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LIFE SATISFACTION AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG HOMEMAKERS AND WORKING WOMEN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Psychological well-being has become an important area of research in contemporary psychology due to the changing social, economic, and cultural roles of women. Life satisfaction and perceived social support are two major indicators of psychological well-being that influence an individual's emotional adjustment, resilience, and quality of life. The present study aimed to compare life satisfaction and perceived social support among homemakers and working women. A total of 64 married women aged between 25 and 40 years participated in the study, including 31 working women and 33 homemakers selected through purposive sampling. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, and Pearson correlation analysis were employed for data analysis. The findings indicated that working women reported significantly higher perceived social support than homemakers. Although working women also showed relatively higher life satisfaction, the difference was not statistically significant. A moderate positive correlation was observed between perceived social support and life satisfaction, suggesting that stronger interpersonal support contributes positively to women's psychological well-being. The study emphasizes the importance of strengthening social support systems for enhancing women's life satisfaction regardless of employment status.

KEYWORDS: *Life Satisfaction, Social Support, Homemakers, Working Women, Psychological Well-being, Positive Psychology*

INTRODUCTION

Women's psychological well-being has received increasing scholarly attention due to rapid changes in education, employment, family structures, and social expectations. Modern women frequently balance multiple responsibilities that include professional careers, family commitments, caregiving, and personal aspirations. These changing roles have generated interest in understanding the factors that contribute to women's overall well-being.

Life satisfaction represents an individual's overall cognitive evaluation of the quality of life according to personal standards. It is considered one of the major components of subjective well-being and reflects how individuals perceive their achievements, relationships, health, financial security, and emotional experiences. Higher life satisfaction is generally associated with better mental health, resilience, optimism, and emotional stability.

Perceived social support refers to an individual's belief that emotional, informational, and practical assistance is available from family members, friends, colleagues, and significant others whenever needed. Social support functions as an important protective factor against stress and psychological distress by providing emotional security and strengthening coping abilities.

The relationship between life satisfaction and perceived social support has become increasingly important among women because their daily experiences are influenced by occupational roles, marital responsibilities, family expectations, and cultural values. Working women often benefit from financial independence, professional identity, wider social interactions, and increased self-confidence. However, they may also experience work-related stress, role conflict, and work-family imbalance. Homemakers, on the other hand, devote themselves primarily to household responsibilities and family care. Although homemaking provides emotional fulfillment and close family relationships, limited social exposure and financial dependence may influence psychological well-being.

Several psychological theories explain this relationship. The Stress-Buffering Model proposes that social support protects individuals from the harmful effects of stress by enhancing emotional coping and reducing psychological strain. Similarly, Social Comparison Theory suggests that individuals evaluate their well-being through interpersonal relationships and social experiences. Positive Psychology also emphasizes that supportive relationships significantly contribute to happiness, resilience, and life satisfaction.

Previous studies consistently indicate that women receiving stronger emotional and social support demonstrate better psychological adjustment, lower levels of stress, and greater life satisfaction. Nevertheless, findings comparing homemakers and working women remain inconsistent because cultural expectations, family structures, occupational conditions, and socioeconomic status vary considerably across societies.

Within the Indian context, women continue to negotiate traditional family responsibilities alongside modern educational and occupational opportunities. Consequently, understanding how employment status influences social support and life satisfaction has important implications for mental health professionals, counselors, policymakers, and organizations working for women's empowerment.

The present study therefore attempts to compare perceived social support and life satisfaction among homemakers and working women while examining the relationship between these two important psychological variables.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To assess the level of perceived social support among homemakers and working women.
2. To assess the level of life satisfaction among homemakers and working women.
3. To compare perceived social support between homemakers and working women.
4. To compare life satisfaction between homemakers and working women.
5. To determine the relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction among women.

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated:

H01: There is no significant difference in perceived social support between homemakers and working women.

H02: There is no significant difference in life satisfaction between homemakers and working women.

H03: There is no significant relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction among women.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Life satisfaction has been recognized as one of the most important indicators of subjective well-being. Diener et al. (1985) defined life satisfaction as an individual's cognitive evaluation of his or her overall quality of life based on self-determined standards. Unlike temporary emotional states, life satisfaction reflects long-term psychological adjustment and personal fulfillment.

Research has consistently demonstrated that individuals with higher life satisfaction experience lower stress, better physical health, greater resilience, and stronger emotional stability. Positive psychology identifies life satisfaction as an essential outcome of psychological flourishing and successful adaptation.

