

Exploring Psychological Well-Being: A Comparison of Married Women in Domestic and Professional Roles

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The current study compares the psychological well-being of women who are homemakers and those who are working (full-time employed). A purposive sampling technique was resorted to, wherein data from 200 educated women (at least graduate level) in the age group of 40-50 years (with at least one child) was collected from various areas of Delhi. Out of these 200, the sample consisted of 100 married working women and 100 homemakers. Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scales (1989) was used to measure psychological well-being. Findings indicate that married working women scored significantly higher in autonomy, personal growth, purpose of life, and self-acceptance than homemakers.

Keywords: psychological well-being, married working women, homemakers, autonomy, personal growth

Well-being is used to describe the condition of an individual or group. It can be of various types: physical well-being, economic well-being, social well-being, emotional well-being and psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is a state in which people experience positive emotions, thoughts, satisfaction, personal growth and a sense of purpose in life.

A homemaker is a home keeper who manages daily household chores to maintain the home such as cooking, laundry, taking care of the children and other members of the family. It is traditionally a role taken up by females but changing times have seen few men also take up the role of a homemaker. A homemaker usually does not earn income on her own but helps in putting the income earned by other members to use. On the other hand, a married working woman spends

a significant amount of time at her workplace and earns an income in return for the work. A working woman may be involved in managing household chores to different degrees. Married women involved in both domestic and professional setups put effort into their respective roles. However, research is being conducted to ascertain who has the higher well-being.

The capabilities of women are generally underestimated, and for this reason, women are unable to get enough opportunities despite their potential. Women who secure a job and work full-time may be judged as selfish for ignoring their household responsibilities. Also, homemakers who stay at home the entire day face several challenging tasks of smoothly running the household without any monetary benefits in return. Their efforts may be taken for granted

or not acknowledged, making them feel worthless. Meraviglia and Dudka (2020) found that despite both partners working, the division of household chores between males and females is unequal with more work given to the females, especially during covid lockdown. Though the gender differences are visible, it is interesting to see whether such differences are seen among married women who are home-makers and those who are house-wives. Since both homemakers and working women manage their respective duties and face different set of challenges, the question about who has better well-being arises. To answer this question, the present research compares the psychological well-being of homemakers with married working women. Several researches have been carried out in this field.

Choudhary & Ahmad (2017) conducted a study to assess the levels of psychological well-being among homemakers who were financially dependent on their husbands and among working women. Their findings indicate that elderly homemakers have significantly lower level of psychological well-being as opposed to elderly working women. Another study by Akram (2017) found working women to have significantly higher self-esteem and psychological well-being than non-working women.

Married working women have significantly higher life satisfaction (Arshad, Gull and Mahmood, 2014), mental health (Mankani and Yenagi, 2012) On the contrary, Satbhai (2020) revealed that there was no significant difference between working mothers as compared to non-working mothers on psychological well-being.

Method

Sample

The sample consists of women aged 40-50 years of age (with at least one child) with

a minimum of graduation degree. Women who were confined to domestic roles as homemakers and those who also had professional roles as full-time employees were taken as two groups that were compared on their psychological well-being. Using purposive sampling, data of 200 educated married women was collected from various areas of Delhi, of which 100 were employed full-time and 100 were homemakers.

Tool

Ryff Psychological Well-being Scale (1989) was used to collect the data. It has 42 items which help to measure the 6 dimensions of PWB: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations, Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance.

Ethical considerations

All ethical considerations such as voluntary participation with an informed consent wherein the participants were provided information related to the purpose of the study, tentative time taken to respond and other general instructions on the response format, were adhered to. The privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of their responses were protected to provide them with a safe and non-judgmental environment that encouraged honest responses.

Results

Psychological well-being of married women who were working professionals and those who were homemakers was compared using independent t-test. Results for the current study were analyzed using SPSS 21.0. t-test independent was used to compare the means of the two groups on the 6 dimensions of psychological well-being.

Table 1. t-test table showing mean, SD, t-value and p-value of home-makers and working women

Variable	Home-makers(n=100)		Working Women(n=100)		t-value	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Psychological Wellbeing	180.37	25.66	192.73	23.34	3.56	0.00
Autonomy	27.65	5.55	30.76	4.979	4.17	0.00
Environmental Mastery	28.73	4.625	29.80	4.028	1.75	0.08
Personal Growth	30.55	6.14	33.66	5.53	3.76	0.00
Positive Relations with Others	33.02	5.90	32.86	5.99	0.19	0.85
Purpose of Life	29.44	5.71	32.52	4.21	4.34	0.00
Self-Acceptance	30.98	6.56	33.13	5.98	2.42	0.02

Table 1 shows the comparison of the two groups on psychological well-being and its six dimensions. It can be seen that married working women have higher Autonomy, Personal Growth, Purpose of life and Self-acceptance at 0.05 level of significance as compared to homemakers. The t-values at significance 2 tailed. $P=0.05$ are (4.17, 0.00), (3.76, 0.00), (4.34, 0.00) and (2.42, 0.02) respectively. On the other two dimensions of Environmental Mastery (1.75, 0.08) and Positive relations with others (0.19, 0.85), no significant difference is found. The overall psychological well-being of married working women is found to be significantly higher than homemakers (3.56, 0.00).

