

*FACTORS CAUSING STRESS  
AMONG WOMEN LECTURERS IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION IN  
THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE*

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*DEDICATION*

This work is dedicated to  
my family, for their encouragement,  
including my daughter, Katlego Loate.

**SUMMARY**

Stress is attributed to the inability to cope with the demands that one encounters. Stress consequences have a negative effect: physically (headaches), behaviourally, (overreacting) emotionally (fatigue) and mentally (forgetfulness). Occupational stress, therefore, is the inability to achieve job-related performance goals.

This study was undertaken to explore the origin of stress experienced by women lecturing in higher education and the effects of such stress, including their management techniques. In chapter one the problem statement, the aim of the study as well as definition of concepts are discussed.

Chapter two deals with the nature, source and effects of stress on women in general as cited by the literature. This includes explanation of the concept of stress as well as the differences between eustress and distress. This chapter further explains the two approaches to stress-focusing on stressors and reaction to stress. The devastating effects of stress come into play physically, behaviourally, emotionally and mentally. Stress symptoms such as headaches and cardiovascular problems are indicative of more serious complications. The third chapter explores stress management strategies; two approaches have been identified, conscious and defensive coping.

In chapter four the focus is on the target population: stress experienced by women lecturing in higher education, backed up by a literature survey. Sex discrimination and male dominance followed by balancing home and work responsibilities have been identified as the main sources of stress for women lecturers. The chapter further examines the effects of their stress.

The fifth chapter documents how the empirical research was conducted. A self-developed stress inventory was constructed for women lecturers in particular, as a means of collecting data from them.

In the sixth chapter interpretation and analysis of findings of the study are discussed. There were some sources, effects and stress management strategies identified that concurred with those discussed in the literature and others that contradicted findings reported in the literature. The last chapter makes recommendations based on the findings of the study.

## **OPSOMMING**

Stres word toegeskryf aan 'n onvermoë van individue om die eise waarmee hulle gekonfronteer word, te hanteer. Stesverwante gevolge manifesteer negatief op fisiese vlak (hoofpyne), gedragsvlak (eetpatrone), emosionele vlak (chroniese moegheid) en geestelike vlak (vergeetagtigheid). Beroepsverwante stres verwys derhalwe na die onvermoë om werkgerigte prestasiedoelwitte te bereik.

Die studie is onderneem om die oorsake van stres te bepaal wat ondervind word deur vroue in doserende hoedanighede op tersiêre vlak, asook om die gevolge van sodanige stres en stresbeheermeganismes te ondersoek. In hoofstuk een word die probleemstelling, studiedoelwit en definisie(s) van relevante konsepte uiteengesit.

Hoofstuk twee verskaf 'n oorsig van die aard, oorsprong en gevolge van stres op vrouens in die algemeen. 'n Verduideliking van die konsep "stres" asook die verskil tussen positiewe en negatiewe stres word hierby ingesluit. Dié hoofstuk ondersoek verder die twee gemelde benaderings tot stres en fokus op stresfaktore en voortspruitende reaksies. Die vernietigende gevolge van stres manifesteer op fisiese, gedrags - emosionele en geestelike vlak. Stresssimptome soos hoofpyne en kardiovaskulêre probleme is aanduidend van meer ernstige komplikasies. In die derde hoofstuk word stresbeheer tegnieke verken: twee benaderings word onderskei, te wete bewustelike asook defensiewe streshantering.

Die fokus in hoofstuk vier, gerugsteun deur beskikbare literatuur, val op die teikengroep, naamlik vroulike doseer-personeel aan tersiêre inrigtings en die stres waaraan sodanige teikengroep blootgestel word.

Geslagsdiskriminasie en manlike oorheersing asook die verantwoordelikheid van beide huis-en werksverpligtinge is as die kernoorsake van stres by vroulike lektore geïdentifiseer. Die hoofstuk ondersoek verder die uitwerking van bogenoemde stresfaktore. 'n Vyfe hoofstuk word gewy aan die metodiek van die empiriese ondersoek. 'n Selfonwerpte stresinventaris is spesifiek ver vroulike doseerpersoneel gekonstrueer as 'n wyse waarop data van die teikengroep ingesamel kon word.

Die sesde hoofstuk sentreer rondom 'n ontleding en vertolking van die bevindinge wat uit die studie geblyk het. Sekere oorsake effekte en stresbeheerstrategieë wat in die loop van die ondersoek aangetoon is, korreleer met dié wat in die bronne bespreek word, terwyl ander weer die bevindinge in die bronne weerspreek. In die laaste hoofstuk word aanbevelings gemaak wat op die resultate van die ondersoek gebaseer is.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, AIM OF THE STUDY, METHODOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION AND CHAPTER PLANNING.

#### *1.1 Introduction*

Stress is attributed to tension disorders that are particularly experienced in individuals' everyday lives. It is alleged to be caused by the rapid changes that are part and parcel of modern living (Berger, 1988:43).

The most striking feature of stress is that it affects people from all walks of life - teachers, nurses, professors, cleaners and politicians (Tanner, 1977:7) and it initially manifests itself in behavioral, cognitive, emotional and physical problems (Cox, 1978:147; and Driskell & Salas, 1991:493).

Stress is unavoidable:

"Regardless of how resourceful we are in coping with problems, the circumstances of life inevitably involve stress" (Atkinson, 1990:555).

Because of the devastating effects on the health and productivity of an individual, the need to minimise occupational stress has aroused international concern (Kyriacou, 1987: 146). Thus, this study will investigate stress experienced by women lecturing in institutions of higher education. Strategies have been suggested to deal with it. It is necessary to explore possibilities for the implementation of programmes of intervention which cater for the needs of the individuals because stress

manifests itself differently from one individual to the next (Cox, 1978: 149; Gray & Freeman, 1988:4; and Faulker & Maguire, 1988:1015).

While some individuals are toughened by the experience of stress, others are weakened or destroyed by it. There are yet others who may even resort to overdoses of medication and even to substance abuse as a solution of stress (Tanner, 1977:141) hence the need to diagnose the causes and remedy the effects of stress on the individual.

The individual may react negatively or positively to the stressors that he encounters in life. This is distress and eustress, respectively. Distress is caused by unpleasant experiences. Prolonged stress plays havoc with the well-being of the individual, leading to malfunctioning of the body. For example, increased heart rate. Stress causes ailments too, (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977:229; Tanner, 1977:7; Dunham 1944:3, Halpin *et al.*, 1984 - 1985, Swick & Hanley, 1985:17; and Ratsoy *et al.*, 1986:271).

On the other hand, not all stress has negative effects. Moderate levels of stress are beneficial in life in that they promote growth and prompt feelings of excitement and the urge that propels the individual to be creative (Capel, 1987:279); Booth, 1988:1017; and Cochrane, 1988:6).

Some amount of stress is necessary to keep people on their toes in order to meet the demands that are made on them. Moreover, stress may produce positive results for the individual and the institution at which he is working. For example, being able to meet deadlines (Payne & Furnham, 1987:142).

Higher education institutions are not exempt from the debate on occupational stress. There is a need to examine

factors that cause stress at these institutions. Such an examination will attempt to:

- (i) identify women lecturers who are experiencing stress, and to
- (ii) help these women to minimise or combat their stress.

## *1.2 Statement of the Problem*

Both men and women experience occupational stress. The difference, however, is that women appear to suffer from stress more than men because of the conflicting dual roles they have to play at the domestic and career front (Sutherland, 1981:129; and Calabrese & Anderson, 1986:32).

Due to economic pressures, women are forced to work as well as perform their family duties. As a result of having to balance career and home responsibilities, women may find it difficult to maintain a balance between the two. This leads to stress-provoking decisions such as whether or not career should come before marriage and parenthood (Burns, 1988:59).

Occupational problems of women include sex discrimination (Burn, 1988:58). Their apparent discrimination against them in education has aroused interest among researchers (Sutherland, 1981:1).

Findings, according to Calabrese and Anderson (1986:30), indicate that women competing in male-dominated organizations like higher education, are under constant stress. To crown it all, career women experience more stress than both housewives and men (Luthans, 1986:133).

For example, women lecturing in higher education may find that they are outnumbered by men and that most high ranking posts are occupied by men. What is disturbing is that these

men have little or no understanding of the isolation and frustrations of women with regard to balancing career and home responsibilities (Calabrese & Anderson, 1986:30).

Furthermore, the university is viewed as being an institution that is dominated by men and thus one which caters for their needs mainly. Women who have opted to work at universities feel that male dominance tempers with their quality of teaching (Calabrese & Anderson, 1986:38). This may be one of the reasons why women who lecture in higher education feel that there is gender bias in their workplace.

Even though university lecturers are expected to teach, write scholarly papers and above all, conduct research, most women tend to be more committed to teaching than to research and publications. However, even though teaching is important, research is a prerequisite for promotion (Sutherland, 1981:184).

Despite the fact that some people feel that academics do not experience stress, they too, experience stress. The nature of their working conditions generates stress (Noel, 1987:65). Research on stress in higher education is neglected, hence the need to explore it in this study. The focus will be on women because while male studies are accepted, studies that deal specifically with women issues are questioned and are therefore, few (Weiten and Arnot, 1987:219). This study intends to fill that gap.

With attention given more to internal psychological factors, the tendency is to blame the individual woman lecturer for her lack of career mobility, while the conditions under which she works are ignored (Shapiro, 1987:172). This study will look into the working conditions of women lecturing in higher education and how their

working conditions can generate stress for them.

It is remarkable that the proportion of women in lower levels of the hierarchy in lecturing should be so great in universities throughout the world (Wilson, 1991:215). An area that calls for further exploration is whether women lecturing in higher education are afraid to meet the challenges of lecturing; or whether there are stumbling blocks of a subtle nature, which prevent these women from taking up managerial posts (Sutherland, 1981:79).

Due to political changes that have replaced the Bophuthatswana Government with the North West Region some stressors are eminent. This situation is encompassed in acculturative stress where people have to cope with political changes and the stress that goes with them (Berry & Annis, 1974:383).

In mid-March this year (1994), the Republic of Bophuthatswana was incorporated into South Africa and became part of the North West region. These changes had a bearing on tertiary education; colleges of education in particular. Two women college rectors have been asked by the students to step down. To ensure their safety, those rectors have been advised to stay at home until the dust settles. This has created a lot of stress in the colleges. Disruption in the university, on the other hand, seems to be under control.

Once sources of stress experienced by women lecturing in higher education are highlighted, it is hoped that organizations in which these women are lecturing, will take cognizance of them and thus, become aware of factors that dampen the morale of these women and hopefully change to accommodate the need systems of women.

Also, the need to suggest appropriate coping strategies is essential because inappropriate and ineffective coping

strategies unnecessarily prolong or even compound stress an individual experiences (Cox, 1978:18).

### *1.3 Aim of the Study*

This study will investigate the occurrence and sources of stress among women lecturing in higher education in the former Bophuthatswana, and their coping mechanisms. Hopefully, once women lecturing in higher education can recognise warning signals of stress, they will be able to manage it constructively through appropriate coping strategies. Their chances of developing chronic, stress-related illnesses will be minimised. Also, higher education institutions/organizations would function more effectively if they become aware of the nature of stress experienced by women lecturers.

In short, the purpose of this study is;

- (a) To determine sources of stress experienced by women who lecture at the University of Bophuthatswana and all colleges of education affiliated to this university.
- (b) To investigate the occurrence and effects of stress particularly its degree of severity, among women lecturers in higher education of their stress.
- (c) To determine the coping strategies applied by these women and to suggest appropriate coping strategies.

## ***1.4 Abbreviations and Definition of Terms***

Because a number of terms will be used throughout the study, these terms have been defined or abbreviated.

### **1.4.1 Abbreviations**

- women lecturing in higher education will be abbreviated as women lecturers.
- Colleges of education will be abbreviated to colleges.

In this study higher education institutions comprise: The University of Bophuthatswana and colleges of education affiliated to it.

### **1.4.2 Definition of Terms**

- Coping resource - "anything considered necessary to dealing with aversive stimuli" (Blase 1986:23)
- demand - an internal or external stimulus which is perceived by a person as requiring an adaptive response (Booth, 1988:1017), e.g. physical or mental action.
- Locus of control - a person's general perception of the contingent relationship between his behaviour and situation that follow their behaviour (Capel in Cole & Walker, 1989:37).
- Schools - the University of the North West uses the term schools to refer to what is commonly known as faculties in other universities.
- overload - having the feeling of too much to do (Jenkins and Calhoun, 1991:68).
- pressure - having too many demands made upon an individual (Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991:68).

- role conflict - perceived clash (conflict) between expected role behaviours (Capel in Cole & Walker, 1989:37).
- role ambiguity - "the lack of clear information regarding expectations associated with a particular role (Kahn *et al.* in Cole & Walker, 1989:37).
- stressor - a stress inducing event (Booth, 1988:1017), thus stressors are stimuli that produce stress.

### ***1.5 Methodological justification***

The research will include both a literature review and empirical techniques. The literature review will attempt to give the reader a comprehensive picture of stress, by looking into stress in general, and coping strategies that these women may employ.

Thereafter, the literature on stress among women, particularly those in institutions or organizations of higher education, will be another area that will be discussed.

The empirical techniques will indicate research procedures employed in the collection of data in exploring the occurrence and sources of stress among women lecturing in higher education.

In this study, women lecturing in higher education will be asked to identify factors in the stress inventory given to them by the researcher, that cause them stress in their occupation. This will be the first draft of the questionnaire. The identification of factors in the stress inventory will be administered with single item questionnaire, on a response scale, to indicate the severity of stress they experienced.

The researcher will design a final stress inventory for women lecturers, eliciting sources of their stress. This will include the stressors identified in the pilot study and in literature survey. The inventory will be a section that will determine coping strategies that these women use to offset the effects of stress. Different colleges of education in the North West will be visited personally to hand out the stress inventories to women lecturers and collect them after completion.

The Chi square will be carried out on the inventory. Statistics will be utilized to find out the degree of association among the matched variables.

### *1.6 Chapter planning*

Chapter 1 comprises the orientation to the problem, the statement and delineation of the problem, determination of aims of the research and discussion of methodological issues.

Chapter two will be devoted to a literature review. In this chapter the concept stress will be discussed, with a view of creating a general picture of what stress entails as already mentioned in 1.5.

In Chapter three stress management techniques used by an individual and organizations in which he works will follow. Chapter four, the focus will be on stress experienced by women in general, and thereafter women lecturers in particular.

Chapter five will be dedicated to a discussion of the carrying out of the empirical research, including research techniques used in the collection of data. This will be followed by interpretation and analysis of findings in Chapter six. The study will be concluded in chapter seven with a summary of findings and a brief discussion of some recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NATURE, SOURCES AND EFFECTS OF STRESS

#### *2.1 Introduction*

Many situations in life can create stress. Stress comes in different shapes and shades (Weiten, 1992:465).

Stress affects people from all walks of life - businessmen, professors, mothers, factory workers and even priests. A keyed-up feeling is part and parcel of every individual (Tanner, 1977:7)

The cost of stress to the individual and organizations is well-documented (Kyriacou, 1987:147). The damaging effects of stress on human performance are related to the problems of mental and physical health (Driskell & Salas, 1991:473; and Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991:60). As a result stress is an occupational hazard (Harvey & Taylor, 1983:25; Eskridge & Coker, 1985:387; and Capel, 1987:279).

How stress is conceptualized differs because of different definitions and approaches to research on it. Gray & Freeman (1984:4) have indicated that stress is a concept that has been loosely used. This state of affairs makes it necessary that this chapter should give the reader insight into what stress generally entails. In attempting to do so, the concept stress, its sources and effects will be explained.

## 2.2 The Nature Of Stress

Stress refers to a person's adaptation to his interaction with his environment. Stress, therefore, is reaction of the body to any demand made on it to adapt (Sutterly & Donnelly, 1981:4; and Capel, 1987:279). Not all stress is negative, some stress is positive thus beneficial. Because of the devastating effects, there is need to investigate it.

Atkinson (1990:555) postulates that stress involves the following characteristics:

- (a) pressure that an individual regard as being detrimental to his physical or psychological well being,
- (b) an individual doubting his ability to cope, i.e he is uncertain as to whether he has appropriate copying mechanisms.

"Stress is primarily the body's natural emotional and physiological reaction to the perception of danger in one's environment; in classical psychological terms, the body is being prepared to "fight" or "flight" (Kyriacou in Cole & Walker, 1989:28).

Dunham (1984:3) mentions that when a person is unable to cope with the demands that he encounters, that person will react behaviorally, emotionally, mentally and/or physically. Stress includes environmental events that an individual perceives as threatening (stressors) and a person's reaction to them (stress responses) (Atkinson, 1990:555).

### 2.2.1 Approaches in explaining stress

Two approaches have been used in explaining the concept stress. The first of these approaches focuses on stressors while the other is concerned with reaction to stress.

#### (a) Stressors

In the first of these approaches the focus is on stressors which entail environmental hazards that evoke stress. Luthans (1985:131) refers to stressors as antecedents of stress.

#### (b) Reaction to stress.

This involves how a person reacts or responds to stress. This will include emotional, cognitive, behavioral, physiological responses emanating from threatening situations (Atkinson, 1990:555).

In order to put the concept stress in perspective, there is need to know how an individual appraises a situation in terms of his particular motives and resources for coping with that stressful situation (Atkinson, 1990:555; and Weiner, 1992:467).

### 2.2.2 Stress as an everyday event

Minor events like traffic jams, unpaid bills, inability to meet deadlines, cause stress. Unfortunately, most people associate stress with major events like war and famine. Yes, these, too, are stress generating, but minor events which occur on a daily basis also generate stress.

Research indicates that persistent hassles may be harmful on mental and physical health (Chamberlain & Zika, 1991:479).

Minor events at home, school and work, when put together, could create strain. Though life is full of everyday hassles, when they accumulate this can lead to a person's breakdown, physically and/or mentally (Weiten, 1992:467). Table 1 gives an illustration of the ten most frequent hassles.

TABLE 1. THE TEN MOST FREQUENT HASSLES

Item (Hassle)

1. Concerns about weight
2. Health of family member
3. Rising prices of common goods
4. Home maintenance
5. Too many things to do
6. Misplacing or losing things
7. Yard work or outside home maintenance
8. Property, investment, or taxes
9. Crime
10. Physical appearance (Weiten 1990:467)

2.2.3 Appraisal: Stress lies in the eyes of the beholder

Individuals perceive stress differently. What stresses one individual may be a source of pleasure to the next. How a person reacts to stress will determine whether the effects of stress will be positive or negative. Therefore, the severity of stress is determined by how one perceives the stress (Eskridge & Coker, 1985:387; Swick & Hanley, 1985:21; Ratsoy et al., 1986:271; and Stanford, 1989:42).

There are two types of appraisals, primary and secondary.

(a) Primary appraisal

Primary appraisal involves evaluating whether a situation is stressful or not and this involves going through the following stages: firstly determining whether the situation is relevant to you; secondly, assessing whether it is relevant but not threatening and thirdly, assessing whether such a situation is stressful.

Once the situation has been identified as being stressful some line of action has to be taken. This leads into the second phase - secondary appraisal (Atkinson, 1990:556; and Weiten, 1992:468).

(b) Secondary appraisal

Because the situation is stressful, the second stage involves evaluation of an individual's resources and options in dealing with stress. The question that would arise is: Which coping strategy or strategies will be appropriate in dealing with the stressful situation at hand?

For example, a stressful situation here emanates from starting a new job. This is primary appraisal. On the other hand, secondary appraisal would include coping strategies that a person would employ in dealing with the problems of a new job.

There are two factors that are outstanding in influencing appraisal: controllability and predictability (Weiten, 1992:468).

- Controllability

Controllability refers to when an individual regards stress as being within his control. A person who perceives a

stressful situation to be within his control, is in a position to do something about his situation; leading to low levels of stress. Such a person does not believe in fate or luck; he manipulates his environment in order to alleviate or remove stress (Halpin *et al.*, 1984 -137; Swick & Hanley, 1985:21; and Atkinson, 1990:571).

- **Predictability**

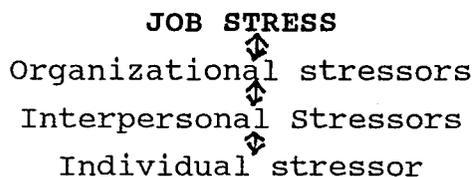
The severity of stress is reduced by being able to predict when stress is likely to occur (Atkinson, 1990: 571). For example, if every winter a person is attacked by influenza virus, such a person may take an anti-influenza injection to combat influenza.

### 2.3 *Sources of Stress*

In the following paragraphs the sources of stress will be discussed.

Countless events in life generate stress. Once the sources of stress have been identified, appropriate coping mechanisms can be instituted. It should be noted that the more people there are in an organization, the more the stressors (Luthans, 1985:133). Individual and organizational stressors can work independently or collectively in generating stress (Beard, 1990:111). The workplace has its own unique set of sources of stressors.

Sources of stress have been classified as - individual, interpersonal and organizational (Swick & Hanley, 1985:7). To summarise it, it can be put in this way:



### 2.3.1 Individual stressors

Atkinson (1990:565 - 570) mentions both traumatic events and life changes as individual stressors.

#### (a) Traumatic events

Traumatic events involve a situation of extreme danger. A person is unable to comprehend the problems that he is facing. Such a person may display the disaster syndrome, where he becomes disorientated. The victim is so hurt that he loses contact with reality (Stanford, 1989:42; and Atkinson, 1990:565).

#### (b) Life changes

Medical researchers such as Holms and Rahe, have verified that sudden life changes create a lot of stress for a lot of people (Luthans, 1985:138). Life changes, whether major or minor, change an individual's life pattern. Such an individual has to readjust his life style, and this may be coupled with stress.

#### • Acculturative stress

Edwards (1988:24) adds socio-political changes in South Africa including the North West Province as a source of stress. Berry & Annis (1974:383) refer to this kind of stress as being acculturative. They maintain that acculturative stress leads to an imbalance between mental health and social change. People may find it difficult to accept or cope with rapid, political changes. Blase (1986:25) indicated that all important life changes are potential sources of stress.

Goodworth (1986:9) postulates that political disunity can

cause stress. In South africa, for example, there are different political parties with different ideologies. Because of a power struggle, some parties fearing to be dominated by other, resort to violence and other forms of extremist actions.

### 2.3.2 Interpersonal stressors

Interpersonal stressors involve professional relationships with superiors and subordinates (Eskridge & Coker, 1988:388). Interpersonal stressors involve people that one interacts with (Swick & Hanley, 1985:10).

Sound relationships between members of a work group are considered a central factor in the smooth running of an organization. Mistrust is positively related to high role ambiguity, which leads to inadequate interpersonal communication between individuals in an organization. These unsound relationships could be referred to as poor staff relations or friction among faculty members (Keinan & Perlberg, 1987:195).

Inconsiderate behaviour on the part of the leaders of an organization appears to contribute significantly to feelings of work pressure. When the workload and the work pressure are perceived to be higher, the relationship between the leaders and the subordinates deteriorate (Swick & Hanley, 1985:16).

### Leadership Style

A faulty leadership style is a potential source of stress for individuals in an organization (Dunham, 1984:55 - 56; and Eskridge & Coker, 1985 - 388), because of the authoritarian style of leader. Such leaders are less likely to appreciate that feedback or performance and recognition for effort are also beneficial to the superior-subordinate relationship.

