

Stress and Coping Strategies among Working Women in Selected Institutions, Mangaluru

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ABSTRACT

Background of the Study: Indian families are undergoing rapid changes due to the increased pace of urbanization and modernisation. Indian women belonging to all classes have entered into paid occupations. Stress is a complex and highly personalized process. As such, stress levels in individuals can vary widely, even in identical situations, due to women's abilities to cope with different forms and levels of stress.

Methodology: A cross sectional research design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select 200 working women from selected institutions in Mangaluru. Married women belonging to nuclear families, willing to participate and present at the time of data collection were included in the study. Three tools were used to collect information from working women namely demographic variables with 10 items, Singh Personal Stress Source Inventory and the Coping Scale. Ethical clearance was obtained from A.J. Ethics Committee. Permission was obtained from the concerned authorities as well as the working women. Analysis was done by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: The findings revealed that majority (91.5%) of the working women's had moderate stress, and least percentage (8.5%) of the working women's had high stress. None of the working women has low stress. The majority (95%) of the working women has average coping and least percentage (5%) has good coping. There is significant association of level of stress and coping with demographic variables such as age, presence of maid at home, mode of transport to the work place.

Interpretation and Conclusion: The study concludes that majority of the working women had moderate stress level and had average coping. The study provides valuable insight into the stressful experience and the use of coping strategies adopted by working women.

Keywords: Stress, Coping, Working Women, institutions, Mangaluru

Introduction

Since the turn of the century, the status of women in India has been changing due to growing industrialization, urbanization, spatial mobility and social legislation. With the spread of education and awareness, women

have shifted from kitchen to higher level of professional activities. Rapid changes in traditional values, life styles, competitiveness and industrialization are the few factors that have changed the whole environment.¹

This change in environment has encouraged and motivated the women for search of work outside the home, which creates stress in women who handled the role of housewife, mother and employed woman at a time. Many studies have produced evidence to indicate that women report more psychological distress than men. Work and family have increasingly become antagonist spheres, equally greedy of energy and time and responsible for work-family conflict. Stress paralyses the human life making life difficult to live²

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Stress has both psychological as well physiological dimensions. By every individual, stress can be handled in different manner like it can be stressful in negative manner for someone, while at the same time it can be eustress for another. All those reasons are known as stressors, which create lots of pressure and demand on an individual to perform. A study reported that stressed working women suffer from many problems like more illness, medicine intake, anxiety and depression.

A study reported that 2% of the female married women never felt stress in their profession, 7% of the respondents felt stress rarely, 24% of the respondents sometimes felt stress, 33% of the respondents felt stress often and rest 34% felt stress regularly in their profession³

Coping is the process of managing demands exceeding the resources of the persons. Coping is not a onetime action; rather, it is a set of responses occurring over time by which the environment and the person influence each other. Coping strategies are the specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological, that individuals employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimise stressful events Approaches in coping with stress are influenced by ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic characteristics. If we would want the women to be empowered and to give their best in the workplace, one of the employer responsibilities would be to reduce stress level and develop coping mechanism to lead a healthy wealthy and prosperous life. Hence the investigator decided to focus on stress and coping among working women in selected schools in Mangaluru.

Objectives

1. To assess the level of stress among working women as measured by stress scale.
2. To identify the coping strategies among working women as measured by coping check list.
3. To find the association of level of stress and coping strategies with selected demographic variables.

Methodology

A cross sectional research design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select 200 working women from selected institutions in Mangaluru. The inclusion criteria were only married working women belonging to nuclear families, willing to participate and present at the time of data collection

were included in the study. Married women without children and living in joint families were excluded from the study. Informed consent was obtained from the study participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from A.J. Ethics Committee.

The Instruments for data collection were as follows:

- Demographic performa with 10 items that include age, income, education, number of children, presence of maid at home full time, children below five years, means of transport to work place and distance from work place.
- Singh Personal Stress Source Inventory (SPSSI)⁴ constructed by Arun Kumar Singh, Ashish Kumar Singh and Arpana Singh was used to assess the level of stress. The inventory had 35 items with three options seldom, sometimes and frequently. The scoring was as follows: 0-30 mild stress, 31-79 moderate level of stress and 80 or higher high level of stress. The English version of the SPSSI has both test-retest reliability and internal consistency reliability. The test-retest reliability was found to be .792 which was not only high but also statistically significant. Likewise, internal consistency reliability by odd-even method was found to be .784 which was highly significant. Thus SPSSI possessed a sufficient degree of reliability. Permission was obtained to use the tool.
- The coping scale had 28-items with three options always(4),sometimes(3) Rarely(2)and Never(1). The tool was given to five experts for content validation. Only one item was modified as per the suggestion of the expert. Arbitrary scoring was as follows: 1-37scores was considered as poor coping skills, 38-75 as average coping skills and 76-112 as good coping skills.

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the concerned authorities and subjects. Subjects were selected according to inclusion criteria. All the three tools were administrated to 200 working women. Analysis was done by using descriptive and inferential statistics

Results

The analysis of the data from the study is presented under following headings:

Section A: Description of demographic variables of working women.

Section B: Description of stress score of working women

Section C: Description of coping strategies of working women.

