

## **Stress Management and Anxiety among Women in Benin City, Edo State, Southern Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

*Women are saddled with challenges in combining paid jobs with domestic roles. Studies have not looked into the stress management and anxiety of self employed women. This study examined the factors that contribute to stress and anxiety in the type of trade engaged by women; and the influence of choice of self employed jobs on stress management.*

*Methodology and theoretical orientation: The study adopted survey research design, in-depth interviews, structured questionnaire was purposively distributed to hundred respondent comprising women of various status using the preference theory to analyse the various roles and responsibilities and choice made by women in managing stress and anxiety. Descriptive statistics and field notes were used for quantitative and qualitative data; this provided answers to the research questions formulated.*

*Findings: The women in this study were engaged in different choice of trade that helped them to contribute economically to the well-being of their home. Women who engaged in trade with lighter schedules performed better in their care roles and stress management employed in managing their homes. These types of trade such as tailoring, distribution of goods to shops, hair dressing and other choice of trade with less stress provided them opportunities for extensive family responsibilities. Stress management techniques was with the use of personal adjustment plans to suit daily activities, friends and neighbours was also used in managing routines, to reduce anxiety and provide opportunities for the women to fulfill their ambitions and caring roles. Most women experienced challenges, stress and anxiety in their care roles pattern, which affected their health.*

*Conclusion and Significance: Overtime women needs to keep developing strategies to cope with daily situations, conflicting roles, in managing stress and anxiety. It is recommended that promoting and strengthening care roles and stress management of self employed women will impact positively on the family and the women's health.*

**KEY WORDS: Stress Management, Anxiety, Self- Employed Women, Care roles**

**Background:**

Among the women there are diversity of values, working women have different values from non working women. In modern society, the statuses of women have been changing due to growing changes in the society. Okafor and Amayo (2006); Jacobs and Gersons (2004) Awareness among women have shifted to more professional activities, rapid changes in traditional values, lifestyles, competitiveness and other factors have increased and help to create stress in women and mother's roles and

responsibilities. Daly (1996); Moen (2003) opined that many women feel torn between work and family, not only because their household chores increase with other competing responsibilities, but because job expectations and parenting standard is demanding overtime.

The focus of this study is on the stress management strategies, and anxiety among self employed women. The study was to examine the daily challenges and responsibilities of women and the factors that contributed to their specific sources of stress, and anxiety supports, and strategies employed by women. The anxiety, distress and vulnerability, they are capable and able to manage and raise their children in the home (Son & Bauer, 2010). Women have high demands in parenting stress and other stressors that require them to readjust stress management strategies regularly. According to Omoegun (1996) stress and anxiety results from individual's unmet needs, fear of failure, financial instability, family pressures. Similarly, Onwuasoanya (2006) stated that in recent times, most families are characterized by several problems such as quarrels between husband and wife and such extends to the children. She also emphasizes the need for interventions, mutual understanding and love as families undergoes stress and anxiety. Stress tends to build up over time and conflicting demands of work and home can cause excessive stress and anxiety. He also advocates for practical stress strategies skills to enhance solving of stressful conflicts that may arise in the home for parents to be able to function effectively at work and meet their roles of affecting happy family life.

**Stress:** Stress is the physical condition, which affects the mental, physical, or emotional strain or tension of any individual. However, the challenging tasks and roles expected of parents in the course of daily living and interaction can cause the experiencing of stress, Omoegun (1996) reveals stress results from individual's unmet needs, fear of failure, frustration, unhappiness which may ultimately lead to exhibition of serious physical and psychological disorder and other maladaptive behaviours arising from

deep feelings of insecurity and anxiety. This therefore calls for the understanding of the needs and responsibilities of each parent to enhance stability in the home for positive children upbringing

**Anxiety:** Is a condition that might be caused by emotional distress, often accompanied by nervous behaviour. It is the body's natural response to stress. It includes several disorders due to fear, nervousness, worrying and apprehension

**Statement of the Problem:** Most women work today so that the family can enjoy material, economic and other benefits; this creates stress in women and also increases their anxiety. Ranges of feelings have diverse consequences which are stress, time pressure, fatigue, burnout and other health problems (MacDermid 2005). Without physical and emotional support, women experience higher stress of parenting than their spouses. This often times influences the women's lifestyle, work, relationships with their spouses, relationship with the children and the family. In turn it affects their health socially, mentally and psychologically (WHO 2004). The roles for these women include a wife, mother, a worker and in some cases trainee (apprenticeship) and a student.

