CHAPTER - VIII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS
INTRODUCTION

This study on mental health of dual earner and traditional single earner families is undertaken in a sample of 270 randomly selected families from the city of Indore. In his attempt to understand the meaning of family mental health the researcher conducted extensive survey of literature in the field of family therapy, family sociology and psychiatry. Basing himself on the general impression in family literature that a systems approach is the most relevant and valid approach in studying the mental health/psychological functioning of families, the researcher considered family mental health as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the characteristic features of individual, dyadic and family systems. Hence, total family functioning, quality of marital life and subjective well-being of individual members in the family systems were identified as the key variables of family mental health.

These three variables of family mental health are studied using standardized measurement devices. The total family functioning is measured using the family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales-III (FACES-III) of Olson and his colleagues. Quality of marital life of spouses is measured with the help of Marital Quality Scale (MQS) of Shah. Subjective Well-Being of couples is gauged with the Subjective Well-Being Inventory (SWBI) of Nagpal and Sell.

This study has been designed to understand the influence of women's employment on the mental health of family systems. To identify the impact of women's employment patterns on the psychological functioning of the family system three types of families are compared on all the independent variables of family mental health. The three family groups of this study include traditional single earner families, pure double track families and interrupted double track families. To control the factors that can influence the family mental health, families are stratified on the family developmental stage. The design of the study thus provided nine family groups three each from the above mentioned family groups. Equal number of
families (i.e. 30 each) are selected from each of these nine groups to facilitate comparison.

PART I: MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings emerging from the study are as follow:

A: Psychological Functioning of Dual Earner and Traditional Single Earner Families.

Psychological Functioning of Family Groups in this study as stated earlier is measured with the help of family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES III) developed by Olson and colleagues in 1985. This scale measures two different dimensions of family functioning viz., Cohesion and Adaptability, using the circumplex model of family functioning. Using the data obtained from both couples, levels of cohesion and adaptability that existed in a family is identified. The findings suggest that there is healthy level of cohesion in majority of the families in all the three groups. Disengaged level of cohesion (too little cohesion) is existent in 28 families of which majority (53.6 per cent) are in the pure double track families. Only less than 5 per cent families belong to this category in traditional single earner families, and another 10 per cent in the interrupted double track families.

Enmeshed level of cohesion is existent in 27 families of which nearly half are in the pure double track families. The other two family groups are equally distributed in this level of family cohesion. Looking at the both extremes of cohesion one can understand that there are more families (31.1 per cent) in the extreme level of cohesion in the pure double track families followed by the interrupted double track families (17.8 per cent). Traditional single earner families have the lowest number of families (12.2 percent) in the extreme levels of cohesion.
The hypothesis that traditional single earner families are healthier on cohesion dimension is tested through Chi-square test of significance. This test to understand the association between family types and level of family cohesion indicates that level of cohesion is dependent on the type of family. The percentage analysis based on the Chi-square table clearly indicate that there are more traditional single earner families in the balanced region of cohesion compared to the other two groups. Hence, the hypothesis of this study that traditional single earner families are healthier on cohesion dimension than the dual earner families of both types is proved.

On the adaptability dimension of family functioning it is found that traditional single earner families are more rigid in their adaptability dimension compared to the other two groups of families. Overall, nearly one third (30.0 per cent) of the pure double track families are in the either of the extremes of adaptability. Traditional single earner families fall in between the other two groups as far the number of families in the extremes are concerned (28.9 per cent). Thus, pathological (in adaptability dimension) families are less in number in the interrupted double track families.

The chi-square test of significance performed to find out the association between the type of family and level of family adaptability has proved no significant association between the two. Thus it is concluded that the level of family adaptability is independent of the type of family. Hence, the hypothesis of this study that traditional single earner families are more dysfunctional on adaptability dimension is disproved.

Using the cohesion and adaptability scores obtained by couples, families were plotted on the circumplex grid to understand the type of family functioning existed in a family. The findings in this regard suggest that traditional single earner families are more rigid and structured compared to the other two groups. Those in the double track (both groups) are more chaotic and flexible than
those in the traditional single earner families. Similarly, less number of traditional single earner families are disengaged. They are more connected and separated.

