

# **STRESS: COPING UP STRATEGIES AMONG WOMAN IN CORPORATE AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN BANGALORE CITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*For many, stress is a five letter companion from daybreak to dusk. In today's age, stress is evident everywhere, and in every workplace irrespective of nature, type or location. Here an attempt has been made to explore how women Library Professionals manage and cope up with stress in Corporate and academic environment.*

*An exclusive survey was carried out to identify the coping up strategies of women librarians working in corporate and academic libraries. Sample consisted of 21 women librarians from Corporate and 31 from Academic Libraries. Data has been collected through a structured questionnaire to understand how women librarians cope up and handle stress. The response shows the coping up strategies used, and the way women professionals manage stress in their day to day life and at workplace.*

*There is a significant difference in coping up strategies among woman library professionals from corporate and academic library is concerned. The findings reveal methods with which professionals manage personal and workplace stress through family support, socialising, adapting healthy habits, exercise, and positive approach and by actively pursuing their hobbies.*

**Key words:** Women and Stress Management, Coping up strategies, Stress and Library professionals, Academic & Corporate library, Bangalore city.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Let the beauty of what you love be what you do” –Rumi

The concept of stress is a buzzword in a continuously changing world, widely talked about and researched too. Stress is a state of both mental and physical exertion towards an issue or stimuli. It is defined as an emotional, mental, physical response towards a stimuli based on the conditions and restrictions applied. Stress can be identified and categorised in two types – distress (negative stress) and eustress (positive stress) depending on the level of response, which depends again on the individual personality. The reasons for stress are always individualistic and diverse too. Common stress boosters may be personal, relating to personal relations at work and family, busy work schedule, heavy work load, financial responsibilities etc.

Stress is not always bad; eustress is a positive one that motivates energy, focuses on the perceived ability in coping up, helps in improving performance and gives the feeling of satisfaction too. Unless one learns to enjoy whatever the person does stress is bound to occur and will be negative.

In today’s fast paced society, it is easy for people to become stressed. For years, scientists have been researching the causes leading to stress and its impact on human health physically and mentally. World is becoming more technologically advanced each day, most people spend a big chunk of their time with smart phones, laptops, tablets and other electronic gadgets that are glued to ones eyes and ears. Apart from general health hazards it affects their mental and physical health too.

Stress has become a universal phenomenon. Modern era is an era of science and technology where everyone is striving to excel in their field of work, whether it is at home or at work place. Every person quests for the attainment of higher ranks, though competition is necessary, it creates undue pressure and stress to the person.

Workplace stress levels are rising and spreading throughout the world, posing a lot of danger to physical and mental health of more and more people. It has not received adequate attention until recently, but many recent studies have tried to assess the problem and find out reasons. Societies that are in transition to a stage where more and more people join the workforce have to get more organised than before to deal with the problem.

In the last few years, economic growth has aggravated the situation, up to 80% of workers complain of increased stress. Professionally both white collar and blue collar employees are susceptible to stress, especially those in the age group of 30-45 are more stressed than the others.

Due to tremendous increase in work stress in recent years, cases of mental illness at workplaces continue to rise, and many of them relate to women who are increasingly joining work force. The illnesses relate to excessive wok pressure, job insecurity, lack of time to discharge essential family obligations, sexual harassment, and compliance with unlawful internal work practices<sup>(1)</sup>

Since the turn of the century, the status of women in India has been changing due to growing industrialization, urbanization, geographical 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. 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 a homemaker, mother and employed professional woman at a time.

Most of the industrialised countries report highest levels of stress. The world health organisation estimates that by 2020, mental depression will be the largest cause of disability worldwide. Reports show that half of the workforce in India being under stress, about 30% of them living with addictions and marital discord, around 20% of the population are suffering due to depression, with 36% of IT professionals living in Bangalore city are facing psychiatric disorders according to NIMHANS study. <sup>(2)</sup>

## **2. WOMEN & STRESS MANAGEMENT**

In recent years as more and more women are coming to take on many jobs. It is a general belief in many cultures that the role of women is to build and maintain the homely affairs like task of fetching water, cooking and rearing children. In the traditional society, women's role was naturally limited to the family. Since she was the bearer of children, she was fully occupied with her duties as a mother and homemaker. This was no small feat, since the traditional household may be described as both a production and a consumption unit. Man's responsibility was to provide the household with raw materials, which were then converted by the woman into consumable products or conditions by means of rudimentary methods and tools. Among the group of women, there is diversity of values. Working women have different values than non- working women and other adult women. In modern society the social and community environment is full of social and moral pollution. Hence there are many problems of working women in different fields.