Therefore there is need for women to develop stress management strategies that help improve their wellbeing in other for them to function in their responsibilities daily. Currently most studies have focused on (public and private) working women. While little about the stress management and anxiety of self employed women, who play the same role with the paid working women. This study focused on the stress management and anxiety among self employed women and managerial strategies these self employed women adopt to meet their demands.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study examined the factors that contribute to stress and anxiety in the type of trade engaged by women, the influence of choice of self employed

jobs on stress management and the coping techniques adopted in managing stress and anxiety among self employed women.

### **Location and Population of the Study**

The study population comprised self-employed mothers in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Benin City. The reason for this community is due to proximity to the researcher. This made data collection easier, faster, and also reduction in the cost of data collection. The population under study is about 100 self-employed women which include widows, single mothers and married women, and field reports on interview conducted for thirty self employed women.

### **Sample size**

This study has a sample size of 100 for quantitative approach, while the qualitative approach made use of 30 respondents.

### **Methodology**

#### **Data Collection Method and Instrument**

A structured questionnaire was adopted for data collection owing to its wider coverage, time-saving, ability to ensure anonymity of the respondents, and possibility of completing it at the respondents' convenience. Interview method was used along with a structured questionnaire).

Collected data was coded and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package Software).

#### **Data Analysis Method**

The study utilized and adopts a quantitative (numerical) analysis where the data were represented in frequency tables and percentages. Furthermore the questions were answered with the use of percentages to determine prevalence and similarity of research questions raised. While analysis, narrations, were provided on the reports for the interview questions.

The interview focused on the kind of jobs engaged by women, their contributions to the home, strategies adopted, how they manage their conflicting roles. According to the research carried out and the care roles adopted.

During the research, there were some observations were discovered. Firstly there was the pilot testing which was carried out among selected few, the same set of people also participated in the interview. But the result was different because they gave different answers.

**Relevance of the study:** The study will help to enhance and promote the necessity of adopting strategies by women for healthy lifestyle for effectiveness at work places and the home front. Women often times are affected by different health issues such as depression, anger and dissatisfaction in the lives, due to lack of stress management strategies. The need cannot be over emphasized by women generally in respective of their work, positions and status in the society. Stress management also varies due to choices, families, cultural beliefs and support from stakeholders (spouses, friends and family) who often assist the women in their managerial roles. It is hoped that the study provides ideas to help women identify signs of stress, develop healthy coping strategies, and manage stress levels to create a balanced life and healthy lifestyles

**Limitation of study:** limitations encountered in the study were rejections because of fear among women of the unknown, barriers in language communication, there was a lot of noise because their shops were by the road, it affected my recording and the interviews, some of the respondent that gave me time could not be reached because they were absent. Time of interviews were rescheduled for better responses.

## Result : Demographic Characteristics

<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	97	100
<i>Age</i>		
20-25 years	6	6
26-30 years	37	37
31-35 years	30	31
36 & above years	25	26
Total	97	100
<i>Level of study</i>		
No Education	14	14
Primary School Leaving Certificate	12	12
Ordinary National Diploma	17	16.5
Higher National Diploma	17	17.5
University Degree (1 <sup>st</sup> Degree)	16	17
Masters/PGD Professional Qualification)	7	7
Total	97	100
<i>Religion</i>		
Christianity	72	74
Muslim	20	21
Traditional	8	8
Others	2	2
Total	97	100
<i>Husband's Job</i>		
No job	14	14
Civil Servant	42	43
Business	33	34