When the sixteen family types as given in table 4.39 are taken separately, a large number of families are found to be falling within the flexibly connected region (20.7 per cent) followed by those in the structurally separated region (15.2 per cent). Both these regions are considered balanced and hence are indicative of healthy family functioning. Those in the flexibly separated (14.8 per cent) and structurally connected (13.0 per cent) regions also constitute a sizable chunk. Since all these four regions are falling within the balanced region it can be concluded that two third of the whole families belong to the category of healthy families.

Using the second method of classifying families according to the circumplex grid, families are classified into balanced, mid-range and extreme types. Findings in this regard reveal that nearly two third (63.7 per cent) of the families fall within the balanced range of family functioning. The distribution of these families across the three groups is more or less equal. However, traditional single earner families constitute a majority. Pure double track families are less in number in the balanced category and more in number in the extreme category of family functioning. Of the 90 families in the pure double track, 20 fall within the extreme region of family functioning. This number is much more than the number of those in the other groups. Even in the mid-range region there are less families from the pure double track category. These findings clearly indicate that there are more pure double track families in the dysfunctional category compared to the other two groups. This is due to the fact that these families are more enmeshed or disengaged in the cohesion dimension (26.6 per cent) and chaotic or rigid in the adaptability dimension (30 per cent).

Chi-square test results on the association between total family functioning and family type indicate statistically significant association between
the two. The percentage analysis based on the chi-square table indicate that there are more pure double track families in the extreme region of family functioning compared to the other two groups and hence it can be concluded that pure double track families are more dysfunctional compared to the other two family groups.

Since the sample was stratified on the assumption that family life cycle is an important variable that can affect the family functioning, a Chi-square test was performed to assess the association between family life cycle and family functioning. The findings suggest that there is significant association between type of family functioning and the family life cycle. The distribution of more families with school going children in the balanced category of family functioning suggest that families in the second life cycle (families with school going children) of this study is more functional compared to the families in the other two life cycles.

B. Quality of Marital Life of Spouses in Dual Earner and Traditional Single Earner Families

The marital quality of couples in all the three family groups was assessed with the help of Marital Quality Scale (MQS) developed by Shah in 1995. This multidimensional device was selected for measurement of marital quality as it is sensitive enough to understand marital relationships and to distinguish healthy marital relationships from disturbed ones. In this study the scale is administered to both the couples to capture the complexities involved in the marital relationships. Data obtained from both couples is treated together to derive a couple score on marital quality. The important findings with regard to the quality of marital life of couples in dual earner and traditional single earner families is as follow.

Analysis of data obtained from couples on all the 12 dimensions of marital quality reveal that traditional single earner couples are functioning better on the role functioning, dissolution potential and despair dimensions of marital quality.
The pure double track couples function better on satisfaction, affection, decision making, discontent, dominance and self-disclosure dimensions of marital quality. Interrupted double track couples on most of the dimensions come in between traditional single earner couples and pure double track couples. The only exception is the discontent dimension where they are more discontented due to spouse's inability to fulfill sexual and relationship needs.

The findings suggest that in traditional single earner families there is feelings of greater rejection from spouse, lower degree of satisfaction in sexual and security needs, unfulfilled affectional needs, exclusion of one spouse from the decision-making process, dominance of one spouse over the other, and lower levels of self-disclosure compared to the other two groups. Whereas, feelings of despair due to helplessness and regret about the relationship, discontent due to spouse's inability to fulfill different needs, consideration of separation or divorce, and inadequate role functioning are more among spouses of dual earner families. On understanding and trust dimensions of marital quality there is no difference between the three groups.