In general, women are more likely than men to experience physical symptoms of stress, such as fatigue, irritability, headaches and depression. Women are also more likely than men to bounce back and cope up with job stress.

Women are becoming more and more career conscious, they want to take up challenging roles for growth and development, whenever they are considered in the stereotyped framework, women face stress. With changing times, middle class families find it difficult to have a decent standard of living without women's income. Therefore their going to the workplace is very much accepted by family members.

Due to this acceptance, other family members try to adjust their roles within the family and a change is being felt in the attitude of the husband and other family members. Moreover due to changes in the technological environment, telecommunication, better transportation facilities, electronic gadgets etc., stress is reduced. As more women participate in and lead work organizations, the health and well-being of women have important implications for organizational effectiveness.

For Woman library professionals in Corporate & Academic Libraries the need to juggle among multiple priorities only seems to increase with time and with advances in technology.

Most companies proclaim that they have a well thought out HR philosophy that anchors diverse initiatives and activities. In an organized setup, the core functions of Human Resources Management, such as, recruitment, training and performance management are integrated through a comprehensive competency map covering key positions. Yet, in spite of all these efforts employees do face stresses, especially women who are burdened with duties in multiple; both at home and at the workplace, bear the brunt the most. The organizations of today are looking forward to having more diversity in the workplace as it leads to not just

greater profitability but also a healthier workplace where talents are appreciated and opportunities are provided regardless of gender biases.

The Industry and economy is greatly benefiting from the vast talent pool of the women managers and efforts are on to create more conducive environments for the women workers.

Working women have larger share of struggle due to dual responsibility at home and workplace. Faith on their capabilities to multitask multiplies their stress levels all the more—stress and anxiety are regular companions in the lives of most career women, who struggle to balance between their personal lives, their family responsibility and in discharging the duties in line with what is most expected of them in their job descriptions.

Dual role played by the working women may make it undeniably tough who wants it all in life. Women should always find efficient ways to handle the situation that demands multiple roles to be played and multitasking, no matter how efficient she is, it takes a toll in the long term on working women, perhaps leading to a burnout characterized by declining energy levels and motivation. <sup>(3)</sup>

In modern day living, access to comforts is easy not only innumerable means of comfort, but there is also plenty of demands that stress human body and mind. In recent times everybody talks about stress from young children to older adults. Stress seems to have affected not only just blue collar executives, but also all types of working class from various sectors, home makers, working women, businessmen, professionals and even children are pressurized due to stress.

Stress has become an inevitable and unavoidable component of human life due to increasing complexities and competitiveness in living standards. It is certainly overwhelming the way, in which change is taking place in the world today, no individual is free from stress and no profession is stress free. Everyone experiences stress, whether it is within or outside the family, business, organization, study, work or any other social or economic activity. <sup>(4)</sup>

Thus at preset stress in general and job stress in particular has become a part of the life and has received considerable attention in recent years. Stress has become the core concern in the life of everyone, though everybody wants stress - free life. Stress is a subject which is hard to avoid. Stress is a part of day-to-day living. Considered alien to Indian lifestyle is now a major health problem, around the globe every individual under the sun, irrespective of his age, class, creed, or gender is subjected to stress either knowingly or unknowingly.

Study of corporate employees across multiple Indian cities showed that more women are stressed and depressed than men because of work. One out of every two employees in corporate India shows signs of depression. 55% of women showed signs of depressed compared to 47% men. 80% of employees exhibited symptoms of anxiety.