(a) Group Pressure

Both formal and informal groups in the organization put considerable pressure on an individual to conform to group norms, which may concern production rates, status and style of relationships. Stress will arise if the values of beliefs of an individual are suppressed (Luthans, 1985:135).

2.3.3. Organizational stressors

Stress in modern organizations poses a serious threat to the mental and physical well-being of their members (Kyriacou, 1987:147). Because we live in a fast-paced, constantly changing environment; many people experience great difficulty in adjusting to organizational changes.

(a) Organizational structure and climate

Blase (1986:25) describes organizational structure and climate which threatens the freedom, autonomy and identity of people working in that organization as a source of stress. This implies that organizational practices at one's workplace are clashing with one's principles and convictions.

To make matters worse, the authoritarian leader may have little or no management training. This will be reflected in the following areas:

- autocratic leadership behaviour which ignores consultation and refuses to delegate decision-making and authority.

- unpredictability or inconsistency which generates staff uncertainty and insecurity (Dunham, 1984:56).

How individuals perceive the culture, custom and climate of the organization is important in the understanding of potential sources of stress resulting from being in an organization. Stress factors identified within this category mainly focus on the amount of involvement or participation on the part of the subordinate in the organization's activities.

Restriction of opportunity for participation and autonomy results in increased depression, exhaustion, illness rates and pill consumption (Tanner, 1977:7). Poor organizational climate, insecurity in the organization are all significant predictors of low mental well-being among individuals in the organization.

**(b) Role ambiguity**

An additional source of stress may be present in an organization when an individual does not have adequate information enabling him to carry out his tasks. These unclear expectations can ultimately lead to dissatisfaction, lack of self-esteem, feelings of futility. a lowered sense of self-esteem, depression, increased blood pressure and intention to leave the organization (Blase, 1986:29).

**(c) Role overload or underload**

Task factors intrinsic to the organization include the idea of workload as a potential source of stress. Both overload and underload are acknowledged as stressors. Two distinction of workload are identified: quantitative overload or underload and qualitative overload

or underload (Dunham, 1984:53; and Fisher, 1987:13).

- Quantitative overload or underload

Quantitative overload results from an individual being given too many tasks to do (Blase, 1986:23). Kyriacou (1987:147) refers to this kind of setup as heavy workload.

Too few tasks to complete in a given period leads to quantitative underload, resulting in boredom (Mumbamarwo, 1986:6). Stress could therefore, be generated by having too little or too much to do.

- Qualitative overload or underload

Qualitative overload as a source of stress is significantly linked to low levels of self-esteem. This manifests itself in a person feeling that he is not valued, because little recognition is given to the effort that he puts in his work.

Dunham (1984:54) sums qualitative overload of teachers by saying,

".....there is lack of  
recognition, appreciation and  
understanding of their (teachers)  
increased effort, their feelings  
of frustration are heightened."

Qualitative underload on the other hand, refers to an individual who is under-utilized. Such a person is not given the opportunity to use his expertise (Dunham, 1984:53 - 4). Feelings of frustration are likely to crop up because the work that such an individual does is not challenging to him.

(d) Promotion

Luthans (1985:138) makes a clear distinction between over-promotion and under-promotion. An individual undergoing either of the two may experience stress.

- Over-promotion

Over-promotion involves a person with no experience and relevant qualifications, being promoted to a post he does not deserve. Such a person undergoes a lot of stress because he will find it difficult, if not impossible to deal with the demands of his work (Dunham, 1985:133).

Such a situation is made worse by the fact that a person of that calibre is not open to advice. Whatever suggestions he receives, he does not readily accept them because he suspects that people want to oust him from his position. Also, he does not want people to work closely with him because they will detect his deficiencies and inefficiencies.

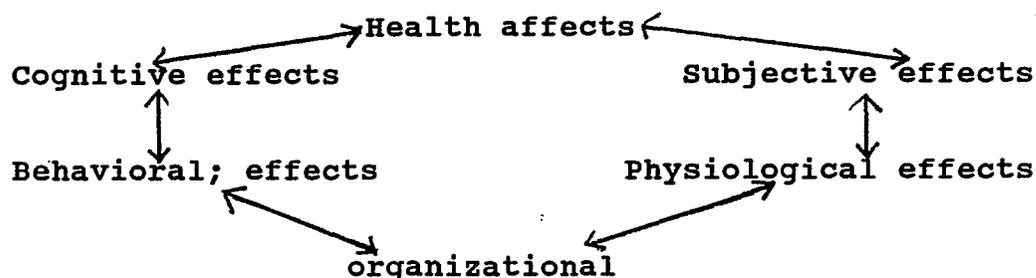
- Under-promotion

Under-promotion involves a person staying for too long in one rank without being promoted, when he deserves promotion. This lowers the morale of that person. It is even worse if the situation is caused by lack of promotional opportunities (Eskridge & Calhoun, 1985:388 and Fisher, 1987:13). The question that now comes to mind is how stress affects an individual.

## 2.4 *The effects of stress*

Stress affects an individual behaviorally, physically, emotional/psychological and mentally (Luthans, 1985: 140 - 142; Duff, 1986:4; Burns, 1988:140; and Atkinson, 1990:559 - 560). Refers to the diagram below:

(a) How stress affects an individual.



"And almost everywhere, countless men and women suffering from undefined worries and tensions reach for more familiar home remedies: a martini or a glass of wine, a cigarette .... and pills, pills, pills" (Tanner, 1977:141)..

When an individual is under constant pressure, his homeostatic mechanisms, which maintain balance between the body and the mind, collapse. This leads to physiological and/or psychosomatic disorders wherein it is believed emotion plays an important role.

Burns (1988: 1 - 2) claims that a tragic consequence of negative stress is that stress-related psychological and physiological disorders have become the number one social and health problem. Most standard medical text books attribute anywhere from 50 to 80 percent of all diseases to stress-related origins.

"Indeed, tension disorders are more common than the common cold, and they constitute unique

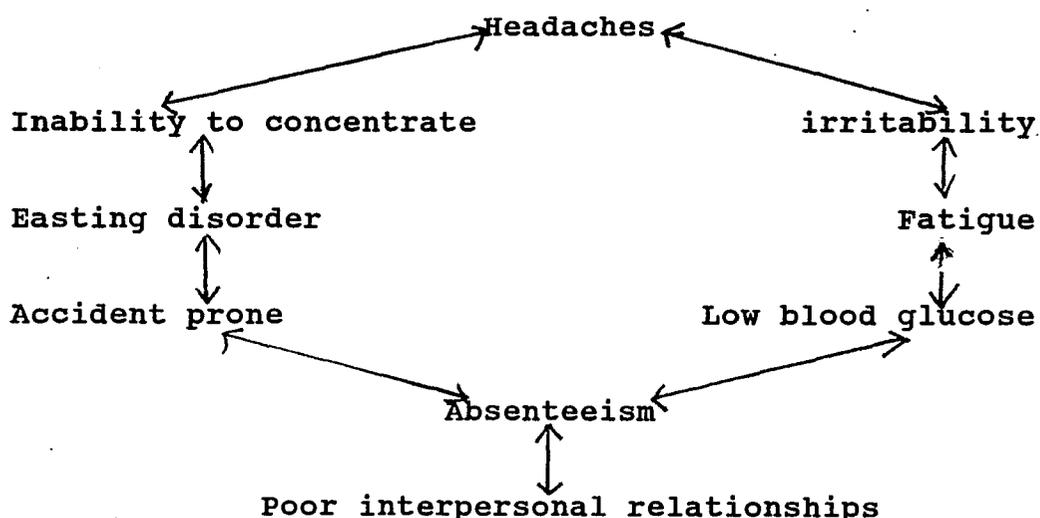
problems for many professional fields" (McGuigan, 1980:209).

Implicit in the contemporary approach to understanding the manifestation of stress are the assumption that stress is a subjective experience (Cole & Walker, 1989:117) and that the outcome or symptoms of distress may be physical, psychological and/or behavioral (Duff, 1986: 3 - 4).

The interactive nature of the symptoms of stress is complete because little is known about the temporal sequencing of the effects of stress, and the relationship that exists between the variables involved, hence diagram (b) which attempts to illustrate the interactive nature of stress symptoms. Kyriacou (1987: 147) illustrates a possible situation that might exist, which suggests that the impact of stress might also be cumulative.

A diagram illustrating the interactive nature of stress symptoms will follow:

(b) The interactive nature of stress symptoms.



#### 2.4.1 Stress and health outcomes

A startling phenomenon highlights on the relationship between stress and physical illness (Burns, 1988:2)

Stress may have direct psycho-physiological effects which affect health (Dunham, 1984:88). Individual differences in perceptions of and reactions to stress result in a wide variety and intensity of physical symptoms. Minor symptoms such as constant fatigue, insomnia, frequent headaches, and sometimes skin rashes, are common in individuals reacting to stress (Eskridge & Coker, 1985:387).

More serious complications such as high blood pressure (Halpin *et al.*, 1984 & 5:136) cardiovascular difficulties, ulcers, chronic depression (Swick & Hanley, 1987:5) may require immediate, and often, prolonged medical attention.

Stress may lead to health impairing habits or behaviours:

"Some people seem determined to dig an early grave for themselves. They do precisely those things that are bad for their lives" (Weiten, 1992:489).

If it is not possible to remove the source of stress or escape from the experience of threat, an individual may resort to the use of palliatives (Booth, 1988:1019). The negative impact of stress may, therefore, be reduced by escapist eating, drinking alcohol or the use of drugs such as tranquillizers, sleeping pills or analgesics, or even smoking (Weiten, 1992:489 - 490).

#### **2.4.2 Behavioral inconsistencies**

Changes in behaviour that accompany exposure to stress include impulsive behaviour, excessive sick leave, lack of patience or sympathy with colleagues, irritability, arriving late at work, leaving early from work or loss of

interest in appearance (Duff, 1986:4).

Some of these behaviours might also have direct and indirect consequences for the health and the well-being of an individual, and likely to cause accidents. For example, too much intake of alcohol may cause accidents, because an individual under the influence of liquor may lack co-ordination (Weiten, 1992:489).

### 2.4.3 Psychological/emotional imbalances

Emotional stress manifests itself physically, for example, shaking or frowning (Burns, 1988:6).

#### (a) Anxiety

Anxiety in our emotional life is like pain in our physical life. It is an indication that things are not right with the functioning of one's body. Anxiety is an essential component of life because it warns an individual of the danger points in life, however too much anxiety has damaging effects on the individual (Burns, 1988:8 and Atkinson, 1990:560 - 561). This includes lack of sleep, nightmares, or even a feeling of choking. Some people may even think that they are physically ill.

#### (b) Depression

Depression entails feeling very low and tired. This leads to a person spending most of the time awake - at night. There are two types of depression:

- Reactive depression

An environmental hazard like losing a loved one, may cause an individual to be depressed. In this instance a person has concrete evidence of why he is depressed.

- Indigenous depression

A person is undergoing internal conflict, which is characterised by swaying moods. This may lead such a person feeling low-spirited, and may ultimately cause that person to commit suicide (Burns, 1988:10)

Dunham (1984:85) postulates that emotional problems manifest themselves through frustration, anger, anxiety and fear. Ratsoy et al., 1986:272) purport that stress has both short-term and long-term effects. Short term effects include increased blood pressure and rapid heart rate. Long-term effects manifest themselves through job dissatisfaction and burnout (Ratsoy et al., 1986:273).

When referring to the effects of stress on teachers, Gray and Freeman (1988:67) maintain that eventually many teachers who are dissatisfied with their working conditions join bodies which question how schools are run, and become very active there. By so doing, they are channelling their energy in another direction. If these organizations practice contradictory principles from those of the organization a person work in, his dissatisfaction may produce reactions that are detrimental to the organizations' aim and objectives.

Another consequence of dissatisfaction can be the withdrawal of the individual from the organization (Beard, 1990:111) to escape or avoid a negative situation through absenteeism or by quitting the organization (Ratsoy et al., 1986:273).

## 2.5 *Eustress and distress*

Stress is either positive or negative. Positive stress is referred to as eustress, while negative stress is referred

to as distress.

### 2.5.1. Eustress

Fortunately, not all stress is negative some stress is positive (Calabrese, 1984:67; and Lazarus, 1993:23). Positive stress is referred to as eustress (Payne & Furnham, 1987:142). Eustress has its origin in the Greek word - "eu" -, which means good (Luthans, 1985:129). Because not all stress is damaging, moderate levels of stress are beneficial in life. Eustress promotes growth and prompt feelings of excitement and urges one to be creative (Capel, 1987:279; Booth 1988:1071; and Cochrane, 1988:6).

When a person or worker experiences pleasant stressors from the environment or organization, he is experiencing eustress. This eustress has a positive effect on the individual and is seen as lifting the morale of workers in the organization. Eustress helps the individual to meet critical deadlines, developing new skills and acquiring new personal strengths (Weiten, 1992:480). Indeed, "stress is the spice of life" (Selye, 1974:85).

### 2.5.2 Distress

When a person's needs, feelings, hopes, intentions and beliefs are not fulfilled in the environment or organization, such a person experiences distress. Unpleasant stressors cause distress (Ratsoy *et al.*, 1986 :271). This distress has a negative effect because it damages individual's well-being and leads to the individual malfunctioning in organizations in which they are employed.

When the level of demand is high on the individual and the body is unable to cope with the amount of pressure, distress will result. A distressed person starts eliciting symptoms associated with survival referred to either as "a

flight or fight response". These will manifest themselves in, for example, the heart pumping faster, generating more oxygen, enabling the person to hear better (Lazarus, 1993:23).

Though the above mentioned manifestations sound positive, it is nevertheless a signal that all is not well with that person because this is the first step towards exhaustion. Such a person ends up overtaxing his physical responses to stress, making his/her breakdown inevitable (Solomon in Lazarus, 1993:23).

An individual experiencing distress may suffer anxiety, depression, leading to illness, an indication of malfunctioning of the body. The individual is unable to unfold his latent potentialities to the full and also fails to meet deadlines and reach his goals (Dunham, 1954:3, Swick & Hanley, 1985:14; and Berger, 1988:43). In short, distress refers to negative stress, which has devastating effects on an individual. Because distress is harmful to an individual, it reduces the quality of his performance in an organization.

According to Burns (1988:1), women experience more stress than men. This alarming disclosure has urged the researcher to investigate stress experienced by women, with particular reference to women lecturing in higher education.

Before looking into stress at work, it should be noted that stress also occurs outside the workplace (Swick & Hanley, 1985:7; and Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991:61). Factors outside the workplace could include traffic jams, long queues at the supermarket and unpaid bills.

## 2.6 *Burnout*

Stress at work can lead to burnout. Booth (1988:1020) supports this view by maintaining that there is a direct link between stress and burnout. Burnout refers to lack of commitment to one's job:

"a reaction to job-related stress that varies in nature with the intensity and duration of stress itself" (Capel, 1987:279).

This means that prolonged stress at work leads to burnout (Hunter, 1986:6 and Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991:62). Therefore, burnout is significantly associated with higher levels of stress perceived at work.

**Burnout involves the following:**

- It is individuals who are over committed to their work, who eventually become victims of burnout (Harvey & Taylor, 1983:24) because organizations do not appreciate their input.
- Staying for too long in a job to a point where the job becomes boring, leads to burnout (Borg & Fatzon, 1989:274 - 275).
- Worse still, workers become emotionally detached from their jobs, and this may go to the extent that such individuals quit their jobs (Capel, 1987:279).

**Burnout has attracted attention because:**

- Most active hours of an individual are spent at work.

- Job goals affect an individual's self-esteem. Once job goals have been attained, and individual's self-image is boosted. On the contrary, when job goals have not been achieved, an individual's self esteem is lowered (Blase, 1986:24).
- Burnout lowers productivity at work (Beard, 1990:110) because the zeal that a person has in order to be productive, disappears. Such an individual loses commitment to his work (Fisher, 1987:17).

Many organizations cannot afford decreased performance. More so, for the last fifteen years, mental health problems have come out clearly as the main causes for days lost at work.

To sum up, Duff (1987:4) postulates the following about burnout in the school situation:

".....it is recognised as a real source of physical and mental illness and harmful to the successful functioning of the school. It is a problem that needs to be addressed in an honest and open fashion by principals and the top management of schools."

This discussion of burnout will be followed by a discussion on stress and personality.

## **2.7      *Stress and Personality***

It is assumed that individuals are not passive spectators in the process of stress. If the assertion of the cognitive

- appraisal approach is accepted - that stress is largely the result of how the person perceives, evaluates and interprets a situation -it follows that stress is individualistic (Stanford, 1989:42).

The variations which are observed among people in the assessment of what constitutes stressful phenomena may be due to differences in personality (Eskridge and Coker, 1985:385; and Gray & Freeman, 1988:1). Stress, therefore, depends on the type of person that we are, rather than the things that are done to us.

**(a) Type A Behaviour**

Interest in personality typologies has been maintained over the centuries, and one such modern typology has been used in the prediction of heart disease as a result of experiencing prolonged stress. Those who are likely to develop heart disease as a result of stress are referred to a Type A personalities (Luthans, 1985:136; and Atkinson, 1990:589).

Coronary heart disease is a major contributory factor to death. When the coronary blood vessels that supply the heart muscle are narrowed or closed. the flow of oxygen and nutrients to the blood, is made impossible (Atkinson, 1990:579).

People with Type A personality tend to be aggressive, ambitious, competitive, impatient, struggling for recognition, over-anxious about keeping time schedules, and putting pressure on themselves in getting things done. They will work too hard even when no deadline or time limit has been set (Luthans, 1985:136 - 137).

**(b) Type B Behaviour**

By contrast, the characteristics of Type A behaviour are

not found in Type B. Type B personalities tend to be more easy-going, relaxed, and do not put pressure on themselves; they are unlikely to develop heart disease (Luthans, 1985:136 - 7).

With regard to these two types of behaviours, Type B never have a coronary heart attack before 70 years, despite unhealthy life-style like eating fatty foods, smoking and lack of exercise. But with Type A, a coronary heart disease can easily erupt in one's thirties or forties (Atkinson, 1990:579). However, not all heart diseases can be directly linked with stress. Environmental conditions, an individual's state of health, can also contribute to stress (Burns, 1988:141).

**Table 2** illustrates the differences between Type A and Type B behaviour.

<b>Type A profile</b>	<b>Type B profile</b>
Is always moving	Is not concerned about time
Walks rapidly	Is patient
Eats rapidly	Doesn't brag
Is impatient	Plays for fun, not to win
Does two things at once	Has no pressing deadline
Can't cope with leisure time	Is mild-mannered
Is obsessed with numbers	Is never in a hurry
Measures success by quantity	Measure success by quality
Is aggressive	Is friendly

**continued on next page**

Is competitive	Not competitive
Constantly feels under time pressure	Not under time pressure

(Luthans,  
1985:132)

## 2.8 *Reacting to stress*

Reacting to stress is complex and multi-dimensional. Individuals react differently to stressors. Many respond physiologically, or behaviourally and psychologically (emotionally) (Weiten, 1992:478).

### 2.8.1 Physiological reaction

Stress causes the adrenal gland to secrete adrenaline which streams into the blood, causing a physiological imbalance like cold sweat or a pounding heart (Stanford, 1989:42).

Cochrane (1988:6) argues that the hypothalamus, which is part of the brain, is able to detect whether an individual is frightened or not. If, for example, a person is frightened the hypothalamus will send stress signals through the body.

In order to give a comprehensive picture of how an individual reacts physiologically to stress, Dr. Hans Selye, "the father of stress", introduced the general Adaptation Syndrome, which has three stages: Alarm Reaction, Resistance and Exhaustion.

#### (a) The Alarm Reaction

When the body is under pressure it reacts dysfunctionally: The alarm reaction leads to bodily changes which are emotionally charged. Adrenaline is secreted into the blood

stream, releasing more blood sugar. Increased blood sugar causes the brain and the muscles to have more energy (Cochrane, 1988:6).

Failure to use the energy released upsets the well-being of an individual. This may manifest itself in accelerated heart beat and/or increased blood pressure which is damaging to the body (Burns, 1988:30).

**(b) Resistance**

The devastating effects of stress on the body lowers the body's resistance. The amount of energy used to counteract stress, therefore, lowers the immune system' making the body susceptible to illness. This strains and drains the body's resources. This could lead to marked loss in weight (Dunham, 1984:85).

**(c) Exhaustion**

Exhaustion is the final stage of how an individual reacts physiologically to stress. It is caused by persistent stress. The body becomes exhausted because the immune system has collapsed. Depending on an individual's make-up, exhaustion may have physical and/or psychological implications (Burns, 1988:3). Physical problems manifest themselves in headaches, sleep disturbances, fatigue (Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991:62).

**A physiological approach**, sums up how stress occurs.

1. From the outer edges of the brain chemical messages are carried along neurons to the hypothalamus.
2. The hypothalamus production of the chemical CFR (Corticotrophin release factor), which follows either of the two paths mentioned above.

*The path that prepares and regulates*

3. Message goes to the pituitary gland where it is changed into the hormone ACTH (Adrenocorticotrophic hormone).
4. It enters the bloodstream and travels to the outer layer of the adrenal glands.
5. ACTH starts the production of cortisol, a chemical that increases the blood sugar and speeds up the body's metabolism.

*The path for "flight or fight"*

6. From the hypothalamus messages trigger electro-chemical impulses down the brain stem and spinal cord.
7. The signals go to the core of the adrenal glands. Here epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine are released.
8. Epinephrine helps supply extra glucose - fuel for muscles and brain.
9. Norepinephrine speeds up the heartbeat and raised blood pressure.
10. Both paths feed back to the pituitary to regulate further the response to stress".

(Insight, 1992:23)

**2.8.2. Behavioral reaction**

An individual under stress will behave in a peculiar manner by eliciting a defensive behaviour, as a way of counteracting the stressful situation he is encountering. Alternatively, he may take a deep breath and silently "count up to ten" before taking action, if any. Coping strategies are either adaptive or maladaptive, an area of coping strategies that will be explored in chapter three. Most behavioral reaction to stress, therefore, revolves around coping, that is, conscious effort to grapple with the demands created by stress (Weiten, 1992:477).

### 2.8.3 Psychological reaction

Unpleasant and painful emotions are indicators that things are not well with a person. Psychological problems lead to impaired cognitive development because high emotional arousal may blur a person's thinking.

#### 2.8.4 (a) Cognitive impairment

An individual who is cognitively impaired reacts in a manner that demonstrates impaired or abnormal cognitive functioning. This results in a lower level of skill performance than he is ordinarily capable of accomplishing.

This may manifest itself in lack of concentration (Dunham, 1984:85), inability to organize thoughts logically (Booth, 1988:559) and forgetfulness (Beard, 1990:111). An individual's thinking capabilities are thus being tampered with, causing him to be mentally deficient.

#### (b) Unpleasant emotions

Emotions commonly elicited by a person experiencing a lot of stress are negative, for example, anger, frustration, rage, annoyance, feeling dejected, feeling low-spirited because of a stressful situation at hand, like loss of a partner (Weiten, 1992:492)

Anxiety is caused by an individual perceiving a threatening situation beyond his control.

