parametric tests. The analyze for Hypothesis (H3), that women with children living at home perceive more stress than men with children staying at home, eventuated as fallowed; *workload*  $U=55$ ,  $p= .002$ , *coping strategies*  $U=122$ , no significance, *resilience*  $U= 77$ ,  $p= .021$ , *family demands*  $U= 98$ , no significance. The analyze indicates that women with children living at home perceive more stress pertaining workload and find it more difficult to recover from stress than men with children staying at home.

Hypothesis 4 (H4), that women and men within the age of over 40 are using more coping strategies than women and men within the age of under 40, did not meet the requirements for a parametric test and a Mann Whitney U-test was operated. Dependent variable in this analysis was coping strategies. The test resulted as followed; *coping strategies*,  $U=183$ , *no significance*. Women and men over 40 years are not using more coping strategies than women and men under 40 years.

## Analysis

A Mann Whitney U-test was used to see if working time (full time respective part time) was significant for perceived stress among working women and men against the 22 variables that are included in the four categories (*workload*, *coping strategies*, *resilience* and *family demands*). No significance was found.

A Mann Whitney U-test was performed to examine women with and without children against the 22 variables. Those women whom have children spend time with them on their alone time  $U= 4.5$ ,  $p = .044$  and feel alert and well-rested when they come to work  $U= 32$ ,  $p= .044$ .

A Mann Whitney U-test was also performed on men with and without children against the 22 variables. Men with children living at home perceive that they have time to perform their job assignments  $U= 23$ ,  $p= .047$ , they have no mental demanding work tasks  $U= 18$ ,  $p= .016$ , they have the ability to influence at work  $U= 22$ ,  $p= .047$  and they're taking the children to extracurricular activities  $U= 1.5$ ,  $p= .009$  and spend their alone time with their children,  $U= 1.0$ ,  $p= .009$ .

A Mann Whitney U-test was used to analyse women and men against the 22 variables. Significans were found concerning the privity of work demands  $U= 238$ ,  $p= .046$  and housekeeping activities  $U= 180$ ,  $p= .004$ . Men feel that they have the knowledge of what their work demands are and the women are the ones who take care of the household.

The 22 variables and women and men with children living at home were analyzed using a Mann Whitney U-test. Result indicated that men with children perceive that they have time for their job assignments  $U= 81, p= .027$ , energy left after work  $U= 97, p= .011$ , thinking of which arrangements are best to take solving problems  $U= 76, p= .017$ , and that they are alert and well-rested when they come to work  $U= 75, p= .016$ .

The same research was performed on women and men without children living at home, but that analyze was made in MANOVA, because the data was equably distributed. No significance was found.

Finally a Mann Whitney U-test was performed on women and men under 40 and over 40 and the 22 variables. Act on improvement  $U= 180, p= .033$  and Thoughts of arrangements  $U= 164, p= .012$ . Men and women under 40 act more on improvement and thinking of arrangements to solve problems at work, and they are more self-critic than men and women over 40 years.

*Table 2. Means (M), Standard deviation (SD), Mann Whitney U (U), Variance of the group means (F), Sig. (2tailed) (Sig.), Degrees of freedom (df), No significance (NS)*

Variable	Women		Men		Age		Highest degree			Managing role		F df Sig.		
	Childre n n=27	No children n=6	U Sig.	Childr en n=12	No childr en n=8	U Sig.	Under 40 n=38	Over 40 n=15	Elementa ry school n=3	High school n=25	Universi ty n=25		Yes n=20	No n=33
Work load	M 3.4 SD .26	M 3.5 SD .59	80 NS	M 3.8 SD .43	M 3.2 SD .64	24 NS	M 3.5 SD .41	M 3.3 SD .38	M 3.4 SD .14	M 3.4 SD .53	M 3.5 SD .28	M 3.7 SD .38	M 3.3 SD .37	6.39 1,36 .016
Coping Strategies	M 3.1 SD .44	M 2.9 SD .63	65 NS	M 3.0 SD .57	M 2.6 SD .68	23 NS	M 3.1 SD .40	M 2.6 SD .64	M 2.1 SD .54	M 3.0 SD .58	M 3.1 SD .35	M 3.0 SD .41	M 3.0 SD .59	1.21 1,36 NS
Resilience	M 3.1 SD .82	M 3.4 SD .92	50 NS	M 3.6 SD .85	M 3.2 SD 1.0	31 NS	M 3.3 SD .78	M 3.4 SD 1.0	M 3.5 SD .81	M 3.3 SD .90	M 3.3 SD .82	M 3.5 SD .85	M 3.2 SD .83	1.76 1,36 NS
Family demands	M 3.8 SD .69	M 3.3 SD .82	.00 NS	M 3.5 SD 0.6	M 1.8 SD .71	.00 .022	M 3.7 SD .68	M 2.7 SD .97	M 4.0 SD -	M 3.7 SD .80	M 3.4 SD .86	M 3.3 SD .82	M 3.7 SD .80	2.81 1,36 NS