“Globally around 350 million people of all ages suffer from depression and is the leading cause of suicide among 15-39 year olds”. (Dr. Mohan K Isaac WHO consultant) <sup>(5)</sup>

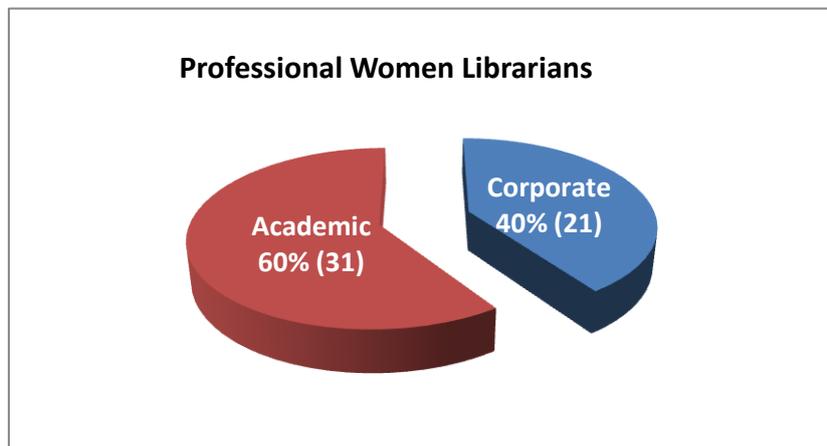
An attempt has been made to find out through a survey method the strategic ways of coping up stress adopted by woman professionals from corporate and academic libraries, A structured questionnaire comprising of 29 questions with two alternative choices in each item, “Yes/No” has been used as a tool that was administered to collect data from the respective respondents.

A total sample size of 52 women from Bangalore city were studied as a sample survey with academic women librarians consisting of (31) comprising 60% and corporate woman

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librarians consisting of (21) comprising 40%. And it is focused only as distress and not eustress.

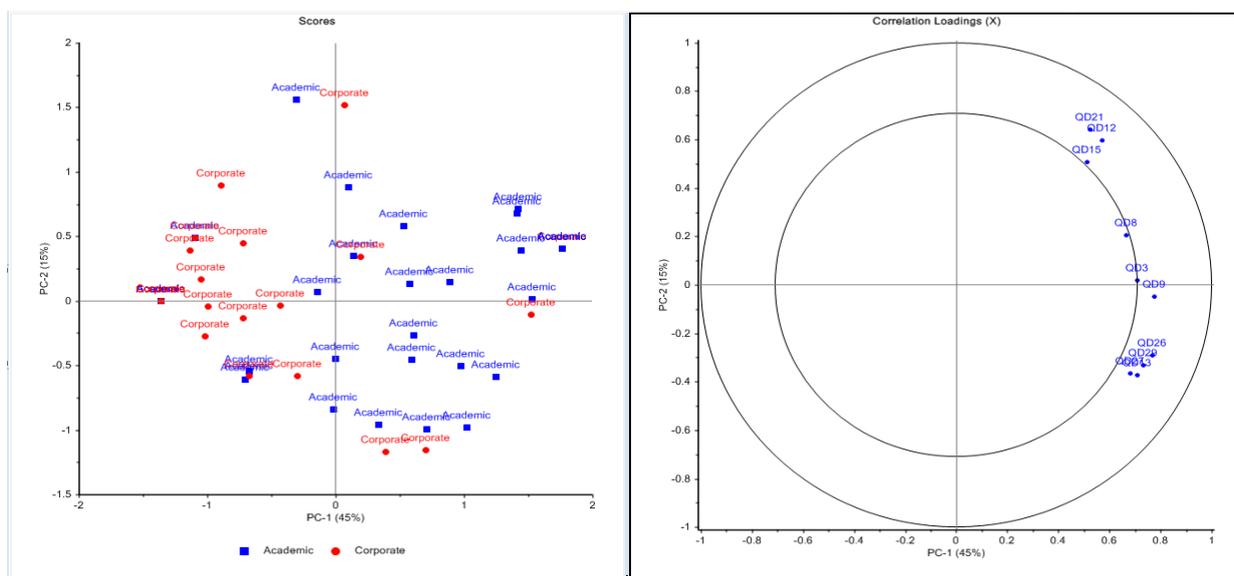
Below, Pie chart presents percentage and total number of women from corporate and academic libraries.



**Figure 1** shows the percentage and no of woman professional librarians from Corporate and academic libraries.

### 3. DISCUSSION BASED ON DATA

The reponses were analysed using Prinicipal Componets Analysis (PCA) method, multivariate analysis, a dimentional reduction tool that aims at reducing a large set of variables to a small set that still contains most of the information in the large set. PCA approach was found more suitable as it provides a roadmap showing how a complex data set can be reduced to a lower dimension in order to reveal the core dynamics lying underneath given variables.