These unpleasant emotions are associated with worry, fear and apprehension (Atkinson, 1990:560)

## 2.9 Conclusion

Since the research is conducted with the assumption that stress is being caused to an individual by the organization, it is important, if possible, to identify those factors within institutions of higher education, that cause unnecessary stress to women lecturers. The findings in chapter 2 support the perspective that when stress is not properly controlled, it will certainly produce an inefficient workforce. It becomes equally important to suggest strategies for alleviating or removing stress, an area that this study will explore.

Chapter 3 will explore coping mechanisms that an individual may employ in counteracting the effects of distress.

## CHAPTER THREE

### STRESS MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

#### 3.1 *Introduction*

".....recognize stressful situations and either resolve the problem or learn to cope effectively." (Hanley and Taylor, 1983:26).

A pressing need for employing appropriate coping strategies is apparent: tension disorders always present in our society indicates that few people have the necessary coping mechanisms (McGuigan, *et al.*, 1980: 209). Anxiety and physiological problems that go with stress are so uncomfortable that there is a need for individuals to know how to manage stress (Atkinson, 1990:573). This is a clear indication that an individual experiencing stress, has to derive coping strategies that will alleviate the discomfort caused by stress.

The problems of occupational health are real. There is a need to resolve these problems by coming up with suggestions and solutions (Cox, 1978:67 and Gaziel, 1993:67). However, there is no universal solution to stress (Noel, 1987:67).

"While stress management techniques may be beneficial in individual cases, there is ultimately no universal panacea for coping with changing stress." (Edwards, 1988:25).

Both the individual and the organization must accept some responsibility in the management and control of stress.

Thus, stress management cannot be put solely in the hands of organizations in which the individual works; the individual, too, has to put effort in stress management (Noel, 1987:65 and Marais, 1989: 38 - 48).

The first important step in stress management is to recognize the need to deal with stress. This must be matched equally by all with determination, if stress management is to be effectively introduced and maintained. Individuals must learn ways to deal with stress and, hopefully, become more effective at coping with strain and pressures of their workplace.

On the other hand, organizations should be in a position to introduce stress management programmes in the workplace. Such programmes should enable the individual to control his physical reactions, or put his problem in perspective. In so doing, the individual will develop a healthier attitude towards the pressures and urgencies of everyday life (Tanner, 1977:141; and Harvey & Taylor, 1983:26).

Organizations are, therefore, charged with the task of addressing coping techniques in dealing with stressful situations at work:

- (i) This will include the importance of understanding the demanding situation the individual in an organization is faced with and
- (ii) how the individual reacts to those situations (Lazarus & Folkman in Boyle *et al.*, 1991:850).

In this chapter the focus will be on stress management techniques, both individual and organizational.

### 3.2 Individual approaches to coping with stress

Programmes for the prevention and treatment of stress should be tailored to the needs of the individual (Cox, 1978:149). Refer to 3.2.1 (types of coping strategies) and Table 3.2.2 (A model for coping).

#### 3.2.1 Types of coping strategies

COPING STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Active coping	Take additional action to try and get rid of the problem.
Planning	I try to come up with a strategy about what to do
Suppression of competing activities	I try to put aside other activities and to concentrate on this.
Restrain coping	I force myself to wait for the right time to do something.
Seeking social support for instrumental reasons	I ask people who have had similar experiences what they did. <b>(continued on next page)</b>

Seeking social support for emotional reasons	I talk to someone about how I feel, e.g. a trustworthy friend
Positive re-interpretation and growth	I look for something good in what is happening.
Acceptance	I learn to live with it.
Turning to religion	I seek God's help.
Focus on and venting of emotions	I get upset and let my emotions out, e.g. by crying
Denial	I refuse to believe that it has happened
Behavioral disengagement	I give up the attempt to get what I want.
Mental disengagement	I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things that upset me. <b>(continued on next page)</b>

Alcohol-drug disengagement	I drink alcohol or take drugs in order to think about it less.
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(Weiten, 1992:495)

### 3.2.2 A MODEL OF COPING

#### Conscious coping resources

The following strategies may be used

- problem solving
- control of emotional responses
- having a good self-image
- conscious use of ignoring the problem

(Capel in Cole & Walker, 1989:56)

The first principle in stress management is: "Know thyself." It is important for the individual to understand what makes him stress prone or stress resistant and when coping is adaptive or maladaptive (Weiten, 1992: 447). When stimulating pressure changes from debilitating stress the subsequent strain can be described as distress.

The individual must be able to identify the problem areas or life style patterns that are preventing him or her from achieving life goals and then, cut through the life time of emotional red tape, by changing behaviour and redesigning these patterns. It is unwise to put the blame on any circumstances or other person for one's failures or an unfulfilling and unsatisfying mode of living. People must manipulate the environment, take responsibility and choose a satisfying way to live (Edwards, 1988:26).

Often a stressful lifestyle creeps upon people so insidiously that they fail to recognise its presence until they experience negative consequences (Beard,

1990:112). Once an individual has identified events in the organization causing unbearable pressure in his life, the effects of these pressures, he can manage his life-style.

Coping will involve the following strategies:

Successful relaxation results in enhanced feelings of well-being, peacefulness, a sense of control, and a reduction in tension and anxiety. Physiologically, this entails a decrease in blood pressure, respiration and heart rate.

(a) "Relaxation is a valuable stress management technique that can soothe emotional turmoil and suppress problematic physiological arousal." (Weiten, 1992:498)..

(b) Physical fitness and exercise are another strategy. Fit individuals may be less psychologically reactive in stressful situations (Tanner, 1977:141; Eskridge & Coker, 1985:389; Duff, 1986:42 and Marais, 1989:38-48). Exercise is viewed as a coping mechanism which reduces the physiological consequences of stressful situations, alters mood states, in the short-term, and personality traits like anxiety, in the long-term (Mazibuko, 1992:50).

(c) Releasing pent-up emotions, stress relief may also be found through talking or writing about one's feelings. Venting frustration and anger to an understanding person - friends or family member, is one of the most common means of venting steam (Weiten, 1992:498). Writing down your thoughts can effectively reduce feelings of conflict or anger (Grasha, 1987:55). However, expression of emotions should be done in a mature and socially accepted manner.

(d) Sleeping patterns. The brain needs rest to maintain its equilibrium, because without adequate rest and sleep, it cannot maintain the biochemical and electrical balances needed for effective functioning. Lack of sleep affects an individual negatively and such an individual may not be able to cope effectively with tasks that he has to accomplish (Cochrane, 1988:7; Mazibuko, 1992:50).

(e) A proper diet that maintains body weight within medical guidelines. Poor nutritional habits should be avoided (Tanner, 1977:141m and Terrill, 1993: 91-94). These wrong eating habits involve:

- (i) Obesity leading to increased heart disease, hypertension, stroke and back problems;
- (ii) Heavy consumption of foods that increase serum cholesterol;
- (iv) Diets high in fats and low in fibre;
- (v) Wrong styles of consuming sugar, not sugar itself, quickening the onset of diabetes (Weiten, 1992:490).

The individual must be aware of the links between stress, illness and personal behaviour (Luthans, 1985:149). The following issues should be taken into consideration when redressing stress management:

- (i) Identification of work and personal stress
- (ii) Identification of the impact of stress, that is, symptoms and outcomes.

- (iii) Helping the individual to recognize his strengths and weaknesses; in relation to behavioral style, personality and coping skills; and how these will affect his response to stress and outcome (Beard, 1990:118).

Weiten (1992:479) purports constructive coping, or what Atkinson (1990:577-8) refers to as problem-focused coping.

Problem-focused coping entails managing or changing the stress-inducing problem that the environment generates. By so doing, the problem is put into perspective.

#### **3.2.2.1 Constructive coping entails:**

(a) Confronting problems directly where conscious effort is made to resolve the problems.

(b) Coping is based on realistic appraisals of the kind of stress in question and coping resources employed.

(c) Learning to recognise or inhibit potentially disruptive emotional reactions to stress.

(d) Ensuring that the body is not vulnerable to the devastating effects of stress (Weiten, 1992:479 -480; and Dunham).

#### **3.2.2.2 Managing Type A behaviour**

Modifying Type A behaviour (Atkinson, 1990:587-588), may entail the following strategies:

(a) A person should force himself to listen to the conversation of other people. He should try to refrain from being the centre of attention by constantly, talking. He should quit trying to finish other peoples' sentences.

(b) A person should try to control obsessional time-directed life by making himself aware of constraints that he puts on himself by time limits and changing the established pattern of behaviour. For example, trying to desperately reach the last post in the office at 16h00, when the letter could be posted the next day. In other words, set priorities about what needs to be done, and by whom.

(c) A person should try to understand that the majority of his work and social life does not really require immediate action, but instead requires a quality end-product, or a fulfilling relationship. This could be attained by asking himself a question like: Are good judgements and best decisions best formulated under hurried or unhurried situations?

(d) As part of an effort to broaden himself and lessen specific aspects of obsessional time, he should resort to some outside activities like theatre, reading, sewing.

(e) He should attempt to create opportunities during the day and at night where he can totally relax - both body and mind (Mazibuko, 1992:51).

The above-mentioned imply that Type A people should be aware of the impact of their behaviour on other people. Because of their over-bearing qualities they should move away from the I first, to others first.

### 3.2.3 *Defensive coping*

Defensive coping (Weiten, 1992:478-479) or emotional-focused coping (Atkinson, 1990: 574 - 6) is a temporary measure of coping in that the source of stress has not been removed; it has just been shelved and could surface

anytime. Kyriacou (1987:147), refers to this solution as palliative action, while Beard (1990:112-113) uses the term negative strategies.

"Inevitably increased evidence and increased interest in researching stress - both occupational and everyday - has spawned a whole host of palliatives, panaceas and placebos designed to enable people to confront stress and cope" (Cole & Walker, 1989:117).

Defense mechanisms are employed to protect an individual from the emotional discomfort that is so often generated by stress (Weiten, 1992:478 - 479). Unfortunately, a temporary measure like alcohol intake, can only lead to dependence on alcohol, without resolving the problem (Faulker & Maguire 1988: 1011). This could compound the problem.

These maladaptative responses may manifest themselves through:

#### **3.2.3.1 Displacement**

More often than not, people lash out aggressively at others who had nothing to do with their frustration, apparently because they cannot vent their anger at the real source of their frustration (Weiten, 1992:477). For example, a subordinate may be feeling angry with his superior but afraid to face him. Rather than strike at his superior, he may strike at his partner at home.

#### **3.2.3.2 Humour or stress-reducer**

Inability to tackle the problem may lead to laughing away one's problems. This may be helpful in short-term, but the problem still remains. Unfortunately defense mechanisms distort reality. A person who is not bold enough to face reality, will invent scapegoats to run away from his problems (Weiten, 1992:497)

### **3.2.3.3 Denial**

Denial is denying having a problem. For example, parents who have a child with physical defects like hard-of-hearing may act as if their child is normal. Rather than accept the problem, they pretend as if it is not there (Atkinson, 1990:576).

### **3.2.3.4 Intellectualization**

Intellectualization is an attempt to distance oneself from his problems in intellectual terms. For example, a nurse who is taking care of a terminally ill patient may develop a detached feeling towards her patient because the problem is too much for her to handle (Atkinson, 1990:576).

The above-mentioned are an indication that a person undergoing a stressful period may either face the music by tackling the source of his problem or he may distance himself from his problem by applying defence mechanisms. So as to avoid temporary strategies that include defence mechanisms, what role could organizations play to help these individuals who are victims of stress?

### **3.2.4 *Organizational approaches in dealing with stress***

The rapid growth of interest in stress management has produced a variety of programmes which are designed to meet the needs of particular organizations.

Leaders hold key positions for influencing attitudes to stress and for implementing strategies to reduce levels of stress (Kearney & Turner, 1987:20).

#### **3.2.4.1 Appraisal support**

Appraisal support is a form of intervention programme to help people put their problems in perspective. In so doing, the individual will be made aware of the links

between stress, illness and personal behaviour (Weiten, 1992:487).

This will encompass:

- Identification of work and personal stress.
- Identifications of the impact of stress.
- Helping the individual to recognize that his strength and weaknesses, in relation to behavioral style, personality and coping skills, will afford his response to stress and outcomes (Beard, 1990:113).

#### **3.2.4.2 Informational support**

After putting his problem in perspective, the next step would be informational support, where the program deals with resolving the problem, by attempting different strategies, until a more appropriate strategy is found (Weiten, 1992:488).

Within this category of stress management falls cognitive restructuring and behavioral modification. The aim is to help the individual gain control over their reaction to a stressor, by modifying maladaptive patterns of thinking and the faulty premises, beliefs and assumptions which underlie their cognitions (Luthans, 1985: 144 - 145).

##### **(a) Cognitive Strategies**

The rationale of cognitive strategies in stress management (Pajak *et al.*, 1987 -8:150), is to reappraise, re-learn, or re-label the way a situation is perceived by logic and thinking, rather than by emotional reactions that have been ingrained by past habits (Atkinson, 1990:573 - 574).

Reappraisal or restructuring often focuses on removing cognitive distortions such as over-generalization, magnifying and personalization. Cognitive restructuring skills include changing the way one perceives and defines stressful events, personal beliefs, expectations, internal conversations and evaluations one has about the pressures that one encounters (Atkinson, 1990:574).

**(b) Behaviour modification**

Behaviour modification is also used to change or reduce inappropriate or exaggerated response to stress (Swick & Hanley, 1985:21). Techniques include role play, observation and self-report and feedback, these can be effectively taught in group sessions. Working together against a common enemy or towards a common goal, keeps people together in that they close ranks (Bretnitz, 1983:xiv). Strategies might take the form of:

- (i) Assertiveness training, which is designed to provide the individual with more control over his activities (Atkinson, 1990:572)
- (ii) Time management (Noel, 1987:70). This might include training in skills such as delegating, negotiating, goal setting and confronting or setting priorities (Grasha, 1987:54).
- (iii) Career planning. Perhaps to establish more realistic goals or to confront the stressors that arise from home and work, for example, problems associated with dual role played by women (Burns, 1988:59).

**(c) Relaxation techniques**

Relaxation techniques (Luthans, 1985:144; and Grasha, 1987:55) may include meditation, biofeedback and exercise (Atkinson, 1990:574).

(d) Interpersonal Skills

Managing stress involves learning the skills necessary in interacting with other people. For example, effective communication, active listening, teamwork. (Boyle et al., 1991:851).

(e) Social support

Support of other people can make stress more manageable (Lawson & Fuehrer, 1989:16). A devastating experience like death or illness, becomes bearable if one has social support. Spouse, friends, relatives may provide material support (Weinen, 1992:488) or even more important, emotional support, that will boost one's self-esteem.

"Numerous studies indicate that people who have many social ties live longer and are less apt to succumb to stress-related illnesses than are people who have few supportive social contacts."  
(Atkinson, 1990:572).

(f) Departmental and interdepartmental counselling

These interventions typically provide counselling and referral for individual problems. An individual may seek help directly, may be referred by a medical personnel or attend at the suggestion of a boss or supervisor, who senses that problems existing are beyond the scope of a friendly chat at work.

Many organizations incorporated counselling into stress management programmes to cope with problems related to drug and alcohol abuse, work and career problems, as well as family issues. A counselling programme for

individuals in distress produce a drop in absenteeism, anxiety and depression and sickness.

An effective organizational programme should meet the following criteria:

- (i) Clear, understandable, realistic, acceptable and measurable goals.
- (ii) A programme should provide both individual and organizational benefits (Noel, 1987:65).
- (iii) The support and endorsement of top management is essential (Kearney & Turner, 1987:20).
- (iv) Stress management workshops should be introduced (Capel, 1987:287). This could entail identifying areas that cause stress to workers so that stress can be minimised or removed in an organization.
- (v) The focus should be on the acquisition of skills, attitudes and behaviours that can reduce levels of stress.
- (vi) Stress management avoids the pre-occupation with stress as a negative concept. A successful programme will emphasize the positive and seek to establish and maintain a healthy well-being.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Overall, it is necessary to view all the individuals in the organization as people who have needs, personalities and commitments outside the confines of organizational life. Organizations should, therefore, begin to realize, that the performance efficiency, and satisfaction of the individual, in their workplace is linked with his or her total life.

Beard (1988:330) sums it by citing criteria that organizations should fulfil in alleviating or reducing stress levels for individuals working in those organizations:

(i) Improved communication channels between management and subordinates.

(ii) Providing guidelines for dealing with abuse, aggression and violence and other stress related issues.

For organizations to function effectively, stress management should be incorporated in those organizations. Individuals, too, should be willing to manage their stress.

The next chapter will explore stress experienced by women in general, before focusing on women in higher education.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. *STRESS EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THOSE LECTURING IN HIGHER EDUCATION*

#### 4.1 *Introduction*

"Factors in each country's history, traditions and politics shape the opportunities for women in complex ways" (Acker, 1992:58).

The previous chapter explored how individuals manage their stress and how organizations in which these individuals work, can assist them in their stress management. In this chapter, the focus will be on stress experienced by women in general, thereafter stress experienced particularly by women lecturing in higher education.

According to the literature, sex discrimination is considered a major stress factor in women (Sutherland, 1981:1; Delamont, 1989:95; Michelson, 1989:49 - 52; and Bird, 1991 : 184). This has led to increased interest in the possible injustices against females in various educational systems, including higher education (Sutherland, 1981:1).

Society still has a problem with the acquisition of feminity and the need to educate females for their proper roles, as both workers and mothers (Bird, 1991:184). This is a strong indication that societal expectations, too, play a role in sex discrimination:

"Societal expectations have a great influence on how women are perceived against the social process, thus affecting equity and equality"

(Kelly et al., 1991:404).

The position of women depends a great deal on the short- and long-term objectives of a society. This has prompted a need to focus on the situation of women and its improvement (Delamont, 1989:95), a situation that this study will explore.

It is interesting that though women receive limited returns when compared with men in higher education concerning rank and promotion, they still have to survive in higher education. This disadvantage women have over their male counterparts has led to more concern on women's unique position in education and the labour market (Mickelson, 1989:49 - 52).

A question that emerges is whether women are not interested in competing with men for prestigious posts or authority in the public life? (Sutherland, 1981:5)

To have a better understanding of women in general, particular political and historical traditions have to be studied (Acker, 1992:72). Thus, an attempt will be made in this study to trace both the politics and history of sex discrimination. An explanation of what sex discrimination entails, will be our point of departure.

#### **4.2 What is Sex Discrimination?**

Sex discrimination implies treating people differently because of their biological differences:

"Legally speaking, discrimination consists of less favourable treatment of a member of one sex than would be accorded to a person of the

other sex, whose relevant circumstances are the same or not materially different" (Acker, 1992:63).

Sex discrimination becomes a stressor to women because:

- men are expected to dominate women, and
- women are regarded as subordinate to men (Pinkstaff & Wilkinson, 1979:111; and Moore, 1988:2).

#### ***4.2.1 Sex discrimination as a stressor***

By its nature sex discrimination is a stress-inducing factor for women in that society expects women to be inferior to men, as already mentioned above. To make matters worse, sex discrimination causes barriers to job prospects and promotion of women (Eccles *et al.*, 1990:183). Discriminatory practices overlook merit, skills, abilities and qualifications to perform a job; judgement is made based on prejudice (De Lyon & Mignoulo, 1989:99).

Because of their being undermined by society, women develop a low self-esteem, which tends to lead to limit their aspirations (Shapiro, 1987:174).

Women display their limited aspirations by:

- being more committed to teaching than in occupying senior posts,
- perceiving their home responsibilities as being more important than their work responsibilities (De Lyon & Mignoulo, 1989:84)
- not forming peer networks and mentors men give to top-level men (Bricklen & Brannigan, 1989:135).

Discrimination against the training of women for employments had deep roots in the past (Byrne, 1978:187). This issue will be discussed:

(a) **Theories of gender differences**

Some theories of gender differences have been designed as an attempt to scrutinise historical and biological factors that could be attributed to present sexual divisions in society (Sayer, 1987:26).

(i) **Biological determination**

Males and females differ biologically. Do these biological differences determine psychological differences? This theory failed to advance reasons why it is assumed that boys are intellectually superior to girls. All that it argues is that males are biologically different from females - a factor that cannot be disputed. It would have been helpful if the biological determinism theory had clearly spelt out whether there is a biological factor causing women's unwillingness to seek higher levels in education and public life (Sutherland, 1981:5).

(ii) **Social Learning Theory**

Another theory that attempted to justify sex discrimination is the social learning theory. This theory states that a child acquires her knowledge and repertoire of sex-typed behaviours through observation from the people she interacts with. Observation will include media that she is exposed to and the subjects she is taught.

Although the social learning theory includes the importance of sex-typing activities, for example, how school work relates to child development, it does not explain the origin of sex-typing. Also, this theory fails to explain why certain behaviours are regarded as male - or female - typed (Sayers, 1987:28 - 9).

(iii) Cognitive developmental theory

Around the age of three years the child, herself, determines sex stereotyping, not society. Thus, it is through her own perceptions that the child develops sex stereotyping. In addition to this, babies look at pictures of their own sex, ignoring biological differences between boys and girls. The cognitive developmental theory failed to explain why it is the child itself, not society, that introduces herself to sex stereotyping (Sayers, 1987:29)

(iv) Psychoanalytic perspective

This theory suggests that society determines which roles should be played by men and those that should be played by women, ignoring the factor of how each sex exerts itself in its situation.

The psychoanalytic theory, thus, maintains that sex differences are insulated in infancy by mothers rather than the child's psychological response to biological differences (Sayers, 1987:31).

(v) Role Theory

The role theory's point of departure is tracing the roles men and women are socialised to play. Men are expected to give higher priority to work obligations and lower priority to family obligations. The opposite could be said of women (Stromberg *etal* 1987 :215). The socialization process influences perceptions about roles played by boys and girls (Sikes, 1991:146). Girls are expected to behave well - act feminine (Mickelson, 1989:57).

This theory further suggests that men's socialization makes them less sensitive to the

psychic costs of relocation, separation from familiar surroundings, isolation from social networks, increased contacts with strangers and the risks of a new job. This theory assumes that men take their work more seriously than women (Stromberg *et al.*, 1987:215).

The above-mentioned theories have attempted to justify sex discriminations and its psychological impact on society. They, however, failed to give an account of the origins of sex divisions in a more rational manner (Sayers, 1987:32). Inability to explain convincingly the origins of sex discrimination had led to women continually grappling with the issue of whether the problems they encounter in their workplace are generated by the fact that they are women or whether it is the nature of their work (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980:135).

A question that comes to mind is: Is it possible that females do not really want opportunities to advance or are there barriers that make it difficult for women to aspire for high posts (Sutherland, 1981:3)? An attempt will be made to get the answer by tracing the history of sex discrimination.

#### **(b) The History Of Sex Discrimination**

##### **The era 1841 - 1941**

Sex discrimination will only be traced as far back as 1941 in this study because it was when sex discrimination became an issue. Also, it may be helpful to trace the origins and universality of women's subordination, because a connection exists between women's subordination and sex discrimination (Moore, 1988:12 -3).

From as far back as 1841 up to 1941, the division of labour between home and work were introduced. With the

dawn of housewifery, women had no role as financial providers; with women's economic dependence on men increasing. (Pinkstaff & Wilkinson, 1979:112; and Perron & St-Onge, 1991:79).