Working in Private organization	8	8
Total	97	100
<i>Income Level</i>		
#1000-#50000	74	76
#51000-#100000	14	14
#101000 & Above	9	10
Total	97	100

According to the table (18%) of the respondents had Higher National Diploma, while (17%) had University degree (1<sup>st</sup> Degree), Also (17%) possessed Ordinary National Diploma while (6%) had master degree. Majority (74%) were Christians while Islam was (21%) and Traditional (5%). Respondents whose husbands' were civil servants were the highest 43%, followed by those in business (34%), while those working in private organization ranked least (8%). Respondents' who earn between #1000-#50000 were highest (76%), while respondents who earn #101000 and above were just (9%).

Frequency Distribution for Work, Stress management strategies, Cause effect on women and the family

	Total YES		Total NO	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Has your choice of work influenced the home generally?	84	87	13	13
If yes how has it influenced the home?	46	47	51	53
a. By helping to support the home	78	80	19	20
b. Fulfilling personal ambition?	72	74	25	26



c. By gaining more from your spouse and other family members?	68	70	29	30
Do you have any other stress management strategies in coping with work and the family?	28	29	69	71
Do you have other hired workers that assist with the house chores, e.g. nannies, housekeepers etc.	22	23	75	77
<i>Which of these stress management strategies do you employ or use?</i>				
House help	10	10	87	90
Nannies	20	21	77	79
Relatives	36	37	61	63
Friends/neighbors	40	41	57	59
Day care centre/children homes?	22	23	75	77
<i>What influenced your decision to adopt any of the above as a stress management strategy?</i>				
It saves cost	25	26	72	74
It allows me to focus on my work	40	41	57	59
It gives me more time to rest and plan for other things	39	40	58	60
It helps me to fulfill my caring roles	75	77	22	23
It favors me at all times	54	56	43	44

The table shows that 87% of the respondents agreed that their choice of work has influenced their homes not only economically but in every ramification and the highest influence provided by their choice of work is helping them to support their home (80%). While 74% stated that it has helped them to fulfill their personal ambition. About 70% agree that it has helped them to gain respect from their spouse and other family members. Other factors influencing the choice of self-employed jobs women engaged in are because they value their home and would not want the work to affect them. From every parent; good parenting is required and compulsory this proves to an extent why the self employed mothers want jobs that will help them build up their families without stress and anxiety, which enhance good relationships and good parenting. A respondent who worked as a self employed woman:

*I chose my job because it will help me concentrate on my children and monitor them, they are often easily deceived and to me my home is first, they were ones influenced by our relatives that stayed with us at a time, but now I would not allow that again. I do not allow them to mix up with other children any how without my consent. That is why I close early from my work, to oversee them (Female, IDI, Ovia).*

### **Choice of work**

Women choose the kind of work or job that will be convenient for them and also helped them to balance their roles. Report from the qualitative study shows the following contributions from one of the respondent.

*I am a trader and started 16 years ago. It has helped me a lot when the money my husband bring is just 500 naira for the day, I will have to work and add more than N1000 naira to cook for that day. I sell yams, Potatoes, and sometimes cocoyam in front of the house. (Female, IDI, 38 years, Benin City)*

The finding of this study shows that most of the self employed women whose type of trade do not require travelling from place to place, and with light schedules performed better in their care roles and coping strategies. Trades like tailoring, selling of items in a provision shops and managing other business outlets were seen to provide more opportunities for self employed mothers to meet the demands of their homes. While most of the mothers who have very tight and busy schedules experience more stress and conflict with their spouses. The qualitative study.

*I have been married for 10 years now and always sought for how, to make the work easier for me every day. My children goes to School and lesson. In my shop I make lunch and dinner in the shop. Then for business I make hats, Zobo drinks which I supply to schools during school period. I also sell baby clothes and caps. It does not affect my work, it's easy because all are done in my shop. When I get home in the evening we sleep. No more cooking. It saves me stress. (Female, IDI, Benin City).*

### Care Roles and Choice of Work by Self-Employed women

Table provides insights into the various care roles and choice of work of respondents. Most respondents (70%) agreed that their choice of work has improved their families economically, while 74% agreed that they can make changes due to stress in their work and the caring roles in their respective families.