**Figure 2** Coping up strategies used by woman from corporate and academic libraries

Based on the Principal component analysis (PCA) procedure identified seven prominent questions having high correlation loading with first three Principal component explaining about 69% variations also confirm that these questions are the ones explaining difference among woman in corporate and academic libraries for coping up strategies.

3. Get away from things for a while, rest or go on a vacation
8. Engage in physical and vigorous exercise
9. Visit places of worship or go on a pilgrimage
13. Fantasize on unreal things that make me feel better
26. Over indulge in eating, shopping, or watching movies, visiting people to keep away from the problem
27. Feel that other people are responsible for what has happened
29. Take a big chance or do something very risky

The principle component analysis throws light on, corporate librarians who have answered affirmatively to these structured questions, whereas the academic librarians are away from these questions.

This clearly shows that the coping up strategies used by corporate and academic librarians do differ in the way in which they handle to de-stress themselves. It is evident that there is a strong tendency among woman from corporate libraries to set aside time to plan methodically, evaluate situations, and prioritise based on how they can manage their time frame and budget.

In order to incorporate a balance of personal and professional goals to cope up with the challenges faced at workplace, they are always open to choose and try newer and viable solutions to unwind and overcome stress in a convenient way. This may be due to their critical and time bound deadlines set by the organisation.

From the prominent questions it can be inferred that most corporate women librarians are willing to get away from things for a while, rest or even go on a vacation, engage in physical/vigorous exercise, visit places of worship or go on a pilgrimage. It also shows that corporate women librarians also fantasize on unreal things that make them feel better.

Alternatively, academic librarians get abundant autonomy to discharge their duties and responsibilities. Timeliness is not a critical factor, as their role revolves around supporting academic activities to students, faculty and administrators.

This description clearly demonstrates that majority of the corporate librarians surveyed were solo librarians working in business or company settings independently without professional peers or support staff to lean on during difficult periods. Hence, whenever corporate librarians were faced with challenging situations they preferred to seek professional help from consultants outside their organisation, personally take an insightful view of the problem several times, until they reached a satisfactorily meaningful solution or a plan of action. They preferred to discuss their issues with family members, who could do something, concrete about solving their problem.

The indicators on the PCA, clearly shows that woman from academic libraries, are not very selective in coping up with stress, though they are equally affected by workplace stress, they tend to deal with stress in a different and unstructured manner. They seldom get bored as they their time is occupied by faculty, students, library staff, administrators and library vendors. Constant communication with people around them, helps in absorbing much of the work place stress, thus not allowing to set aside special time to recharge themselves either by travelling, going on vacation or on a pilgrimage.

Corporate librarians also feel that they are well placed and better off when compared to their contemporaries working in academic and public libraries, due to attractive pay structure,

healthy HR policies, exposure and access to latest technology. They often face stress with candour and wish they could change what has happened and try to seek reassurance and emotional support from friends and family members. They constantly reaffirm and take a fresh look at their problem as nothing can be done, to overcome stress and anxiety.

Woman corporate librarians are well absorbed in their immediate surroundings and environment that they forecast, anticipate probable outcomes and mentally rehearse themselves well in advance and stay prepared and focused to handle adversities. They are resilient and console themselves that things are not that bad, and it could have been worse, depending on their need, they prefer to retreat to a quiet spot and think over the situation. They also like to fantasize on unreal situations that make them feel better and optimistic to the brighter side of life.

Whenever corporate librarians encountered challenging situations they preferred a bit of yoga, prayer, meditation, go for long walks or Listen to music for comfort and relaxation. Make light of the moment, refuse to get too serious about it. Try to avoid being advised by wrong kind of people, and prefer try to solve the problem on their own.

Woman corporate librarians often display leadership initiative, find ways to delve deep to find a purpose or meaning whenever faced with setbacks. And approach problems in a philosophical manner to accept that time is a great healer, stick to a plan and follow it. They are familiar with popular guide books, visit websites, social media and search for solutions of similar problems. They sought solace through work and study to take their mind away from the problem, Take each day as it comes, step into work place with a feeling to nurture, and awaken the creativity side in them. Whenever they were unable to solve problems normally, they were open to seek professional counsellor help, or plunged themselves in a hobby or learn something new that mentally keeps them absorbed.

