



# Stress, Self-esteem and Well-being amongst women: A Comparative Study.

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The aim of the Present study is to draw a comparison between stress, self-esteem and well-being amongst working and non-working women. A sample of 100 subjects was used. Half of them were working women and half of them were housewives having an age range of 30-45 years. Number of children (Min. 2) and type of family (nuclear / joint), demographic variables were controlled. Life Events Scales (Holmes and Rahe, 1967) was used as a measure of stress, Self-Esteem Inventory (Virk and Chauhan, 2003) for measuring self-esteem and P.G.I. Well-Being Scale (Verma, Dubey & Gupta, 1983) for measuring well-being. The data was analyzed by using t-test. No significant difference was found between working and non-working women on stress. The results revealed that working women were higher on self-esteem and well-being than non-working women. The findings of the study would be discussed in the light of changing scenario towards health promoting behaviour i.e. to maintain a balance between job and family.



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In the fast changing world of today, no individual is free from stress and no profession is stress free. Modern life is full of stress. Women experience a lot of stress at place of their work as well as their home. Both employed and unemployed women play a significant role in house hold activities of their families. Their life is more family centered than that of man. Working women are often tossed between home and job. The double work pressure affects their life satisfaction, adjustment, happiness and mental health.

As women have become more assimilated into the workforce over recent decades, they have realized considerable changes in their work role which may contribute to health problems and other negative outcomes such as marital strain and diminished job status. Many women are discovering the problems of having a job. Having to cope with dual role responsibilities seems highly stressful for the career women. Most hold low-level positions that involve high demand and low control, a combination that is inherently stressful. Many opportunities for stress seem to confront women who are employed outside the home. Women who work outside the home are likely to experience stress from demands and challenges associated with work and non-work responsibilities. They are required to make many social readjustment that can contribute to stress and anxiety. Women who perceived higher overload in home –tasks reported also higher level of anxiety, depression and a lower self-esteem (Blanco and Feldman, 2000).

Self-esteem is a personal, judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes of the individual holds towards him/her self. These personal evaluations are based on the values of the social groups and the society. Baumeister (1993) contends that self-esteem implies self-acceptance, self respect and feelings of selfworth. In sum self-esteem might be viewed as a person's overall judgment of himself/ herself pertaining to self competence and self worth. Studies have suggested that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and stress. In case of working women the ability to enact multiple roles may contribute to the self-esteem because performing different tasks and interacting with more role partners might increase their sense of competence and equip them to deal with range of situations. High self-esteem appears to buffer people against feelings of anxiety, enhancing coping and promoting physical health (Baumeister, 1993).

Over the last two decades, considerable evidence have accumulated suggesting that stressful life events are linked to low psychological well-being or ill health(e.g. Bhatti and Channabasvanna, 1985; Cohen and Williamson, 1991; Kasl and Cooper, 1987; Gautam and Kamal, 1990 & Pestonjee, 1992) although the stress-illness relation is well established, yet it is also obvious that all individuals do not respond with health/ well-being problems when exposed to major life changes. The magnitude of stress-illness associated is often low, with stress typically accounting for rarely more than 10% of the variance in the illness indicators (Leventhal and Tomarkeen, 1987).

Well-being is a state in which a person thinks about the positive aspect of herself and about society. Well-being is based on the perception of happiness regarding one self and for others. Campbell (1980) distinguished three types of well-being that is, affect, Strain and satisfaction. Negative components of psychological well-being are relatively easily assessed through self-report of anxiety, depression and frustration etc., but it is difficult to assess positive components of well-being.

Hirsch and Rapkin (1986) reported that the perceived quality of role and responses of social network members may affect the well-being of those who occupy multiple roles. Pearlin and Johnson (1977) strongly suggested



that the marriage plays an important role in producing or maintaining psychological well-being under the conditions of stress. The available research evidence talks about the various correlates of working women in their work set up but do the working women and homemakers do differ significantly in term of their well-being and self-esteem is a major concern of this investigation.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Taking this aim in mind the present study is done to test the following hypothesis:

1. There would be significant difference between working and non-working women on the level of stress.
2. There would be significant difference between the working and non-working women in terms of self-esteem.
3. There would be significant difference between working and non-working women on well-being.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample**

A group of 100 married females having an age range of 30-45 years was selected as a sample for the present study. Half of the female (n=50) were working women and rest half (n=50) were non-working. Number of children (Min. 2) and type of family (nuclear & joint), demographic variables were controlled.

### **Tools**

To accomplish the aim of study, following tests were used.

1. Life Events Scale: This scale was developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967), which consists of 43 items or life events. The Test-Retest reliability for the scale was found to be .73.
2. Self-Esteem Inventory: This inventory was developed by Virk and Chauhan (2003). It consists of 20 items, which measure self worthiness and personal judgment.
3. P G I well-being scale: This scale was developed by Verma, Dubey and Gupta (1983). The PGI well being scale is a 20 items scale constructed with a low difficulty level to suit Indian Conditions. Its Kuder-Richardson reliability is .98, while the test-retest reliability is .91.