Overall marital quality is low among spouses of traditional single earner families compared to the other two groups. This is well expressed from the fact in these marriages there is high dominance of male spouse, greater feelings of rejection, lower degree of satisfaction, unfulfilled affectional needs and exclusion of the female spouse from the decision making process. The quality of marital life is better among dual earner couples especially those in the pure double track category. ANOVA statistics performed on the mean scores of marital quality obtained by the three groups reveals statistically significant difference between the three groups. Scheffe's multiple comparison test indicate that pure double track spouses are different from the other two groups on their mean scores of marital quality. Identification of homogenous subsets has yielded three subsets, putting each group in a separate subset. These findings prove the hypothesis of this study that
marital life of couples following pure double track occupation is qualitatively better than couples following interrupted double track occupation and the couples in traditional single earner families. Table 5.28 helps us in identifying the group which is qualitatively better in marital interactions.

Analysis of marital quality data over different family life cycles has indicated that couples in the third family life cycle of this study enjoy qualitatively better marital life. Marital quality is found to be the lowest among couples in the first family life cycle. The ANOVA test of marital quality score over different family life cycles has indicated significant difference between the three groups. Or in other words, marital quality significantly varied according to the family life cycle of couples. These results proved the hypothesis of this study that quality of marital life of couples significantly vary according to the family life cycle.

C. Subjective Well-Being of Male and Female Spouses

To understand the association between family pattern and the degree of mental health of spouses, their subjective well-being was measured using the Subjective Well-Being Inventory (SWBI) of Nagpal and Sell. This inventory gauges the mental health of individuals treating positive and negative aspects of well-being independently. The result of subjective well-being as measured by SWBI gives a profile of well-being and not an overall index of well-being. The eleven factors of mental health as conceived in this inventory are independent dimensions of well-being and non-correlated in their positive and negative dimensions. SWBI permits independent evaluation of negative and positive dimensions due to the basic assumption that people evaluate positive and negative aspects of their well-being independently.

The analysis on different dimensions of subjective well-being indicates that except on transcendence dimension husbands fare well on the different dimensions of subjective well-being in all the three groups. Wives in
traditional single earner families exhibit higher degree of primary group concern, lower levels of perceived ill-health, and negative affect compared to their husbands. As a whole husbands in the study exhibit signs of higher subjective well-being compared to wives in all the three groups.

Another striking finding of this study is that there are more husbands in traditional single earner and interrupted double track families on both the extreme degrees of subjective well-being. Among the three groups of this study husbands in traditional single earner families score high on transcendence, family group support, social support and low on perceived ill-health and deficiency in social contacts. However, they exhibit signs of poor subjective well-being on expectation-achievement congruence, primary group concern, inadequate mental mastery, and negative affect dimensions of mental health.

Husbands of interrupted double track families show signs of high subjective well-being on positive affect, expectation-achievement congruence, confidence in coping, primary group concern, and inadequate mental mastery dimensions. However, they show signs of low subjective well-being on transcendence, perceived ill-health, and deficiency in social contacts. Husbands of pure double track families are in between the husbands of the other two groups on most of the dimensions of well-being.

Inter-group comparison of female spouses reveal that traditional single earner women score low on SWBI's six dimensions viz., expectation-achievement congruence, confidence in coping, family group support, social support, inadequate mental mastery and deficiency in social contacts. However, they scored high on transcendence, primary group concern, perceived ill-health and negative affect. Women from interrupted double track scored high on majority of dimensions of mental health. These findings suggest that housewives possess lower degrees of subjective well-being compared to working women. Among the working women,
interrupted double track women have higher subjective well-being compared to pure double track women.

Inter-group comparison of male spouses indicate that those from the interrupted double track enjoy a higher level of subjective well-being compared to their counterparts in the other groups. These findings reveal that both spouses of interrupted double track families enjoy higher degree of well-being compared to the spouses in the other two groups. Being a housewife adversely affected the mental health of women whereas having a working wife adversely affected the mental health of men in pure double track families.

The hypothesis of this study that subjective well-being of spouses will vary according to the family type was tested for each dimension of subjective well-being as there is no composite score for subjective well-being. The findings indicate that the three groups of male spouses significantly differ on six of the eleven dimensions viz., positive affect, expectation-achievement congruence, transcendence, family group support, primary group concern and inadequate mental mastery. There is no statistically significant difference between the three groups of male spouses on confidence in coping, social support, perceived ill-health, deficiency in social contacts and negative affect dimensions of mental health.

