

A STUDY ON COPING STRATEGIES USED BY WORKING WOMEN AND HOMEMAKERS

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Abstract: The empirical paper focusses on the various coping strategies used by the working women and homemakers to deal with crucial life circumstances. For the purpose of the study a sample of 30 working women and 30 homemakers within the age range of 25-35 years and minimum qualification of Graduation were selected from the city of Hyderabad. A test named 'Coping Strategies Scale', developed by A. K. Srivastava, (2001) that studies coping strategies on five dimensions namely; Behavioural approach, Cognitive approach, Cognitive-behavioural approach, Behavioural avoidance and Cognitive avoidance was administered on the sample. The results shows that there is no significant difference between working women & homemakers in their use of coping strategies to overcome various life conditions and other situational problems. However, it was found that there is difference in the types of coping strategies used by the sample.

Keywords: Working women, Homemakers, Coping strategies.

Introduction: Usually, home was regarded right place for women. They were confined to four walls and look after domestic task. They were neither allowed to get education nor do jobs outside. In the post independent period in India with the expansion of education and markets, more and more women have started taking to different jobs. In our society, it is expected that women should do well on home and professional front. This has made their lives stressful. Millions of women in our nation report that they have to face high level stress balancing their twin role that of home maker and successful professional. Many researchers, in recent times have directed their attention and efforts to carry out various studies to understand the complex relationships between stress and the coping strategies. Stress cannot be eliminated from life; therefore, it is necessary to find out more and more effective ways to cope with it. Both an employed and unemployed women play a significant role in household activities of their families. Their life is more family centered than that of men. The happiness of a family to a great extent depends upon her. Women fulfill their duties and responsibilities sincerely in their outside profession by coping with the double work pressure that can create frustration, stress and other problems.

Coping: "Coping is the process of managing demands (external or internal) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984b). "Coping consists of efforts, both action-oriented and intrapsychic, to manage (i.e. master, tolerate, reduce, minimize) environmental and internal demands and conflicts among them". This definition of coping has several important aspects. First, the relationship between coping and a stressful event represents a dynamic process. Coping is a series of transactions between a person who has a set of resources, values and commitments and a particular environment with its own resources,

demands and constraints. Thus coping is a set of reciprocal responses, occurring overtime, by which the environment and the person influence each other. Second, the definition encompasses a great many actions and reactions to stressful circumstances. Generally coping resources are divided into five categories namely emotional, spiritual, physical, cognitive and social. People adopt various strategies to cope with stress such as problem solving, cognitive reconstruction, social support, express emotions, problem avoidance, wishful thinking, and self-criticism and social withdrawal.

According to Phillips and Imhoff (1997), given the stress and conflict involved in the balancing of a dual-role lifestyle, women have formulated coping strategies and support systems in order to balance the two role demands. Phillips and Imhoff (1997) found that there exists a large body of research that has developed the area of coping strategies and interventions for helping women cope with role stress and conflict. Herbst (2006), defines coping as "an effort to create conditions that permit an individual to continue moving toward desired goals". Further stating that "coping can thus be seen as a response that follows a stressful experience" (Herbst, 2006). A focus is placed on women in the study and thus, Ahmad (1995), states that women who find themselves in multiple role situations, need to decrease the amount of conflict they experience, and this is done through the use of coping strategies.

The Five Functions of Coping Behaviour: According to Higgins *et al.*, (2008) coping behaviour has five functions:

1. It decreases the individual or family's prone- ness to distress by removing causes of stress.
2. Strengthens and maintains the resources used to protect the individual or family from damage, for example; family cohesiveness and adaption.

3. Decreases or eliminates stressor events and their corresponding adversity.
4. Actively manipulates the individual or family's environment by actively seeking to alter the societal circumstance.
5. Controls the impact of stress and its destabilising impacts on the individual or family, if stress cannot be avoided.