• **The family power theory**

Economic dependence of women on men is closely interrelated with power. The spouse who is economically independent commands power. Power in marriage, therefore, flows from partner who is economically independent (Murray, 1984:19; and Stomberg *et al.*, 1987:216):

• **Social perceptions about women**

The perception that society has about women has a great impact on sex stereotyping. Many studies on women have concluded that women:

- prefer family life to career life,
- are unwilling to fight for positions,
- are not interested in getting to the top, they hate bureaucracy,
- are more susceptible to emotional pressures,
- spend more time thinking about their problems,
- are prone to somatic manifestations of their psychological distress,
- display lack of confidence.
- have low aspiration and ambition,
- are more concerned about people and nurturance than to be serious with their work,
- have motives to avoid success (Warshaw, 1979:14; and Acker, 1992:61). The above-mentioned barriers are psychological.

Society does not want to spend money educating women because after completion, some women never get employed as they may become housewives. Thus, an argument has been put forward that women do not take their training

seriously because they have the option of not working, after completion of their training (Acker, 1992:62).

The bottom-line is that society is not supportive of women's employments trends (Emmons *et al.*, 1990:6). Gender segregation, therefore, continues to exist in many activities, including employment (Eccles *et al.*, 1990:183). Added to lack of support by society, women lack administrative skills and relevant qualifications (Shapiro, 1987:172).

(ii) The middle and end of the 1960's

By the middle and end of the 1960's prejudice and discrimination were increasingly recognised as barriers to women's employment and equality (Arnot, 1985:85).

Since the 1960's female enrolment at all levels of education has increased, with women entering professions which were previously a sacred area for males. Throughout the 1970's, further attempts were made to create a climate which would give individuals equal access to education and jobs. The current trend is to strike a balance between home and work responsibilities (Perron & St-Onge, 1991:79).

The condition of women has improved considerably in the 1990's. Women are becoming more economically independent, they have better educational opportunities and political rights than the previous generations (Kelly *et al.*, 1991:404).

### **4.3. *Why Women Work***

The dawn of the twentieth century has seen the number of working women increasing. This could be attributed to the following demographic factors:

- better qualifications
- a decrease in the number of children in their families.

The above mentioned demographic factors have made it possible for women to fulfil their dual role of both career and family. This has led to dual income families increasing (Le Roux, 1987:317 - 8).

Women work for two main reasons: psychological and economic. Psychologically, women who work have a better self-esteem than those who do not work. Economically, finances at home are usually such that a woman's salary comes in handy (Clifford, 1987:12).

It should be noted that there are two types of economically active women:

- working woman who works mainly to alleviate her financial plight.
- career woman who works for love of her job. This kind of a woman works for self-fulfilment.

**The reasons why women work can be summarised as follows.**

- Some women are career-orientated (Pinkstaff & Wilkinson, 1979:17-18). Thus, nowadays women also take part in the labour market because they enjoy building their own careers (Opperman, 1993:65).
- Improved self-image because women have something of value to contribute to the community. This provides a sense of purpose and meaning for her life (Thoits in Emmons et al., 1990:62).
- The need for independence and autonomy (Mbambo,

1993:13), contrary to societal perceptions about women.

- The need to broaden their social horizon by interacting with, and conversing with people from all walks of life (Pinkstaff & Wilkinson, 1979:17-8).

Married women who work, regard their work just as important as their husband's, particularly that women's work lead to self-satisfaction (Lucas *et al.* 1986:137). Despite the positive effects that working has on women, they still have to contend with male dominance in the workplace.

Women are concentrated in the stereotypically female occupations such as clerical work, teaching, and nursing. Few women hold managerial posts (Dex & Shaw, 1986:39) and this generates a lot of stress for women because women, too, would like to hold managerial posts so that the aspirations of women should be accommodated in their workplace.

Sex difference in choices of careers affect women and employment prospects in general and their possibilities to sit in higher education. If women cluster around too few areas, their employment prospects are hindered because they become redundant.

Women are greatly under-represented in the Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Studies, including Engineering and Technology. However, in Law, Administration and Medicine, the situation is better. Unfortunately there are too many women in the humanities (Wilson, 1991:5).

It is disadvantageous for women to choose careers or subjects that make mobility to senior posts difficult. The right education is important for women - it will arm them with the right ingredients to fight sex discrimination, and thus avoid stress generated by sex discrimination.

"Education is thought to have a positive effect on women's participation in the labour force because it improves employment opportunities for women..." (Moore, 1988:103).

#### **4.4. Other Stress Factors Affecting Women**

The workplace generates a lot of stress for women. It makes it necessary to look into conditions in the workplace that induce stress for women because the tendency is to blame women for their lack of mobility without examining their working conditions (Shapiro, 1987:172).

##### **4.4.1. Working Mothers**

According to the role overload hypothesis, working mothers, single or married, are likely to experience stress as a result of conflict between their work responsibilities and the demands of home-making and parenthood. Stress is caused by on-going tug-of-war between home - and work - responsibilities (Emmons *et al.*, 1986:85; Le Roux, 1987:329; Cohen *et al.*, 1990:118; and Eccles, 1990:64).

##### **(a) Single Mothers**

Sources of stress among single mothers may emanate from:

- limited budget (Mbambo, 1993:12) due to low income as compared to two-parent families. Low income is related to stress and demoralization (Cohen *et al.*, 1990:118).

- being both a mother and a father (Mbambo, 1993:12).

(b) **Married Mothers With Children**

Women's commitment to their work, their ambition, their desire for promotion in various occupations, is likely to be influenced by marriage, especially parenthood. Home and work imbalances are generated by parenthood, rather than marriage (Evetts, 1990: 63-4).

Parenthood makes certain demands on married women because society expects the responsibility of the marital home, particularly the physical care and emotional well-being of young children, to be in the hands of the woman (Eccles, 1990:64).

The demands of a married life, on the other hand creates an unpredictable future for married women because their future, including their work may be determined by their husband's work prospects because their husband's work tend to be taken more seriously than their own (Sutherland, 1981:171).

Motherhood affects both single and married women and becomes a stressor to them in attempting to balance a career with nurturing young children (De Lyon & Migmuolo, 1989:84; and Emmons *et al.*, 1990:61), which may lead to a spill over between work and home responsibilities (Lucas *et al.*, 1986:134).

Therefore, career women with young children experience role conflict in attempting to strike a balance between career and family obligations. Planning either is not difficult, but planning for both is really taxing to these women (Lucas *et al.*, 1986:132 -3; and Le Roux, 1987:329).

All in all, working mothers feel that their children, particularly those in preschool or at primary school, are not given enough attention due to their work pressures. Thus issues pertaining to child care and limited time to attend to their childrens' needs cause a lot of stress for these women (Le Roux, 1987:329).

#### **4.4.2 Male Dominance**

Working in a predominantly male environment, women will probably experience stress because of:

- aggression displayed by some men,
- difficulty in being accepted by some men (Warshaw, 1974:142),
- dominance by male administrators stifles women (Calabrese & Anderson, 1986:38),
- low representation of women in the full range of professional and managerial posts,
- women occupying low paying jobs (Clifford, 1986:10; Lucas *et al.*, 1986:137; and Wilson, 1991:217).

Kelly and Hale postulate that there is an absence or minority of women among the upper echelons of the civil service. This state of affairs deprives women of the opportunity of being part of decision-making structure in their organizations (Kelly *et al.*, 1991:403).

#### **(a) Promotion**

Research has shown that women seem to have been disadvantaged in the promotion process. This could be attributed to the negative effects of sex stereotyping and sex discrimination on promotion procedures and on women's opportunities for career advancement (De Lyon & Mignuolo, 1989:83-4).

Data suggest that women tend to be promoted at a slower

pace than men for the first five to six years of their employment. The underlying motive seems to stem from the fact that women have to prove themselves first before they can be promoted (Kelly *et al.*, 1991:403).

Because discriminatory practices have been identified in both staffing and promotion; it is the duty of women themselves, to remedy the situation (Byrne, 1978:226).

Higher education institutions or organisations have to be analyzed to ascertain whether there are equal opportunities for both men and women. If this is not done, the situation has to be changed:

"If real change are to be brought about in the present educational experiences of girls and women, we must not only develop the knowledge and skills to implement equal opportunities in schools but also examine the institutional working and internal politics of higher educational establishments", Skeleton in (Cohen *et al.*, 1991:15).

#### 4.4.3 Maternity Leave

Le Roux (1987:330 - 1) postulates that conditions of maternity leave benefits for working mothers are not favourable to women. The main problem has been maternity leave without pay, or the period being short, like one month only.

Organizations must accept that maternity leave is part and parcel of a woman's world, unless she decides not to have children. This issue of maternity leave should be revisited by having consultations between women and the organizations in which they are employed.

#### **4.4.4 Absence of the mentoring relationship**

Scarcity of women administrators and absence of the mentoring relationship is basically the main reason why women experience difficulty with career mobility beyond the mid-management level. Moreso, same-sex role models seem to be more important for women. Unfortunately, there are too few women available to mentor other women (Shapiro, 1987:172; and Cullen & Luna, 1993: 127 - 131).

### ***4.5 The Present Position In Higher Education***

Before the issue of equal opportunities can be made our line of action, it is crucial to look into the conditions presently prevailing in higher education which may generate stress to those working in these organizations.

The economic climate has been affected by sanctions, which led to a declining economy. Fortunately with the April elections where all racial groups qualified to vote, foreign investment will gradually play a role in improving the South African economy.

#### **4.5.1. Decline In Resources**

The economic recession has led to a substantial decrease in resources of universities. Reduced budgets in higher education have resulted in a number of changes within the universities. Unfortunately, these changes have caused deterioration in the quality of life in higher education (De Mello e Souza, 1991:229).

This is evidenced in the re-organization of some university departments, rising student numbers against a dramatic swing down of staff recruitment, coupled with increased teaching load. There has been a squeeze on the pay of staff in higher education when comparing them with

equivalent professions due to tight budgets. (Farnham, 1987:35).

#### 4.5.2 Promotion

Traditions about promotion differ from university to university (Sutherland, 1990:37). However, the base for promotion is research, usually in the form of publications. Lack of research is a disadvantage to the lecturer concerned because his academic growth is hampered (Gray & Hoy, 1989:39).

#### 4.5.3 Teaching And Research

Students regard teaching with high esteem, while lecturers have to prove themselves in research. These lecturers are expected to always be involved with research more than anything else. Moreover, research enable these lecturers to gain reputation, to meet their peers in other institutions and even widen their horizons by obtaining money to travel to other academic institutions at home and abroad. Thus, research is a prerequisite for survival in higher education (Gray & Hoy, 1989:40, and Elton, 1992:256).

The question that arises is: What is the situation of women lecturing in higher education?

"The unequal position of women in teaching and the academic world mirrors the position of women in the labour market as a whole" (Wilson, 1991:58).

### ***4.6 Women Lecturing in Higher Education: A Source Of Stress***

Though the issue of sex discrimination in higher education have been documented, there is little empirical knowledge about its nature and the mechanisms that are employed to maintain it. Statistical information amidst

the prevalence of sex discrimination, but fails to show the courses or the processes involved in discriminatory practices (Bagilhole, 1993:262).

The main source of stress for women lecturing in higher education is male dominance. Men outnumber women, leading to under-representation of women in the workforce of universities and other institutions of higher education (Wilson, 1991:6).

Upon closer scrutiny of higher education, staff development policies appear to provide little or no support and encouragement for women per se. Women's interests and needs are not redressed. There are little or no child care facilities and time-tabling is not flexible to allow these women to attend to their home duties (Canna et al., 1991:25).

#### **4.6.1. Male Dominance**

Simply working in a male-dominated environment imposes different pressures on women. This is evidenced by career structures designed on male norms: the needs of women are not taken into consideration, for example, maternity leave or part-time work so as to look after children, is a disadvantage to women's promotion opportunities (Ackers, 1992:64).

On the other hand all women's intake in higher education has been fewer than men's in the past. This could be attributed to the fact that women had not considered university careers as falling within their domain, with few or no role models for women in higher education particularly in top management. There are more women in lower grades, with very few professors (Delamont, 1989:96; Sutherland, 1990:35; Acker, 1992:60; and Canna et al. 1991:21).

Not being part of top management causes a lot of pressure on women lecturers because men in top management will not be as sympathetic towards their needs as they, themselves, would. For example, professors and deans dealing with promotion issues are mostly men. Consciously or unconsciously, male aspirations will dominate and influence promotion procedures (Cann et al., 1991:73).

**4.6.2 Dual Role** (Emmons et al., 1990: 76; Bagilhole, 1993:263; and Cullen & Luna, 1993:131).

Balancing their work and home responsibilities creates stress for some women lecturers, especially the demands of nurturing young children. Thus, child-bearing and child-rearing causes interruption in women lecturers' work.

**4.6.3 Lack Of Research**

Women lecturers tend to show more enthusiasm in teaching than in research. As research is a prerequisite for promotion in higher education, especially the university, if they do not conduct research, they become stressed. However, women are currently taking research more seriously because of its academic enrichment; so the trend is changing for the better because women are becoming more involved with research (Delamont, 1989:96).

**4.6.4 Lower Ranks**

As most women lecturers occupy lower ranks, their salaries, too, are bound to be low. Living under a tight budget causes a lot of stress for these women (Sutherland, 1981:184). The above-mentioned stressors affect women lecturers physiologically, psychologically and/or mentally.

This leads to the question: What effects does stress have on women lecturers?

#### ***4.7 The Effects Of stress On Women Lecturers***

An area that has been neglected is the effect that stress has on women lecturers, hence the need for this study.

Sex stereotyping affect women lecturers' well-being. They become prone to somatic manifestations of psychological distress and physiological imbalances.

It is reported that women make more visits to emotional health professionals and clinics than men. They are more frequently labelled with psychiatric diagnosis and use more tranquilizers and other mood altering medications. These psychological disturbances manifest themselves physiologically through coronary heart disease, lung cancer and peptic ulcer (Warshaw, 1979:141).

On the contrary, the above-mentioned physiological imbalances could also be attributed to women's greater use of cigarettes, alcohol and caffeine, rather than stress. But it is also known that too much use of these substances is also symptomatic of stress (Warshaw, 1979:142).

Another issue that crops up is: How can these women lecturers cope with the demands of their life-style? It should be taken into consideration that for most women to feel fulfilled, both at work and home, career patterning is crucial. In career patterning, a woman attempts to balance both work and home responsibilities (Evetts, 1990:69). There is need for action, otherwise equal opportunities for women lecturers will remain just an empty rhetoric (Cann et al., 1991:21).

## **4.8 *Towards More Effective Action***

Women must be vigilant in demanding that their rights should be accorded equal opportunities with that of their male counterparts. To ensure that their voice is heard, all women must come together. In articulating their rights women themselves must educate men about how they feel about their rights which have been overlooked over the years. Above all, women should see to it that their rights are included in the constitution (Brazilli; 1991:21).

### **4.8.1 Liberal Feminism**

The main purpose of liberal feminism is to alter women lecturers' status and opportunities in their workplace. It concentrates on removing barriers that prevent women from achieving their full potential, due to sex discrimination. This kind of strategy would consider the role of marriage and parenthood, coupled with organizational factors that affect women lecturers. Its point of departure would include scrutinizing factors and conditions prevailing in the workplace of these women lecturers (Acker, 1992: 612 -62).

### **4.8.2 Positive Attitude**

Everyone has bad days in the workplace. However, there are good days too. The focus should be on the enjoyable part of her work. In so doing, destructive feelings that come up with a bad day will be conquered (Mbambo, 1993:13). Moreso, as too much stress is not good for the well-being of an individual, individuals must know how to manage their stress.

On the other hand, women should stand up and be counted (Opperman, 1993:65). This they could do as individuals, or from support groups with other women (Pinkstaff, 1979:57).

#### **4.8.3 Organizational Support**

Whilst individual women lecturers are expected to develop their own stress management skills, organization in which they work, too, have a role to play in combatting stress. This implies that both the individual woman lecturer and her organisation should put hands together for stress management to be effective.

Thus, organizations of higher education can offer on-site day care centres (Calabrese & Anderson, 1986:39; Dex & Shaw, 1986: 6 - 7; and Emmons, 1990: 61 - 2). A support system that equips women lecturers with managing sex bias, isolation and powerlessness would be highly recommended (Warshaw, 1979:144; and Opperman, 1993:66).

#### **4.8.4 Individual Strategies**

Emmons *et al.* (1986:89) have suggested the following coping mechanisms for women:

- relaxing her own standard of role performance, and
- adopting different ways of handling multitudes of demands.

This could be achieved by either planning ahead or through employment of paid domestic help. Thus dual role conflict could be avoided by time management (Macan & Shahani; 1990: 760).

## 4.9 Conclusion

A feature that becomes outstanding when discussing the sources of stress for women lecturers is sex discrimination, compounded by male dominance. This study will investigate whether this is still the case in higher education.

Secondly, stress has devastating effects on people, manifesting in physiological, psychological and mental malfunctioning. It is for this reason that the effects of stress on women lecturers in higher education has to be examined.

Thirdly, both the individual woman lecturer and the organization in which she is working, should work together for effective stress management.

The next chapter, chapter 5, it will be a discussion of how data concerning the cause of stress, its effects and stress strategies used by women lecturing in higher education, will be collected.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Two research designs in particular have had a major influence on this study. These were the research designs by Shaw *et al.* (1985) and Mazibuko (1993) which encompassed an exploration of self-reports on stress. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes the stress inventory, its objectives, design and items.

The second section indicates why it was deemed necessary to use the whole population in this study. The final section discusses the plan for analyzing and reporting data.

#### **5.2 The Aim Of The Research**

The aim of this study is to:

- investigate women lecturers' stressors and their severity
- determine the occurrence and the effects of stress on these women lecturers
- explore the strategies employed by women lecturers in coping with occupational stress.

#### **5.3 Designing the Stress Inventory**

Although several instruments for obtaining information on stress have been designed (Gmelch *et al.*, 1984; Shaw *et al.*, 1985; and Payne & Furnham, 1987), these have been designed overseas. The need for a local instrument became

apparent. Mazibuko (1993), to a certain extent filled this gap. His instrument was designed to determine stress among adolescents in Kwa Zulu. His study population was youths of both sexes, while this study considers women only. It became necessary to construct a distinctive stress inventory relevant for this study.

#### **5.3.1. The first draft**

The first draft of the stress inventory was compiled in consultation with fifty members of the pilot study from the University of the North West. Each member was contacted at her convenience. This would allow each member to make herself available during her free periods so as not to interfere with her lecturing sessions. During these encounters the purpose of this study was clearly spelt out to members of the pilot study.

Information concerning stress was obtained from the members in the following ways:

Firstly, the concept stress was explained, including its devastating effects on the well-being of an individual experiencing stress. The definition of Dunham (1984:3) was used:

"Stress is a process of behavioural emotional, mental and physical reactions caused by prolonged, increasing or new pressures which are significantly greater than coping resources."

Each member was requested to make a list of the following:

- factors causing stress in her workplace,
- the effects of stress on her, and
- her stress management strategies.

### 5.3.2. The final draft

After a great deal of sifting and comparing the stressors identified by members and those in the literature survey

in chapter two, the list of stressors was condensed to twenty nine. The items of the effects of their stress were reduced to twenty six. Their stress management strategies, too, had to be pruned to ensure their relevance to this study. With the aid of chapter three's literature survey on stress management, the final draft included sixteen stress management strategies (cf. Appendix A).

The first draft was divided into four sections:

- demographic factors
- stressors
- effects of stress
- stress management

In the first section of the Stress Inventory the following demographical particulars were requested which would supply information concerning:

- whether academic qualifications induce stress to the respondents
- whether the number of years they have taught in higher education contribute to their stress
- whether they occupy high or low rank
- whether they have too many students in the main course they offer
- ascertain the level at college where women lecturers are clustered
- determine the level at the university where the majority of the respondents teach (under - or post-graduate)
- whether the respondents' marital status is stress-inducing
- whether the bigger the family the more stressful it

is for the respondents

- whether the participants are clustered around the humanities, law or other schools (faculties).

In order to supply information concerning the above-mentioned issues, the following questions were constructed:

(cf. Appendix A)

1. academic qualifications
2. teaching experience in higher education
3. rank
4. number of students in main course
5. level at which you teach at college or university
6. marital status
7. number of children
8. school (faculty) in which they teach.

A literature survey has indicated the following stressors: sex bias coupled with male dominance; problems emanating from maintaining a balance between work and home responsibilities; few women professors, few women in top management, problems with day-care centres, lack of co-operation from female or male counterparts, inflexible working hours, low income, not being part of the decision-making machinery, priority being given to husband's work, forced by economic pressures to work, life changes, lack of administrative skills, overload, underload, autocratic organizational climate, lack of promotional opportunities and political changes; which formed items in the stress inventory.

A 5-point scale was used to determine the degree of severity of their stress. The five points were: not applicable, no stress, little stress, moderate stress and severe stress. Where the stressor was not applicable to the respondent, a tick would be made in the not applicable block; whilst no stress indicated that such a

stressor did not induce any stress to the respondent. The following stressors were included in Section 3 of the Stress inventory to ascertain whether they induced stress to the respondents during the academic year 1993 - 1994.

9. male dominance
10. lack of appropriate qualifications
11. occupying low rank
12. low income
13. lack of research and publications (university in particular)
14. maintaining a balance between work and home responsibilities
15. lack of mentors
16. role conflict
17. Too much administrative work.
18. working overtime
19. unruly students
20. sex bias
21. few women in top management
22. few women professors
23. not being part of the decision-making process.
24. problems with day-care centres
25. lack of co-operation from female subordinates
26. lack of co-operation from male subordinates
27. inflexible working hours that do not allow you to attend to your home duties.
28. economic pressures forcing you to work.
29. if married, priority being given to husband's work.
30. lack of administrative skills
31. inability to meet deadlines
32. life changes
33. overload
34. underload
35. organizational structure and climate threatening your freedom, autonomy and identify.

36. autocratic head
37. lack of promotional opportunities
38. political changes
39. decline in resources
40. fighting your problems alone.

Literature studies revealed the devastating effects on the well-being of the individual- behavioural, physical, emotional and mental. these manifested themselves through substance abuse, cardiovascular problems, skin problems, over eating, tardiness, absenteeism, consistent headaches, fatigue, irritability, anger, frustration, misplacing or losing of objects, illogical arrangement of thoughts.

In Section C of the Stress Inventory the following Stress Effects questions were included:

41. Have you had the feeling of wanting to leave your work?
42. Do you leave for home early, just to get away from your work?
43. Are you unpunctual because of lack of enthusiasm?
44. Have you experienced the following stress-related illnesses - sleeplessness, skin problems, increased blood pressure and/or headaches?
45. Have you used the following temporary relievers of stress - drugs, alcohol, smoking and/or eating too much?
46. Have you displayed the following stress-related behaviours - excessive sick leave, absenteeism, loss of interest in appearance, lack of patience or sympathy with colleagues, misplacing, or losing things and/or accident-prone?
47. Have you experienced the following emotional problems - low selfesteem, fatigue, irritability, frustration, anger, anxiety and/or fear?