#### Frequency Distribution For Care Roles and Choice of Work by Mothers

	Total YES		Total NO	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
	49	51	48	50

Does the caring role affect your home and work?				
Was it because of your family that you choose that kind of work?	58	60	39	40
Do you stay longer in your place of work than your home	54	56	43	44
Can you make changes due to stress in your work and the caring roles in your family?	72	74	25	26
Do you encounter problems in your caring roles pattern?	49	51	48	50
Does this problem affect your health?	36	37	61	63
Has your work affected the home economically?	68	70	29	30
In trying to balance the home and your work, did you have any conflicts (anxiety)	50	52	47	49
Does the stress you experience in your caring roles affect your relationship with your family?	39	40	40	60

More so, 60% agreed that because of their families they choose their type of work. About 52% agreed they have conflicts with their husband in trying to establish a balance between works and maintaining their homes. Nevertheless, a lesser proportion of the respondents 27% stated that the stress they experienced in their care roles has caused conflicts between them and their husbands. More than half of the respondents (59%) agreed they have particular stress management strategies they employ in caring and managing their homes. However, the roles and work affects their health (50%).

### **Choice of trade and its influence on stress Management**

The choice of trade for most of the respondent was determined by their husbands who wanted them to have time for their home. From the interview, most of respondents had National Certificate Education. But were not allowed by their husbands to work with it because it affected the quality of time dedicated to their home. This contrast the study Okpalanma (1994) views that mothers do not relinquish their positions as home-makers and care-givers when they begin to work, but rather they make adjustments which enable them to combine the their roles. The finding of this study also show that most of the self employed women whose type of trade do not require travelling from place to place, and with light schedules performed better in their care roles and stress management strategies. Trades like tailoring, selling of items in a provision shops and managing other business outlets were seen to provide more opportunities for self employed women to meet the demands of their homes. While most of the women who had very tight and busy schedules experienced more stress and anxiety. A respondent among the self employed women:

*Am a trader, a mother, a wife, and a student.*

*I supply eggs in crates to customers around my house from the farm, the eggs are delivered to my shop so that I will not need to travel to get them. Other goods are brought to the shop by my husband, it's convenient for me to sell to customers, my house is by the end of the road. It allows me time to go to school, come back and take care of the home.(Female, IDI, 34 years, Ovia).*

In another interview the respondent pointed out that, the way she scheduled her work does not affect her because her husband takes her to buy goods in Lagos and brings her back before her children closed from school. She said:

*I am a hair beautician and I also sell cosmetics. My trade does not affect my care roles because of the way I have planned my roles. When I need goods my husband takes me to Lagos and we come back before the children close from school. But most times, it often fails because the stress management strategies adopted has affected the business by reducing customers and money realized. (Female,IDI, 33 years,3 children, Ovia).*

Major influences are economic contribution, provision of clothes, which is not often provided by husbands, and money for other issue on a daily bases. When there is pressure as a result of festivity and even for hair dresser as the case may be. According to the respondents, anxiety mostly arises when there are high demands from customers for their goods at a particular period of time. To avoid loose of customers, we sometimes sacrifice time for the home for work or business. For women who sell different items in their shop such as meat, eggs, snacks, provisions and then second new clothes such women severally have stress in satisfying her customers and also in her home. A qualitative study is as follows

*Most times, there have always been anxieties trying to meet up with the demand of customers. And also the day, I go to the market, because of the bulk of things we buy, it always a stressful day. By the time we get home the day would have been gone. Severally for me, my husband have insisted that I must stop the business. But I couldn't, because of its contributions to the home (Female,IDI, 44years, Ovia)*

