

Life Satisfaction and Self Esteem in Married and Unmarried Working Women

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The present study aimed at finding out the difference between married and unmarried, working and non-working woman on life satisfaction and self esteem. For this purpose a total of 80 women were taken on incidental basis. Among them 40 were working and 40 non-working. Among each group there were 20 married and 20 unmarried women making a 2x2 factorial design. ANOVA showed significantly greater life satisfaction and lower self esteem for working women than for non-working women. However, non-significant difference was found between married and unmarried women on both life satisfaction and self-esteem. The interactional effects of working status and marital status were found non-significant for both life satisfaction and self esteem. The results were discussed in the light of increased income of family and facilities brought to the family because of double earning in case of the life satisfaction, and in terms of hassles and problems faced by working women arising out of double roles they play at work places and at homes in case of self-esteem.

Keywords: Life Satisfaction, Self Esteem, Working Women, Non-Working Women.

Life satisfaction refers to person's general happiness, freedom from tension, interest in life, etc. It is defined as the function of actual physical fitness perceived by an individual. The extent to which the needs of individuals are satisfied and their aspiration for better life is fulfilled denotes the life satisfaction of the individual. As opined by Palmore and Liukart (1972) life satisfaction has been defined according to health status, social variables, like income level, family satisfaction and organizational activities. It is relatively sensitive to changes in circumstances.

Self esteem refers to the judgments we make about our own worth and the feelings associated with those judgments. This judgment of worthiness is experienced by the attitudes a person holds towards the self. Coopersmith (1981) stated that self esteem is a set of attitudes and beliefs that a person brings with him or herself when facing the world. It includes beliefs as to whether he/she can expect success or failure; how much

effort should be put forth for it. Self esteem provides a mental set that prepares the person to respond according to expectations of success, acceptance and personal strength. According to Rosenberg (1979) a person with high self esteem is fundamentally satisfied with the type of person he/she is, yet he/she may acknowledge his/her faults while hoping to overcome them. High self esteem implies a realistic evaluation of the self's characteristics and competencies, coupled with an attitude of self acceptance and self respect.

The increasing economic pressure and hardship on families in the days of globalization, privatization and hike in prices of commodities have compelled the women to come out of the fore-walls of their houses and to join different organizations in order to meet out the needs of the family. This has overtaxed the energy and strength of working women. Studies have reported higher anxiety level among working women than housewives

(Mukhophadhay, Dewanji & Majumdar, 1993; Mukhophadhay, 1996), greater incidents of daily hassles in dual career women than housewives (Thakar & Misra, 1995), employed woman more frequently experienced perceived stress with marital and / or parental roles (Ahn, 2008) and depression was influenced by employment and marriage (Upmanya & Reen, 1991). Hasnain and Sharma (2004) reported non-significant difference between marital adjustment of dual career women and their husbands; and single career women and their husbands. However, in another study Hasnain, Shahnawaz and Sharma (2001) reported significantly more life satisfaction in husbands of working women than husbands of housewives. They also had more life satisfaction than their working wives.

The study of Maynard (1993) indicated some evidence that as the number of family (work/family) roles increases, scores on occupational adjustment and life satisfaction scales tended to increase. However, studies of Sachdeva and Malhotra (2001) reported that work enhances the self esteem of women and enhanced self esteem works as a moderator of stress in working women. Adelman and Pamela (1993) reported that those women who were both retired and homemakers had higher self esteem and lower depression than single-role women. In a National Longitudinal Survey Elliot (1995) attempted to assess the impact of women's work and family roles on changes in their self esteem between 1980 and 1987 among a sample of white women aged 22-29. The data showed that self esteem changes moderately as women make the transition to work, marriage and parenthood in their twenties. The strongest predictor of positive change in self esteem for them was employment. Married women had higher self esteem than non-married women.

Lewis and Borders (1995) examined 10 factors and their relation to the life satisfaction. Life satisfaction was significantly explained by resource to the variables of job

satisfaction, internal locus of control, regrets regarding life circumstances, sexual satisfaction and leisure time activities. Ronald (2001) found managerial women having organizational values more supportive of work-personal life balance reported greater job and career satisfaction, less work stress, less intention to quit, greater family satisfaction, fewer psychosomatic symptoms, and more positive emotional well-being. Azar and Vasudeva (2006) found that professionally employed women were found to be significantly higher on self-Efficacy and self-esteem than unemployed and non-professionally employed women. Non-professionally employed and unemployed women did not differ significantly on self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Marriage as an institution in Indian context seems to work as a moderator for self esteem and life satisfaction. Although much has changed in the world of work and women are fastly moving toward greater career orientation, they still face many difficulties in their career-growth and enhancement. No doubt, in middle socio-economic strata working women still bear primary responsibilities of family life along with the responsibilities of their job. Against this backdrop, the present study was carried out to study the difference between married and unmarried working, and non-working women on life satisfaction and self esteem.