48. Have you thought of mobilising your female-counterparts to rebel; against the stressful life in your institution?

From the literature survey it came out that different stress management strategies are used in coping with stress (cf chapter 3). these coping mechanisms differ from individual to individual. Both the individual and the organization in which she is employed, must accept some responsibility in the management and the control of their stress. Some coping mechanisms could involve the following: regular exercise, planning for each day, positive thinking, relaxation, resorting to a spiritual life and/or healthy eating habits. To determine the coping mechanism employed by the respondents the following questions were asked:

(Tick with an "x" in the appropriate block)

49. Which of the following stress management programmes are offered in your workplace?  
guidance and counselling, recreational facilities, workshops on stress
50. Which of the following strategies do you employ to manage your stress?  
regular exercise, a balanced diet, enough leisure time to relax and spiritual life.
51. Is freedom of expression allowed in your organization?
52. Which of the following strategies recommended below, would you use to manage your stress?  
confiding in a trustworthy friend, confiding in a trustworthy relative, developing hobbies, fighting for your rights as women, positive thinking, writing problems on a piece of paper and thereafter tearing it and planning for each day.

### 5.3.3. The format of the Stress inventory

The stress inventory was divided into four sections:

The first section dealt with demographic factors which indicated the respondents' background information. Issues like academic qualifications and teaching experience in higher education, rank, number of students in their class, level at which the respondents teach, number of their children and their marital status.

As indicated in paragraph 5.3.2., the second section comprised a list of stressors encountered by the respondents and the degree of severity of their stress on a 5-point scale. 1 = no stress, 2 = little stress, 3 = moderate stress, 4 = severe stress and 5 = not applicable. Not applicable implies that stressor is not applicable to such a respondent.

The third section dealt with the effects of stress on the participants of this study. the final section dealt with the respondents' stress management strategies.

Permission was sought and granted by the Chief Officer, Department of Education, Teacher Education section, to conduct this study in the colleges of education affiliated to the University of the North West, and to use government records concerning these colleges.

### 5.4. *The Population*

The population of the study encompasses all women lecturing at the following:

- The University of the North West
- Hebron college

- Lehurutshe college
- Tlhabane college
- Thaba Nchu college
- Moretele college
- Marapyane college
- Taung college

According to the statistics obtained from the Department of Education, the number of women lecturers at the colleges is two hundred and nine, that is,  $N = 209$ . The distribution is as follows: Hebron = fifty five, Lehurutshe = thirty one, Tlhabane = thirty, Thaba Nchu = twenty seven, Moretele = twenty five, Marapyane = twenty one, Taung = twenty, while the university has seventy women lecturers.

The university is divided into five schools, known as faculties in other universities: Health and Social Sciences = thirty three, Education = thirty one, Law = six, Administration and Management = five and Agriculture = two. All in all, the university has seventy women lecturers.

#### 5.4.1 Summary of the responses in frequencies

INSTITUTION	RESPONDED	DID NOT RESPOND	ROW TOTAL
The University	58	12	70
Hebron	31	24	55
Lehurutshe	24	7	31
Tlhabane	28	2	30
Thaba Nchu	18	9	27
Moretele	18	7	25

(continued on next page)

<b>Marapyane</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Taung</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>279</b>

The involvement of the whole population seemed more advantageous than sampling, because the population is accessible and manageable. It was also important in this type of study to include all the women lecturing in higher education in order to have a comprehensive and exhaustive spectrum of their stress levels.

### ***5.5 Administration of the Questionnaire***

The respondents were given a self-administered inventory which included the purpose of the study. Each respondent was requested to complete the stress inventory and return it to the liaison person in each college. A time limit was given to ensure a high return rate. Anonymity was retained throughout the study to ensure free participation.

#### **5.5.1 Rationale for the administration procedure**

A self-administered inventory was opted for because it allowed each lecturer to have ample time to study the questionnaire before completing it. Each participant in the study could do this in her own time. Also, care was taken not to disrupt their lectures to ensure their future co-operation.

### ***5.6 Statistical Techniques***

The inventory were coded to allow computing. The responses returned were arranged in numerical order and scored using the statistical analysis System (SAS)

programme (Cody & Smith, 1991), supplied by the University of the North West's Computer Centre.

An examination of the distribution characteristics in percentile frequencies of demographic factors, stressors, effects of stress on the respondents and their stress management strategies was carried out.

The Chi-Square statistics was utilized to determine the level of significance among the matched variables dealing with the effects of stress and demographic factors. The level of significance among matched strategies and demographic factors, too, was identified.

The demographic factors matched against the effects of stress on the respondents and their coping mechanisms, on the other hand, involved:

Highest academic qualifications, number of students, marital status and number of children. Only high ranking effects of stress and stress management strategies were used in the matching. These were fatigue, frustration, irritability and anxiety; matched against highest academic qualifications and the number of students in the classes taught by the respondents.

The research was conducted in November 1993, before the commencement of the end of the year's examinations. The return rate was 60% (167). To increase the return rate to the above 70% (195), those lecturers from the University of the North West who had not responded, were requested to do so. In collecting the questionnaire it was noticed that the response from the university was 35% (24) of their total number 70. Early this year (1994), with little persuasion, the number of respondents from the university increased with another 49% (34). Ultimately, the total number of respondents came up to 201.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter described the methods of research and the construction of the stress inventory designed for women lecturing in higher education. In chapter 6, discussion of findings of data collected during empirical research will be undertaken.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret and analyze the research findings pertaining to the research objectives that guided the study. The research objectives were:

- (a) To determine the sources and severity of stress colleges of education affiliated to it.
- (b) To investigate the effects of their stress
- (c) To determine the stress management strategies employed by the respondents in coping with their stress and to suggest appropriate coping mechanisms.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section outlines the response pattern of the participants in the study. This includes their demographic factors, stressors, effects of the stress and their coping strategies. The second section matches the highest ranking effects with demographic factors, thereafter high ranking stress management techniques with demographic factors to determine whether the two categories are related.

#### 6.2 Demographic factors

(cf. paragraph 5.3.1.)

It was necessary to investigate some demographical particulars of the respondents to obtain their background information.

### 6.2.1. Frequencies

Data was analyzed through frequencies produced by the University of the North West Computer Section, using the SAS programme. The results stipulated the frequencies and percentages of responses to each item in the stress inventory (SAS - Institute, 1985:403). Comparison between demographic factors and stress management strategies have been made.

### 6.2.2. Summary of demographic factors in percentile frequencies N=201.

VARIABLES		TOTAL %
Academic Qualifications	Diploma	15 (7.5%)
	Degree	67 (33.3%)
	Honours	67 (33.3%)
	Masters	50 (24.9%)
	Doctorate	2 (1.0%)
Teaching experience in higher education	0 -5 years	84 (41.8%)
	4 - 10 years	57 (28.4%)
	11 - 15 years	28 (13.99%)
	16 - 20 years	15 (13.9%)
	over 20 years	17 (8.5%)
Rank	Junior Lecturer	20 (19.0%)
	Lecturer	127 (63.2%)
	Senior Lecturer	19 (9.5%)
	Associate Professor	3 (1.5%)
	Head of Department	26 (12.9%)
	Deputy Dean	2 (1.0%)
	Rector	2 (1.0%)
	Professor	2 (1.0%)
	(continued on next page)	

Number of students in main course	0 -11	79 (39.3%)
	101 - 200	81 (40.3%)
	201 - 300	29 (14.4%)
	over 300	12 (6.0%)
Level at which you teach at college	early learning	9 (4.5%)
	primary	11 (5.5%)
	early learning & primary	8 (8.5%)
	Secondary	17 (8.5%)
	technical	0 (0.0%)
primary & secondary	98 (49.0%)	
Level at which you teach in the university	under-graduate	14 (7.0%)
	post-graduate	24 (12.0%)
	under- & post-graduate	20 (10.0%)
Marital status	single	38 (18.9%)
	married	129 (64.2%)
	divorced	26 (12.9%)
	widowed	8 (4.0%)
Number of children	one	45 (22.4%)
	two	50 (24.99%)
	three	61 (30.3%)
	four	12 (6.0%)
	five and more	7 (3.5%)
	no children	26 (12.9%)
School (faculty) in which you teach	Education	27 (13.4%)
	Law	2 (1.9%)
	Agriculture	0 (0.0%)
	Administration & Management	1 (0.5%)
	Health & Social Sciences	28 (13.9%)

The majority of the respondents 67 (33.33%) have either a degree or honours. Only 2 (1.0%) of the participants in the study held a doctorate, and indication that women lecturers must improve on their academic qualifications. On the other hand, the bulk of the respondents, namely 84 (41.8%) have little teaching experience in higher education (less than 5 years).

Of all the respondents 127 (63.2%) are lecturers. Very few of them occupy posts in the higher echelons of their organization. For example, only 2 (1.0%) are deputy deans, 2 (1.0%) are rectors and 2 (1.0%) professors.

There are 7 (3.5%) respondents with five or more children. It is evident that the participants in the study do not have many children. Most of them (61 (30.3%) have 3 children.

Most of the respondents 28 (13.9%) are clustered around the School of Health and Social Sciences, which comprises the following departments - Communications, Development Studies, Nursing Science, Psychology, Social Work and Sociology. 27 (13.4%) of the respondents came from the School of Education which comprises the following (faculties): Humanities, Sciences and Education Studies. There are few women in both the School of Law and Administration and Management.

### **6.3 Stressors**

Firstly, a summary of stressors encountered by women lecturing in higher education has been outlined in percentile frequencies. The average of both moderate and severe stress were used. These stressors have been ranked, starting with the minimum and ending with the maximum of both the averages. Secondly, the 10 highest ranking stressors, which made noticeable impact on the

respondent, will be graphically illustrated.

6.3.1. Summary of percentile frequencies of stressors encountered by women lecturing in higher education.

STRESSOR	N/A	NO	LITTLE	MODERATE	SEVERE	MOD. & SEV.
Underload	36.3	39.3	12.4	8.0	4.0	12.0
Promotion to new rank	39.8	27.9	15.9	10.9	5.5	16.4
Underqualifi- cation	22.4	38.3	18.9	15.9	4.5	20.4
New Post	36.3	27.4	11.9	19.4	5.0	24.4
No adminis- trative skills	17.4	36.3	20.4	14.9	10.9	25.8
Husband's work priority	43.3	18.9	12.4	15.9	10.9	26.8
Day-care Centre's Problems	30.3	26.4	15.4	13.9	13.9	27.9
Problematic female subordinates	24.9.	28.4	18.9	20.9	7.0	27.9
Low rank	19.9	41.8	13.9	18.9	9.5	28.4
Sex bias in promotion	21.9	35.3	12.9	15.9	13.9	29.8
Male dominance	12.4	35.8	21.4	23.4	7.0	30.4
Problematic male subordinates	22.4	26.4	20.9	20.4	10.0	30.4
Inability to meet deadlines	13.4.	26.4	25.9	20.9	13.4	34.3
Few women professors	26.4	23.4	15.4	20.9	13.9	34.8
Few women in top management	10.9	31.3	19.9	21.9	15.9	37.8
Changes in social life	16.9	24.4	20.4	21.9	16.4	38.3
No research & publications	28.4	13.9	18.9	20.9	17.9	38.8
Low income	13.9	23.4	23.9	21.9	16.9	38.8