The three groups of female spouses of this study significantly vary on nine of the eleven dimensions viz. positive affect, expectation-achievement congruence, transcendence, family group support, social support, inadequate mental mastery, perceived ill-health, deficiency in social contacts and negative affect. The largest degree of variations in different dimensions of well-being among female spouses could be attributed to the occupational roles played by them as there is no other variable differentiating the three groups.
D. Role Reward Value and Role Commitment of Male and Female Spouses

Four major life roles of working couples viz., the occupational, the marital, the parental, and the homecare roles are assessed in this study using the Life Role Salience Scales developed by Amatea and colleagues. Each role is assessed in terms of two dimensions i.e., role reward value and role commitment. These two dimensions measure the extent to which a role is considered important by an individual in terms of self-definition and personal satisfaction, and the extent to which a person demonstrates willingness to commit personal resources to assure success in the role or to develop the role. The major findings with regard to the role reward value and role commitment of both spouses are as follow.

The mean scores of reward value attributed to different roles indicate that men in all the three family groups attach highest level of reward value to the occupational role followed by the marital role. The lowest level of reward value is attributed to the homecare role by husbands in all the three groups. These findings suggest that work role reward value take a high priority among men compared to their family role reward value.

As far as the commitment to different roles are concerned men in interrupted double track and single earner families manifest highest level of commitment to their marital roles. Men in pure double track families give top-most priority to occupational role commitment. Commitment to homecare roles is given last preference among different life roles by men in all the three groups.

Women in traditional single earner families and interrupted double track families attribute the highest level of importance to their parental role, whereas women in pure double track families give their top-most importance to the marital role. Homecare role receives only a second priority in all the three family groups. Interestingly, women attach lowest priority to the occupational role. This is just opposed to the findings on the reward value of male spouses.
As far as role commitment of female spouses is concerned, homecare role receives the top-most attention compared to the other roles. Marital role receives only the second priority. Commitment to occupational roles is given the last priority by women in both types of dual earner families.

These findings suggest that while men in all the three family groups attribute a high reward value to the occupational role, women attribute low importance to their occupational role. Similarly when women attribute a high level personal importance to the homocare and parental roles, men attribute a comparatively lower level reward value to these roles. It is also found that men in traditional single earner families possess traditional sex role orientation while men in the interrupted double track possess a more egalitarian sex role orientation.

Compatibility of role reward value and role commitment between spouses is more obvious among the spouses of interrupted double track families and is less apparent between spouses of traditional single earner families. Similarly, discrepancies in role reward value and role commitment between different roles is less among spouses of interrupted double track, while it is more among spouses of traditional single earner families. Thus, role complimentarity is seen more among spouses in interrupted double track families and less among spouses in traditional single earner families.

The hypothesis that male and female spouses in all the three types of families differ significantly on their commitment to and reward value attributed to occupational, marital, parental and homocare roles was tested through inter-group comparison of the score of husbands and wives on relevant variables using ANOVA test. The findings indicate that male and female spouses in all the three groups differ significantly on their reward value attributed to parental, marital and homocare roles. However, both spouses in all the three groups did not differ on their occupational reward value. Similarly, male spouses in all the three groups differ significantly on their commitment to occupational, parental and homocare roles whereas they did not
differ on their marital role commitment. Interestingly, female spouses in all the three
groups did not differ in their commitment to any of the four roles.

The hypothesis that marital role reward value and marital role
commitment have direct relationship with the quality of marital life has been proved
as the r value indicate direct relationship as shown in Table 6.19.

E. Mental Health of Adolescent Children

Mental health status of adolescents in this study is measured using
the mental health status scale of Abraham and Prasanna developed in 1981. The
findings in this regard reveal that children of traditional single earner families enjoy
a higher level of mental health compared to the other two groups. 83.3 per cent of
adolescents in this family group enjoy a high mental health status compared to
63.3 per cent in interrupted double track families and a meager 16.7 percent in the
pure double track families. Adolescents in pure double track families enjoy the
lowest level mental health status as a great majority of them possess only average
level of mental health.