\*Elementary school was excluded in the analyze and the result is only based on men and women with a high school or a University degree

## Discussion

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The intention with our research was to do a study to examine working women and men with and without children living at home and how they perceive stress at work, and to investigate how women and men in the age of under 40 years are using more coping strategies than all women and men in the age of over 40 gave the following result.

### Summary of Data Analyzes

Our study shows that there are no difference pertaining perceived stress between those women and men whom have children living at home and women and men without children living at home, with one exception - men with children. These men perceive more stress concerning family demands than men without children living at home. According to correlations concerning men with children living at home it seems like there is a strong correlation between *Main stress factors emerge at work* and *Working overtime*. Men with children perceive that stressfactors emerge at work and that they don't have acceptable amount of work and that they can not put work-related matters a side. No significance was found referring perceived stress among women and men with children and quantity of working hours. When it comes to differences of perceived stress between the genders, the analyze shows that women with children living at home perceive partial more stress than men with children staying at home. The women perceive more stress at work and have more difficulty to recover from stress than the men. Still, the study establish that women feel well-rested when they come to work. The correlations expose that women with children living at home have an acceptable amount of work and they can put work-related matters aside and they don't work overtime. While the men with children living at home work overtime, they perceive that they don't have an acceptable amount of work, they can not put work-related matters aside and the main stress factors emerge at work. We found significant connections that women and men within the age of under 40 are using more and specific coping strategies than women and men within the age of over 40.

## Explanation to The Results

The result of this study indicates that there are no differences referring perceived stress between those who have children living at home and those who do not have children living at home, because parents learn and adjust to different situations of stress and they are accustomed to have “two strings to one bow”. The reason for differences between women and men with children living at home can depend on the fact that women are more bound to infants than men, considering nourishing etc. Although the society strive to be more coequal and a progress when it comes to equality between the genders has been made, it is hard to terminate old habits and traditions. In many families it is still the women who have the mainly responsibility for the family matters. Perhaps this is the reason why our study found out that women have more difficulty to recover from stress than men. Women do not have time to recover or to get resilience at the same extent as men. The reason why there were no significance between women and men within the age of under 40 using more coping strategies than women and men within the age of over 40 may depend on the distributions referring age, of the survey participants. The men felt that they had an acceptable amount of work and time to perform job assignment, also the ability to influence work and no mental demanding work tasks. This may be because it is predominantly male who has supervisory role and therefor feel they can influence their work situation. But in this study, it is almost equally between men and women with managerial roles (10 men and 11 women, and only two in each group is without children). Therefore, one can assume that marital status (for example, divorced) and working hours can be a few out reasons for the outcome.

## Results in Relation to Theories and Previous Research

The men correspond, as we mentioned earlier, to time to perform their job assignment and no mental demanding work tasks. These findings are similar to Matjasko & Feldman’s (2006) study, which shows that parents do not perceive work as stressful and that especially men with families, actively tries to solve their problems when they emerge. On the other hand, Matsui et al. (1995) point at the relationship between parental demands and absenteeism, tardiness and increased stress, inasmuch as Major et al. (2002) sees the family and the family gathering as an opportunity to unwind and recovering from a day of strain. Major et al. (2002) also mean that the amount of working hours have an impact on working parents’ perceived stress. This study did not find anything that point in that direction, no

