

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Analysis of Stress Among the Female Employees with Children in the University of Cape Coast: Implications for Management Practices

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the sources, effects and coping strategies of stress adopted by female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast. A descriptive study design was employed in carrying out the study. Two hundred and four (204) respondents were sampled out of the 431 female employees with children. The instrument used was a constructed questionnaire. The results revealed that demands from husbands, children and thinking of promotional issues were some of the stressors that confronted the respondents. The major effects of stress among the respondents were their inability to plan well and lack of concentration on household chores. The result showed that the most prevailing coping strategy adopted by the respondents was engaging in conversation with friends and family members as well as getting assistance from colleagues and house helps. It was concluded that female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast go through stress which emanates from different sources. Some of the recommendations were that management of the University should educate employees on appropriate strategies to cope with their stress and could be done through seminars, conferences, and workshops on coping strategies of stress.

**Keywords:** work stress, coping strategies, female employees, university of cape coast

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## INTRODUCTION

Stress seems to be a worldwide phenomenon, which occurs in various forms in every workplace. Hans Selye (1998) was one of the founding fathers of stress research and he found stress to be not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it. The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is detrimental. Selye believed that the biochemical effects of stress would be experienced irrespective of whether the situation was positive or negative.

Since Selye, a lot of researches have been conducted on stress over the last few years. Some of the theories behind it are now settled and accepted; others are still being researched and debated. The causes of stress can be environmental, social, biological, or psychological factors that challenge an individual to change or adapt (Bourne & Yaroush, 2003). For instance, environmental and social factors include the environment of a workplace and relationships with others whereas biological and psychological factors encompass the nutritional status, emotional wellbeing and overall health levels of an individual (Gazzaniga et al., 2010).

A widely accepted definition of stress, attributed to psychologist and Professor Richard Lazarus, is, a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual can mobilize. According to Lazarus & Folkman, (1984), stress is generally used to describe a response to demands that is greater than an individual's ability to cope, which disrupts the individual's physical or mental equilibrium and poses a threat to the individual's general well-being. They suggested that for a situation to elicit a stress response, the situation has to be appraised by the individual as stressful, that is, the demands on the individual's resources exceeds his or her ability.

Stress at work is seen as one of the major psychosocial risks of work and it is one of the major problems confronting employees. It is of great concern to employees, employers and psychologists, because of its high growing rate in ill-health, as a result of long working hours of some employees. In reference to work-related stress, European Commission (2000) defines stress as the emotional, cognitive, behavioural and psychological reaction to aversive and anxious aspects of work, work environments and work organizations. The National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH, 1999) also defined work stress as the negative effects on the worker's physical and emotional health as a result of the mismatch between the worker's capabilities, resources or needs and the requirements of the job.

Sources of work stress such as work overload, job insecurity, work interpersonal relationships, role conflict, commuting stress etc. have been identified to play a primary role in employee's health and are somewhat similar for both males and females (Days & Livingstone, 2001). Frequent absenteeism, mood disorders, tardiness and intentions to quit are usually predictors of stressful working conditions (Sandmark & Renstig, 2010) However, work stressors unique to working females also include sexual harassment, lower chances of career advancement and sexual inequality, may negatively impact females (Street, Gradus, Stafford, & Kelly, 2007).

The widespread entry of females into the labour force is a characteristic of the past decades. Females are increasingly entering the workforce to contribute financially to the family survival and that they are not only entering the work force in greater numbers but also remaining in the work force throughout their child-bearing and child-rearing years (Lim, 2009). Even with the changing societal trends and expectations, it is still 'expected' that working females should assume the traditional role of a homemaker.

Noor's (1999) preliminary findings on Malaysian working women's roles and wellbeing showed that the juggle

between work and family demands have contributed to the adverse psychological and emotional wellbeing for the working mothers which includes feelings of guilt, anxiety or decreased role satisfaction at work and home. Killien and Brown (1987) summarized that when demands from work and family roles opposes each other, the mother is likely to suffer stress and negative health consequences.