On different dimensions of mental health, adolescents in interrupted
double track scored high on regularity of habits, emotional maturity, recreational
pursuits, environmental mastery and positive attitude towards self. On all the other
eleven dimensions children of traditional single earner families scored high. The
ANOVA test results on the mental health status of adolescents indicate statistically
significant difference between the three groups on the total mental health status as
well as on 14 of the 16 dimensions of child mental health. The two dimensions
where children of the three groups do not differ are emotional maturity and
positive attitude towards others. Scheffe's multiple comparison procedure has
indicated that all the three groups significantly differ from the other groups at 0.05
significance level. Hence, the hypothesis of this study that mental health of
adolescent children will vary according to the family type is proved.
Another hypothesis of this study that there is direct relationship between quality of marital life of parents and the mental health of children was tested through Karl Pearson's Coefficient of correlation. The results indicate that there is direct relationship between the two variable as the r value is significant at 0.0001 significance level.

PART II: SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher would like to make few suggestions. These suggestions are aimed at rectifying the dysfunctional areas of different families systems. These are also useful from the promotional angle of family mental health.

1. Mental Health Promotion Programmes for the Dual Earner Families

The findings of this study reveal that dual earner families, especially those following the pure double track are more dysfunctional in different areas of family processes. These families are more chaotic in the adaptability dimension and more disengaged in the cohesion dimension. A large number of families from this group fall in the extreme region of family functioning indicating the extent of dysfunctional processes in such families. Family therapists believe that disengagement and lack of affective expressions in family are important indicators of family pathology which require attention of mental health professionals.

Mental health promotion programmes especially those in the field of family therapy should cover dual earner families, as these families have dysfunctional family processes. These promotional activities should especially tackle problems of role functioning, affective responsiveness, affective involvement and family subsystem dysfunctions. If such dysfunctions are not tackled before they develop into family pathologies the institution of family will suffer from its interface with labour market.
Governmental and non-governmental agencies working in the field of family welfare should be made aware of the potential dangers surrounding female employment and should be equipped to work with these families in their routine welfare programmes. The intervention of these agencies at the community level can strengthen the family system while families continue to derive the benefit of women's occupational involvement. Such a grass root level intervention with families should concentrate on proper role reallocation in dual earner families and make efforts in modifying control systems of these families by making it more structured. Family counselling centers in different parts of the country should be given adequate guidance and support to deal with different dysfunctional family processes that could emanate from female employment. For this, at a policy level dual earner families may be identified as a target group for intervention on a priority basis.

2. Marital Enrichment Programmes for the Traditional Single Earner Couples

Though the extent of overall family dysfunction is less in traditional single earner families, the functioning of marital subsystem is found to be inadequate. This is well expressed from the low degree of marital quality experienced by the traditional single earner couples. Among spouses of traditional single earner families there are feelings of greater rejection from spouse, lower degree of satisfaction with sexual and security needs, unfulfilled affectional needs, exclusion of one spouse from the decision making process, dominance of one spouse over the other and lower levels of self-disclosure. Greater amount of marital dissatisfaction reported by the female spouses of traditional single earner families call for the immediate attention of mental health professionals.

Patriarchal form of marriage prevalent in traditional single earner families contributes to poor quality marital life as women in these marriages do not enjoy equality of status with their husbands. Since marital quality is an important
factor influencing the family processes and even mental health of children, this area requires urgent attention of marital therapists. Specific issues affecting marital quality viz., problem solving difficulties, communication problems, role definition problems, difficulties with affective responses and behaviour control problems need to be tackled before they lead to marital conflicts.

The findings of this study suggest that marital tensions persist more in traditional single earner families as women in these families experience greater amount of rejection and exclusion from decision making process. Moreover housewives are traditionally a group overlooked by mental health professionals. In the changing socio-political scenario, problems of housewives need a close attention by all and sundry.

