

Life Satisfaction and Level of Stress among Working and Non- Working Indian Women: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

Stress is a universal phenomenon existing among the people of different age groups, education, position and socio-economy background. It paralyses the human life, thereby making it difficult for people suffering of stress to live a normal life. The lives of women of current era are highly stressful and much different than the older days. Nowadays women tend to expand their lives to include a career while maintaining their traditional roles. Studies have revealed that the dual-career families have witnessed deleterious effects on the life satisfaction of women and an enormous rise in their levels of stress. Stress and Life satisfaction are interrelated with each other. The sense of one's identity or self is an important dimension of individual's personality giving each one of us unique individuality. Women holding a job or pursuing a career are more vulnerable to stress because they shoulder dual responsibilities. The present study aims to find the difference, if any, between the life satisfaction and the level of stress of working and non working women. The sample of this study comprised of 100 women (50 working and 50 non working). The tools were individually administered to all the participants of the study and all the possible precautions were taken. T-test was used for analyzing the data. Significant differences were found between the two groups.

Key words: Life Satisfaction, Level of Stress, working and non-working women.

Stress has been defined both as a non specific adaptive response of the body to any demand and an internal and external stimulus. It is a universal phenomenon existing among the people of different age groups, education, position and socio-economy background. It may also be referred to as the generalized, patterned, unconscious mobilization of the body's natural ability. Stress paralyses the human life, thereby making it difficult for people suffering of stress to live a normal life. Life satisfaction refers to having a favorable attitude towards one's life as a whole. It is a state of mind or an evaluative appraisal of something. The terms "subjective well-being" and "happiness" and "life satisfaction" are synonymous. Life satisfaction however refers to the overall evaluation of life rather than to current feelings or to specific psychosomatic symptoms. Life satisfaction is also defined as an individual's global assessment of his or her life in positive terms (Diener, et.al., 1985). Industrialization, urbanization and career orientation among the people have brought about the social transformation. Traditionally, the major responsibility of women has been perceived to be the maintenance of the family including home and childcare and breadwinning was the main responsibility of men. The lives of women of current era are much different than the older days; they are going to expand their lives to include a career while maintaining their traditional roles. (Hoffman 1986). More and more women acquire the education; find out the suitable jobs for the dual purpose of career building and economic support of the family. This is symbolic of social transformation and social change where more and more women prefer to come out of home and do the service. Although economic development requires an integration of the male and female labour force; the dual-career families have witnessed deleterious effects on the life satisfaction of women and an enormous rise in their levels of stress. Stress and Life satisfaction are interrelated with each other. The sense of one's identity or self is an important

dimension of individual's personality giving each one of us unique individuality. Women holding a job or pursuing a career are more vulnerable to stress because they shoulder dual responsibilities. They not only have to fulfill the demands of their jobs but have to fulfill the demands at home which are expected of them as a mother or wife. Women do not have responsibility only in one domain anymore; they have to balance the competing demands of both work and family domains (Biçaksiz, 2009). Balancing work and family roles has become a key personal and family issue for many societies. Work and family are the two most important aspects in people's lives and, contrary to the initial belief that they are distinct parts of life; these domains are closely related (Ford *et al.*, 2007).

With a boom in the number of working women; an increase has been witnessed in their levels of stress; which has had deleterious effects on their life satisfaction. Several researches have indicated that work-family difficulties can make negative influence for individual mentality and physiology. Studies have shown that, compared with their male counterparts, women report.

Higher level of stress in work/family conflicts, gender barriers and career development. Studies on women academics in china revealed that women academics perceived the demands for career development as highly stressful, they are under continuous pressure due to gender related barriers and they experience more difficulties in fulfilling both academic work and family roles (Zhang, 2010). The main conflict situations pertained to "performing both work and family roles very well," "children's education and future" and "lack of time to satisfy personal interests and hobbies." Levels of stress have also been reported to be related to the work place environment. Previous findings (Allen, 2001; Dikkers *et al.*, 2007; Thompson *et al.*, 2004; Grandey *et al.*, 2007; Lapierre *et al.*, 2008) have indicated that employees working in an environment perceived as more