Method

Participants

The sample was 80 women (40- working and 40 non-working women). Among each group there were 20 married and 20 unmarried women making a 2x2 factorial design. They were taken on incidental basis. Their age ranged from 25 to 35 years. These women were either working as clerks in the offices or as teachers at primary or secondary level. The data were taken individually.

Measures

Self esteem inventory Adult Form by Coopersmith (1981) was used to measure the

self-esteem of the respondents. This form consists of 25 items. The respondents have to put a 'X' in the column of either 'Like Me', if he/she thinks that the item signifies what he/she feels, or 'Unlike Me', if he/she thinks that the item does not signify what he/she feels. The positive items were scored correct and given one point if answered 'Like me'. Negative items were given one point if answered 'Unlike Me'. The reliability coefficient ranging from .71 to .80 has been reported when alternate forms were used. The concurrent validity and predictive validity have been reported to be good.

Life satisfaction scale by Singh and Joseph (1996) was used to measure the life satisfaction of the respondents. The scale consists of 35 items based on five dimensions of life satisfaction: taking pleasure in everyday activities, considering life meaningful, holding a positive self image, having a happy and optimistic outlook, and feeling success in assuming roles. The items are to be rated on a five-point scale: Always, often, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never which are scored as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The higher the score, higher is life satisfaction. The test retest reliability computed after a lapse of 8 weeks was computed to be 0.91. For determining the validity, correlation between the scores on the scale and Alam and Srivastava's (1972) life satisfaction scale was computed and coefficient of correlation was found to be 0.83.

Results and Discussion

Two-way ANOVA was applied to analyze the data. Significant F-ratio for life satisfaction was found only for working status [$F(1,76) = 5.52, p < .05$], where working women obtained significantly more mean score ($M=146.87$) than non-working women ($M=139.00$). In the same way F-ratio for self-esteem for working status only was found significant [$F(1,76) = 3.39, p < .05$], where working women obtained significantly lesser mean score ($M=17.50$) than non-working women ($M=18.47$). The results of ANOVA for life satisfaction revealed significantly greater life satisfaction for

working women than non-working women. All the other results emerged as non-significant. Working for jobs does seem to provide not only economic boost to the women and freedom to spend more, but make the family free from daily hassles of economic hardship. No doubt, economic liberation is the greatest source for life satisfaction in this age of materialism and economic hardship, which is provided by the double earnings of husband and wife. The findings of the study are in line of studies conducted Jan and Masood (2008) who found that with an increase in family income, the overall life satisfaction of women also increases.

In case of self esteem also working status has emerged as the only significant factor in ANOVA, but here the self esteem of non-working women was found better than working women. Thus, the contention that work enhances the self esteem of women (Sachdeva & Malhotra, 2001) was refuted by the findings of the present study. It seems that though, employment brings life satisfaction to the women but perhaps it overtaxes self esteem of working women. Thus, economic liberalization gives life satisfaction to the working women but it lowers down their self esteem. It is important to mention that sample of the study belonged to lower middle socio economic status, where most of the women were engaged in clerical and other such jobs which did not have higher grades of pay. In these cases the main purpose of job is to enhance the purchasing power of family and meeting out the necessities of life in the face of different odds of life, where the load of work and responsibilities at two places lower down the self esteem of women. In their case the organizational values and family do not seem to be supportive of work and personal life balance resulting into low self esteem and contradict the findings of Ronald (2001), who found managerial women having organizational values more supportive of work-personal life balance reported greater job and career satisfaction, less work stress,

less intention to quit, greater family satisfaction, fewer psychosomatic symptoms and more emotional well-being. The findings of the present study are also not in consonance with the findings of Elliot (1995) who reported that self esteem changes moderately as women make the transition to work. The findings of the present study seem to suggest that work induces anxiety in working women (Mukhopadhyay *et al.*, 1993; Mukhopadhyay, 1996), daily hassles (Thakar & Misra, 1995) and depression (Upmanyu & Reen, 1991), because of which their self esteem lowers down.

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