Over the years, according to Higgins *et al.*, (2008), catastrophic events, such as unemployment, disease, death, family separation and bankruptcy have called for the study of coping and its response to such life events. However researchers have also recognized that coping takes place in response to 'normative' stressors too. These stressors are picked up steadily and tirelessly, such as that of the conflict between work and family life. Although research has focused on coping strategies and its procedures, there proves to be little incorporation of the study of family coping, individual coping and organisational support mechanisms (Higgins *et al.*, 2009). Hall (1972) on the other analyses coping in relation to role- conflict, portraying roles as a form of a person's identity that compete for a part of the total identity of a person through a frequent link in the core. Hall (1972) states that the greatest role- conflict that a working women experiences comes from inter- role conflict. Hall (1972) establishes three different types of coping strategies that can be used in dealing with work-family conflict. The strategies include: structural role redefinition; personal role redefinition and reactive role behavior. Structural role redefinition is the "altering external, structurally imposed expectations relative to one's role" (Hall, 1972). This has to do with a person lowering demands and setting new expectations. Personal role redefinition "involves changing one's expectations and perceptions of one's own behavior in a given role" (Hall, 1972). This involves the requirement for the person to alter their own attitudes and perceptions concerning certain expectations. The final coping strategy is reactive role behavior which "entails attempting to find ways to meet all role expectations" (Hall, 1972). This refers to an individual's improvement in role performance in an attempt to meet certain demands.

Factors that Influence Coping: McVeigh (2003) states that Lazarus and Folkman identify several resources that influence coping, including that of health, optimism, problem solving and social skills, social support and material resources. McVeigh (2003) adds that the aspects of an individual's life that can hamper coping include; the level of risk the individual is open to as well as personal and environmental limitations. Kenney (2000) supports this view and adds that there are a few qualities that women can take on and they include hardiness, assertiveness as well as the ability to love, trust and

confide. Decent social skills and high self- esteem have also shown to prevent the negative effects from overload (McVeigh, 2003).

A study by Easton (2007) identified the coping strategies of working women as that of domestic support networks such as support from husband or partner, extended family, friends and formal childcare facilities. According to Brink and De la Rey (2001), working mothers used both emotional and problem solving focused- coping strategies in dealing with the strain of work- family roles, including reappraisal, problem solving and seeking social support, incorporating not just one but a combination of all the strategies.

Coping responses can be active in nature and oriented towards confronting a problem, or they can be strategies that entail an effort to reduce tension by avoiding dealing with a problem.

Approach/ Functional coping style: Functional coping skills involves facing the realities of issue consciously and taking some concrete action to solve the problem at the individual level or with the help of other people .These style of coping with issues are functional. This also resembles as approach coping , encompasses actions such as planning, strategizing, and applying effort that aim to correct the situation rather than passively allowing the stressor to continue (Skinner *et al.*, 2003). Approach coping also includes emotion-focused strategies such as emotion regulation and cognitive restructuring (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Cronkite & Moos, 1995; Moos & Schaefer, 1993). Further approach coping can be viewed in following categories.

1. *Behavioural approach* coping consists of the conscious use of an obvious action in response to stressful appraisal of a situation or event when individual confronts the stressor (Krohne, 1993), it may include enhancing one's effort to resolve the issue and identifying the source of stress to prevent its reoccurrence .
2. *Cognitive approach* coping skills includes strategies such as logical analysis, mental rehearsal of problem resolution, and restructuring cognitions to find positives from the experience. Cognitive approach coping consists of a conscious thought or emotion in which the individual is "oriented toward the threat-related aspects of a situation" (Krohne, 1993).

Avoidance style/Dysfunctional coping style: On the other hand ,the second category consists of a person who decide to suffer from ,accept or deny the experienced stress /problem or issues or put blame on somebody (self or other) for being in that situation.

1. *Behavioural avoidance-* coping is characterized by engaging in behaviors aimed to reduce negative effect in response to the stressor. These strategies

include behaviors such as substance use and seeking new activities to find sources of relief or satisfaction. Behavioural avoidance coping is the conscious decision to physically remove oneself from a threatening environment. Examples are walking away from the stress source or avoiding a threatening or unpleasant situation.