Figure 1.  
Autocratic head

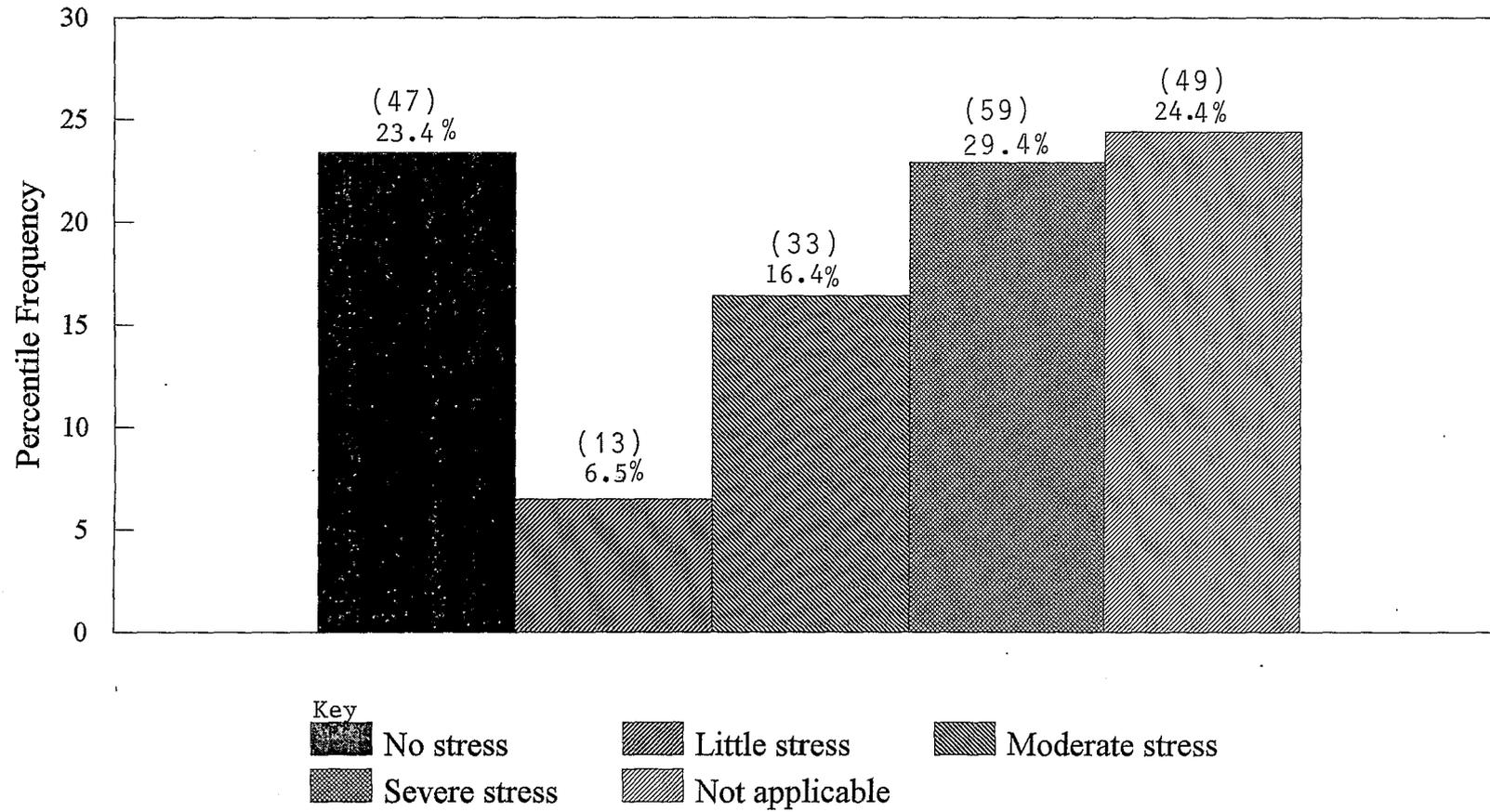


Figure 2  
Lack of promotional opportunities

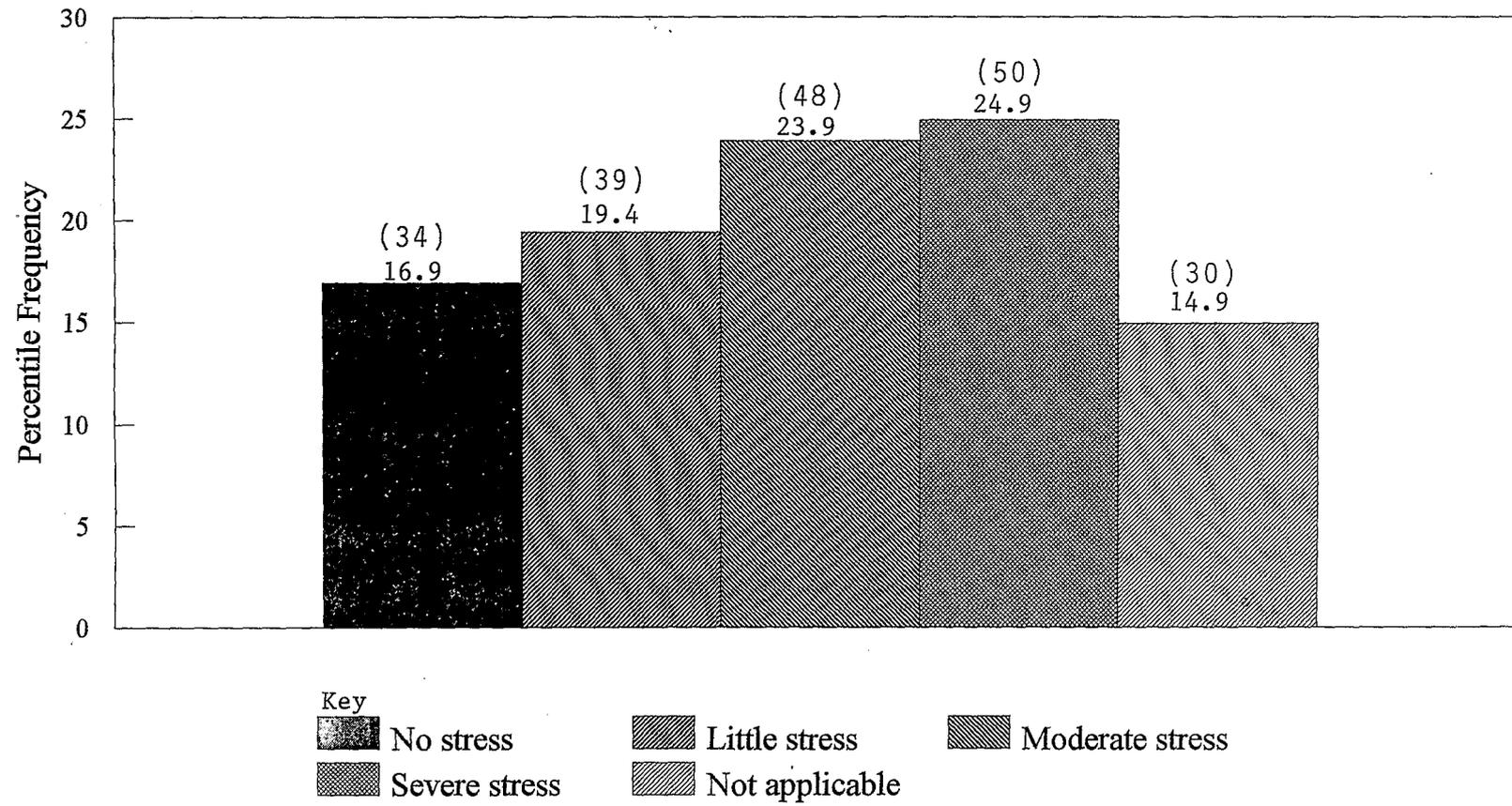


Figure 3  
Organizational structure that threaten autonomy

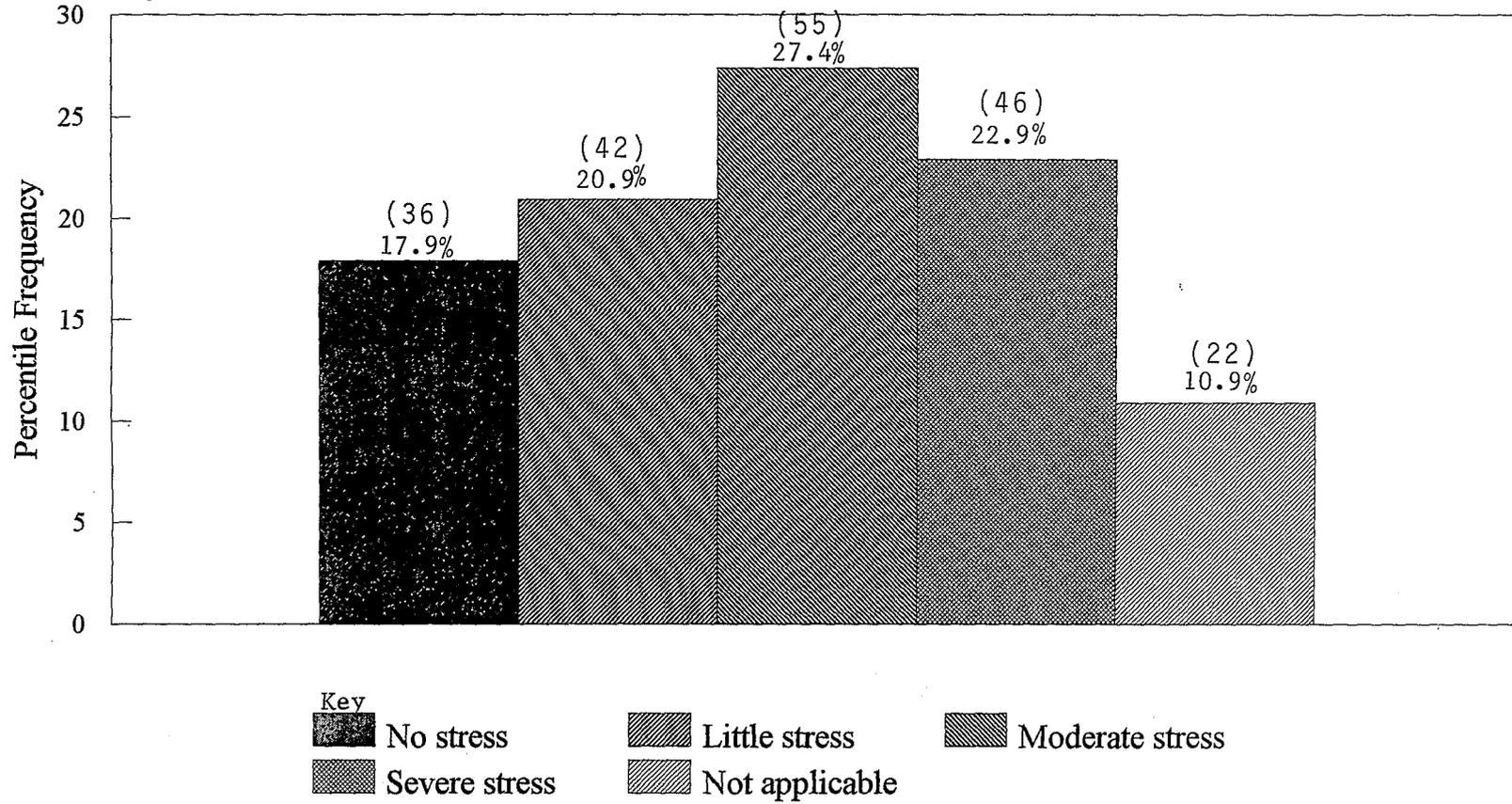


Figure 4.  
Not in the decision-making process

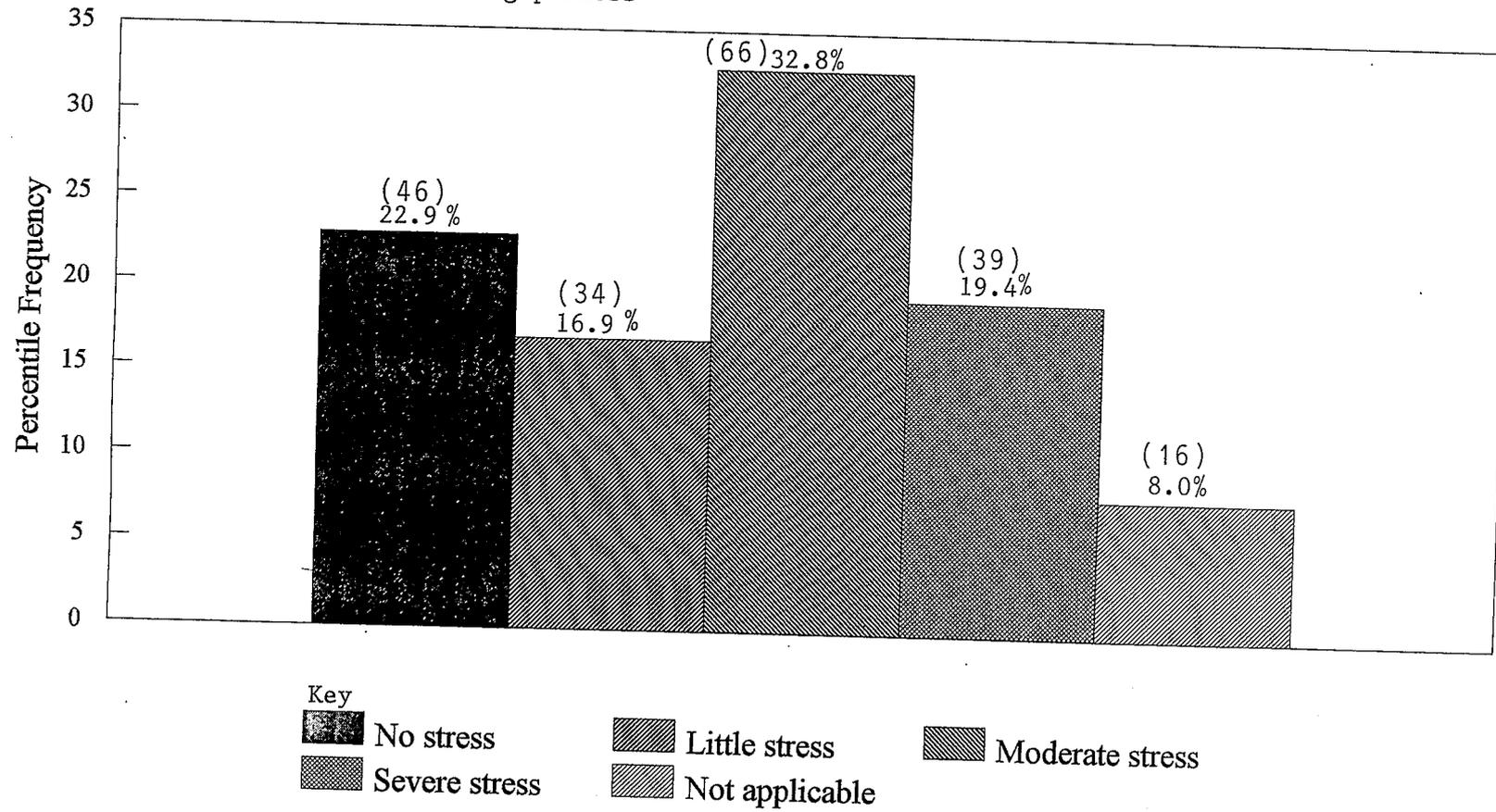


Figure 5  
Economic pressures

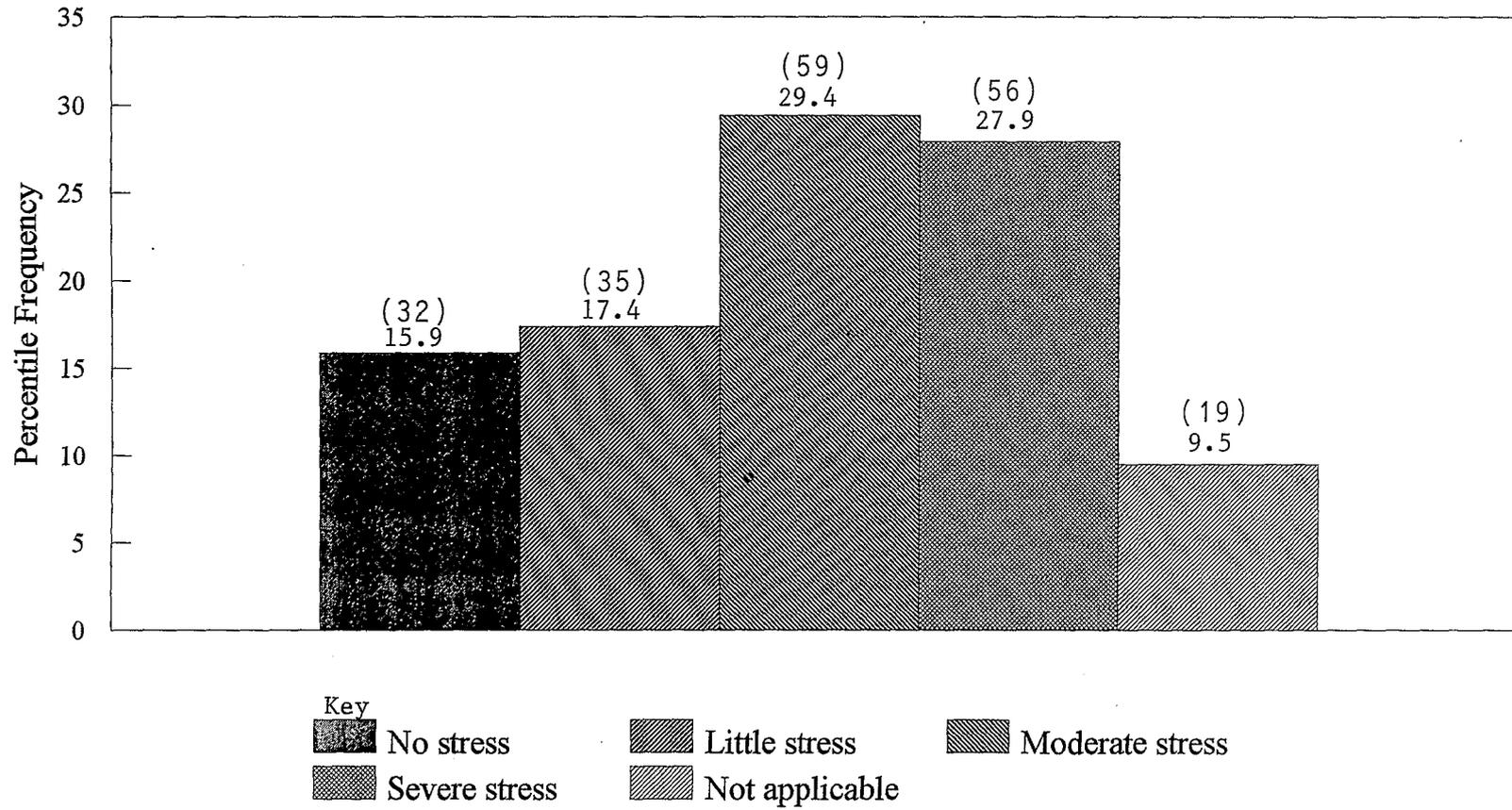
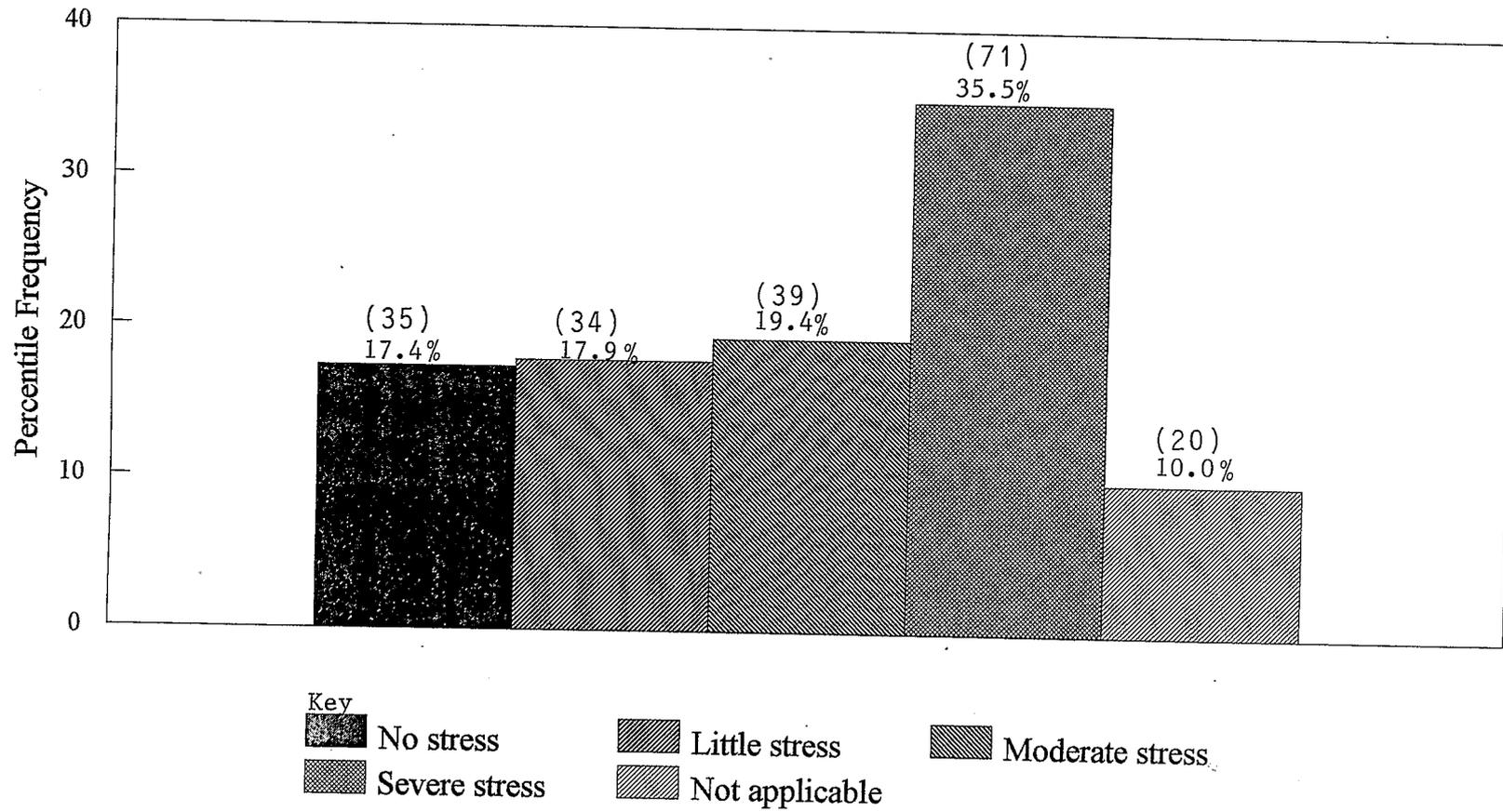


Figure 6  
Overload



- **Autocratic head**  
Figure 1 illustrated that 33 (16.4%) of the respondents experienced moderate stress and 59 (29.4%) severe stress. Both moderate and severe stress are equivalent to 92 (45.8%).
- **Lack of promotional opportunities**  
Lack of promotional opportunities was illustrated in Figure 2 as: moderate stress = 48(23.9%), severe stress, 50 (24.9%) of the respondents which amount to 98 (48.8%), when combined.
- **Organizational structure that threaten autonomy**  
Figure 3 reflected that those respondents who experienced moderate stress attributed to organizational structure that threaten autonomy were 55 (27.4%) and those who experienced severe stress were 46 (22.9%), totalling 101 (50.3%).
- **Not being included in the decision-making machinery**  
66 (32.8%) respondents experienced moderate stress attributed to their exclusion from the decision-making machinery, as illustrated in Figure 4. 39 (19.4%) experienced severe stress. Together 105 (52.2%) respondents experienced both moderate and severe stress-generated by their exclusion from the decision-making machinery.
- **Economic pressures forcing them to work**  
Figure 5 illustrated that 59 (29.4%) respondents experienced moderate stress and 56 (27.9%) experienced severe stress induced by economic pressures forcing them to work. The total of the two is 115 (57.3%) respondents.