Coping is essentially defined as the efforts used to manage the internal or external demands that are appraised as potentially harmful and stressful to the individual. Coping strategies are behaviours adopted by the individual in response to reduce the adverse effects of the appraised stressor (Fleming et al., 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), there are two categories of coping strategies-problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping actively confronts the problem and tackles the problem head-on. It is usually used when the individual appraises the situation as optimistic and controllable (Carver et al., 1999). Emotion-focused coping features behaviour that reduces the emotional distress on the stressor, for instance, avoidance, minimization, selective attention and positive comparison. This coping strategy is most likely utilised when the individual perceives the situation as unavoidable and uncontrollable (Carver et al., 1999). Nevertheless, problem-focused and emotion focused coping are not two distinct functions but both facilitate and impede each other in the coping process and may be more beneficial than the other in different situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). To facilitate the coping process, seven categories of coping resources have been identified: health and energy, positive beliefs, problem solving skills, social skills, social support and material resources.

With the increase in the demand for university education in recent times and the desire for every university to meet its growing needs, staff are bound to be stressed. The freeze on employment in the public sector has also come to worsen the plight of employees in the public universities and the University of Cape Coast is not an exception. Female workers are now made to work extra and most of these people also have families and therefore play the dual roles. Being a female worker comes with its own level of stress and then being a woman with children further compound this stress.

Again, there appears to limited studies on this topic within the setting of this study. Amoako (2018), Nbiah (2016), Vandyke (2015) and Mate-Siakwa (2013) investigated stress among staffs and students within the University of Cape Coast. For example, Mate-Siakwa (2013) investigated stress among academic senior members, Vandyke (2015) investigated stress among first year students, Nbiah (2016) studied stress among final year Education students while Amoako (2018) also investigated stress and coping strategies of international students of the University of Cape Coast.

Many of the studies conducted focused on the general population and did not single out females. For instance, Roberto (2021) investigated adopted by health workers in dealing with during COVID 19 in Vasto, Italy. Vandyke (2015) studied the coping strategies of stress adopted by cultural hub workers in Ghent, Belgium. Osiola (2018) also investigated stress coping strategies of teachers in the Benin State in Nigeria.

This study, therefore, sought to fill the literature and geographical gap by assessing the coping strategies of stress adopted by female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast and professed some implications for management practices.

## **Research Questions**

The study answered the following research questions:

- 1 What are the sources of stress among female employees with children in the public universities of

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Ghana?

- 2 To what extent does stress affect female employees with children in public universities in terms of managing the home and work?
- 3 What are the prevalent coping strategies of female employees with children in the Public University of Ghana?

### **Theoretical Models of Stress**

The theoretical models used in this analysis are outlined here. Nilsen (2015) explains that a model is a simplification that is made on purpose of a phenomenon or some feature of a phenomenon. Although models might be thought of as theories with a more limited scope of explanation, Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) argued that models are more descriptive in character. It helps to gain a deeper familiarity with the topic at hand by looking back on relevant information. Experts have stressed the importance of precise model depiction (Cairney 2012; Carpiano & Daley, 2006). For this research, we used two different theoretical frameworks: the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman, and the Two-Factor Theory of Motivation developed by Herzberg. The Transactional model of stress and coping postulated that one's resiliency in the face of adversity and stress stems from the way they interact with their surroundings. The two-factor theory is a concept that describes the aspects that determine an individual's pleasure and motivation level. According to the model, while elements like job security and salaries are important for reducing workplace dissatisfaction, aspects like creative freedom and peer respect are what really drive people to succeed in their jobs.

### ***The Concept and Nature of Stress***

Selye (1979) first identified stress as a cause of nonspecific symptoms of sickness, drawing on personal experience. According to Selye (1979), stress is the body's universal reaction to pressure. Since then, new forms of stress have emerged in response to ideological explorations. Stranks (2015) stated that several personal, social, environmental, and work-related aspects might be employed in defining and interpreting the meaning of stress, but Kinman and Jones (2005) noted the lack of consensus on conceptualisations of stress among academics. Some analyses of stress show that differences in access to or use of power or control based on factors such as gender and socioeconomic status contribute to the experience of stress. Tan and Yip (2018) pointed out that stress is not a psychiatric concept but rather a staged sequence of events, experienced by everyone during a period of disease, and that these characteristics of stress are universal. In addition, stress was defined by Leung et al. (2012) as an emotional condition brought on by physical exertion. In light of these considerations, Pitt et al. (2018) concluded that the subjective sense of stress is still an inescapable, normal, and required consequence of being alive.