2. *Cognitive avoidance* – characterized by denial of the crisis or “deciding that the basic circumstances cannot be altered” (Moos & Schaefer, 1993). Cognitive avoidance coping reflects, “Turning away from threatening cues” (Krohne, 1993) for example, filtration of information, selective attention, and distraction.

There are seven styles of coping that are used –

- Blaming on others
- Avoiding the stressors
- Asking others for the help
- Engaging in indirect stress reducing activities
- Collecting information
- Acting opposite of the way one feels
- Minimizing the importance of issue
- Social & emotional support from others helps in coping.

Enhancing coping skills/ capabilities: There are several ways to enhance coping strategies of adolescent girls such as Exercise, Practicing yoga, indulging in recreational activities, adequate communication skills, building relationships and peer counselling activities, Changing gears : It involves shifting from issue to something else for e.g., Activities that capture one's interest, Pamper yourself, Warm-up slowly etc.

Working Women and Homemakers: *Working women* are women with paying jobs. And *homemaker* is a person who manages the household of his or her own family, especially as a principal occupation.

Most people, married or unmarried, find the term *housewife* perfectly acceptable. But it is sometimes perceived as insulting, perhaps because it implies a lowly status (“She's just a housewife”) or because it defines an occupation in terms of a woman's relation to a man. Homemaker is a fairly common substitute.

The traditional status of a woman as a homemaker anchors them in society and provides meaning to their activities within the social, religious, political and economic framework of their world. However, as India undergoes modernisation, many women are in employment, particularly in the larger cities, where most women will work. But still both the working women and homemakers women face challenges and stress far greater than that faced by men.

In comparison of the lives of working women and homemaker, there are *advantages* and *disadvantages* for working women and homemaker. Now women are becoming economically independent not only in the urban cities but in the rural areas also. The lives

of working women are more hectic than a homemakers. A working woman has to look after the family, household chores and manage her office work also. Whereas, a homemaker, has to manage the household duties and look after herself and her family. It becomes difficult to manage household duties for working women as they cannot devote much time to their families as compared to a homemaker. The working women have less time to themselves, whereas homemakers women have a bit of time for themselves. It is difficult to say which is better. Men give more importance to working girls than non-working girls. When the time comes for matchmaking, the parents or the groom will prefer a working girl to a non-working girl, but they want that the girl should be *Homely* and should look after the home front also. Therefore life is a bit tougher for a working woman. Dhurandher, D., & Janghel. G., (2015) in their study found out the coping strategy of stress in employed women and non-employed women who were in the 25 to 40 years age group. The study was conducted on 60 women, 30 were employed women as different profession and other 30 were non-employed women. For assessment brief COPE Scale used which was developed by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub. The brief COPE Scale is a 28-item self-report measure of problem-focused versus emotion-focused coping skills. The t-value was computed to analyse data. It was observed that employed women used technique of self-distraction, instrumental support, behavioural disengagement, venting and positive reframing more in comparison to non-employed women as coping strategies to stress.

Asudani, et.al. (2014) carried out a study to find out the difference between college female teachers and female homemakers with regard to their stress and coping strategies. This study has been conducted on the sample of 100 women; 50 female college teachers and 50 homemakers. This is relevant as females have to balance their family and professional roles that can trigger higher levels of stress in them. The results depicted that, College female teachers have higher level of stress with the Mean of 37.36 and S.D. of 6.14 than those of homemakers with Mean of 30.67 and S.D of 10.22. The study also found out that the college female teachers made better use of coping strategies with the Mean of 203.74 and S.D of 17.68 than those of homemakers with Mean of 189.78 and the S.D of 37.79. To find out the comparison between Means and Standard Deviation student's t test was used. On stress level the difference was significant at 0.10 level. It means that results may vary 10 out of 100 cases. In the same way there is a significant difference of 0.05 level on coping strategies. It also gives indication that the result would differ 5 out of 100 cases.