Figure 7  
Closure of institution

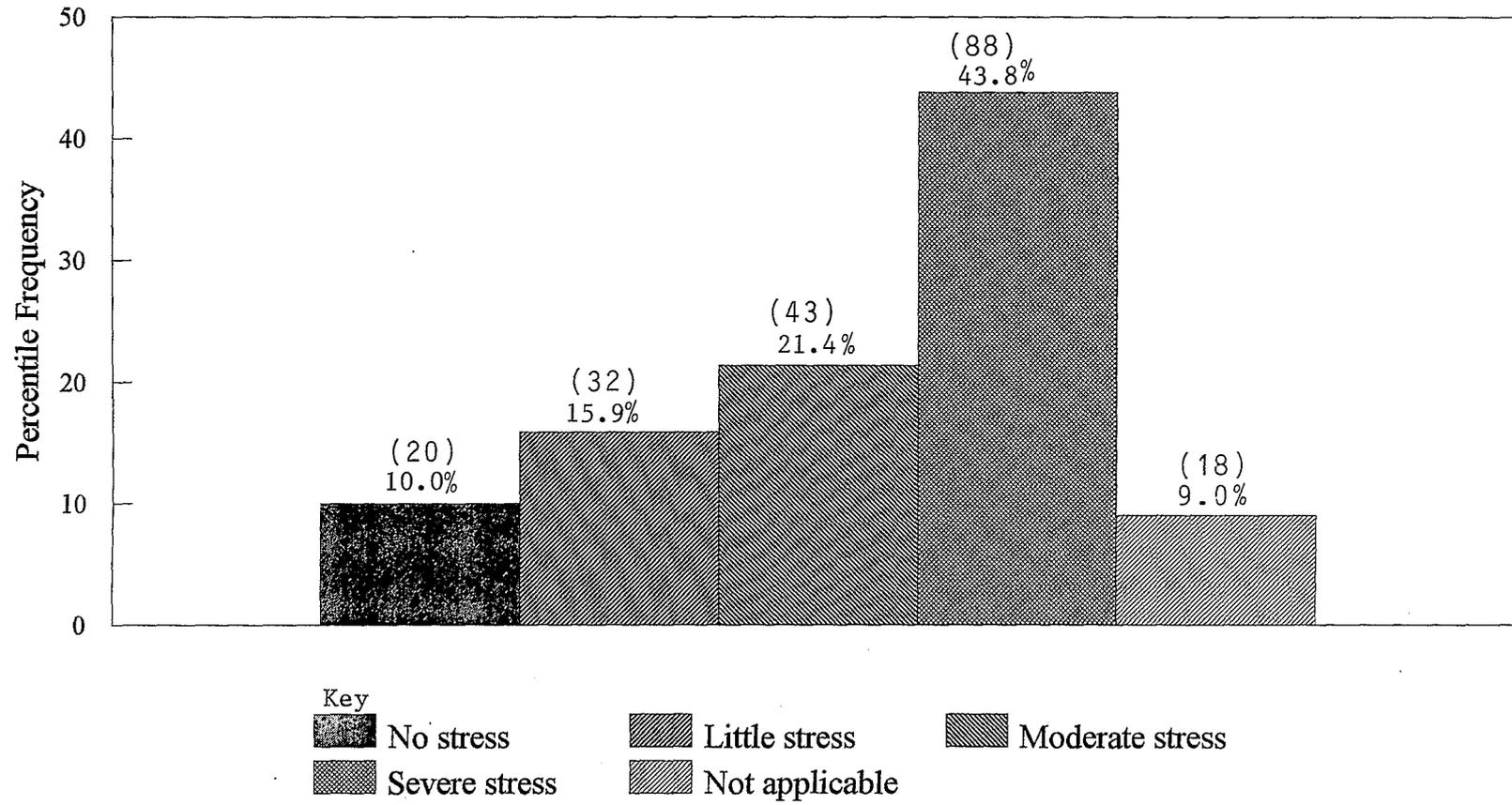


Figure 8  
Dual role

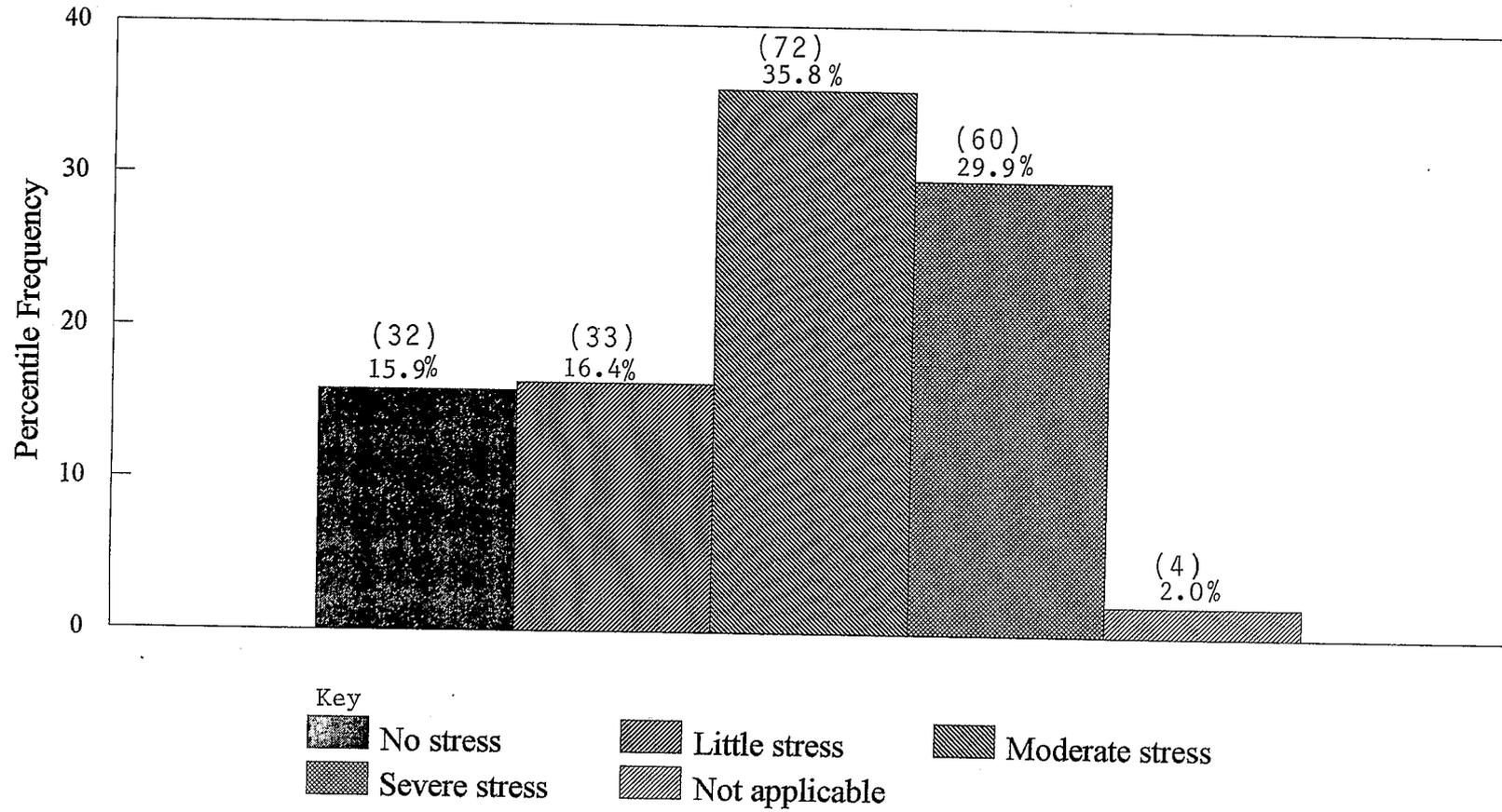


Figure 9

Uncertainties about the future of your organization

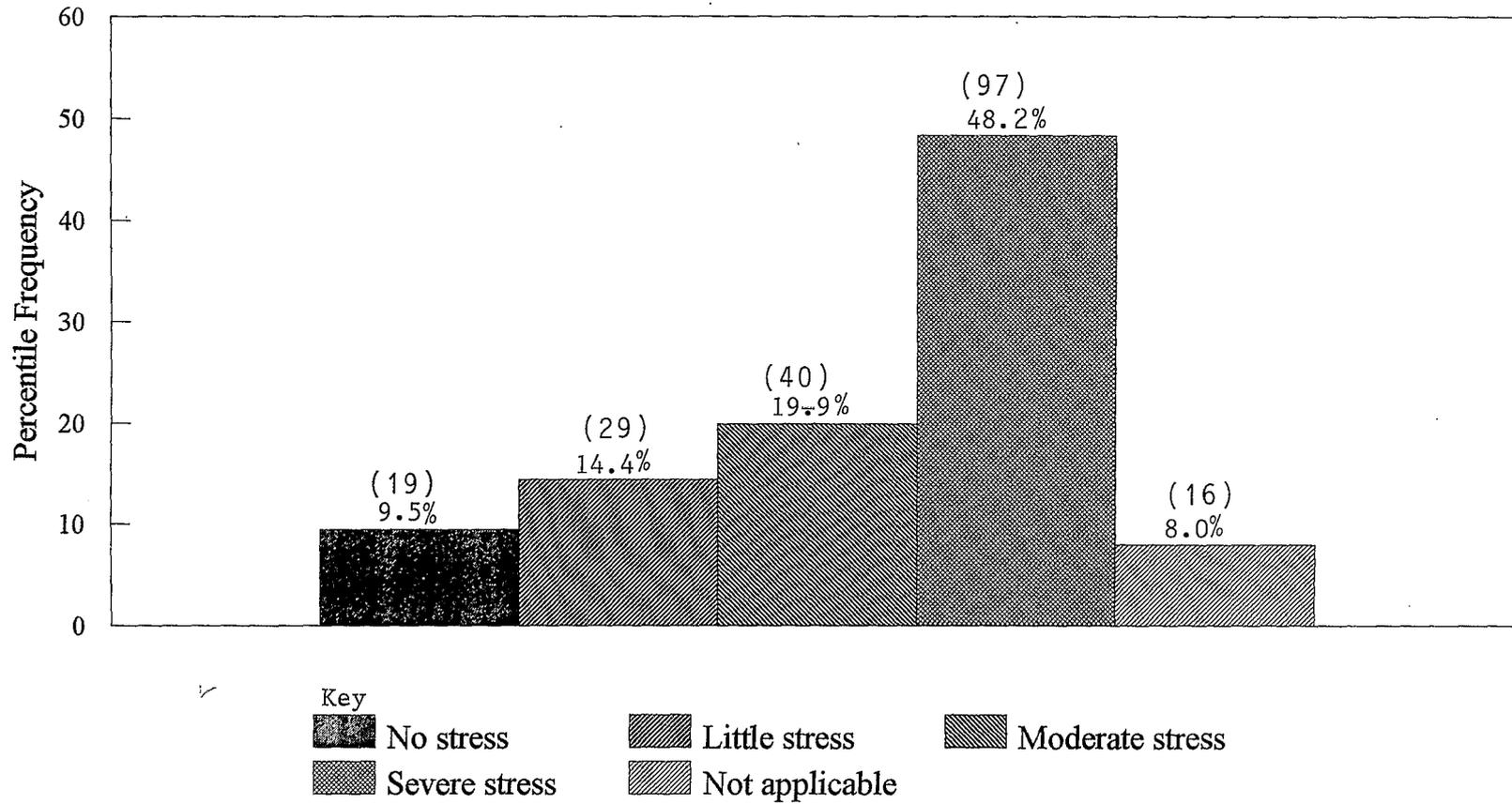
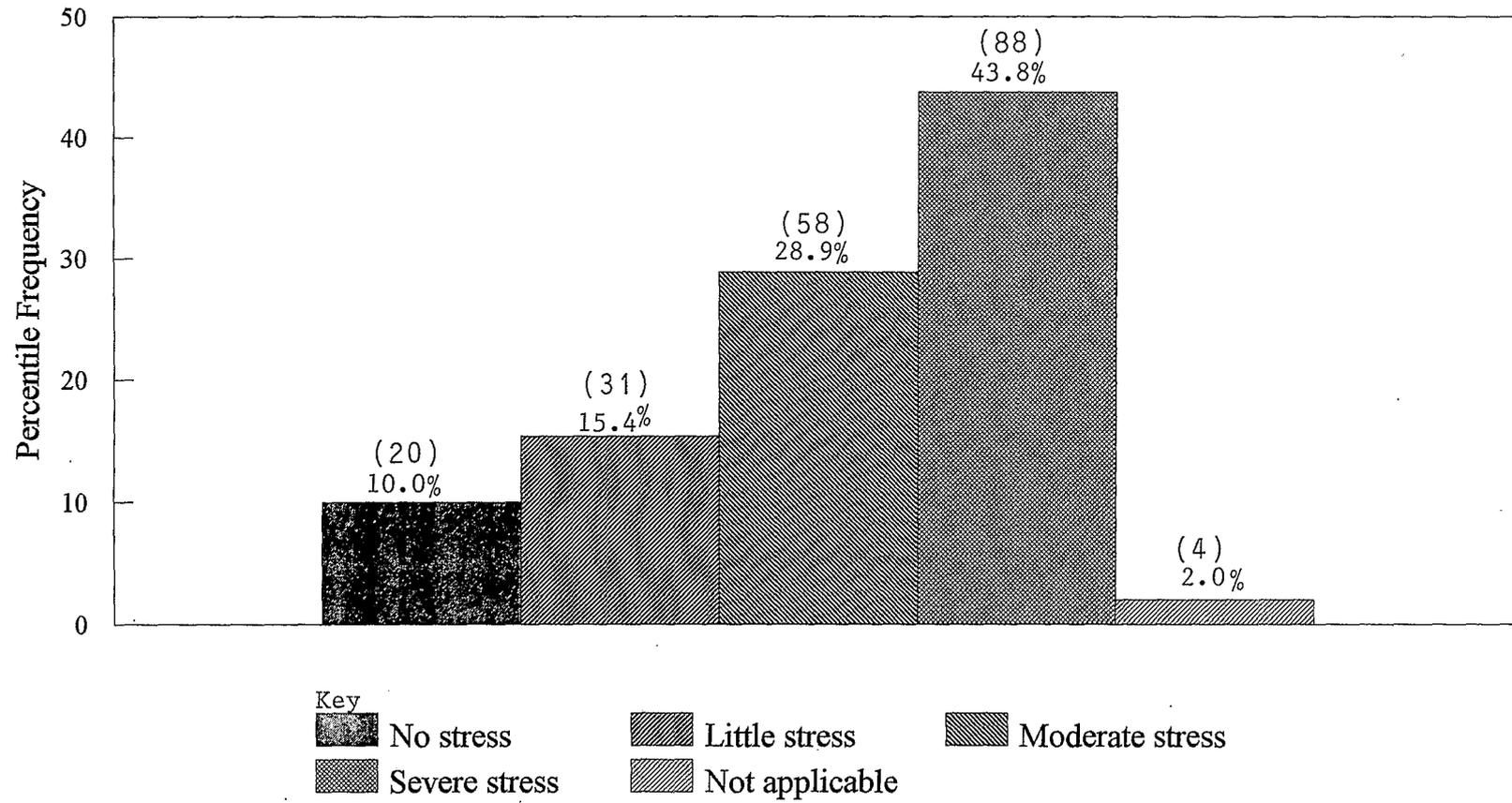


Figure 10  
Students' boycotts



- **Overload**

Respondents who experienced moderate stress, generated by overload were 39 (19.4%) and 71 (35.5%) experienced severe stress; with a total of 110 (54.9%), as illustrated in Figure 6.

- **Closure of institution**

The following trend emerged from Figure 7: moderate stress=43 (21.4%), severe stress = 88 (43.8%) of the respondents, cumulative frequency of moderate and severe stress attributed to closure of institution = 131 (65.2%).

- **Dual role**

72 (35.8%) respondents experienced stress induced by their dual role where a balance had to be maintained between responsibilities at work and at home. 60 (29.9%) experienced severe stress. The cumulative frequency of both moderate and severe stress is 132 (65.7%), associated with dual role, as illustrated in Figure 8.

- **Uncertainties about the future of their organization**

Figure 9 revealed that 40 (19.9%) of the respondents experienced moderate stress induced by uncertainties about the future of their organization, related to the political changes that South Africa is undergoing since the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990 and the unbanning of political parties. Of all the respondents, 97 (48.2%) experienced severe stress. It should be noted that uncertainties about the future of their organization is the highest ranking severe stressor acknowledged by the respondents. Cumulative frequency of moderate and severe stress emanating from uncertainties about the future of their organization is 137 (68.1%).

- **Students' class boycotts**

58 (28.9%) of the respondents experienced moderate stress generated by students' class boycotts. 88 (43.8%) experienced severe stress. The cumulative frequency of moderate and severe stress induced by students' class boycotts is 146 (72.7%), as indicated in figure 10.

### 6.3.2 Some observations

The highest ranking severe stressor identified by the respondents is uncertainties about the future of their organization, 97 (48.2%), followed by both closure of their institution 88 (43.8%) and students' class boycotts (43.8%). The highest ranking moderate stressor is dual role 72 (35.8%), followed by not being included in the decision-making machinery 59 (29.4%) and students' class boycotts 58 (28.9%).

On the other hand, husband's work being given higher priority than their own was not applicable to the respondents 85 (42.3%) induced no stress 38 (18.9%). Only 6 (3.0%) experienced little stress attributed to priority being given to husband's work. An alarming feature is that the married respondents had no moderate or severe stress emanating from priority being given to husband's work. This is a clear indication of how seriously the respondents regard their career.

It is interesting to note that the following stressors did not play a significant role in the respondents' workplace: underload, promotion to new rank, underqualification, occupying a new post, lack of administrative skills, low rank, problems with day-care centres, inability to meet deadlines, changes in social life, lack of research and publications including low income.

Contrary to a literature survey, sex bias in promotion, male dominance, unco-operative male subordinates did not feature high as stress-inducing to the respondents, particularly as the respondents are females. It can be assumed from the data collected that the respondents do not perceive of sex-discrimination as having noticeable effect as mentioned in the literature.

#### **6.4 THE EFFECTS OF STRESS**

Stress had behavioral physical, emotional and mental effects on the respondents. Unfortunately stress can have devastating effects on the well-being of the individual

##### **6.4.1. Summary in percentile frequencies of the effect of stress. N = 201**

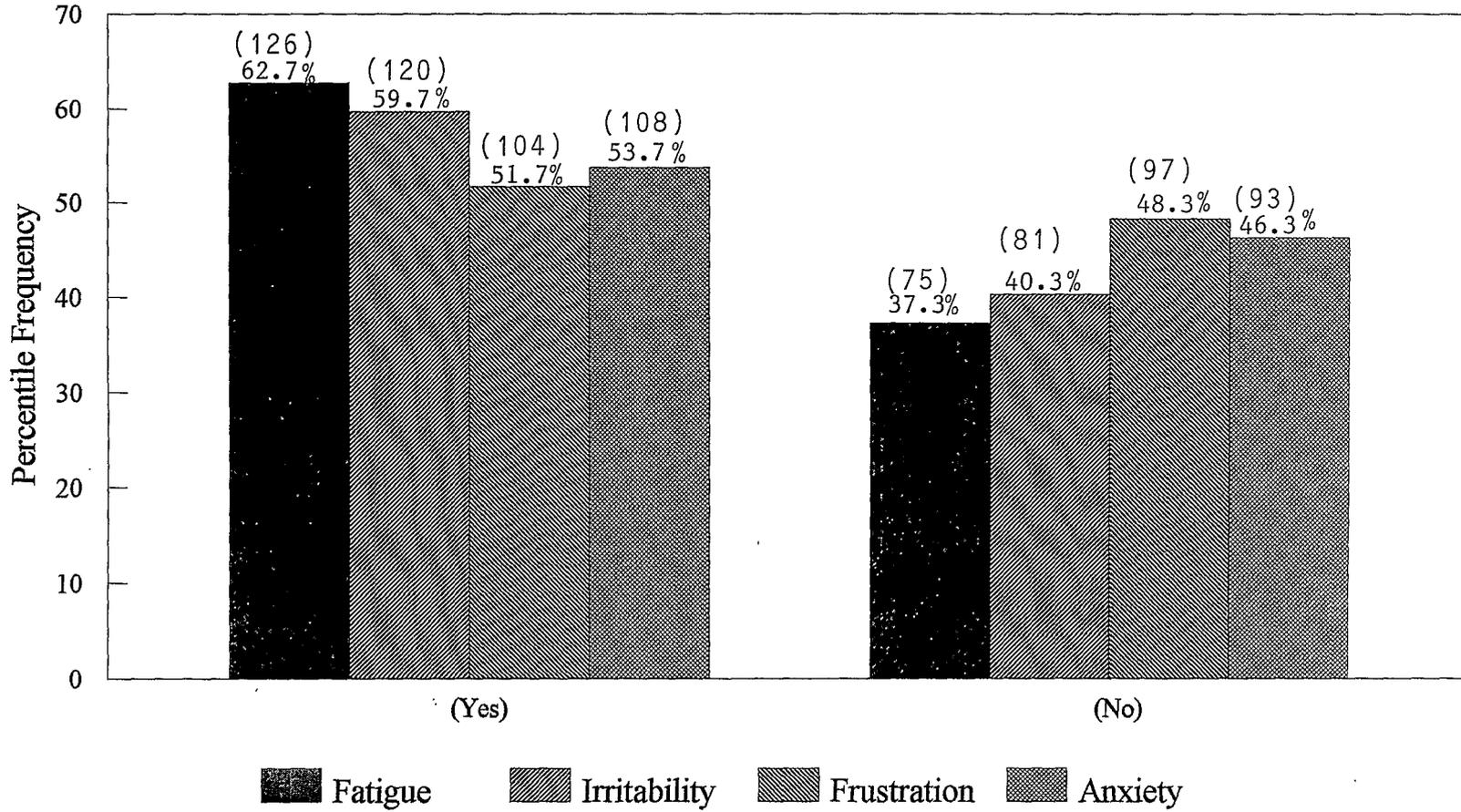
<b>EFFECT</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Excessive sick leave</b>	2 (1.0%)	199 (99.0%)	201 (100%)
<b>Absenteeism</b>	3 (1.5%)	198 (98.5%)	201 (100%)
<b>Alcohol</b>	15 (7.5%)	186 (92.5%)	201 (100%)
<b>Smoking</b>	15 (7.5%)	186 (9.2%)	201 (100%)
<b>Leaving early for home</b>	18 (9.0%)	183 (91.0%)	201 (100%)
<b>Accident-prone</b>	22 (10.9%)	179 (89.1%)	201 (100%)
<b>Mobilising other women</b>	25 (12.4%) (continued	176 (89.6%) on next	201 (100%) page)

High blood pressure	27 (13.4%)	174 (86.6%)	201 (100%)
Loss of interest in appearance	34 (16.9%)	167 (83.1%)	201 (100%)
Unpunctual	35 (17.4%)	166 (82.6%)	201 (100%)
Headaches	40 (19.9%)	167 (80.1%)	201 (100%)
Skin problems	49 (24.4%)	152 (75.6%)	201 (100%)
No patience or sympathy with colleagues	50 (24.9%)	151 (75.1%)	201 (100%)
Drugs	54 (26.9%)	127 (73.1%)	201 (100%)
Low self-esteem	63 (31.3%)	138 (68.7%)	201 (100%)
Wanting to leave job	66 (32.8%)	135 (69.2%)	201 (100%)
Overeating	72 (35.8%)	129 (64.2%)	201 (100%)
Sleeplessness	83 (41.3%)	118 (58.9%)	201 (100%)
Anger	96 (47.8%)	105 (52.2%)	201 (100%)

#### 6.4.2. Emotional problems associated with stress

Figure 11 illustrated emotional problems displayed by the respondents associated with stress as fatigue, irritability, anxiety and frustration. The majority of the respondents 126 (62.7%) indicated that fatigue played havoc with their emotional well-being, followed by

Figure 11  
Emotional problems associated with stress



irritability 120 (59.7%), then anxiety 108 (53.7%) and thereafter frustration 104 (51.9%).

Other effects of stress on the respondents were ranked, starting with the highest and concluding with the lowest. They follow in this order: anger, sleeplessness, using drugs, lack of patience or sympathy with colleagues, skin problems, headaches, unpunctuality, less of interest in appearance, high blood pressure, mobilising other women, being accident-prone, leaving early for home, smoking, alcohol, absenteeism and excessive sick leave (cf. paragraph 6.4.1.)

Very few women used alcohol or smoked as an indication of their stress. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents come from a culture that disapproves of women using alcohol or smoking.

## **6.5 *Stress Management***

The most outstanding stress management strategy used by 187 (93.09%) of the respondents encompassed positive thinking; that is, developing a positive attitude towards life then followed leading a spiritual life indicated by 143 (71.1%) respondents. According to 141 (70.1%) respondents, they confided in a trustworthy friend; whilst 138 (68.9%) respondents mentioned that they managed their stress by developing hobbies.

Out of 201 (100%) respondents, 130 (64.9%) allowed themselves enough time to relax whilst 117 (58.2%) confided in a trustworthy relative. 102 (50.7%) of the participants in the study resorted to regular exercise.

**6.5.1 Percentile frequencies of Stress management strategies**

<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Workshops on stress	21 10.4%	180 89.6%	201 100%
Writing problems on a piece of paper	26 12.4%	175 87.6%	201 100%
Guidance & counselling	45 22.4%	156 77.6%	201 100%
Recreational facilities	46 22.9%	155 77.1%	201 100%
Freedom of expression	90 44.8%	111 55.2%	201 100%
Fighting for rights of women	102 47.8%	99 52.2%	201 100%
Regular exercise	117 50.7%	84 49.3%	201 100%
Confiding in a trustworthy relative	117 58.2%	84 41.8%	201 100%
Balanced diet	123 61.2%	78 38.8%	201 100%
Relaxation	130 64.7%	71 35.3%	201 100%
Developing hobbies	138 68.7%	63 31.3%	201 100%
Confiding in a trustworthy friend	141 70.1%	60 29.9%	201 100%
Spiritual Life	143 71.1%	58 28.9%	201 100%
Planning for each day	175 87.6%	26 12.4%	201 100%
Positive thinking	187 93.0%	14 7.0%	201 100%

The summary of the respondents' stress management strategies has been ranked by starting with the least employed strategy to the highest employed strategy.

#### **6.5.2. Some observations**

The stress management strategies mentioned by the participants in the study are individual-inclined as mentioned above. Thus, the respondents are applauded for having identified their stressors and doing something about their plight. But organizations in which the respondents work are expected to offer support systems for those women employees who are undergoing stress.

The last section of this chapter is two-fold:

- **matching highest ranking effects of stress against demographic factors.**

By doing so it is hoped to determine which effects of stress are prevalent in which group. For example, is there a relationship between fatigue and academic qualifications?

- **matching most commonly employed stress management strategies against demographic factors.**

The intention here is to determine which group employs which stress management strategies. This comparison will indicate whether the effects of stress and demographic factors are dependent (related); the same applies to stress management and demographic factors. If the prob-value is greater than 0.05, the two categories compared are independent (unrelated). Otherwise they are dependent (related) if the prob-value is less than 0.05. The Chi Square statistics was used to determine the degree of association among the matched variables.

## 6.6 Comparing Effects With Demographic Factors

**TABLE 3: COMPARING FATIGUE WITH ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS.**

**N = 201.**

FATIGUE	DIPLOMA	DEGREE	HONOURS	MASTERS	DOC-TORATE	ROW TOTAL
YES %	5 (2.49)	39 (19.40)	42 (20.90)	38 (18.91)	2 (1.00)	126 (62.6)
NO %	10 (4.98)	28 (13.93)	25 (12.44)	13 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	75 (37.31)
COLUMN TOTAL %	15 (7.49)	67 (33.33)	67 (33.33)	12 (12.97)	0 (0.0)	201 (100.0)

**DF = 4                      VALUE = 11.079                      PROB = 0.026**

Table 3 illustrated that fatigue and academic qualifications are not significantly different, that is, they are dependent (related) because the prob-value is 0.026; irrespective of their academic qualifications, fatigue was a common feature among all the respondents. Therefore a relationship existed between fatigue and academic qualifications.

**TABLE 4: COMPARING FATIGUE AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS. N = 201**

FATIGUE	0-100	101-200	201-300	OVER 300	ROW TOTAL
YES %	45 (22.39)	60 (29.85)	15 (7.46)	6 (2.99)	126 (62.69)
NO %	34 (16.92)	21 (10.30)	14 (6.97)	6 (2.99)	73 (37.31)
COLUMN TOTAL %	79 (39.30)	81 (40.30)	29 14(6.97)	12 (5.97)	75 (37.31)

**DF = 3                      VALUE = 8.069                      PROB. = 0.048%**

Fatigue and the number of students are not significantly different, the prob-value is 0.48, that is,  $0.048 < 0.05$ , as illustrated in Table 4. A relationship existed between fatigue and the number of students taught by the respondents. That is, whether the respondents taught few or many students, they still experienced fatigue.

**TABLE 5: COMPARING FATIGUE AND MARITAL STATUS.**

N = 201

FATIGUE	SINGLE	MARRIED	DIVORCED	WIDOWED	ROW TOTAL
YES %	25 (12.44)	77 (38.31)	20 (9.95)	4 (1.99)	126 (62.69)
NO %	13 (6.47)	52 (25.87)	6 (2.995)	4 (1.99)	75 (39.31)
COLUMN TOTAL %	38 (18.91)	129 (64.18)	36 (12.94)	8 (3.98)	201 (100.00)

DF = 3      VALUE = 3.455      PROB. = 0.037

As illustrated in table 5, there is a relationship between fatigue and marital status, the prob-value was 0.037. That is, whether single, married, divorced or widowed, fatigue played havoc to the well being of the respondents.

**TABLE 6: COMPARING FRUSTRATION AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS. N = 201**

FRUS- TRATION	0 -100	101- 200	201-300	OVER 300	ROW TOTAL
YES %	43 (21.39)	40 (19.90)	13 (6.47)	8 (3.98)	104 (51.74)
NO %	36 (17.91)	41 (20.40)	16 (7.96)	4 (1.99)	97 (48.26)
COLUMN TOTAL %	79 (39.30)	81 (40.30)	29 (14.43)	12 (5.97)	201 (100.00)

DF = 3      VALUE = 2.035      PROB. = 0.565

Frustration and the number of students, as illustrated in Table 6, are significantly different. That is, there is no relationship between frustration and the number of students taught by the respondents.

Frustration and the number of students, as illustrated in Table 6, are significantly different. That is, there is no relationship between frustration and the number of students taught by the respondents.

**TABLE 7: MATCHING FRUSTRATION AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION**

**N = 201**

FRUS- TRA- TION	DIPLO- MA	DEGREE	HONOURS	MASTERS	DOC- TORATE	ROW TOTAL
YES %	9 (4.48)	29 (14.43)	35 (17.41)	29 (14.43)	2 (1.00)	104 (51.94)
NO %	6 (2.99)	38 (18.91)	32 (15.92)	21 (10.45)	0 (0.00)	97 (48.26)
COL. TOTAL	15 (7.45)	67 (33.33)	67 (33.33)	50 (24.88)	2 (1.00)	201 (100.00)

**DF = 4**

**VALUE = 4.986**

**PROB = 0.0289**

Table 7 illustrated that frustration and academic qualifications are not related because  $0.05 > 0.0289$ , an indication that the two are not related.

**TABLE 8: COMPARING FRUSTRATION AND THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN. N = 201**

FRUS TRA- TION	NONE	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE & MORE	ROW TOTAL
YES %	16 (7.96)	26 (12.94)	25 (12.44)	25 (12.44)	9 (4.41)	3 (1.49)	104 (51.74)
NO %	10 (4.98)	19 (9.45)	25 (12.44)	36 (17.91)	3 (1.49)	4 (1.99)	97 (48.26)
COL. TOTAL	26 (12.94)	45 (22.39)	50 (24.88)	61 (30.35)	12 (12.97)	7 (3.48)	201 (100.00)

**DF = 5**

**VALUE = 7.365**

**PROB = 0.195**

Frustration and the number of children are significantly different as illustrated in Table 8. There is no relationship between the two.

#### 6.6.1 Some observations

Fatigue and academic qualifications are dependent, the same applies to fatigue and number of students. On the other hand, there is no relationship between the following: fatigue and marital status, frustration and the number of students, frustration and academic qualifications; and frustration and the number of children. Fatigue is, therefore, dependent on both academic qualifications and the number of students the respondents teach in their main course, indicating that fatigue has a noticeable effect on the respondents.

### 6.7. Comparing Stress Management and Demographic Factors

TABLE 9: MATCHING RELAXATION AGAINST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS. N = 201

RELAX- ATION	DIPLOMA	DEGREE	HONOURS	MASTERS	DOC- TORATE	ROW TOTAL
YES %	4 (1.99)	50 (24.88)	41 (20.40)	35 (17.41)	0 (0.0)	130 (64.68)
NO %	11 (5.47)	17 (8.46)	26 (12.94)	15 (7.46)	2 (1.00)	71 (35.32)
COL. TOTAL%	15 (7.46)	67 (33.33)	67 (33.33)	50 (24.88)	2 (1.00)	201 (100.00)

DF = 4

VALUE = 17.027

PROB. =

0.002

Relaxation and academic qualifications are related as illustrated in Table 9. This implied that relaxation was a valuable stress management technique for most of the respondents.

**TABLE 10: COMPARING RELAXATION AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE MAIN COURSE**

RELAX- ATION	0 - 100	101- 200	201-300	OVER 300	ROW TOTAL
YES %	51 (25.37)	56 (27.86)	19 (9.45)	4 (1.99)	130 (64.68)
NO %	28 (13.93)	25 (12.44)	10 (4.98)	8 (3.98)	71 (35.32)
COL. TOTAL%	79 (39.30)	81 (40.30)	29 (14.43)	12 (5.97)	201 (100.00)

DF = 3

VALUE = 5.875

PROB. = 0.118

Relaxation and the number of students the respondents teach in their main course are significantly different as illustrated in Table 10, there is no relationship between the two.