Existing research on the effects of stress on people and organisations demonstrates that stress can have both negative and positive outcomes (Yu Fei et al., 2012; Ismail et al., 2010; Lazarus & Folkman 1984). When people are overwhelmed by the pressures from outside themselves, it can have detrimental effects on their bodies and minds (Ismail et al., 2015). Overall, anxiety is typically portrayed as negative outcomes and potential dangers (Kozuszniak et al., 2012). Ill health, an unpleasant way of life, a lack of self-control in the face of fear, and a lack of motivation are all examples of distress that can be experienced by faculty members. While most of the preceding definitions painted a bleak picture of stress or discomfort, Farler and Broady-Preston (2012) argued that it is possible for stress to bring out the best in people. An example of this kind of goodness would be when pressure

actually helps you get what you need (Kupriyanov & Zhdanov 2014; Szalma & Hancock 2008). Such cases are typically referred to as eustress and are less likely to be discussed (Mesurado et al., 2016; O'Sullivan, 2011). The positive method of responding to the stress and the positive outcome are both possible in eustress, as described by O'Sullivan (2011). Managed pressure on the body from the outside world has been linked to reduced physiological and psychological stress in those who experience it (Leung et al., 2012; Yu-Fei et al. 2012; Ismail et al., 2010; Gachter et al., 2011). From a more theoretical standpoint, eustress can be exemplified by things like living a fulfilling life, mastering your anxiety, and taking initiative. Similarly, from an academic point of view, working hard in research and supervision, as well as teaching and learning, can be healthy responses to stress for academic personnel. When the research produces the expected number of publications, the expected number of postgraduate students graduates, and the expected quality of students passes, the outcome is positive. How an individual responds to stress is the primary determinant of whether or not it is healthy stress. According to experts, good stress is the kind that motivates people to rise to the occasion in the face of adversity and improve their performance at work, while bad stress has the opposite effect.

In light of the aforementioned, we can distinguish between two types of stress: physiological and psychological (Beehr & Glazer 2005; Lazarus & Folkman 1984). The physiological response of the organism to stress (Ismail et al., 2010; Newell, 2002). Headaches, migraines, stomach pain, exhaustion, chest pain, irregular heartbeat, trouble sleeping, muscle soreness, and aches and pains are all symptoms of physiological stress. The individual's efficiency, effectiveness, work quality, and health are all negatively impacted by these symptoms (Ismail et al., 2010; Newell, 2002). Also, "psychological stress refers to a relationship with the environment that a person appraises as significant for his or her well-being and in which the demands tax or surpass available coping resources," as Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 19) put it. Anxiety, sadness, burnout, job alienation, hostility, tension, wrath, anxiety, nervousness, irritability, and frustration are all examples of emotional reactions that can be caused by workplace stimuli, as described by Reddy (2011). Overall, according to the findings of Haines and Saba (2012), one's sense of role identity is linked to psychological stress.

### **Academic Workplace Stress**

Organizations are increasingly worried about stress, and it has become a hot topic in both academic and public discourse. For example, in a press conference addressed and released on August 1, 2023 by the president of Colleges of Education Teachers Association of Ghana, he indicated that teachers in the colleges are stress as a result of the workload they have to handle. Environment and work conditions vary greatly between different types of educational institutions. People believe that academe one of the least demanding workplaces possible. They reason been that as a place of learning, people have learnt to deal with all situations including stress. Metric of performance, productivity, and quality have recently been introduced within the academic community, proving that this is not the case. Moreover, Shin and Jung (2014) pointed out that managerial workloads for academics have increased rapidly due to new public management of reforms pushed by performance-based management, budget short-cuts, and efficiency-oriented management. Both Shin (2014) and Jung (2014) pointed out that different types of universities assign different obligations to their faculty members. Teaching, learning, research and supervision, administration, community service, and academic citizenship are all part of the academic obligations of a student (Meng & Wang, 2018; Macfarlane, 2018).

