

Topic

How are Bangalore women working in corporates dealing with stress, anxiety and depression- a qualitative insight

Background

Bengaluru, referred to as "India's Silicon Valley," is home to a thriving corporate culture that has transformed not only the economic environment but also the social fabric, particularly with regard to working women. Many women have entered the workforce as a result of the city's economic expansion, which has significantly changed gender norms and expectations. Though this change has been uplifting in many ways, it has also brought with it a host of new difficulties that are affecting the women's mental health working in the corporate world. Studies reveal a noteworthy incidence of mental health issues among employed women in Bengaluru's business domain. In this pretext, this study explores the various aspects that contribute to working women's psychological well-being and the overall effects on society and the economy. It focuses on the mental health condition of these women in Bengaluru's corporate environment.

The current study is a part of bigger study where tested tool 'Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)-21' was administered to 101 women so as to understand their current mental state status and factors associated with it. Based on the outcome of the scale, women with higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression were identified and interviewed for qualitative study which focused on their life course and on understanding how do they deal with it.

The objective of current study is to explore the coping mechanism adopted by women working in corporates in order to deal with stress, anxiety and depression.

Data and Methods

Qualitative data were gathered from the women working in the corporates. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted among 10 women with higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression based on their consent. Semi-structured questionnaire were used for the interview focusing on their life course events and coping mechanism. They were interviewed at their residence/cafe according to their availability. Confidentiality of the information was maintained. The participants were clearly explained the purpose of the study and the study was carried out with the written informed consent of all participants. The study was undertaken with the approval of the Institutional Ethics committee at Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Study Findings

Coping mechanism

This theme reflects the various coping mechanisms adapted by the participants for the betterment of mental health. Based on our analysis meditation and the physical activity like yoga played a major role in dealing with stress, anxiety and depression.

According to one of the participants,

“Meditation and keep reminding myself to be present at the moment and being calm helps me. I don't overthink and don't make things complex. And I follow my hobbies thrice a week”. (P01, 28 years)

“Prayer, meditation, gym, walking, yoga, drawing, cooking are my hobbies. By selecting good company and the culture of the company which helps in balancing both”. (P08, 29 years)

“Mostly its meditation and I read books in kindle. I plan things based on priorities”. (P10, 32 years)

A woman said incorporating meditation into their routine, the participant prioritizes mindfulness and inner calm, anchoring themselves in the present moment and avoiding overthinking or unnecessary complexity. By embracing this practice, they cultivate a sense of tranquility that permeates their approach to challenges, enabling clearer decision-making and reducing stress. Additionally, dedicating time to hobbies three times a week provides a welcome outlet for relaxation and rejuvenation, reinforcing their commitment to holistic well-being and maintaining a balanced lifestyle amidst the demands of daily life.

The participant finds solace and balance in a diverse array of hobbies, including prayer, meditation, gym workouts, walking, yoga, drawing, and cooking. These activities serve as essential outlets for relaxation and self-expression, nurturing their well-being amidst the demands of daily life. Additionally, they prioritize selecting supportive company and fostering a positive workplace culture, recognizing the profound impact of their environment on maintaining a healthy work-life balance. By surrounding themselves with encouraging individuals and engaging in activities that nourish their mind, body, and soul, they cultivate a harmonious equilibrium between their professional and personal spheres.

Centering her routine around meditation and reading books on Kindle, the participant prioritizes self-reflection and intellectual stimulation as cornerstones of their daily life. She approaches her tasks and responsibilities by meticulously planning based on priorities, leveraging mindfulness and knowledge acquisition to guide their decisions and actions. This intentional approach not only fosters personal growth and well-being but also empowers them to navigate life's complexities with clarity and purpose, ensuring alignment between their aspirations and their daily pursuits

“I walk daily and spend time with my friends. It's really hard, sailing through taking one day at a time”. (P03, 32 years)

With a daily commitment to walking and cherished moments spent with friends, the participant navigates life's challenges by adopting a "one day at a time" mindset. Embracing the rhythm of each day, they find solace and strength in the simplicity of these activities, which serve as anchors amidst life's uncertainties. By prioritizing self-care and nurturing relationships, they cultivate resilience and find joy in the journey, embracing each day with determination and gratitude, regardless of the obstacles they may face

“Nothing. Not easy to maintain work life since I leave by 6:30 am and come back *early or late or whenever*”. (P06, 24 years)

Maintaining work-life balance proves challenging for the participant due to their demanding schedule, starting as early as 6:30 am and returning home at varying times. The irregularity in their work hours disrupts their ability to establish a consistent routine, leaving little time for personal pursuits or relaxation. This lack of predictability can strain both professional and personal spheres, requiring adaptability and resilience to navigate the fluctuations in their daily routine while striving to find moments of rest and rejuvenation amidst the hustle and bustle of their work life.