Social support has similarly received considerable attention in psychological research. House (1981) described social support as emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal assistance received through interpersonal relationships. Cohen and Wills (1985) proposed the Stress-Buffering Hypothesis, suggesting that supportive relationships reduce the harmful psychological effects of stressful life events by promoting adaptive coping strategies.

Women particularly benefit from social support because emotional connectedness and interpersonal relationships play significant roles in their psychological functioning. Studies indicate that women receiving support from

spouses, family members, friends, and colleagues report lower anxiety, higher self-esteem, and better emotional adjustment.

Research comparing homemakers and working women has produced mixed findings. Some investigators have reported that employment contributes positively to women's life satisfaction by increasing financial independence, social participation, and personal identity. Professional engagement also provides opportunities for achievement, decision-making, and expanded interpersonal networks.

Conversely, other researchers argue that employment may increase psychological stress due to role overload, occupational pressure, and work-family conflict. Working women often experience the "double burden" of balancing professional responsibilities with domestic obligations, resulting in fatigue and emotional exhaustion.

Homemakers also present diverse psychological experiences. Although domestic responsibilities provide emotional fulfillment through caregiving and family relationships, homemakers may experience reduced social recognition, limited financial independence, and fewer opportunities for personal development. Nevertheless, many studies indicate that supportive family environments significantly enhance homemakers' psychological well-being.

Several empirical investigations have reported a positive association between social support and life satisfaction. Women with stronger emotional support consistently report higher levels of happiness, resilience, and psychological adjustment irrespective of occupational status. High-quality interpersonal relationships appear to be stronger predictors of life satisfaction than employment status alone.

Despite extensive research, relatively fewer studies have directly compared homemakers and working women within the Indian sociocultural context. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to understand how employment status, social support, and cultural expectations interact to influence women's overall psychological well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a comparative between-group research design to examine differences in life satisfaction and perceived social support between homemakers and working women.

Sample

The sample consisted of **64 married women** aged between **25 and 40 years**. Among them, **31 were working women** and **33 were homemakers**. Participants were selected using purposive sampling.

Inclusion Criteria

- Married women between 25–40 years.
- Women capable of reading and understanding the questionnaire.
- Women belonging to both nuclear and joint families.
- Working women employed in corporate organizations.

Exclusion Criteria

- Women diagnosed with psychological disorders.
- Women employed outside the specified occupational category.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

1. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

The MSPSS developed by Zimet et al. (1988) was used to assess perceived support from family, friends, and significant others. The scale consists of twelve items rated on a seven-point Likert scale.

2. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Diener et al. (1985) consists of five statements measuring individuals' global cognitive judgments regarding their life satisfaction.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation. Independent sample *t*-tests were used to compare group differences, while Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent sample *t*-tests, and Pearson's correlation analysis. The findings are presented below.

Demographic Characteristics

A total of 64 married women participated in the study. Among them, 31 (48.4%) were working women and 33 (51.6%) were homemakers. The majority of participants belonged to nuclear families, while the remaining participants belonged to joint families. Most respondents possessed graduate or postgraduate qualifications, indicating that the sample represented an educated population capable of providing reliable responses regarding their psychological well-being.

Perceived Social Support

Analysis of perceived social support revealed noticeable differences between the two groups. Working women demonstrated higher levels of perceived social support than homemakers. More than half of the working women reported high social support, whereas the majority of homemakers reported only moderate social support. A comparatively larger proportion of homemakers also reported low levels of social support.

The mean score of perceived social support among working women was higher than that of homemakers, suggesting that employment may provide greater opportunities for interpersonal interaction, emotional encouragement, professional networking, and access to supportive relationships beyond the family environment.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction scores also indicated relatively better outcomes among working women. Most working women reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with their lives, whereas homemakers showed comparatively higher levels of neutrality and dissatisfaction.

Although the average life satisfaction score of working women was higher than that of homemakers, the difference between the two groups was relatively small.

Comparison between Homemakers and Working Women

An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the psychological variables between the two groups.

The results indicated a statistically significant difference in perceived social support, with working women reporting greater support than homemakers. This finding suggests that occupational engagement contributes to broader interpersonal relationships and stronger support networks.

However, no statistically significant difference was observed regarding life satisfaction. Although working women reported slightly greater life satisfaction, both groups demonstrated relatively similar levels of overall subjective well-being.