Equally diverse are the personality types, levels of education, career aspirations, and core values that make up the academic staff and the management of the school. Expectations within the institutional setting might cause

academic employees to feel a wide variety of stresses. Yousefi and Abdullah (2019) linked these pressures to the age of transition brought on by constant global changes; however, Kaur, Noman, and Awang-Hashim, (2018) linked them to shifts in curriculum design and the dynamic multitasking obligations that have emerged as a result of this. Additionally, Meng and Wang (2018) linked the pressures to the varying responsibilities placed on academic staff members to meet the demands of their students. There is growing dissatisfaction among faculty as a result of these measures, which are fast altering current practises in the classroom. Academic staff members' life and safety may be at greater risk than one might think in the complex academic setting where such precautions are in place. As a result, juggling schoolwork and personal responsibilities becomes an endless struggle as demands rise. Thus, "academic proletarianisation," a term coined by Locke and Bennion (2013), describes the deterioration of the academic workplace. Smith (2019) revealed that female employees of the Ministry of Finance, Ghana are stressed. She identified work-family balance as the leading cause of stress among female employees.

## METHOD

### Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This design according to Olayiwola (2007) is an effective way of gathering data from different sources within a possible short time at a relatively cheaper cost. Descriptive surveys or studies also serve as direct sources of valuable knowledge concerning human behaviour.

### Setting and Participants

The population for this study comprised all the female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast. There were a total of 494 female employees with children as at January, 2022 (IMS-UCC). From the population of the study, a sample of two hundred and four (204) female employees with children were selected for the study. This was informed by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size. Purposive sampling was adopted in selecting female employees with children while convenience sampling technique was used to select the require sample form the various colleges and the central administration. Purposive technique was used because of the expertise of the respondents on the subject under discussion while the convenience technique was used because of the complex nature of the work of employees with academic which require them to undertake research, community service and consultancy. The convenience sample gave room for those who were willing and available to be included in the study.

### Instruments

A self-designed questionnaire named Female Employees with Children Questionnaire (FECQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into four sections A, B, C and D. Section 'A' comprised of personal information of the respondents such as age, qualification, and years of experience. Section 'B' consists of items drawn on sources of stress among female employees with children. Section 'C' consists of items drawn on the effect of stress on managing the home and on job/tasks performance and Section D consists of items drawn on the coping strategies of stress. The items were constructed on a modified Likert scale with structured or closed ended. They were placed on Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was created in line with the research objectives of the study.

The reliability of a measuring device is defined as the degree to which it reliably and dependably measures the target quantity (Leedy & Ornrod, 2015). The tools were field-tested on a sample of 30 female employees with

children in the Cape Coast Technical University. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients:  $r = 0.86$  was obtained. According to Cohen (2015),  $r$  values of 0.70 or above is considered to be internally consistent, hence these values was adequate.

## **Procedure**

The data collection for this research took place during January and February 2022, specifically between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. These months were chosen to capture a representative snapshot of stress experiences among female employees with children at the University of Cape Coast. The mid-afternoon timing aimed to ensure participants were available and not influenced by the immediate morning rush or end-of-day fatigue. The data collection occurred within the participants' offices to create a familiar and comfortable environment, promoting open and honest responses. Each data collection session spanned approximately 45 minutes to an hour, allowing sufficient time for participants to express their experiences comprehensively. A team of experienced enumerators, well-versed in survey research methods, were responsible for conducting the surveys. Training sessions were held to ensure consistency and ethical considerations in data collection. Potential challenges, such as participant apprehension or time constraints, were mitigated through clear communication about the research's importance, emphasis on confidentiality, and flexibility in scheduling meetings. This structured data collection procedure aimed to obtain a nuanced understanding of stress among female employees with children at the University of Cape Coast, ensuring both the quality and ethical standards of the research were upheld.

## **Data Analysis**

In the process of data analysis, we simplified participants' responses into two overarching categories: "Agree" (consolidating both "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses) and "Disagree" (merging "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" responses). The rationale behind this consolidation was to streamline the interpretation of participant sentiments. To ascertain the level of agreement within each category, we employed a mean score criterion. Responses with a mean score of 2.50 and above were categorized as "Agree," while those falling below 2.49 were classified as "Disagree." This decision-making threshold was established based on a weighted mean score calculation within a four-point interval (adapted from Nitko, 2004). The weighted mean score was computed by assigning values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 to the respective response categories and then summing them up:  $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10$ . This sum was then divided by the number of categories (4), resulting in a mean score of 2.5. This analytical approach aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of participant perspectives, ensuring that the outcomes were comprehensively and systematically interpreted in alignment with the study's objectives and methodological considerations.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the study are presented at this section and it covers a decision rule that guided the interpretation of the results. The results are presented using tables to cover the demographic issues as well as the various research questions.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Two hundred and four (204) respondents from the University of Cape Coast were involved in the study. Their demographic variables were selected in line with the topic under study. The analysis of demographic characteristics are presented in Tables 1 to 3 as follows:

