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CHAPTER-7
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The present study clearly evinces that employment status per se is not important. In other words, employment for women does not always ensure good quality of life, self-esteem or life satisfaction. The benefits of employment to women are moderated by large number of antecedent, personality, socio-economic status and job related factors. It is the nature, prestige and rewards of job held by the women which is important. This finding explains as to why literature on comparative study of employed and unemployed women has been replete with contradictory findings. In many of the research papers, information about nature of employment is missing. Combining professional and non-professional employed women in the sample can dilute the results as it is evident that trends are different for the two groups.

The most salient finding of the present study is that having a job is an asset for professional employed women as compared to the non-professional employed and unemployed women, as the former are significantly higher on quality of life, hardiness, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. The higher prestige, income and educational level, autonomy, better support, enriched and challenging jobs associated with professional employed women is self-fulfilling accounting for their having a more positive profile than the non-professional employed and unemployed women.

Another possibility is that professional employed women being higher on hardiness, self-efficacy, and self-esteem are able to cope up with stresses more effectively, and have more resistance to withstand stresses and pressures. They are likely to set higher goals for themselves, and being high on commitment, control and challenge have proclivity for aspiring for professions and attaining occupational success.

Contrary to the expectations, non-professional employed women did not differ significantly from the unemployed women on self-efficacy, self-esteem, and hardiness. One of the most surprising findings was that unemployed women were
significantly higher on quality of life than the non-professional employed women. It seems that with lesser economic resources for adequate household help and lesser support from family, multiple roles are source of stress and role overload affecting quality of life, self-efficacy, and self-esteem in particular. Role strain, conflict and distress may occur when the demands of one role become excessive. It is pertinent to point out here that multiple roles are beneficial for professional employed women as they are a source of higher income thus, better support system, prestige, and self-growth. On the other hand, multiple roles affect non-professional employed women adversely as they are low on all the above factors thus leading to role stress, impacting negative role performance both at work, causing feelings of guilt, worthlessness and depression. There is ample evidence that if work-family balance is disturbed, not only it affects individual and their families, but also adversely affects employers and ultimately society at large. Effective work family balance may have advantage for positive life experiences, reduction in stress, and normal life for children, all of which have economic and social ramifications. Effective balance may have economic advantages for the organizations (Biddle and Thomas, 1966; Hall and Mirvis, 1955.; Zedeck, 1998; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999; and Barnett and Hyde, 2001).

Low skilled workers and their families are particularly at risk of stress because their earnings are lower and they tend to have less choice over how they balance their work and family responsibility (Parkhurst, 2000). Supporting greater participation of men in family responsibilities is important to the objective of gender equality and as important as increasing women’s ability to participate in balance market. Mothers still bear disproportionate burden of carrying responsibilities as compared to fathers, even when both are in full time employment. This is truer of non-professional employed women than professional employed women. Hence, the responsibility for developing and implementing effective ways for reducing work-family interference and increasing enrichment should be shared by organizations, policy makers, individuals and their families.

As already pointed out in discussion of results, that some of the investigators have found professional employed women as compared to non-professional employed women reporting more family support, adequate help for household chores and childcare, more positive attitude of family and spouse towards their job, lesser
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perceived discrimination at work place more job satisfaction. All this would certainly lead to less role conflict and higher well-being, which is corroborated by the obtained results. The implication is that organizations and society in general have to coordinate and join hands in making conditions both at home and work more conductive for the non-professional employed women.

So far as perceived discrimination is concerned, non-professional employed women should get assertiveness training and men should be gender sensitized so that non-professional employed women do not experience stress because of discrimination at work place.

As already pointed out that hardiness and self-efficacy act as buffers in stressful situations and are important predictors of quality of life and general well-being. They also reduce pervasiveness of discrimination, feelings of helplessness, lead to higher careers goals. Thus, it has ramifications for parents and other socialization agents to provide conducive family environment, use appropriate child rearing practices and provide the right parental models to inculcate hardiness and self-efficacy in women. Parents should provide environment that stimulates curiosity in young minds, with enough opportunities for exploration, manipulation and mastery experience.

On the basis of available literature and the present results, investigator proposed one model (Fig. 15) to be tested empirically and by future researchers.

To sum up, in view of the present findings that non-professional employed women are not favorably placed vis-a-vis professional employed and unemployed women, it has important implications for the families, organizations and society in general. The strategies have to be multi-pronged and problems have to be tackled at the levels of family, organizations and personality of the women. In order to raise the position and well-being of non-professional employed women, following measures are suggested.

1. At work place, in order to reduce monotony of work, there should be job enrichment and role expansion ensuring higher job satisfaction. This will provide non-professional employed women with opportunities for advancement and self-growth and will also reduce role stagnation.
2. They should have more autonomy and voice in decision making process.
3. Gender sensitization should be promoted through media, workshops, training programs.

4. Provision for on-the-job training which can lead to self-growth.

5. In view of the evidence that training programs can raise self-efficacy and self-esteem, the same should be organized to raise self-efficacy and self-esteem of the employees. It should be mandatory for the non-professional employed women to attend these training programs.