Aim: To determine the types of coping strategies used by working women and homemakers.

Hypotheses: Null hypotheses have been formed as follows;

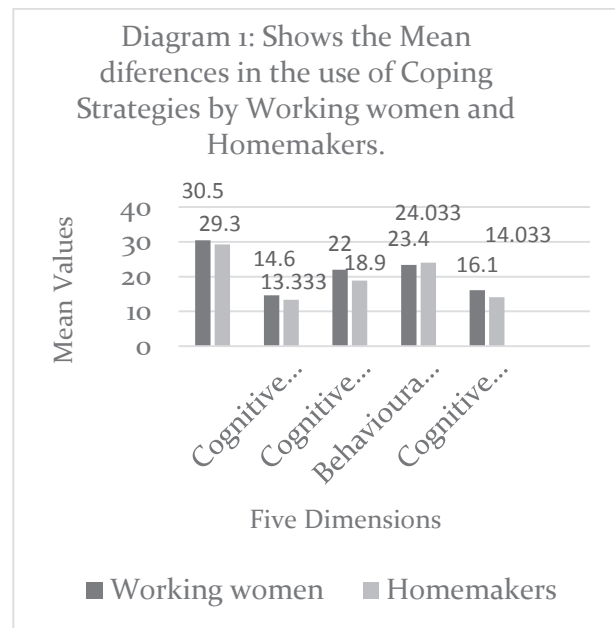
1. There would be no difference in the types of coping strategies used by working women and homemakers
2. There will be no difference in use of Behavioural approach as coping strategies between working and homemakers.
3. There will be no difference in use of Cognitive approach as coping strategies between working and homemakers.
4. There will be no difference in Cognitive-behavioural approach as coping strategies between Working women and homemakers.
5. There will be no difference in use of Behavioural avoidance as coping strategies between working women and homemakers.
6. There will be no difference in use of Cognitive avoidance as coping strategies between working women and homemakers.

Test material Used: Coping Strategies Scale Questionnaire, developed by A. K. Srivastava, Department of Psychology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, (2001). The questionnaire has 50 questions containing 5 responses for each question that includes options- Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Most of the times and Almost Always. Determining the types of coping strategies used in five dimensions, namely, *Behavioural Approach*, *Cognitive Approach*, *Cognitive-Behavioural Approach*, *Behavioural avoidance* and *Cognitive Avoidance*. The subject has to tick one option according to her opinion.

Sample Selection: The sample of the study consists of 60 women of age group 25-35. 30 working women and 30 non-working women. Data was obtained from different workplaces like hospitals, offices and schools for working women, and households for homemakers in Hyderabad.

Procedure: The coping strategies scale was administered on both the samples of working women and homemakers, and after the collection of the data, the scoring was done with the help of the manual to determine the types of coping strategies used by them overall and on five dimensions.

Results and Discussion:



From the results depicted in Table no. 1 and Diagram -1, it can be compared and seen that there is a mean difference of use of coping strategies in dealing with life situations by working women and homemakers. The means for Behavioural approach for working women and homemakers is found to be 30.5 and 29.5 respectively. The means for Cognitive approach for working women and homemakers is found to be 14.6 and 13.333 respectively. The means for Cognitive - Behavioural approach for working women and homemakers is found to be 22.0 and 18.9 respectively. The means for Behavioural avoidance for working women and homemakers is found to be 23.4 and 24.033 respectively. The means for Cognitive avoidance for working women and homemakers is found to be 16.1 and 14.033 respectively. It shows a clear difference in the use of coping strategies by working women and homemakers, and the most used coping strategy by both the group is Behavioural approach, followed by Behavioural avoidance and Behavioural cognitive approach, Cognitive avoidance, and the least used strategy is cognitive approach. This indicates that in dealing with life situations both working women and homemakers prefer to use Behavioural strategies more than cognitive strategies. Thus, the null hypothesis - 1, that is, 'There would be no difference in the types of coping strategies used by working women and homemakers', stands rejected.