Marital enrichment programmes have generally not included housewives in single earner families as a target group. Looking at the degree of vulnerability to mental health problems among these women it is high time to device marital enrichment programmes for these groups as well. Since the social network of these women is largely restricted, a supportive marital relationship is a must for their psychological health. The specific areas to be addressed in marital enrichment programmes should include (i) role allocation problems, (ii) sex role orientation of couples, (iii) affectional needs and expectations (iv) problem solving difficulties (v) communication problems and (vi) decision making patterns. Marital tensions can be prevented if these areas are properly addressed in marital enrichment programmes.

3. School Mental Health Programmes for Children

Mental health of children in dual earner families is found comparatively lower than the mental health of children in traditional single earner families. Children in dual earner families generally receive less amount of parental attention and guidance for their psychological as well as life skill development. The
findings of this study suggest that children of working couples possess lesser degree of mental health on eleven of the 16 dimensions of subjective well-being inventory.

School mental health programmes should identify children of working couples as a vulnerable group and should concentrate on facilitating their mental and life skill development. Here teachers, school social workers and other mental health professionals have to substitute the responsibilities of parents and offer useful guidance, advice and counselling in helping these children compensate for their deficiencies in social contact and emotional development.

4. Family Life Education Programmes for Changing the Traditional Sex Role Orientation of Husbands

In most of the dual earner marriages of this study women experienced considerable amount of role strain due to the traditional sex role orientation of their husbands. Husbands in dual earner families do not generally alter their role priorities due to which women in these families undergo role overload. Dual earner family system becomes a viable arrangement when certain amount of role reallocation takes place between spouses.

Family life education programmes for the adolescents should concentrate on this aspect of family functioning. Attitude of male members can be changed in systematically designed education programmes. Traditional sex role orientation is basically a matter of attitude and if it has to be changed systematic efforts to alter the mental set of male members has to take place. Hence, it is suggested that adolescents in schools, colleges and communities should be given family life education which focuses on the change of patriarchal attitude of the male spouse. Such an effort can lead to creation of conducive marital relationship and healthy family functioning in dual earner families.
5. Setting up Family Counseling Centers

Since the interface of family with labour market is influencing the functioning of the institution of family, efforts to control the adverse effects of occupational commitment of spouses has to be made in the right direction. Though occupational commitment of female spouses in itself is not harmful to the mental health of family, possible consequences of such arrangement can affect the family functioning. Family counselling centers are to be set up in different parts of the country especially in urban areas where a large number of dual earner families exist. These counselling centers, as a priority, should take up the problems faced by families emanating from the occupational involvement of female spouses.

Family counselling centers should work with working women and their families, including children to ensure high quality marriage for these women, and to promote higher levels of subjective well-being for the different family members by addressing their specific mental health problems. Social workers employed in the family counseling centers should however be equipped with adequate levels of theoretical understanding and skills for working with such issues.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this empirical study on the mental health of dual earner and traditional single earner families have revealed that overall family functioning and mental health of children are adversely affected in dual earner families whereas quality of marital life and subjective well-being of spouses are favourably affected. Or in other words, dual earner pattern of family arrangement has both positive and negative effects on the functioning of different family systems. The overall impact of dual earner pattern of family arrangement on the mental health of these families can be understood only if there is an overall index of family health.
This study has attempted only to provide a profile of family mental health and not an overall index of family mental health. Hence no attempt has been made here to establish the nature and extent of relationship between different key variables of mental health of family systems. The key variables considered as different dimensions of mental health of family systems seem to be independent and non-correlated. This is quite obvious from the fact that the nature of individual and dyadic measures of family functioning (subjective well-being of individual members and quality of marital life of spouses) differed from the overall family functioning in the dual earner and traditional single earner families.

An important implication of this study for future research is to examine whether the individual, dyadic and family system functioning are independent of each other or they are inextricably woven that one is dependent on the other. If the nature of relationship between these variables can be established it would be useful for the development of an overall index of family mental health.

Similarly, it is also worthwhile to examine the influence of role functioning problems of dual earner couples on the different variables of family mental health. The present study has only provided description of the two different dimensions of role expectations of couples in different family groups. It will be beneficial to explore the nature of relationship between role functioning problems and mental health of family systems. Such an attempt would enable us to discern the importance of role theory concepts in understanding the mental health of dual earner families.