**TABLE 11: COMPARING PLANNING FOR EACH DAY AND THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN THE RESPONDENTS HAVE**

PLAN- NING FOR EACH DAY	NONE	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE & MORE	ROW TOTAL
YES %	22 (10.95)	31 (15.42)	47 (23.38)	49 (24.38)	9 (4.48)	4 (1.99)	162 (80.60)
NO %	4 (1.99)	14 (6.97)	3 (1.49)	12 (5.97)	3 (1.49)	3 (1.49)	39 (19.40)
COL. TOTAL	26 (12.94)	45 (22.39)	50 (24.88)	61 (30.35)	12 (5.99)	7 (3.48)	201 (100)

DF = 5

VALUE = 12.662

PROB. = 0.027

Table 9 illustrated that a relationship exists between planning for each day and the number of children that the respondent has: the need to plan for each day was

imminent amongst the majority of the respondents, irrespective of the number of children they have.

### **6.8 Conclusion**

The response profile showed that the respondents' main stressors were students' class boycotts, uncertainties about the future of the organization in which the participants of the study work, not participating in the decision making machinery, working in an organization that threatens autonomy, lack of promotional opportunities and serving under an autocratic head. Fatigue is the most pronounced effect of stress on the respondents, followed by irritability and frustration.

The most commonly used stress management strategy was positive thinking, followed by spiritual life, confiding in a trustworthy friend, developing hobbies, relaxation, a balanced diet, confiding in a trustworthy relative and regular exercise.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# 7. SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *7.1 Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold. First, the nature of the investigation and findings of the study are summarised. Second, the implication of these findings for higher education are suggested. Third, recommendations for further research are advanced.

The first part of the chapter presents a summary of the problem, aims of the study, research design and findings of the objective that guided this study.

### *7.2. Statement of the Problem* (Delving this area further)

(cf. paragraph 1.2)

Stress has been defined by various researchers as the inability of a person to cope with the pressures that she encounters, this may effect her negatively behaviourally (drug abuse, eating too much), emotionally (frustration, anger), mentally (illogically arranged thoughts, misplacing or losing objects) and physically (increased blood pressure, inability of the individual worker to cope effectively with various work demands.

Various researchers have indicated that women suffer from occupational stress more than men because of their dual role in balancing home and work responsibilities. Because of its devastating effects on the health and productivity of women lecturers, the need to minimise their occupational stress has aroused international concern; it

is considered to be one of the ten leading work-related health problems.

Occupational stress of women lecturers includes sex discrimination and male dominance. The nature of their working conditions generate stress. One striking feature is the proportion of women lecturers in lower levels of the hierarchy in universities.

### ***7.3 Aim Of the Study***

(cf. paragraph 1.3)

In a nutshell, the aim of this study was:

- (a) To identify women lecturers' stress and its severity
- (b) To determine the occurrence and the effects of their stress
- (c) To explore the strategies employed by women lecturers in coping with their stress.

The above-mentioned aim was compared with the findings in paragraph 7.2

The area of the matter is how women lecturers can recognise warning signals of stress to enable them to apply appropriate coping mechanisms. The intention is to avoid the devastating effects that stress can have on their well-being and to make their workplace as stress free as possible by making organisations of higher education aware of their role in joining hands with women lecturers to tackle occupational stress.

### ***7.4 Research Methods***

(c.f. paragraph 1.5)

#### **7.4.1. Review of Literature**

Both international and local literature was surveyed to

gather information related to the nature of stress, its sources, effects on women lecturing in higher education and their stress management strategies. Literature survey revealed the following:

#### **7.4.1.1 The nature, sources and effects of stress**

(cf. chapter 2)

Before confiding stress to women lecturers, chapter two intended to analyze the sources and effects of stress in general to enable the reader to have a comprehensive picture about stress. What emerged from local and international researchers on stress is that inability to cope with challenges that one encounters leads to physical, behavioural, emotional and mental malfunctioning (c.f. paragraph 2.2.1). Two approaches can be used in explaining stress: stressors that induce stress and reaction to stress is how one responds to stress.

How a person reacts to stress will determine its effects on that individual. There are two appraisals to stress: primary and secondary. Primary appraisal is how a challenge is perceived - is it stressful or not? If the answer is yes, which coping mechanisms will be appropriate? (cf. paragraph 2.2.4).

Both local and international literature categorized sources of stress as follows: individual, interpersonal and organizational stressors. Individual stressors encompassed: traumatic events and life changes. Interpersonal stressors included group positive and organizational stressors involved organizational structure and climate, role ambiguity and role overload/underload.

Literature survey reflected the following effects of stress:

physical illness like constant fatigue, insomnia, skin rashes and frequent headaches as minor symptoms. Serious complications included high blood pressure, cardiovascular problems and ulcers. Behavioural inconsistencies like irritability, tardiness and lack of patience or sympathy with colleagues. Emotional imbalances encompassed anxiety, frustration, anger and fear.

Fortunately not all stress is damaging; there is positive stress, too. This positive stress is referred to as eustress. It is beneficial in that it enables individuals to reach their goals. Devastating stress is referred to as distress. If not attended to, stress can lead to burnout where one lacks commitment to her work or to job dissatisfaction, contentions supported by the literature survey. Another factor that emerged from the literature attributed to differences in personality, with type A B Personality more prone to stress than Type B Personality.

#### **7.4.1.2. Stress management in organizations**

Both the individual and the organization must accept some responsibility in managing stress. The first important step in stress management is to recognise the need to deal with stress. Programmes for the prevention and treatment of stress should be tailored to the needs of the individual. The individual could use the following strategies: relaxation, regular exercise, releasing pent-up emotions, getting enough sleep and proper eating habits, as highlighted in the literature.

Two types of coping mechanisms have emerged from the literature: conscious and defensive. Conscious coping is problem-focused and constructive because challenges are confronted directly and conscious effort is made to receive them by putting the challenge into perspective.

(c.f. paragraph 3.2.2.). Defensive coping, on the other hand, is emotional-focused. This is a temporary measure in that the source of the problem is shelved, to protect an individual from the emotional discomfort that is often induced by stress. these maladaptive responses may manifest themselves through: displacement, denial and intellectualization (cf. paragraph 3.2.2. and 3.2.3.).

Organizations should begin to realize that the performance efficiency and satisfaction of the individual in her workplace is linked with her overall well being. For organizations to function effectively, stress management should be incorporated in those organizations. Individuals, too, should be willing to manage their stress (cf. paragraph 3.2.4; 3.3.).

#### **7.4.1.3. Stress and women lecturing in higher education (cf. chapter 4).**

It is crucial to look into the conditions in higher education which may generate stress for women lecturers. The following sources of stress for women lecturers have been cited by national and international researchers: decline in resources; lack of research affecting promotion; sex discrimination; male dominance manifesting itself in more women in lower grades, with very few women professors and not being part of top management; and playing dual role (cf. paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6).

Sex stereotyping affects women lecturers' well-being. they become prone to somatic manifestations of psychological distress and physiological imbalances: these psychological disturbances manifest themselves physiologically through coronary heart disease, lung cancer and peptic ulcer.

On the other hand, the above-mentioned physiological imbalances could also be attributed to women's increased

use of cigarettes, alcohol and caffeine, rather than stress. In the same vein, it is also known that too much use of these substances is symptomatic of stress (cf. paragraph 4.7)

Women lecturers themselves must address their plight. The following coping mechanisms could come in handy: liberal feminism by consciously attending to their problems, starting off with scrutinizing factors and conditions prevailing in their workplace and developing a positive attitude at work. Preventative strategies are recommended for dealing with academics' stress (cf. paragraph 4.8.1. and 4.8.2.).

Effective stress management is twofold: individual and organizational. Organizations of higher education can offer on-site day care centres. A support system that equips women lecturers with managing consequences of sex bias, isolation and powerlessness. Individual strategies would entail a women's realising her own standard of role performance; planning ahead; employment of paid domestic help to minimise home responsibilities; time management (cf. paragraphs 4.8.3 and 4.8.4).

#### **7.4.2. Empirical Research**

A self-developed stress inventory was constructed and designed as an instrument to measure stress among women lecturing in higher education in the University of the North West and colleges of education affiliated to it. Their unique circumstances and cultural background were taken into consideration when constructing the stress inventory, guided by the purpose of this study (cf. paragraph 5.2).

##### **7.4.2.1. The measuring instrument - its description and application**

The research design is discussed in chapter five. The

role of the stress inventory as the only measuring tool of measuring stress among the respondents is analyzed, starting off with the items in the questionnaire. The final draft consisted of four sections and 45 items. These sections were divided into biographic information, stress factors, effects of stress and stress management (cf. paragraph 5.3.3.). A census survey, where an attempt is made to gather data from each and every member of the population (N=279), was applied. the return rate was 201 (72%), which is representative of the whole population.

#### **7.4.2.2. Findings of the research**

(cf. chapter 6)

The SAS computer programme of the University of the North West Computer Centre was used to statistically analyze the inventory responses. Demographic factors, effects of stress identified by the respondents and their stress management strategies stated in the inventory were analyzed through frequency scores. Research data on stress factors identified by the respondents were analyzed by mean scores according to rank of order where both moderate and severe stress were added together. in instances where severe stress was a striking feature in terms of frequency score, such a matter was given attention (cf. paragraphs 6.2; 6.3; 6.4; 6.5).

In paragraph 6.2.1. a summary of the profile of the respondents revealed that the majority 67 (33.33%) hold a degree or an honours degree. a disturbing feature is that only 2 (1.0%) have a doctorate degree. also, the majority of the respondents 84 (41.8%) have little experience in higher education, 0 to 5 years.

The summary of the findings of the study are organised according to the research objective:

- To identify the sources of stress experienced by the

### **respondents**

Data revealed that the main stressors identified by the respondents are ranked as follows:

- students' class boycotts
- uncertainties about the future of their organization
- dual role
- closure of their organizations
- overload
- economic pressures forcing them to work
- not participating in the decision-making process
- organizational structure that threaten autonomy
- lack of promotional opportunities
- autocratic head (cf. figure 1;2;3;4;5;6;7;8;9;10).

The highest ranking severe stressor identified by the respondents is students' class boycotts 146 (71.7%) followed by uncertainties about the future of their organization 136 (72.7%), then dual roles 132 (65.7%). Contrary to expectation, sex discrimination and male dominance are not indicates as high ranking stressors by the respondents.

- **To determine the effects of stress on the respondents.**

The following behaviours attributed to stress played havoc to the well-being of the respondents as revealed by the data. Of all the respondents 126 (62.7%) experienced fatigue, 120 (59.7%) irritability, 108 (51.7%) anxiety and 104 (48.3%) experienced frustration. The picture portrayed indicated the emotional problems the respondents undergo emanating from stress (cf. figure 11;12).

- **To identify the respondents' stress management strategies.**

The most outstanding stress management strategy that the respondents applied is positive thinking 187 (93.0%), followed by spiritual life 143 (71.1%), confiding in a

trustworthy friend 141 (70.1%), developing hobbies 138 (68.7%), relaxing 130 (64.7%), balanced diet 123 (61.2%) confiding in a trustworthy relative 117 (58.2%) and exercising regularly 102 (50.7%) (cf. paragraph 6.5.1.). Individual respondents took it upon themselves to cope with their stress as illustrated by the respondents' stress management strategies.

In matching highest ranking effects of stress experienced by the respondents against demographic factors using the Chi-Square statistics, to ascertain which effects of stress were prevalent in which group; the following trend emerged: there is a relationship between fatigue and academic qualification. This indicated that irrespective of their academic qualifications, the majority of the respondents were victims of fatigue. The prob-value is 0.026. fatigue is also related to the number of students the respondents teach. That is, irrespective of the number of students in their main course (whether few or many), the majority of the respondents experience fatigue; the prob-value is 0.034 (cf. table 1.2).

In comparing the highest ranking stress management strategy with demographic factors, data revealed the relationship between relaxation and academic qualifications; the prob-value is 0.002. Another relationship exists between planning for each day and the number of children the respondents have. The need to plan for each day is apparent to the majority of the respondents no matter how many children they have (cf. table 9).

This study revealed that women lecturing in higher education still experience stress. Their stress emanates from: students' class boycotts, uncertainties about the future of their organization, playing a dual role,

closure of their organization, work overload, economic pressures forcing them to work, not being part of the decision-making process, organizational structure that threaten autonomy, lack of promotional opportunities and autocratic head. The above-mentioned support the notion that conditions under which these women lecturers work generate a lot of stress for them; the need to scrutinize their working conditions is evident.

Firstly if not attended to, stress play havoc to the well-being of those experiencing stress. Secondly it is not the individual alone who suffers, the organization in which such an individual works also suffers because of their decreased productivity. Thus, organizations must take stock of themselves and help these women in addressing the above-mentioned stressors.

With the dawn of a democratic society in South Africa in April 1994, all organizations should put into practice democratic principles. However, it should be noted that at certain levels, the transformation process will be gradual.

Some stressors emanated from the students. For example, students' class boycotts and the closure of the institution which is directly linked with students' class boycotts. On the other side, balancing home and work-responsibilities, and economic pressures forcing the woman lecturer to work, are individual-inclined.

One consoling feature of the effects of stress is that stress levels of these women lecturers have not yet reached proportions where these women want to leave their job. This is an indication that burnout is not imminent. There is still room for giving support to those women lecturers experiencing high levels of stress. Therefore, all is not lost as far as stress experienced by women in

higher education is concerned.

Another concern is application of appropriate stress management strategies, to help those experiencing stress to remove or alleviate their stress. Stress management is two-fold: those emanating from the individual herself and those emanating from her organization.

An observation made from the responses of the participants is that organization do very little, if anything, to help women lecturers with a support system that will enable these women to manage their stress. Organizations re challenged to offer these women support systems in their workplace.

Fortunately, the respondents took it upon themselves to do something about their plight. They have opted for the following stress management strategies: positive thinking, resorting to a spiritual life, confiding in a trustworthy friend, developing hobbies, relaxation, eating a balanced diet, confiding in a trustworthy relative and regular exercise.

## ***7.5 Recommendations***

### **7.5.1. Recommendations pertaining to this study**

#### **Mentors**

Lecturers who have little experience need mentors who will help them in the moment of need. It is always advisable to know that help is available, particularly concerning supervision where a lecturer is uncertain about what is expected of her, that is, role conflict.

#### **Support Group for Women**

It is suggested that all women should stand together and endeavour to improve their working conditions in forming a united front their voices will be better heard than if they fight alone. Support groups encourage social interaction and develop a sense of belonging.

All stake-holders in an organization, particularly higher education, should be part and parcel of the decision-making machinery. Empowering staff will make them more accountable.

Women issues are on the agenda of transformation into a democratic society. However, women themselves must also be on their toes to ensure a fair deal.

#### **7.5.2. Recommendations For Further Research**

The focus on higher education should be more precise. For example, the point of departure could be universities only or colleges of education only, to obtain more specific information. The foregoing study just scratched the surface by explaining stress encountered by women lecturing in higher education, where both the university and colleges of education affiliated to it were investigated.

Another option is to choose a section in an institution of higher education - heads for example, and their stress or even top management and their stress. With this kind of approach the focus will be more directed towards a particular group in higher education.

This study was conducted while society was still in transit from an autocratic dispensation. another research of this nature could be conducted when the dust has settled.

### ***7.6 Conclusion***

Despite the notion held in some quarters that academics do not undergo stress, this study has revealed that women lecturing in higher education experience stress. This exploratory study was carried out to determine sources of stress experienced by women lecturers, the effects that

stress has on these women and their management strategies.

The study revealed that most of the stressors were organizationally-based: autocratic head, an organizational that threatens autonomy and exclusion from the decision-making machinery. Other stressors were students' class boycotts and some stressors were individually based like: dual role where a balance had to be maintained between home- and work - responsibilities, and economic pressures forcing women lecturers to work.

Due to the stress that they encountered these women had emotional imbalances life fatigue, irritability, anxiety and frustration. Their workplace neglected their role in helping these women to manage stress, and this loophole must be tightened. Individually-generated stress management strategies were employed by these women.

Contrary to expectation, most of the respondents did not resort to temporary stress relievers like smoking, or drinking alcohol. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents come from a culture where women are not expected to smoke or use alcohol.

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## APPENDIX A

QUESTION  
NUMBER

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(1 - 3)

C A R D  
NUMBER

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(4)

The purpose of this inventory is to determine factors inducing stress in women lecturers in the University of the North West and colleges of education affiliated to it, the effects of their stress and their stress management strategies.

I would appreciate it if you could fill in this inventory. I rely on your co-operation. All information will be treated as strictly confidential. Please tick "X" in the appropriate blocks below.

A. *DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS*

1. Highest academic qualification
- |       |                                |   |
|-------|--------------------------------|---|
| :only | Diploma                        | 1 |
|       | Degree                         | 2 |
|       | Degree + Honours or equivalent | 3 |
|       | Masters                        | 4 |
|       | Doctorate                      | 5 |
|       | other (Specify) _____          |   |

[5]

2. Teaching experience in higher education

0 - 5 years

1
---

6 - 10 years	2
11 - 15 years	3
16 - 20 years	4
over 20 years	5

[6]

## 3. Rank

Junior lecturer	1
Lecturer	2
Senior Lecturer	3
Associate Professor	4
Head of Department	5
Deputy Dean	6
Rector	7
Professor	8
other (specify)	

[7]

[9]

## 4. Number of students in your main course

0 - 100	1
101 - 200	2
201 - 300	3
over 300	4

[8]

5. (a) Level at which you are teaching at college

early learning	1
primary	2
early learning & primary	3
secondary	4
technical	5
other (specify) _____	

[6]

(b) Level at which you are teaching at university

undergraduate	1
post-graduate	2
undergraduate & post-graduate	3
other (specify) _____	

[4]

not applicable (N/A)	5
----------------------	---

[10]

6. Marital status

single	1
married	2
divorced	3
widowed	4

[11]

7. Number of children

one	1
two	2
three	3
four	4

	five or more	5	
	none	6	
8.	School in which you teach (university)		[12]
	Education	1	
	Law	2	
	Agriculture	3	
	Administration & Management	4	
	Health & Social Sciences	5	
	N/A	6	

[13]

### B. STRESS FACTORS

On a 1 - 5 point scale, indicate by means of an x to what extent the factors mentioned below were responsible for stress in your workplace during the academic year 1993 - 1994.

Stress is "a process of behavioural, emotional, mental and physical reactions caused by prolonged, increasing or new pressures which are significantly greater than coping resources" (Dunham, 1984:3).

- 1 = no stress
- 2 = little stress
- 3 = moderate stress
- 4 = severe stress
- 5 = not applicable (N/A)

9. Male dominance

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[14]

10. Lack of appropriate qualifications

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[15]

11. Occupying a low rank

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[16]

12. Low income

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[17]

13. Lack of research and publications (university in particular)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[18]

14. Maintaining a balance between work &amp; home responsibilities

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[19]

15. Sex bias

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[20]

16. Few women in top management

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[21]

17. Few women professors

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[22]

18. Not being part of the decision making process

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[23]

19. Problems with day-care centre

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[24]

20. Lack of co-operation from female subordinates

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[25]

21. Lack of co-operation from male subordinates

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[26]

22. Inflexible working hours that do not allow you to attend to your home duties

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[27]

23. Economic pressures forcing you to work

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[28]

24. If married, priority being given to your husband's work

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[29]

25. Lack of administrative skills

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[30]

26. Inability to meet deadlines

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[31]

27. Life changes e.g:  
(a) promotion to new rank

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[32]

- (b) appointment to new post

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[33]

- (c) changes in social life

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[34]

28. Too many responsibilities  
(i.e. underload)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[35]

29. Too little to do at work  
(i.e. underload)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[36]

30. Organizational structure  
and climate threatening  
your freedom, autonomy and  
identity

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[37]

31. Autocratic head

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[38]

32. Lack of promotional opportunities

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[39]

33. Political changes leading to:  
(a) students boycotting classes

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[40]

- (b) closure of your institutions

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[41]

- (c) uncertainties about your  
work

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

[42]

**C. THE EFFECTS OF YOUR WORK STRESS DURING THE  
ACADEMIC YEAR 1993 - 1994**

Supply your answer by simply placing an "x" in the square opposite the relevant code number

34. Have you had the feeling of wanting to leave your work because of the stress that you experienced?

YES NO

1	2
---	---

[43]

35. Do you leave for home early, just to get away from your work?

1	2
---	---

[44]

36. Are you unpunctual because of lack of enthusiasm?

1	2
---	---

[45]

37. Have you experienced the following illness(es) which may be attributed to stress?

(a) sleeplessness

1	2
---	---

[46]

(b) skin problems

1	2
---	---

[47]

(c) increased blood pressure

1	2
---	---

[48]

(d) rapid heart beat

1	2
---	---

[49]

(e) headaches

1	2
---	---

(f) other (specify)

[50]

\_\_\_\_\_ [51]

\_\_\_\_\_

38. Have you used the following temporary relievers of stress?

YES NO

(a) drugs

1	2
---	---

[52]

(b) alcohol

1	2
---	---

[53]

(c) smoking

1	2
---	---

[54]

38. (d) eating too much

1	2
---	---

[55]

(e) other (specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ [56]

\_\_\_\_\_

39. Have you displayed the following behaviour?

(a) excessive sick leave

1	2
---	---

[57]

(b) absenteeism

1	2
---	---

[58]

(c) loss of interest in appearance

1	2
---	---

[59]

(d) lack of patience or sympathy with colleagues

1	2
---	---

(e) misplacing or losing things

[60]

1	2
---	---

[61]

(f) accident-prone

1	2
---	---

[62]

(g) other (specify)

[63]

40. Have you experienced the following emotional problems?

YES NO

(a) low self-esteem

1	2
---	---

[64]

40. (b) fatigue

1	2
---	---

[ 6  
5]

(c) irritability

1	2
---	---

[66]

(d) frustration

1	2
---	---

[67]

(e) anger

1	2
---	---

[68]

(f) anxiety

1	2
---	---

[69]

(g) fear

1	2
---	---

[70]

(h) other (specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ [71]  
 \_\_\_\_\_

41. Have you thought of mobilising your female-counterparts to rebel against the stressful life in your institution?

YES NO

1	2
---	---

[72]

#### D. STRESS MANAGEMENT

Tick with an "x" in the appropriate block

42. Which of the following stress management programme(s) are offered in your workplace to help you prevent or manage your stress?

(a) guidance and counselling

1	2
---	---

[73]

(b) recreational facilities

1	2
---	---

[74]

(c) workshops on stress

1	2
---	---

[75]

(d) none

1	2
---	---

[76]

(e) other (specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ [77]  
 \_\_\_\_\_

CARD NO.

2
---

[1]

43. Which of the following strategies do you employ to manage your stress?

(a) regular exercise

YES NO

1	2
---	---

[2]

(b) a balanced diet

1	2
---	---

[3]

(c) enough leisure time to relax

1	2
---	---

[4]

(d) spiritual life

1	2
---	---

[5]

(e) Other (specify)

[6]

---



---

44. Is freedom of expression allowed in your organization?

1	2
---	---

[7]

45. Which of the following strategies recommended below, would you use to manage your stress?

(a) confiding in a trustworthy friend

1	2
---	---

[8]

(b) confiding in a trustworthy relative

1	2
[9]	

(c) developing hobbies

1	2
[10]	

(d) fighting for your rights as a women

**YES NO**

1	2
[11]	

(e) positive thinking

1	2
[12]	

(f) writing your problems on a piece of paper and tearing that paper

1	2
[13]	

(g) planning for each day

1	2
[14]	

(h) other (specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ [15]

\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire.  
Your participation has been highly appreciated.*