Corporate librarians are careful enough not to indulge in over eating, shopping, or watching movies, at the same time they took time to visit people to keep their mind away from the problem. They take ownership and never feel that other people are responsible for what has happened. They want to share their feelings with friends who understand them well, and are also confident of themselves and are prepared to take a big chance or do something very risky.

Major part of the stress for woman from academic library comes from local travel time, as commuting with in cities during peak hours is found unbearable due to flooding traffic jams and dependence on public transportation. The other factor is time management and balance of work and family life. Academic librarian's job too comes with harder deadlines during admissions, new entrants orientation, semester changes, examination, seminars, workshops and conferences that are held from time to time. Also, with their commitments towards students and faculty members.

When it comes to de stressing, academic librarians take a holistic view in coping up with stress. They do not go on separate vacation, as they enjoy lean periods between semesters and college vacations, and do not seek professional or counsellors help to solve their problems. They create a dependable peer group both inside and outside their work place to absorb workplace stress and negativity. <sup>(6)</sup>

By nature women in academic libraries are forthcoming, open in sharing and expressing their concerns as their job requires them to often interact with students, faculty, senior staff and administrators who often guide, inspire and keep them motivated.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

While coping with work stress is essential for all working woman, it is very important to get to the bottom of the problem, and explore the root cause and fix it. Rather to feel miserably helpless and depressed. Today woman are no longer confined to their homes, but the expectations is almost the same. All types of media's are repellent highlighting cheerful superwoman, who keep their house sparkling, sterilised clean, cook gourmet food and excel in their jobs. She is also the best mom, wife, daughter-in-law. This kind of portrayal puts a lot of strain on the woman as it may not be practically possible to be best in all fields. Hence, it is wise to have achievable goals and expectations that work accordingly.

Though workplace stress does affect woman in both corporate and academic libraries in myriad ways, as they deal with uncooperative colleagues, tough higher ups, unfriendly workplace, together takes a toll on woman's mental and physical health.

While, coping up styles and strategies are different, even though both deal with digital technologies, data and services. Corporate woman librarians often being solo librarians have to plan their absence away from work place often well in advance through proper channel and approvals. This is often not the case with academic librarians as they work in small, medium and large teams. Corporate woman librarians feel that taking away from work, going on a vacation or travelling rejuvenates and recharges them. Whereas, academic woman librarians use subtler ways in coping up with stress both at work and home through friends, relatives and family members.

Finally, it is worth noting that any type of stress management purely depends on individual style, courage, determination and experience.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

**Structured questionnaire administered to the respondents:**

##### **Coping up Strategies**

	<b>Answer by ticking</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1	Like to go over the problem mentally again and again, until I reach a solution or a plan of action		
2	Discuss with a family member, who can do something concrete about the problem		
3	Get away from things for a while, rest or go on a vacation		
4	Compare to others and feel that am blessed and better off		
5	Sometimes wish that I can change what has happened		
6	Seek reassurance and emotional support from friends and family members		
7	Accept or face the problem since nothing can be done		
8	Engage in physical and vigorous exercise		
9	Visit places of worship or go on a pilgrimage		
10	Anticipate probable outcomes and mentally rehearse them		
11	Console myself that things are not that bad, and it could have been worse		
12	Retreat to a quiet spot and think things over		
13	Fantasise on unreal things that makes me feel better		
14	Try to be optimistic and look at brighter side of life		
15	Would like to do yoga / prayer or meditate		
16	Go for long walks or Listen to music for comfort		
17	Make light of the moment, refuse to get too serious about it		
18	Avoid being advised by wrong kind of people, try to solve the problem personally		

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19	Find a purpose or meaning in my suffering		
20	Accept that Time is a great healer, stick to a plan and follow it		
21	Read popular guide books, visit sites and social media and search for solutions of similar problems		
22	Turn to work/Study to take mind away from the problem		
23	Take each day as it comes, step into work place with a feeling to nurture, and awaken the creativity in me.		
24	When unable to solve normally, shall seek professional counsellor help		
25	Indulge myself in an hobby or learn something new that mentally keeps me absorbed		
26	Over indulge in eating, shopping, or watching movies, visiting people to keep mind away from the problem		
27	Feel that other people are responsible for what has happened		
28	Share my feelings to ones who understand me well		
29	Take a big chance or do something very risky		

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