



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Appraisal of Life Stress and Coping Behaviour in Working Women

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### Abstract

Present study was conducted to examine the nature of life stress and coping behaviour in working women. The sample consisted of 100 working women and 100 non - working women aged between 25 to 35 years selected from a cross-section of society. Research tool consisted of Roy's (2008) stress scale. Results indicated that compared to non-working women, the working women had experienced more stress; Urban working women had ; Upper cast working women experienced more stress than their middle cast and scheduled cast working women. Their coping behaviour to reduce also differed significantly. Working women used more often-the coping stretcher or coping skills like-problem centered, psychology Resilience, family support, cognitive restructure and other kinds of proactive coping strategy for behaviour and escape sahuviou (medications); Where as non-working women moit drepuentiy used emotional founed, support, seeking. It was also found that both working as non-working women used a mixture of several coping strategies which may change over time. To conclude, using problem focused coping strategies were found both for reducing stress and enhancing better for reducing stress enhancing better adjustment to life.

**Keyword:** Lifestress, coping behaviour, working women, Non-working women, Psychology , coping skill.

### Introduction

Stress is the experience of mental, physical and emotional disturbance arising from the situation to which a non - human organism fails to adinat. It is a normal part of life,and in unusernal situations organisms can respond to the environmental change physically, mentally, or emotionally, characterizing it as stress,It is a painful response to a challenging situation. The term stress was borrowed from physics when it is meant on the force acting on an object undergoing deformation. It is generally defined or force per unit area applied to the material.

In Psychology stress is considered as the feeling of emotional strain and pressure. In small amounts it may be the desired, beneficial and motivational and positive reaction to the environment.

But light stress can negatively impact our lives causing headache, sleep disturbance, depression, AIDS,

cancer etc.

Stress can be external as related to the environment but it can be developed by internal perceptions that cause an individual to experience anxiety or other negative emotions surrounding a situation. In fact, stress symptoms can affect our body, our thoughts, feelings and our behaviour. Hans Selye (1950) termed stress as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) of the body, describing three stages as - i. Alarm Reaction stage; ii. Resistance stage, and iii. the Exhaustion stage.

Stress can occur with any type of stressful events, such as -

- . A job loss
- . Medical problems
- . Financial troubles
- . Death of a loved one etc.

Although some of the effects of stress are some for men and women, there are other ways that stress affects women. In general women are more influenced by stress than men (Hammen et al., 2009). Women are socialized to be caretakers, and now, more than ever, are juggling traditional responsibilities along with a career outside home. As women progress through life's stages, hormonal fluctuations associated with menstruation, pregnancy, post-partum and menopause can affect a woman's vulnerability to stress and depression. Under the above backdrop present study was conducted to examine the life stress among working women and their coping strategies of stress.

**This paper is based on the Ph.D Thesis of the author on which Ph.D degree was awarded by L.N.M.U, Darbhanga, in 2008.**

Under the above backdrop present study was conducted to examine the life stress among working women and their coping strategies as stress.

Coping behaviour or strategies are individual conscious efforts to reduce or tolerate stress and mental conflicts. (Weiten and Lloyd, (2008); Snyder, 1999; Zeidner and Endler, 1996; Cummings et al., 1991; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The term coping generally refers to adaptive (constructive) coping strategies, that is strategies which reduce stress. Moreover the term coping also means a reactive coping, that is coping strategies which follows the stressor: The other type is proactive coping, in which a coping response aims to neutralize a future stressor. Folkman Lazarus (2004) split the coping strategies into 4 groups, namely, problem focussed, emotion focussed, support seeking, and meaning making cooperation (2004; Harrington, 2003). In their context, Billings and Moos (1981) added avoidant coping strategy as of the emotion-focused coping strategy. Brannon and First (2009) said that social coping strategy in itself impart coping skill in which an individual seeks others cooperation, Further examples of coping strategies include instrumental support, self-distraction, behavioural disengagement, and use of drugs or alcohol (Alburtur, 2015).

Skyner (1994) suggests that meditation is also used as a coping strategy as it were some kind of prayer to achieve an inner quietness and peace. Moreover, escape is also used as coping behaviour. Some people experiencing stress want to flee the situation at the first sign of anxiety (Jascofisky, 2011).

The effectiveness of the coping strategies given depends on the types of stress, the circumstances, and the personal characteristics of individuals. Moreover coping responses are rarely controlled by personality i.e., habit traits, but also partly by the social environment, particularly the nature of the stressful environment (Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010).



**Method:-****Sample-**

The sample consisted of 100 working women and 100 non-working selected purposefully from the cross-section of society, aged between 25to35 years.

**Research Tools:**

Levels of stress were measured through S.K.Roy's Life Stress Scale, and personal characteristics of subjects were measured through a personal date schedule prepared by the author.

**Results:**

Obtained statistical findings have been presented in Table no-01 through 03 below.

**Table no-01****Comparison of Life Stress Scores of Working and Non-Working Women Through t-ratio**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	df	P-value
Working Women	100	59.12	5.40	6.63	198	<0.01
Non-Working Women	100	54.61	4.24	6.63	198	<0.01

It is obvious from the observation of the contents of Table-01 that Working Women had experienced significantly more stress than those of non-working women because of the fact that working women have to meet double responsibilities and conflicts compared to non-working women.

**Table no-02****Comparison of Life Stress Scores of Urban and Rural Working Women Through t-ratio.**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	df	P-value
Urban Working Women	50	62.48	5.44	5.74	98	<.01
Rural Working Women	50	55.76	5.36	5.74	98	<.01

It is evident from observation of the contents of Table no-02 that urban women had experienced significantly greater amounts of stress than those of the rural-working women. The reason may be that the cognitive structure of working women is wide enough to examine the present situation and speculate its future outcomes, causing anxiety and stress compared to rural women. Moreover, rural society and culture provide more social connectivity, interaction, and more social support which minimize the experience of stress in rural working women, compared to those of urban working women.

**Table no-03**

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**Comparison of Life Stress Score of More Educated and Low Educated Working Women Through t-ratio.**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	df	P-value
More Educated Working Women(10th pass and above)	70	63.18	5.66	8.92	98	<.01
Low Educated Women (Below class 3 pass or simply Literate)	30	55.06	5.14	8.92	98	<.01

From the inspection of the figures contained in Table no-03, it is apparent that more educated working women had experienced significantly greater amounts of stress compared to low educated working women. The reason behind such finding may be that higher the education greater the logical thinking, higher life goals and aspirations which often function as stressors causing stress.

**Coping Behaviour:**

Both groups of women differed in terms of their choices of using coping strategies, as follows-

Most Frequently used Coping Strategy By Working Women	Most Frequently used Coping strategies by Non-Working Women
1. Problem focussed (51%)	1. Emotion focussed (75%)
2. Social Support (62%)	2. Crying (56%)
3. Avoidance (36%)	3. Prayer (41%)
4. Yoga & Meditation (10%)	4. Stop eating (8%)
5. Emotional Focussed (12%)	5. Escaping (4%)

The working and nonworking women had differential Preferences of coping strategies to get rid of their life stress.

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