Table No. 1: Shows the results of coping strategies used by Working women and homemakers, in the values of Mean, SD and t test.

I.Behavioural Approach				
	Mean	SD	t test	Significance
Working women	30.5	4.22	0.44 2	Not significant
Homemaker	29.5	7.4		
II. Cognitive Approach				
	Mean	SD	t test	Significance
Working women	14.6	2.5	0.07	Not significant
Homemaker	13.33 3	2.7		
III. Cognitive-Behavioural Approach				
	Mean	SD	t test	Significance
Working women	22.0	5.4	0.02 3	Not significant
Homemaker	18.9	5.2		
IV. Behavioural avoidance				
	Mean	SD	t test	Significance
Working women	23.4	7.4	0.6	Not significant
Homemaker	24.03 3	5.4		
V. Cognitive Avoidance				
	Mean	SD	t test	Significance
Working women	16.1	3.4	0.05	Not significant
Homemaker	14.03 3	4.6		

From the results depicted in Table no. 1, the five dimensions of coping strategies are compared to determine the difference in use of coping strategies in dealing with life situations by working women and homemakers. The means for *Behavioural approach* for working women and homemakers is found to be 30.5 and 29.5 respectively, and SD is 4.222 and 7.4 respectively, and the t test value is 0.422, which is found to be not significant, this determines that results are not significant to differentiate between the working women and homemakers with respect to their use of Behavioural approaches as coping strategies. Thus, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis -2, that is, "There will be no difference in

use of behavioural approach as coping strategies between working and homemakers".

The means for *Cognitive approach* for working women and homemakers is found to be 14.6 and 13.333 respectively, and SD is 2.5 and 2.7 respectively, and the t test value is 0.07, which is found to be not significant, this determines that results are not significant to differentiate between the working women and homemakers with respect to their use of cognitive approaches as coping strategies. Thus, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis -3, that is, "There will be difference in use of Cognitive approach as coping strategies between Working women and homemakers".

The means for *Cognitive-behavioural approach* for working women and homemakers is found to be 22.0 and 18.9 respectively, and SD is 5.4 and 5.2 respectively, and the t test value is 0.023, which is found to be not significant, this determines that results are not significant to differentiate between the working women and homemakers with respect to their use of cognitive-behavioural approaches as coping strategies. Thus, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis -4, that is, "There will be difference in Cognitive-behavioural approach as coping strategies between Working women and homemakers".

The means for *Behavioural avoidance* for working women and homemakers is found to be 23.4 and 24.033 respectively, and SD is 7.4 and 5.4 respectively, and the t test value is 0.06, which is found to be not significant, this determines that results are not significant to differentiate between the working women and homemakers with respect to their use of behavioural avoidance as coping strategies. Thus, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis -5, that is, "There will be difference in use of Behavioural avoidance as coping strategies between working women and homemakers".

The means for *Cognitive avoidance* for working women and homemakers is found to be 16.1 and 14.033 respectively, and SD is 3.4 and 4.6 respectively, and the t test value is 0.05, which is found to be not significant, this determines that results are not significant to differentiate between the working women and homemakers with respect to their use of cognitive avoidance as coping strategies. Thus, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis -6, that is, "There will be difference in use of cognitive avoidance as coping strategies between working women and homemakers".

Conclusion: From the present study it can be concluded that, there does exist a difference in the most preferred type of coping strategies used by the working women and homemakers and that is, Behavioural approach. Behavioural approach coping consists of the conscious use of an obvious action in response to stressful appraisal of a situation or event

when individual confronts the stressor (Krohne, 1993), it may include enhancing one's effort to resolve the issue and identifying the source of stress to prevent its reoccurrence. However when it comes to determining difference in the five types of coping

strategies used by the working women and homemakers, there is found to be no significant difference between the types of coping strategies used by both the group.

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