**Table 1.***Distribution of Respondents by Age*

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21-30 years	34	16.67
31-40 years	97	47.55
41-50 years	42	20.59
51-60 years	31	15.19
Total	204	100

Table 1 indicates the distribution of respondents by age, with 97(47.55%) falling in the age group of 31-40 years. The data also revealed that 42 of the respondents representing 20.59% fell in the age group of 41-50 years, followed by 34(16.67%) in the age group of 21-30 years. Next were 31 (15.19%) who fell in the age group of 51-60 years. This implied that majority of the respondents were below 40years which represents the youthful age.

**Table 2.***Distribution of Respondents by Years of Experience*

Number of years of working experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5	13	6.37
6-10	84	41.18
11-15	27	13.24
16-20	53	25.98
21-25	18	8.82
26 and above	9	4.41
Total	204	100

Table 2 reveals the analysis of the distribution of respondents by number of years of experience. The table showed that respondents who fell in the group of 6-10 years were the highest representing 41.18%. This was followed by 53 respondents representing 25.98% who had between 16-20 years of experience, 27(13.24%) respondents fell between 11-15 years of experience. Eighteen respondents representing 8.82% fell in the category of 21-25 years while 13(6.37%) and 9(4.41%) fell in the category of 1- 5 years and 26 and above years of experience respectively. This implies that majority of the respondents of the study had much more to learn in terms of experience which could inform the way they cope with stress.

**Table 3.***Distribution of Respondents by Years of Experience*

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5	81	39.71
2	52	25.49
3	64	31.37
4	4	1.96
5	1	0.49
6	2	0.98
Total	204	100

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents by number of children. It also shows that 81(39.71 %)



respondents had between 1 child while 64 respondents representing 31,37% had 3 children while 52 representing 25.49% had 2 children. This implies that majority of the respondents of this study are mothers with one, two or three children who could be faced with many responsibilities.

### **Research Question One: What are the sources of stress among female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast?**

Research question one sought to identify the sources of stress among female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast. Table 4 presents the results from the analysis.

**Table 4.**

*Sources of Stress among Female Employees with Children in the University of Cape Coast*

Items	Agree		Disagree		Mean Score	Remarks
	F	%	F	%		
Marital separation	120	58.82	84	41.18	2.58	Agree
Divorce	113	55.39	91	44.61	3.20	Agree
I think of promotional issues at the work place	142	69.61	62	30.39	3.43	Agree
Demands from husband	143	70.10	61	29.90	3.83	Agree
Demands from children	122	59.80	82	40.20	2.72	Agree
Religious activities	117	57.35	87	42.65	2.88	Agree
Low levels of income	141	69.12	63	30.88	2.97	Agree
Ill health	105	51.47	99	48.53	2.84	Agree
Attitude of colleague workers	129	63.24	75	36.76	2.63	Agree
Attitude of students	136	66.67	68	33.33	2.85	Agree
Attitude of management	103	50.49	101	49.51	2.73	Agree
Aggregate Mean score					2.87	Agree

From table 4, there was an aggregate mean score of 2.87 which indicated that all the factors in the table are sources of stress. An item-by-item analysis, however, showed that "Demands from husband" was the most dominant source of stress with a mean score of 3.83 which was even higher than the aggregated mean score. Other four of the items were above the aggregated mean score. These were "I think of promotional issues at the work place" with a mean score of 3.43 followed by "Divorce" with a mean score of 3.20. The others were "Low levels of income" and "Religious activities" which had mean scores of 2.97 and 2.88 respectively. The item the respondents considered as the least source of stress was "Marital separation" with a mean score of 2.58.

### **Research Question Two: To what extent does stress affect female employees with children in University of Cape Coast in terms of managing the home and work?**

Research question two sought to investigate the extent to which stress affected female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast regarding how they manage the home and work. Table 5 presents the results from the analysis.