Thus, married working women are significantly higher than the homemakers on Autonomy, Personal Growth, Purpose of life and Self-acceptance. Also, overall psychological well-being of married working women is significantly higher than women homemakers.

Discussion

After analysing the results of t-test, it is noticed that working women have significantly higher psychological wellbeing than homemakers. They are also found to be significantly higher on 4 dimensions of PWB than the homemakers.

One of the dimensions in which married working women score significantly higher than homemakers is autonomy. Autonomy is the capacity to make an informed, un-coerced decision. Married working women have greater level of autonomy than homemakers because it is likely that they are more independent due to their financial independence. They earn on their own to live a life they want. They are more free to take their decisions (Khatwari, 2017). They are more self-aware and are not suppressed by anyone. They may have strong opinions and do not feel difficult to voice their opinions in front of people. On the other hand, non-working women may be more dependent on other earning members of the family due to which their decisions may get influenced by their families.

The level of personal growth is found to be significantly higher in married working women than the non-working women. This means working women get more opportunities to develop themselves and improve their quality of life. This may be because working women spend huge amount of time outside their homes, they are interested in many of the activities and opportunities that expand their capabilities. They may like new experiences that bring new challenges. They

may find ways to improve their life and themselves. They may consider life as a continuous process of growth. The employment also provides working women with an opportunity to discover their own strengths and weakness and motivate them to work upon them. Moreover, they won't believe in giving up and this helps them develop their overall personality. On the other hand, housewives are preoccupied in their daily household work, they do not explore as much as a working woman can explore the environment.

In the current study, it was found that married working women are significantly higher on purpose of life than the non-working married women. This can be attributed to the fact that employment provides women with greater opportunities that increase their level of confidence and resilience. Having to deal with different people and adverse situations at workplace in turn increases their confidence. Moreover, they have a goal-oriented life, they are driven with the specific purpose to earn and seek respect for the knowledge they possess. They have clear and high dreams and work upon to achieve them. Home-makers on the other hand may not have high self-goals and dreams as they do not get such exposure as the married working women get.

Self-acceptance was the other dimension on which married working women scored significantly higher than homemakers. This means that married working women are better at acknowledging and accepting all aspects of themselves, whether strengths or weaknesses. A married working woman has a clear identity due to the designation and formal roles and responsibilities placed upon them whereas a homemaker may not have such identity. Many a times, homemakers do not accept their identity or may not be aware of their identity as a mother, daughter or wife. This could be the probable cause for their lower self-acceptance.

No significant difference was found between married working women and homemakers on the dimension of environmental mastery. This could be due to the fact that all women in this study were having at least graduation degree and since the variable of education was controlled, it may have resulted in development of environmental mastery between both groups. Education helps in developing mastery by giving more opportunities to develop skills that promote mastery.

No significant difference was found between married working women and homemakers on Positive relations with others. This means that both the groups are equally good or bad at maintaining their relationships with others. But it may be based on their personal characteristics of how they manage to maintain positive relationships with others and is also based on their work demands. Married working women may be good at maintaining their relationships with others by maintaining a work-life balance. Also, they spend huge amount of time outside, which results in building a larger social network. As far as personality traits are concerned, the working women may get tired after working for hours, and thus unable to maintain a balance between family and work. This may result in conflict between them and their families. On the other hand, housewives remain at home the entire day, take care of their family, meet with family, hang out with them, give time to their families which help them to maintain positive relationships. Since home-makers remain inside their home most of the day, it is difficult for them to maintain a larger social network due the lack of exposure of the environment. Thus, this factor may be one of the causes of not maintaining higher positive relationships for than the working women. However, research by Ahmad and Khan (2018) reported that working women are significantly higher on psychological, social and environmental domains as compared to housewives.

Overall, the psychological well-being of married working women is significantly higher than that of homemakers. Similar conclusion has been drawn by Chaurasia & Kumari (2023). Nathawat and Mathur's (1993) findings are also in line with current study since it showed that marital adjustment and subjective well-being is higher among married working women than their non-working counterparts. Findings by Thakar and Mishra (1999) also indicate that even though employed women face more challenges with less support, they were higher on well-being than the non-working women.

Limitations

The present study included only educated married women with a minimum educational qualification of graduation and above. Thus, its findings must not be overgeneralized. Since the sample did not include unmarried and illiterate women, one needs to apply the findings with caution. Additionally, only women residing in Delhi were included in the sample, which might be more indicative of the urban metropolitan context. Moreover, the current research included only one aspect of well-being i.e. psychological well-being, it may not be apt to generalize that all forms of well-being in working women are higher than their non-working counterparts.

Implications

The current study has several implications that include future work on intervention programs such that the overall psychological well-being of housewives can be enhanced. Similarly, training might be conducted in communities to make families aware of the importance of sharing household chores and appreciating those who help in the smooth running of the day-to-day lives of family members. Parents can be trained to teach their male and female children to carry out domestic chores and not have a gendered distribution of household work by being ideal role models themselves.

Future Research Suggestions

Future studies may be conducted to also study the psychological well-being among illiterate women with broader age sample.

Also, aspects of emotional and social well-being may be taken into account. An indepth interview on their work-family conflict, work-life balance, social support, economic conditions and reason for working/not working might provide better insights about the impact of women's professional lives in their well-being.

Conclusion

The current study found that married working women are significantly higher in overall psychological well-being as well as its four dimensions namely: autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life and self-acceptance than the home-makers.

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