### **Stress management Strategies**

Coping strategies as “a change in structural behaviour characteristic that produces better adjustment of organism to its environment.” Boss (1986) referred to it as a process that an individual uses to keep stress at a tolerable

level. Coping Strategies in this study, involves the various ways the women and mothers have chosen to manage their homes and families by constantly changing behavioural effort to manage external and internal demands daily. Lazarus and Folkman (1984). These management strategies help to resolve “problem-focused coping” managing the source of stress and the “emotional-focused coping” the individual’s emotional response to stressful conditions. The different methods that mothers have employed depended on their kind of work and jobs as some of the women had several other jobs. About (36%) use of relatives, this created problem in the home. Another method which is about 5% that the women employed was house helps. In addition the most used stress management strategies was friends/neighbors (41%). In addition about 77% of the respondents said that using friends/neighbors has helped them to fulfill their caring roles, while only 26% agreed that it saved cost for them. This is also supported by the in-depth interview as follows:

*I am into production of food, am always faced with a lot of stress because the work is strength sapping, so, I employed different strategies. I started with house help they were supportive and helpful at first, shortly after then, they began to misbehave so they had to go. Another strategy was that I got nannies who were effective but they do not stay with us they come from their homes. Though they were not as efficient as the house helps yet as least I got assistant to an extent. After sometime they also left. So I tried another method which was the use of house hold equipments e.g. washing machine, micro-wave and others, which helped me to do almost three things at a time. I continued until my children grew up to assist me with most of the work, I had relatives they added to the problems and when you try to correct them, there will be*

*problems. Presently, I have learnt to plan and schedule my work at home. And I think this is the best over the years for 16 years. Do as much you can do for each day. It is advisable to try adjusting to different strategies until you get the best that suits your kind. (Female, IDI, 44 years, Benin City).*

### **Different Stress management strategies adopted by women**

Overtime, women had to keep developing strategies to cope with daily situations. These different strategies include support from spouse or husband, the use of house helps, the use of relatives, nannies, and apprenticeship mostly at work, the use of mother-in law, friends or neighbours, day care centers, boarding schools and the use of kitchen equipment such as washing machine, dryer for clothes, electric cooker, hot plate for cooking etc. Others include use of part-time helps for washing of clothes and cleaning on Fridays and Saturdays. The major strength was the spiritual strength and wisdom on a daily bases.

### **Theoretical framework**

Women are more influence by household management than the men. While the women concentrate on different pressing issues, the men are mostly influenced by work place characteristics (Tanja Van Der Lippe, 2006). However to this end this study will focus on the use preference theory. Preference theory helps to provide the opportunity for women to make choices from responsibilities such as work, employment and the family which are competing life interest, which are stressful. According to Catherine Hakim (2000) lifestyle preference are defined as causal factors which thus need to be monitor in modern societies. Hakim's had five condition, contraceptive revolution, the equal opportunities revolution, the expansion of white collar occupations, the creation of jobs for secondary



earners, and the increasing importance of attitudes, values and personal preferences in lifestyles choice.

### **Stress management strategies adopted by women**

It can be inferred from the study, women, employ managerial strategies, with different strategies daily, advice and help from friends and neighbors. From the quantitative approach almost half of the respondents agreed that they usually sought the support of friends and neighbours. This could be traceable to the fact some persons have experienced various conflicts and challenges in seeking help and care role support from family members, nannies and house helps.

### **Summary**

Also the stress management and the anxiety are determined by the family size. With respect to their perceptions of their current work flexibility, there are differences in perceptions of parenting stress. Stress management strategies employed by women could change depending on the women's choice and their wish to change on how to manage their homes. According to this study, the women employed the different strategies, based on the their spouses choice, the size of the family, kind of work, daily social support from friend and relatives and their health.

### **Recommendation**

Finally, it might also be fruitful to consider the relationship between work flexibility, parenting stress and maternal involvement in choice of work. Delving further into this study by looking at differences in the reported occupations and working conditions of women, engaged in formal and informal self-employment, this might shed more additional light on the nature of the estimated relationship based on time and other factors in managing stress among women from different endeavour.

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