**Table 5.**

*Effects of Stress on Female Employees with Children in Terms of Managing the Home and Work*

Items	Agree		Disagree		Mean Score	Remarks
	F	%	F	%		
I am not able to plan well.	158	77.45	46	22.55	2.89	Agree

I lack concentration on household chores.	127	62.25	77	37.75	2.92	Agree
I have a poor interpersonal relationship with my spouse.	161	78.92	43	21.08	2.69	Agree
I am not sexually active	123	55.17	96	43.05	2.73	Agree
I always feel tired and ill	148	21.52	22	9.87	2.82	Agree
I am not able to achieve goals and target set.	156	25.11	39	17.49	2.71	Agree
I have poor interpersonal relationship with my children	138	17.04	27	12.11	2.59	Agree
Poor attitude/zeal to work	137	16.59	31	13.90	2.79	Agree
I perform poorly on the job.	120	44.84	56	25.11	2.68	Agree
Longer time in tasks accomplishment.	164	28.70	57	25.56	2.63	Agree
I am not able to learn or study effectively.	190	40.36	69	30.94	2.66	Agree
Aggregate Mean Score					2.76	Agree

From table 5, the aggregate mean score of 2.76 agreed that stress has negative effect on female employees with children in public universities in terms of managing their home and work. The respondents agreed to all the items as effects they go through in one way or the other. What affected the respondents most was the item "I lack concentration on household chores" with the mean score of 2.92 followed by "I am not able to plan well" with a mean score of 2.89. The respondents also agreed that stress makes them feel tired and ill with a mean score of 2.82. Also 156 (25.11%) indicated they were not able to achieved set goals. In terms of time taken for job completion, the respondents agreed that stressed female workers take longer time to perform a given tasks. This was seen in the mean score of 2.63 and percentage (28.70%) agreement.

### Research Question Three: What are the prevalent coping strategies of female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast?

Research question three sought to determine the prevailing coping strategies of female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast. Table 6 presents the results from the analysis.

**Table 6.**

*Coping Strategies of Female Employees with Children in the University of Cape Coast*

Items	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
I use labour saving equipment (e.g., washing machines).	169	82.84
I resort to eating balance diet	131	64.22
I engage in regular exercise	98	48.04
I take in deep breathing	152	74.51
I listen to soft music	191	93.63
I relief myself with drugs	127	62.25
I take a good rest	123	60.29
I talk to a counsellor	84	41.18
I engage in a chat with friends	197	96.57

It is evident that the most prevailing coping strategy adopted by the respondents was "I engage in a chat with friends and Colleague" 197(96.57%). This was followed by "I listen to soft music" 191(93.63%). The next was "I use labour saving devices or equipment (e.g., washing machines)" 169(82.84%) and the least coping strategy adopted was "I talk to a counsellor" 84(41.18%).

## Discussion

The result obtained in respect of the research question one revealed that the respondents agreed to all the items. This finding agrees with that of by Maisamari (2000) who observed that women perform multiple roles which make them vulnerable to stress. He added that women with children are stressed by almost all their daily activities. It was also revealed from the study that the most dominant source of stress was "demands from husband." It is age old believe that, after going through a hard day's job, the female is expected to come home to cook for the family, take care of the children and meet the sexual needs of the husband. It was therefore not surprising that the respondents indicated that what stress them most was demands from their husbands. This finding is buttressed by the finding of Saeed (2015) when he found among females with children in Alexandria, Egypt that their number one stressor was demands from their husbands. According to him, 86% out of the 350 respondents took that position.

The second research question revealed that stress has negative effect on female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast in terms of managing their home and work. This finding is consistent with the finding of Stephens (2014) who found among nursing mothers in New Zealand that stress was detrimental to their health and to their work life as well. The finding which also conformed with Noor's (199) preliminary findings on Malaysian working women's roles and wellbeing showed that the juggles between work and family demands have contributed to the adverse psychological and emotional wellbeing for the working mothers; this includes feelings of guilt, anxiety or decreased role satisfaction at work and home. Out of the 275 respondents, 91% of the respondents responded in the affirmative with regards to this finding.

From the current study, one of the findings was that what affected the respondents most was the item "I lack concentration on household chores". Another finding was that the respondents could not plan effectively as a result of stress. These findings were also revealed in the finding of Asare and Ntim (2013). They found that stress affects the thinking patterns of people and gets manifested in the way they plan for a task, execute, and concentrate on its smooth running to a successful end. To a larger extent, success is dependent on effective planning. Lack of it pervades failure in all facets of life.