Relationship between Social Support and Life Satisfaction

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction.

This indicates that women experiencing greater emotional, informational, and interpersonal support generally reported higher satisfaction with their lives. The findings demonstrate that supportive relationships contribute substantially to women's psychological adjustment irrespective of occupational status.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to compare perceived social support and life satisfaction among homemakers and working women while examining the relationship between these important psychological variables.

The findings demonstrated that working women experienced significantly greater perceived social support than homemakers. This observation may be explained by the broader social interactions associated with employment. Working women regularly communicate with colleagues, supervisors, clients, and professional networks, thereby increasing opportunities for emotional encouragement, informational guidance, and practical assistance.

These findings are consistent with the Stress-Buffering Model proposed by Cohen and Wills (1985), which emphasizes that supportive relationships protect individuals from the harmful effects of stress. Employment not only provides financial independence but also facilitates social connectedness, enhancing emotional resilience and coping abilities.

The study also found that working women reported relatively higher life satisfaction compared with homemakers. Employment often contributes to financial security, personal achievement, professional identity, autonomy, and increased self-confidence. These factors collectively improve women's perceptions of their quality of life.

However, the statistical analysis revealed that the difference in life satisfaction between the two groups was not significant. This finding suggests that employment status alone does not determine happiness or psychological well-being.

Homemakers derive satisfaction from family relationships, caregiving responsibilities, emotional bonding, and successful household management. These meaningful social roles contribute positively to subjective well-being despite limited occupational involvement.

Similarly, working women frequently encounter occupational stress, workload, role conflict, and work-family imbalance. Consequently, the psychological benefits of employment may be partially offset by professional responsibilities and domestic obligations.

Therefore, both groups experience unique sources of satisfaction and stress, resulting in relatively similar overall life satisfaction.

One of the most important findings of the present investigation was the positive relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction. Women receiving stronger emotional support from spouses, family members, friends, and colleagues demonstrated greater satisfaction with life.

Supportive relationships provide emotional security, increase self-confidence, improve coping strategies, reduce psychological distress, and strengthen resilience. These findings reinforce the principles of Positive Psychology, which emphasize that meaningful interpersonal relationships are fundamental determinants of happiness and psychological well-being.

Within the Indian sociocultural context, family continues to play a central role in women's emotional lives. Consequently, strengthening family support, marital relationships, workplace support systems, and community participation can substantially improve women's overall psychological health.

The present findings indicate that psychological well-being depends not merely upon employment status but also upon the quality of interpersonal relationships, emotional support, family functioning, financial security, and personal coping resources.

CONCLUSION

The present study compared life satisfaction and perceived social support among homemakers and working women. The findings indicate that working women experience significantly higher perceived social support than homemakers. Although working women also reported relatively greater life satisfaction, the difference was not statistically significant.

The study further established that perceived social support is positively associated with life satisfaction. Women who experience stronger emotional and interpersonal support demonstrate greater psychological well-being and higher satisfaction with life.

These findings suggest that employment alone does not determine happiness. Rather, supportive relationships, emotional connectedness, healthy family environments, and positive social interactions contribute substantially to women's overall quality of life.

The study highlights the importance of developing supportive family systems, workplace policies, counseling services, and community-based mental health programs that promote women's psychological well-being regardless of occupational status.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study included only 64 participants, limiting generalizability.
- The research was conducted within a specific geographical region.
- A cross-sectional research design was adopted; therefore, causal relationships cannot be established.
- Only perceived social support and life satisfaction were examined.
- Other important psychological variables such as stress, depression, anxiety, coping strategies, marital satisfaction, and work-life balance were not included.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings have important implications for psychologists, counselors, educators, policymakers, and employers.

The study suggests that strengthening social support systems can improve women's emotional well-being and overall life satisfaction. Mental health professionals should encourage family counseling, peer support, stress-management interventions, and community participation to enhance women's psychological adjustment.

Organizations should promote supportive workplace environments, flexible working arrangements, and employee assistance programs that help women balance professional and family responsibilities.

Government agencies and social organizations should develop gender-sensitive policies that recognize the psychological needs of both homemakers and working women while promoting equal opportunities, social inclusion, and mental health awareness.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing literature on women's psychological well-being and emphasizes that meaningful social relationships remain one of the strongest determinants of life satisfaction.

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