family-friendly reported less work-family conflict. Several researches have indicated that work-family difficulties can make negative influence on individual mentality and physiology (Clark et al, 2010). Factors like personality and environment were found to be influential in determining life satisfaction (Beutell, 2006). Women's hostility towards other women was inversely associated with their life satisfaction. That is, women who harbored hostile feelings toward other women were less likely to be satisfied with their own lives. The study suggested that people's perceptions of their life satisfaction are in part due to comparisons that they make between what they have, what they want, what they used to have, and what others have. Thus, hostility toward other women may be a consequence of unfavorable social comparisons (Sousa and Lyubomirsky 2001). Life satisfaction can create colossal catastrophic consequences for both, the individual as an employee or the individual as a family member. Life satisfaction in women is found to be directly related to their satisfaction with marriage, employment and leisure experiences (Kousha and Moheen (2004). Satisfaction with work and marriage was significantly related to life satisfaction (Perrone et.al.2007). In 2008, Schaer, also stressed on Couples Coping Enhancement Training to increase dyadic competencies which can have positive effects on the general well-being, life satisfaction and other workplace variables like less burnout and less work stress. A study of work place and job performance recognized negative implications of work stress as a challenge to both employers and workers, with women, youth, shift, part-time, and non white collar workers being more likely to have high-strain jobs (Park, 2007).

Objectives

The present study aims

1. To find the difference, if any, between the working and non working women on their levels of stress.

2. To find the difference, if any, between the working and non working women on their life satisfaction.

Method

Participants

The sample of this study comprised of 100 women. (50 working and 50 Non-working). The group of working women included teachers from Government schools and those working in different capacities at various other offices while as the non-working group consisted of home-makers. The tools were individually administered to each of the participants of the study. All the possible precautions were being taken.

Tool

The satisfaction with life scale

The satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) developed by Ed Diener et al (1984) is a measure of life satisfaction. It is a five item assessment tool that enquires about the respondents overall assessment of their lives. The items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)

To study psychological distress, General health Questionnaire (GHQ) by Goldberg and Hiller (1979) was used. This is a self administered screening test designed for detecting non-psychotic psychiatric disorders. The possible scores vary from 0-69.

Analysis

The data was analyzed using t-test. The results were interpreted.

Results

Table-1 Showing the mean differences between the two groups on life satisfaction.

| Groups | N | Mean | S.D | T |
|-------------------|----|--------|-------|------|
| Working women | 50 | 150.43 | 10.58 | 2.77 |
| Non-working women | 50 | 141.00 | 15.32 | |

The results of table-1 show that there were significant meaningful differences between the two groups of women on life satisfaction.

Table-2 Showing the mean difference between the two groups on Level of stress.

| Groups | N | Mean | S.D | T |
|-------------------|----|--------|-------|------|
| Working women | 50 | 137.80 | 21.66 | 2.45 |
| Non-working women | 50 | 124.63 | 19.80 | |

The results of table-2 show that there were significant meaningful differences between the two groups of women in terms of stress levels.

Discussion

India is a developing country. There has been a mammoth change in the life-style of people nowadays. Integration of male and female labour force is considered to be a key factor in the economic development of the country. While on one hand this emerging new trend has worked wonders in raising the living standards of the society; it has exposed the women folk to the dual pressure of balancing her role in the family and at work, thereby causing deleterious effects on her life-satisfaction and an immense increase in her levels of stress. Present study focused to find the differences between the working and non-working Indian women on their levels of stress and life-

satisfaction. The results showed that there were significant differences between the two groups on their levels of stress. Women holding a job or pursuing a career were more vulnerable to stress because they shoulder dual responsibilities. They not only have to fulfill the demands of their jobs but have to fulfill the demands at home which are expected of them as a mother or wife. The results of the present study are in conformity with the results of Bicaksiz, 2009 and Ford et al, 2007. Working women are exposed to different work place environments; which they might assume to be insecure, hostile or threatening. Such experiences are bound to expose them to more and more stress (Allen, 2007). The present study also showed significant differences between the working and non-working women in terms of their life-satisfaction. The working women were more satisfied with their life; the possible reason for this could be economic independence and leisure. The non-working women were found to be less satisfied with life than their working counterparts. This may be because of the fact that the non-working women have a certain given setting, they do not get variety in life; e.g getting to dress for the job, hanging out with friends and co-workers at parties. They have live with a certain monotonous routine, besides being financially dependent. Previous studies on life satisfaction in women found it to be directly related to their satisfaction with marriage, employment and leisure experiences (Kousha and Moheen (2004). The present study confirms their findings.

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