In the studies of Nurudeen (2012), Nelson (2015) and Asafuah (2016), they all found that one of the ways people cope with stress was to engage in a conversation with people. In Asafuah's study, 74% out of 185 respondents (students of the Catholic University College) affirmed that talking to their roommates was the surest way they dealt with their stress. Asafuah added that the respondents indicated that coping strategy was problematic as their roommates could share the concerns and challenges with other people. They however adopted that coping strategy because of the readily availability of professional counsellors to talk to.

Nelson (2015) on his part found among female civil servants in Malaysia that chatting with a friend or a family member was one of the ways they coped with their stress. Out of 310 respondents 88% agreed that talking to someone was a coping strategy of stress they had adopted over the last three years. On a similar account, Nurudeen (2012) found in Pakistan that student nurses adopted talking to their friends as the coping strategies of stress.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study established the sources, effects, and coping strategies of stress among the female employees of the University. Demands from husband, promotional issues at the work place, divorce, Low levels of income and religious activities were the issues that stress the most. Marital separation was the least source of stress for the

respondents. The effects of stress include lack concentration on household chores, unable to plan well, tiredness and illness. The coping strategies of female employees are engaging in a chat with friends and Colleagues, listening to soft music, use labour saving equipment, taking drugs, and having a good rest.

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the issue of workplace stress can no longer be ignored. Female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast go through stress, which emanates from different sources. This stress affects them negatively both at home and at the work place. These effects may not only affect their persons but also the people around them such as the colleagues at the work place, their husbands, and their children. This may eventually have an associated effect on institutional and national productivity and growth.

### **Implications for Employees and Management**

Even though the study was on coping strategies of female employees with children in the University of Cape Coast, it is an undeniable fact that all employees experience stress in one way or the other. Stress is a major 20<sup>th</sup> century ailment producing an increase in blood sugar level, adrenalin, heart rate, cholesterol level and blood pressure (Morgan & Baker, 1985). Heart attacks and strokes now kill more people than all other diseases combined (Scott & Spooner, 1989). Management of work-related stress is therefore the sole responsibility of the employers and employees.

#### ***Implications for Employees***

Employees need to become aware of themselves and of how the stress in their lives is impacting on them, their colleagues and their families and should be able to develop meaningful relationships with individuals in a peer group, the family or colleagues who are likely to understand their feelings and reactions to stress. Employees should be well advised to:

1. Differentiate between stressors which are avoidable and those which are beyond control
2. Recognize the real causes of their stress
3. Be assertive in expressing their desires and opinions
4. Have confidence in their ability to work through stressful situation
5. Practice an activity which helps to reduce the psychological and physiological consequences of stress

#### ***Implications for Management***

Organizations have an essential role to play in minimising the stress levels of their employees. As Glovinkowski and Copper (1986) observed that it is only when organisations accept their responsibility to help employees manage their stress that we will begin to deal effectively with employee's stress. The following recommendations are therefore made for Management's consideration:

1. With an increasing number of female professionals entering workplace, there is a need for the Management to identify factors that are stressful to women. They should recognize the importance of developing corporate policies that minimize the stresses and strains which are particularly pertinent to working women and take cognisance of the fact that men and women at different job levels experience special concerns and vulnerabilities
2. Management should acknowledge the reality of dual-career couples and families and accommodate them by introducing affirmative action activities in the form of career planning and counseling and support network for women. These changes would help reduce anxiety and sex-role conflict among working

women, thus allowing organizations to use a major segment of the workforce more efficiently.

3. Management should ensure that every worker is aware of the stressors that are related to work. Promotion of wellbeing at work should be effected through the development of varieties of initiatives designed to raise awareness of stress and combat stress. This could be through seminar, courses, and leaflets. These activities will empower staff to recognize and manage stressful situation more effectively.
4. The University, through the Directorate of Human Resource should have a policy document on Occupational Health and Wellbeing. The document should be able to address the following issues:
  - a. The difference between pressure and stress
  - b. Sources of pressure and signs of stress
  - c. The Employees role in preventing stress and managing pressure
  - d. The Managers' role in preventing stress and managing pressure
5. Management should ensure that every worker, especially, staff at the Central Administration is encouraged to go on leave annually. This will help reduce stressful feelings and emotions by allowing them to take time off their busy schedules.
6. Management should engage the services of professional counsellors to offer guidance services to employees in order to reduce their risks to stress and incapacitating consequences.

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