Section D: Association of level of stress with selected demographic variables

Section E: Association of demographic characteristics of working women

Section A: Description of demographic variables of the sample: This section deals with description of working women according to their demographic characteristics. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and is summarized in terms of frequency and percentage. Highest 110(55%) of the working women are in the age group of (31-40 years). Highest 127(63.5%) of the working women are between the income of Rs.(10,000 -15,000) and least income 3 (1.5%) in the group of (>30,000). More than half 127(63.5%) of the working women have studied up to graduate with B.Ed. Most 112(56%) of the working women have two children. Majority 162(81%) of the working women have no servant at home. Most 103(51.5%) of the working women having children below the age of five. Most 37% of the working women keep their children for babysitting when they are at work. 37.5% of the working women have to travel about 6-10 km from home to work place. Mode of transport: Most 79(39.5%) of working women use bus facility to travel to workplace and least 11(5.5%) of working women are dropped by family members.

Section B: Description of stress score of working women: Stress of 200 working women were assessed by using Singh Personal Stress Source Inventory Scale.

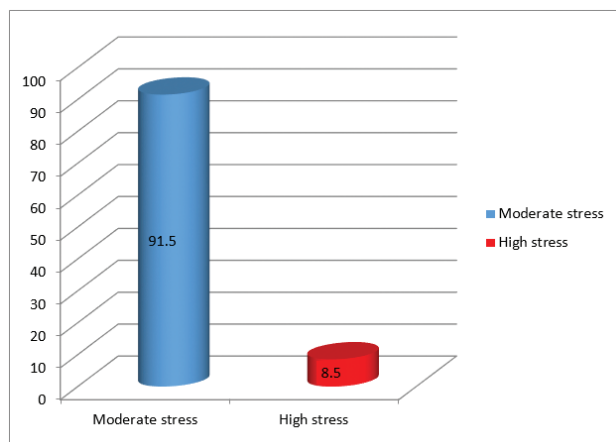


Figure 1: Bar diagram representing percentage distribution of level of stress among working women

The findings in fig 1 shows that majority 91.5% of working women had moderate stress whereas 8.5% of the working women had high stress. The range of stress score was 43-85, the mean stress score of working women was 66.6 and the standard deviation was 6.91. The median for the stress score was 66. None of them had low stress.

Section C: Description of coping strategies of working women: Coping strategies of 200 working women were assessed by using the coping scale.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of brief coping strategies among working women

N = 200

Level of coping	Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor	1-37	-	-
Average	38-75	190	95
Good	76-112	10	5

Table 1 shows that majority 95% of the working women had average coping and 5% of the working women show good coping. None of the sample have poor coping. The mean of the coping scores was 64.4 which show that working women had average coping.

Section D: Association of level of stress of working women with selected demographic variables: To compute the association between the levels of stress of working women with selected demographic variables chi square test was computed. Analysis revealed that there was significant association of stress score with age, presence of maid, and mode of transport to the work place. The chi square value obtained is more than the ‘p’ value. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and research hypothesis is accepted.

Section E: Association of coping strategies of working women with selected demographic variables: The findings revealed that there was significant association of coping strategies with age, income, education, presence of maid/servant, presence of child below age of five years, distance between home and work place, mode of transport to the work place.

Discussion

Stress is the individual’s response to pressure. The response can be psychological and/or behavioural.

How the individual responds to the stressor will depend on their personality, their perceptions, and their past experience. Some amount of stress is necessary and assists the women in achieving both work and personal goals. However, too much stress can make those goals harder to achieve. People respond differently to stress. Some people function well under significant stress while others do not.

In the present study majority (91.5%) of working women have moderate coping and whereas 8.5% of the working women had high stress. The range of stress score was 43-85, the mean stress score of working women was 66.6 and the standard deviation was 6.91. The median for the stress score was 66. None of them had low stress.

This finding is supported by a study conducted by using a descriptive study design to assess stress among 100 School Teachers using the Singh Personal Stress Source Inventory. Results revealed that 77% of teachers showed average stress, 10% of teachers showed high stress and only 13% teachers showed low stress. The comparative study of stress level and scores calculated mean values are 26.38, 54.84 and 82.40 respectively for Low, Average and high stress level.⁵

In yet another study undertaken with the objective of determining the level of stress experienced by the working women and the factors cause stress by working women in banking sector in Bangladesh estimated that more than 43% of the working women faced high stress between the age group of 20-29. 28% working women regularly felt stress in their profession in banking sector. Workload was major factor of stress reported by 65% and 80% women reported that they felt stress due to low salary, job insecurity, transfer and lack of opportunity for growth and advancement; those were mostly responsible creating stress among the working women in banking sector. This shows that working women does have stress in different areas.⁶

The present study shows that majority 95% of the working women had average coping and 5% of the working women show good coping. None of the sample have poor coping. The mean of the coping scores was 64.4 which show that working women had average coping.

A study attempted to find out the coping strategy of stress in employed women and non employed women who were between 25 to 40 years age group. Results showed that the mean score of G₂ group is 1.80 and G₁ is 1.60

for self distraction. G₂ group (working women) score is significantly greater than G₁ group (Non Working) which indicates that the employed women use self distraction technique more in comparison to unemployed women. It is observed that employed women used more technique of self distraction, instrumental support, behavioural disengagement, venting and positive reframing in comparison to non-employed women for coping with stress. Mean score of instrumental support of employed women (M=1.93) is significantly higher in comparison to non employed women (M=1.53)⁷

Conclusion

The study provides valuable insight into the stressful experience and the use of coping strategies among working women and their level of coping. The study concludes that working women has moderate level of stress and average coping level.

Limitations of the Study:

- The sample size is small. Hence generalisations of study findings are difficult.
- Only subjective reporting was used to assess the stress and coping among women.

Recommendations: On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. The study can be replicated on a large sample for generalizing the findings.
2. An interventional study on effectiveness of stress management program can be done.
3. A comparative study can be done between women working on day and night shift
4. A study to assess the various types of stress can be conducted.

Conflict of Interest: None

Source of Funding: Self

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