significance was found referring perceived stress among women and men and quantity of working hours. Both groups have significant result pertaining taking the children to extracurricular activities and using their own time with their children. Aronsson and Rissler (1998) intimate that women have a considerable workload at home than men, but nothing indicates that their assertion coincide in this study. This can depend upon that women are more patient to stress related situations and that they according, to Marianne Frankenhaeusers studies, have a more economical way of coping with different demands and achievements (Aronsson & Rissler, 1998). Our result corresponds to former studies where the result imply that women have a substantial difficulty to unwinding after work. Our research shows that women have more difficulty to recover from stress than men. Van der Lippe and Peters' (2007) remark that many individuals are torn between family and work can be noticed in our result. Men with children perceive more stress concerning family demands and women perceive more stress at work and have difficulty to recover from stress. The confirm from Wattis, Colin, Standing and Yerkes' (2013) study that women find it difficult to balance the demands at work and parenting can be sensed, but are not pronounced in our result. But Wattis, Colin, Standing and Yerkes' (2013) research regarding that women feel a need to compensate for long hours at work by spending all the free time with their children can be deduced to the positive correlation between spending alone time with the children and taking the children to extracurricular activities . Although, this study point at that it is both men and whom spend their *alone time* with their children. According to Hill (2005) the individual can handle more stress by spending time with the children. From the results from the correlation we can see a moderate relationship between an acceptable amount of work and to put work-related matters aside concerning women with children. While the men with children living at home perceive that main stress factors emerge at work, they work overtime and have not an acceptable amount of work. In spite of the men's result from the correlation both women and men with children show significance when it comes to that they fell alert and well-rested when they come to work. In the previous study by Matjasko & Feldman (2006) claims that men with children living at home use more active coping strategies than women, they seem to actively solve their problems rather than to dwell on them and that men would use more active coping strategies in greater extent than what women do show no significant results in our study. It turns out that there are differences between the genders in terms of coping. Women have a higher negative self image as a strategy and they use avoidance strategies to a

greater extent than men did. Avoidance strategy are used most by young males and decrease when they get older. Older men are using more problem-solving strategies (Rauschenbach et al., 2013).

## Own reflections

Referring to the Family Adjustment and Adaption Response (FAAR) Model we could see that working parents feel well-rested when they come to work and in contrast to men and women without children staying at home, whom neither feel well-rested or have energy left after work. When it comes to Rausenbach et al. (2013) and their notion about that most age-related theories forbode that older workers perceive less stress than younger colleges do correspond to this study according to the strong positive correlation between men and women under 40 working overtime and feel that their main stress factors emerge at work.

A source to workrelated stress is money. The Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO) has made a research concerning the gap between men and women's salary (Ekström & Regnér, 2008). The research establish that men earn more money than women and therefor are several mothers home with their children than the fathers. The responsibility of family demands becomes more difficult to share equally because of the money issue. The Central Bureau of Statistics in Sweden have through their research concluded that every third women in EU is working part-time and many women have to choose between children and career (Bernhardt, 2013). This may be the cause that women perceive more stress pertaining workload and find it more difficult to recover from stress than men.

## Limitations

There are several limitations to our study. We are aware that there are a great deal procedures to measure stress, and we have chosen the most unestablished one. Note though, that the choice is not our own, but rather because of our restrictions pertaining physical measurements (blood test, sample of saliva etc.), therefore we have been obliged to choose self-valuated measurements to estimate stress. Our measurement model emanate from the Allostatic Load Model (AL), that is, the primary AL (*Initial Adaption*) alone. We have not used the AL Model in its entirety because of our limitations. We realize in retrospect that our

study could have been more detail regarding the definition of children living at home. There is a lack of clarity and collected data for the term children living at home. When it comes to our survey it could be framed differently. Marital status should been included and questions about impact of salary may have given another result. Our measurement is not totally intent on stress at work, although three of our four hypothesis are all about work-related stress. The thought was to get as wide picture of stress as possible and to see if external elements influenced on the perceived stress at work. When it comes to the Family Adjustment and Adaption Response Model, we have no questions in our survey that directly are associated with the FAAR Model. We should have taken the age of the children in consideration when we performed our analysis. (Parents with infants may not feel alert and well-rested when they come to work, although our study indicates the opposite.) Regarding the selection of participants to our survey our primary intention failed. We were in contact with six different administrative authorities in a medium-sized commune, but only two answered and therefor our survey was published at Facebook. However, we already then anticipated that we would get an unequal currency among our attendants, which has an indirect influence on our result.

## Future Research Questions

We realize that there are several different correlation between perceived stress and non-correlation between coping among working men and women both with and without children living at home. Are there other key factors in stress and coping than those we studied that are relevant for future research?