6. Salaries should be commensurate with the number of hours they put in.

7. Good quality day care centers & crèches are the need of the times. Government should ensure that these services are at subsidized rates so that non-professional employed women have access to such facilities. With increase in such facilities, many of the educated unemployed women will seek gainful employment.

8. Programs should be chalked out which can enable women to be productive, to control their own labor, means of production and earnings. Programs should be attuned to women's needs buffering them from oppressive conditions that put them at high risk for mental illness. Programs should focus on effective coping strategies to deal with violence, exploitation and discrimination.

9. NGOs and Government organizations should work at grassroots level to tap the sources of problems. There should be forums where there can be interaction of the women with the policymakers trying to identify the problems and solutions to the same.

10. Conferences on Women's Health can represent a broad perspective as well. Conference recommendations are directed toward women's overall empowerment; these include: (i) establishing baselines for women's health and well-being and measuring progress; (ii) developing ways of monitoring the impact of structural adjustment programs on women's welfare, and establishing programs to mitigate their adverse effects; (iii) enforcing or enacting legislation to improve women's status; (iv) addressing women's need for equitable employment and economic development, and (v) expanding education for women and girls.
According to Brownell (1997), some strategies successfully managing the stresses include: (i) setting realistic expectations; (ii) making distinctions between job and personal life; (iii) finding ways to exercise professional discretion and increase autonomy by evaluating each aspect of the job and determining changes to improve the environment that can be reasonably made; (iv) not expecting praise from the boss and looking for alternative sources of reinforcement, such as students, colleagues, friends, or parents; (v) increasing efficacy by keeping records of progress to receive direct feedback on efforts, and (vi) developing personal coping strategies, particularly active coping strategies. Brownell highlights direct active coping strategies, including changing the source of the stress, confronting the source of the stress, and adopting a positive attitude. Indirect strategies that rely on activities known to reduce stress are also discussed, including talking about the source of stress, changing the way the source of the stress is perceived, getting involved in activities that are unrelated to school issues, and altering diet to reduce stress.

11. At the family level non-professional employed women should get support and appreciation. Spouses should come forward in lending helping hand in household chores and child care lest the “hand that rocks the cradle is to tired”. Attitude of acceptance and appreciation of the family members towards women’s job can go a long way in improving general well-being and reducing role conflict amongst working women.

12. Success stories of professional employed women efficiently achieving work-family balance should be highlighted through media. They can be role models for relatively less successful women.

7.1 Suggestions for further research

With the best of efforts and most perfectionist attitude, no investigator can claim to have carried out a study totally free of limitations. Particularly this being an exploratory study examining the psychological variables while comparing employed and unemployed women on quality of life, hardiness, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, the investigator could not visualize some of the problems and limitation. On the basis
of vast data generated in the present study; following are the suggestions for future research:

1. Since income and education as socio-demographic factors have seen to be significant, it would be worth the effort to cover a large sample for selecting equal number of subjects in each of the groups classified on the basis of socio-demographic variables. Then only it will be possible to examine the interaction effect of the socio-demographic variables on quality of life, hardiness, self-efficacy, and self-esteem.

2. In order to avoid unwieldiness, the investigator did not measure career orientation of the employed subjects, which if analyzed can explain many of the unexplained results of the present study. Career orientation is a significant factor for all variables under study as reported by some of the earlier investigators.

3. Data collected through questionnaires can be supplemented by interviews with the subjects focusing on some of the moderating factors which can possibly impact the results. Qualitative analysis could have provided more in depth information.

4. Longitudinal studies can help finding out the link between familial antecedent variables of professional, non-professional and unemployed women with the variables of the present study.

5. In view of the large number of women penetrating into careers considered to be mainly male bastions earlier, it will be fruitful to include such a group for comparison along with the other three groups examined by the investigator.

6. This study was carried out in Zabol. The ancient city with more than 5000 years old, which has characteristics of traditional culture unlike the big towns of Iran like Shiraz, Esfahan or Tehran (capital city). The sample of the present study was restricted to the women in Zabol only. It would be worthwhile to see as to how far these results get support, if such a study was done on subjects belonging to big towns.
Fig. 15 A model of link between Hardiness, Self-efficacy, Self-esteem, and Quality of life

Antecedent Family Variables ➔ High hardiness ➔ High self-efficacy ➔ High self-esteem ➔ High QOL

(a) Early Independence Training ➔ (a) Commitment ➔ (a) Persistence ➔ (a) Confidence ➔ (a) Life Satisfaction

(b) Authoritative Parenting ➔ (b) Challenge ➔ (b) Motivation ➔ (b) Self-Enhancement ➔ (b) General Well-being

(c) High Parental Involvement ➔ (c) Control ➔ (c) Successful Adjustment to Negative Life Events ➔ (c) Felling of Self-worth ➔ (c) Physical Health

(d) Opportunities for Exploration, Manipulation. ➔ (d) Successful Coping (problem focused strategies) ➔ (d) Job Research Behavioural Optimization ➔ (d) Mental Health

(e) Successful Parental Role Models ➔ (e) Use of Social Resources ➔ (e) Academic & Occupational Success ➔ (e) Leisure

(f) Work-family Balance ➔ (f) Good Environment