“Taking at least 30 minutes personal time out per day. By scheduling each day as per the needs of personal and professional commitments”. (P09, 33years)

The participant prioritizes self-care by dedicating a minimum of 30 minutes each day to personal time out. Through careful scheduling, they maintain a careful balance between personal and professional obligations, ensuring that both aspects of their life receive the attention they deserve. By carving out this dedicated time for themselves amidst their busy schedule, they proactively nurture their well-being and maintain a sense of harmony and fulfilment in their daily routine.

As per our analysis based on the interviews, 9 out of 10 participants practiced meditation, yoga and following their hobbies as their coping mechanism except one participant, who had no coping mechanism due to lack of time which might have contributed to increased stress levels.

Motivational factors

This theme reflects on the people who motivates and supports the participants in the times of stress. Based on our analysis the spouse and parents play a major role in mental well-being. According to one of the Participants,

“My father, who took care of me as a single parent and supporting me all my life. My professional guru, from whom I learnt so many things and still learning. My husband, off course... Specially the way he handles any situation with a calm mind. Husband, Father, Sister, Friends supports me in the times of stress”. (P01, 28 years)

The participant finds strength and support from a network of cherished relationships, starting with their father, who raised them as a single parent and has been a pillar of unwavering support throughout their life. Their professional guru has also played a pivotal role, imparting valuable lessons and guidance that continue to shape their professional journey. Additionally, their husband's calm demeanour in navigating challenging situations serves as a source of inspiration and stability. Alongside these key figures, the support of family members, including a sister, and close friends, provides comfort and encouragement during times of stress, underscoring the profound impact of meaningful connections in navigating life's ups and downs.

“My father, he never had any gender bias, and gave us equal opportunity. My husband supports me in the times of stress”. (P03, 32 years)

Both the participant's father and husband play integral roles in their life, providing support and guidance in different ways. The participant's father, who upheld gender equality and offered equal opportunities to all, instilled values of fairness and inclusivity from a young age. This foundation of

equality laid by their father has shaped their worldview and empowered them to pursue their aspirations without limitations. Meanwhile, the participant's husband serves as a source of strength during challenging times, offering unwavering support and understanding when faced with stress. Together, these influential figures contribute to the speaker's sense of security, enabling them to navigate life's obstacles with confidence and resilience.

As a life partner, a husband can offer emotional support, practical assistance, and encouragement that help his wife navigate the challenges and opportunities of her professional journey.

"My mom motivates me, since even she was working lady and the way she managed her work life balance. My mom, she is my stress buster". (P04, 28 years)

The participant's admiration for their mother stems from her ability to navigate the complexities of work-life balance as a working woman, serving as a role model of resilience and adaptability. With her own career demands, the participant's mother still finds time to offer support and comfort, serving as a dependable source of relief during stressful moments. Through her example and presence, she not only inspires her child but also provides a sense of reassurance and calm amidst life's challenges.

"My parents motivate me. They have shown that a happy life can be led among all the stressful situations one comes across. The best way to tackle is to understand the root cause of the same and recalculate what needs to be done to avoid it in future circumstances". (P05, 25 years)

The participant draws inspiration from their parents, who exemplify the ability to maintain happiness amidst life's inevitable stressors. Observing their parents' approach, she learns the importance of understanding the underlying causes of stress and taking proactive measures to address them. By focusing on identifying root causes and recalibrating strategies for the future, the participant's parents demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness, providing invaluable lessons on navigating challenges with grace and positivity.

"I am spiritual person and I believe in self and energies. I think we get influenced by our own thoughts and act accordingly. Family and friends, give some good input". (P08, 29 years)

Grounded in spirituality, the participant acknowledges the profound influence of thoughts and energies on their actions and experiences. Believing in the power of the self and the energies that surround them, they recognize the importance of cultivating positive thoughts and intentions to manifest desired outcomes in their life journey. Furthermore, the input from family and friends serves as a valuable source of guidance and support, offering perspectives that align with their spiritual beliefs and helping to reinforce their commitment to personal growth and fulfilment.

The inputs from the participants of the study reveal a deep appreciation for familial support and guidance in navigating life's challenges. Participants highlight the positive influence of parents, spouses, and other family members in providing emotional support, imparting valuable lessons, and serving as role models for managing stress and maintaining balance. Additionally, there is an acknowledgment of the significance of spiritual beliefs and the impact of self-awareness on one's mind set and actions. The significance of asking friends and family for advice and assistance emphasizes even more how important interpersonal relationships are in fostering resilience and well-being. Overall, these verbatim reflect a holistic approach to coping with stress, drawing strength from familial bonds, spiritual beliefs, and social connections.