SUMMARY

Women’s role in maintenance and advancement of society has always remained proactive. Increased pressures of globalization have forced increased participation of women in jobs outside the home. However culturally determined and socially conditioned perceptions of men about women have placed them in subservient position. Contemporary personality research has provided enough empirical evidence regarding value neutral gender differences in males and females. However, in practice, male perceptions and expectations from females in all fronts of their participation have remained misplaced. Their role overloads and divergent demands expectations and division of their psychological resources for work, family, and society tend to put extra burden on them. Despite this, it has been observed that women exercise better volition controls over their behavior as compared to males. In psychological literature the construct of self regulation has been evolved to account for this aspect of human functioning and is understood as the capacity to plan and execute control over one’s behavior. It is through this process that human seeks to exert control over their thoughts, feelings, impulses, appetites and their task performance. There has been ample evidence that self regulation resources are depleted under stimulus overload and stressful life conditions. Psychological research has also shown that eating behaviors of people are mediated by their cognitive process. The cognitive process further influence performance component, executive meta-component and knowledge acquisition component of own behavior.

It is in this context, that understanding of dynamics of self regulation in working women who on one hand are always under divergent pressures of performances and meet diverse kind of expectations, on the other hand show relatively better volitional controls over their behavior becomes important. Since the term ‘cognitive’ includes a wide range of skills then only three cognitive functions have been taken into account. These three functions namely thinking clarity, concentration and recall seems to have immediate implication on self regulation of
behavior in women. Since working women have always found to be under stress and strain of demand overload and stress tend to seriously affect their adaptive capacity, task performance and psychological well being. Hence the variable of stress has also been taken for the study to analyze the effects on cognitive functioning and self regulation. The title of present study was “Self Regulation in Women: Cognitive Dysfunctions & Life Stress.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has been planned to address the following objectives:

1. To study the relationship between self regulation, cognitive functions & life stress in women.
2. To analyze the effects of sharp and disrupted cognitive functions on self regulation in women.
3. To study the effects of life stress on self regulation in women.
4. To analyze the conjoint effects of life stress, thinking clarity and concentration on self regulation in women.
5. To study the effect of life stress on cognitive functions in women.

METHOD

Sample of the present study comprised of 318 subjects (married and working women, their age ranging between 30 to 45 yrs). All the subjects selected had completed graduation (some of them did post graduation also) and were working in different professions viz Schools, Colleges, Banks, Research, Consultancy Services, telecommunication, and IT Sector. The selection of the sample was incidental as only those subjects were taken who were available and gave their consent for cooperation and participation and who had been in job for at least last 5 years or more.

The participants were adequately instructed about what is required of them and then they were administered the following seven tests in three sessions. All the tests were given individually.
The following tests were used:

1. The Self Regulation Questionnaire
2. Coping Self-Efficacy Scale
3. Thought Occurance Questionnaire
4. The Problem Solving Inventory
5. Presumptive Stressful Life Events Scale
6. Stroop Neuropsychological Screening Test
7. Recall Test

Means, Standard Deviations, Spearman’s rank order correlation, Factor analysis and t-test were applied to test the following hypotheses.

HYPOTHESIS

1. Functional Self Regulation in women would be positively associated with sharp Cognitive Functions and negatively associated with life stress
2. Dysfunctional Self Regulation in women would be negatively related with Cognitive Functions and high Life Stress
3. Capacity to Recall would be positively associated with Self Regulation in women
4. Women with sharp Cognitive Functions would be high on Self Regulation as compared to women with disrupted Cognitive Functions
5. Self Regulation in women with high Life Stress would be dysfunctional as compared to women with low Life Stress
6. Self regulation of women with high problem solving capacity but low life stress would be higher as compared to those with high problem solving but high life stress
7. High Life Stress would impair Cognitive Functions of women
THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY ARE:

1. Correlations between self regulation, problem solving ability, capacity to handle cognitive interference and memory functions were highly positive and significant.

2. No differences were observed in trends of these correlations for functional self regulation group and dysfunctional self regulation.

3. Self regulation and life stress were negative and significant in all the three group i.e. Total Group, Functional Self regulation Group and dysfunctional self regulation Group.

4. No differences have been observed between association of cognitive functions with self regulation in case of functional and dysfunctional groups.

5. Correlations between life stress and cognitive functions are negative in all the three groups. Magnitude of coefficient of correlation between life stress and cognitive function is higher in the negative direction.

6. In general self regulation and capacity for recall of learned material appear in factor analysis as coexistent and this constellation is accompanied by absence of life stress (factor I). This factor by implication lends support to hypotheses 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

7. Life stress negatively aligns with coping self efficacy and capacity for taking new turns while handling new situations (Factor II). This factor partially supports the contention of the hypothesis that high life stress would impair cognitive functions of women.

8. There is close link of problem solving capacity with coping self efficacy (Factor III).

9. Capacity to maintain concentration and perception of personal control are interlinked, however evaluation of information input is inversely related to it (Factor IV).

10. In the functional self regulation group problem solving capacity (factor I); life stress (Factor III & factor IV) emerged as independent factors.
11. All indices of self regulation capacity have appeared as well knit construct in factor II of Group II. Negative association of immediate life stress is also in line. However negative factor loading of coping self efficacy variable is beyond comprehension.

12. In case of Group III which represent dysfunctional self regulation group problem solving comes on as independent factor (factor II). Factor of life stress shows association with lack of control over their emotions and behavior (Factor I).

13. In dysfunctional self regulation group also, overall capacity for self regulation is negatively align with ambiguous stress and thought occurance (Factor IV).

14. Self regulation was found to significantly higher in women with sharp cognitive functions as compared to women with disrupted cognitive functions.

15. Self regulation in case of women with high life stress was dysfunctional as compared to women with low life stress.

16. Self regulation in women with high problem solving but low stress was significantly higher than in case of women with high problem solving and high stress.

17. Cognitive functions were disrupted in case of high stress women and sharp in case of low stress women.