### **Procedure**

Life Events Scale, Self-Esteem Inventory and PGI Well-Being scale were individually administered as per the sample requirement All women were assured about the confidentially. Proper rapport was established after getting consent from each respondent. Appropriate instructions were given and subject were asked to give their first impression and whatever is true and best describes the way they feel, should be reported.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

The main aim of the present study was to investigate the significance difference between working and non-working women in terms of stress, self-esteem and well-being.

The data analyzed by calculating the means and standard deviations of the scores obtained by two groups of women i.e, working and non-working women, and t-test was used to find out the significant difference between means score obtained on stress, self-esteem and well-being (in Table I) between working and non-working women.

Table I; mean, SD and t values for stress-self-esteem and well-being of working and non-working women.

Dimensions	Working women (N=50)		Non-Working Women (N=50)		t-values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Stress	98.70	86.53	134.21	94.53	.94 <sup>NS</sup>
Self-Esteem	16.10	3.13	13.96	2.35	3.89**
Well-being	15.00	4.81	13.00	4.86	2.04*

\*P< 0.05

\*\* P< 0.01



The results indicate that a great difference exists in the means of the stress scores (Table- 1) in working women (mean 98.70 and SD 86.53) and non-working women (mean 134.21 and SD 94.53). The mean is found higher among non-working women. It means that homemakers are under more stress than working women.

On the other hand, working women are having higher scores on self-esteem (i.e. mean 16.10 and SD 3.13) as well as well-being (i.e. mean 15.00 and SD 4.81). For testing hypothesis 1, 2, and 3, t-test was conducted to determine whether there existed significant difference in the above variables between two groups of women.

Table I shows that there is no significant difference between two groups of women on stress. However, mean comparisons between working and non-working women are significant difference on self-esteem and well-being, indicating that working women have higher self-esteem and well-being but less stress as compared to non-working women. Therefore hypotheses 2 and 3 have proved and hypothesis 1 has not proved. It is interesting to note that in spite of the heavy workload and multiple duties stress is low in working women than non-working women.

There are evidences indicating that the stress is less in working women. Working women had more power than non-working women with respect of children's affairs and self decision, decision taking related to house hold affairs than non-working women (Devi and Rayalu, 2003). Four factors that causes stress at home were suggested by Fontana (1989). These factors are partner-stress, child-stress, domestic arrangement stress, and neighborhood stress. In the context of Indian social structure (Sharma, 2000), some more factors can be added like parents-in-law, unmarried daughters or sisters and child-lessness. These stress factors are specific to Indian society. Women's family roles often combine a high level of psychological demands with a low level of control. The life stress experienced by housewives is often due to the primary responsibility for house work and child care (Kumari and Singh, 2000). Several researchers have reported similar finding. (Mukhopadhyay, Dewanji and Majumder, 1993; Mukhopadhyay, 1996; Kumari and Singh, 2000; Singh and Mediratta, 2005). Our finding is confirmed by these studies.

It was also seen from the result that self-esteem and well-being are higher in working women as compared to non-working women. It may be due to the fact that Women empowerment rises their status and enables them to have equal rights in the society. Empowerment helps women gain access to many resources in the family as well as in the community to promote their well being thus raising their self esteem (Blumberg, 1991). The improved financial conditions are responsible for better and healthier understanding between the wife and husband, that is more conducive and leads to better marital adjustment (Schoen, Roger and Amato, 2006). Andrade, Postma, Abraham (1999) observed a higher level of 'Confidence in coping' amongst Indian working women than Indian non-working women.

The result has been supported by Nathawat and Mathur (1993) who found working women report higher scores on general health, life satisfaction and self-esteem measures and lower score on hopelessness, Stress and anxiety. Full time housewives hold more conservative values, and more traditional view of women's roles report experiencing a more supportive family life, express lower self-esteem and are less dissatisfied than working women. Other researchers have reported similar findings (Neiva and Gutek, 1981; Coleman and Antonucci, 1983; Pietromonaco, 1984).

Thus, it can be concluded from the above results that non-working women experience more stress but less self-esteem and less feelings of well-being as compared to working women.

The above results become meaningful in the context of changing scenario of modern society, particularly in India. As India has witnessed profound changes almost in every aspect of social life in the last fifty years. Industrialization and urbanization has changed the attitudes of people towards marriage and social institutions. Economic, social and cultural values are also changing rapidly. As a result, women are not confined in household duty but their role has gone a tremendous change, which has brought psychological well-being and life satisfaction to some; but many still suffering from depression.

Loopo and London (2011) studied the relationship between quality of life, well-being and self-esteem in working women in Insurance Company. It was found that working women had high quality of life and self-esteem than homemakers despite of their busy schedule.

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