It would be of interest to research further on the relationship between coping strategies, working mothers and fathers with children living at home in other cultures than the prevailing in Sweden. Our interest for further research on this occasion, we would like to see in other countries where equality of opportunity with regard to working mothers and fathers are not as distinctive as Sweden. Sweden is presented as a country where equality between working mothers and fathers has increased significantly over the past few decades and an international comparison study would be interesting from a research perspective.

## Our Conclusions

There are no difference in perceived stress among women with children living at home and women without children staying at home. Men with children perceive more stress when it comes to family demands than men without children, and women with children perceive more stress pertaining workload and find it more difficult to recover from stress than men with children. Women and men within the age of over 40 are not using more coping strategies than women and men within the age of under 40.

We did not find as large differences as we had expected, and therefor we can establish that when it comes to perceived stress among working women and men we are same same but different.

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## Appendix 1

### *Information letter*



Hi!

Do you want to respond to our survey about stress and working women and men? We would be very grateful to all of you who respond on this survey! The inquiry is a part of our bachelor thesis. The survey is open until Sunday May 4th. NOTE! The questionnaire is addressed only to those who have some kind of employment! The questionnaire can be found in the comments field.

Thanks in advance!

Best Regards Anette and Elisabeth

## Appendix 2

### *Covering letter*



Hi!

We are two students who is studying on the program Social Science for Communication and Learning at Blekinge Institute of technology. Now we write our bachelor thesis (C-level) and we want to do a survey about how you perceive and handle stressful situations at work and during leisure time. The survey is designed as a Web-survey which is expected to take about five minutes to answer. Those of you who do not have children living at home skip the claims that are child-related.

Try to answer the claims as spontaneously as possible without any further reflection. Please check that you have answered all questions before you send the inquiry. Participation is voluntary and you can cancel without providing any reason. All information will be kept confidential and cannot be traced to any single individual or workplace. The results of the survey will only be used in our thesis and the material will be destroyed when the thesis has been approved.

If you have any questions about the research or survey are you welcome to contact us at [a0708800666@gmail.com](mailto:a0708800666@gmail.com) or to our tutor Per Eisele; [per.eisele@bth.se](mailto:per.eisele@bth.se)

Thank you for your participation!

Regards Anette and Elisabeth

## Appendix 3



*Survey questions transferred to [surveygizmo.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com)*

### Background

#### 1. Gender

Female

Male

#### 2. Age

Up to 30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61 and older

#### 3. Highest education

High school

Secondary school

College/ university

#### 4. Number of child at home

0

Same same but different  
Division of industrial economy

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

5. Age of child/ children

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Works

Full-time

Part-time

7. Permanent employment with current employer.

Yes

No

8. Temporary employment with the current employer.

Yes

No

9. Have you employment with another employer (consultant)?

Yes

No

10. Do you have a supervisory position at work?

Yes

No

## **Workload**

11. I have a workload that feels acceptable.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

12. I have enough time to carry out my tasks

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

13. I have no psychological stressful tasks.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

14. I find other people's demands on me are acceptable.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

15. I know what is required of me in my work.

- Never

Rarely  
Sometimes  
Often  
Always

16. I can influence decisions that are important for my work.

Never  
Rarely  
Sometimes  
Often  
Always

17. The main stressors in your everyday life occur in the workplace.

Never  
Rarely  
Sometimes  
Often  
Always

18. I work beyond my normal working hours to perform my tasks.

Never  
Rarely  
Sometimes  
Often  
Always

## **Coping strategies**

19. I get the emotional support of my family and friends.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

20. I act to try to improve the situation that is stress-related.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

21. I am critical to myself.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

22. I try to find comfort in my religion or my spiritual beliefs.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

23. I avoid the problem as much as possible.

Never

Rarely

Same same but different

Division of industrial economy

Sometimes

Often

Always

24. I think carefully about what action I can take to solve the problem.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

## **Resilience**

25. I feel alert and well-rested when I get to work.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

26. I have working hours/ work schedule that fits me.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

27. I can use the meal breaks and pauses to relax from work.

Never

Rarely

Same same but different

Division of industrial economy

Sometimes

Often

Always

28. I have the energy to do things after a day at work.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

29. I can put thoughts of work sideways on my free time.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

## **Family demands**

30. I am the person doing the household chores. (Cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping, laundry).

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

31. I am the one who makes sure that children come to their leisure activities.

Never

Rarely

Same same but different

Division of industrial economy

Sometimes

Often

Always

32. I spend my own time with the child/ children.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always