CHAPTER – SIX

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction is a central concept on psychological well-being. Within this context, the study of the relationships between satisfaction with life as a whole and satisfaction with specific life domains (family, job, health, leisure, friendships, etc.) or life facets has been a widespread and common approach to psychological well-being since it was first described by Andrews & Whithey (1976). Diener et al. (1999) have demonstrated that life satisfaction is a desire to change one’s life, satisfaction with past, satisfaction with future, and significant views of one’s life. Life satisfaction can be defined as the cognitive component of subjective well-being. This is consistent with Bradley & Corwyn (2004) who asserts that life satisfaction reflects both the extent to which basic needs are met, and the extent to which a variety of other goals are viewed as attainable.

Importance of life satisfaction not only as an outcome, but also as a predictor in health research is documented by its predictive value with regard to physical health and even mortality. Satisfied person often feels good at ease in both work and leisure in his life. In contrast, a dissatisfied person demonstrates symptoms of depression, such as a tendency to worry, uncertainty about the future, social withdrawal, lack of drive, depressive thought, a feeling of guilt, and in extreme cases suicidal thoughts, and behaviour.

It is necessary to identify those factors that contribute to satisfaction in each domain of life. At every period of life-span, life satisfaction is influenced by a number of factors. Good physical and mental health, physical attractiveness, degree of autonomy, interactional opportunities outside the family, type of work, work status, living conditions, emotional adjustment, inability to experience and verbalize emotions (alexithymia), personality disorder, marital status, and gender etc. are a few to count in this regard.
Alexithymia And Life Satisfaction

In the early 1970s, Sifneos (1973) coined the term “alexithymia” which means “no words for feelings”, and it refers to a personality construct characterized by impoverishment of fantasy, poor capacity for symbolic thought and an inability to experience and verbalize emotions. It is, by definition, considered a stable personality trait (Sifneos, 1973; and Taylor, 2000). Le et al. (2002), Taylor & Bagby (2004), and Mattila et al. (2007), observed negative association between alexithymia and life satisfaction.

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) And Life Satisfaction

The name BPD refers to the belief that patients meeting the criteria were on the border between psychosis and neurosis, although many clinicians find the term BPD lacking in validity and reliability, it has been found its way into the DSM-IV as a disorder of the B-cluster.

DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) describes borderline personality disorder (BPD) as a ‘pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects, and marked impulsivity beginning by early childhood and present in a variety of contexts’ (p. 654). Specific problems include frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment, identity disturbance, parasuicidal or suicidal behaviour, chronic feelings of emptiness, transient stress related paranoid ideation and severe dissociative symptoms.

The relationship between alexithymia and BPD suggests that difficulty in identifying, differentiating, understanding, and communicating emotions and feelings (somatic sensations) impairs ability of a person to regulate emotions and remains dissatisfied with life as the consequence. Findings (Leible & Snell, 2004; and Web & McMurran, 2008) suggest that those diagnosed as BPD report poor understanding of the nature of their emotions and a reduced capacity to overcome
negative emotional experience, which constitute a reduced level of emotional intelligence and leads to life dissatisfaction.

**Marital Status And Life Satisfaction**

Marital status is another vital dimension which has been considered in the present study in relation to life satisfaction of middle agers. It is a natural state to believe that presence of a life partner after marriage brings in dramatic changes in the lives of both males and females. Even further, the departure of one spouse after marriage shatters the life of single man or women. This state of singlehood may be due to natural course of death or divorce. Unmarried state of a middle ager, has a differential impact due to the absence of a loving life partner right from an early age of adulthood. In latter life this unmarried middle ager struggles with his/her loneliness more bitterly. In either case, there are strong evidences to believe that the marital status do exert its effect on life satisfaction of middle agers.

Researches have found that married people, on average, are happier than unmarried people (Frey & Stutzer, 2002; Diener & Scollon, 2003; Evans & Kelley, 2004; Mroczek & Spiro, 2005; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2008; and Taylor et al., 2011).

Diener et al. (2000) observed that relation between marital status and subjective well-being are similar across 42 nations in the world.

**Gender And Life Satisfaction**

There are biological differences between men and women. Sociobiologists argue that gender differences are attributable to differences in psychology and biology. During childhood and adolescence, girls as a group tend to be happier than boys. One of the most important reasons for this is that girls get their life satisfaction from interpersonal relationships, while boys’ greatest life satisfaction comes from achievement. During the early years of adulthood, women tend to be more satisfied in life than men, especially if they are married and feel useful as
mothers and wives. Young men by contrast tend to be less satisfied in their lives because they are often not able to achieve the success in their occupation that they had hoped for. After forty, the reverse is true for many women, especially those whose role has been that of home maker. By contrast, many men become happier and better satisfied in their lives after forty because they feel more successful in their careers than when they were young. Then there is a shift in happiness and life satisfaction after sixty or sixty-five. Men rebel against feeling useless, while many women feel more useful, either in taking care of retired or ailing husband, or helping with the care of grand children.

In general, studies have reported no significant effects for gender on life satisfaction (Pavot et al., 1991; Shek, 1995; Hamarat et al., 2001; and Zhang, 2005). However, Dorahy et al. (1996) reported that Indian females scored higher on life satisfaction than their male counterparts. In contrast, Plagnol & Easterlin (2008) have found that men were more satisfied with their financial status and family than women. Oshio (2012) investigated gender differences in the associations of life satisfaction with family and social relations among the Japanese elderly. It was observed that men were less satisfied with life when living without their spouse; women were less satisfied with life when they lived and/or had close relations with their parents-in-law; co-residence with an unmarried son was negatively associated with life satisfaction for both men and women; and a larger number of friends and social activities enhanced life satisfaction for women but not for men. It too was observed that men were more sensitive than women to overall family relations, while the relative importance of social relations was higher for women.

**STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The present study intended to explore the role of alexithymia, borderline personality disorder (BPD), marital status, and gender in life satisfaction of middle aged people. The specific problems and relevant hypotheses were as below:
1. The first problem of the present investigation pertained to verify whether middle aged with high alexithymia differ from those with low alexithymia in respect of their life satisfaction?

It was hypothesized that low alexithymic middle agers would show more life satisfaction in comparison to high alexithymic middle agers.

2. The second problem was whether middle aged with borderline personality disorder differ from normal middle agers in regard to their life satisfaction?

It was hypothesized that normal middle agers would show higher level of life satisfaction than middle agers with borderline personality disorders.

3. The third problem of research pertained to the role of marital status in life satisfaction of middle aged people?

It was hypothesized that middle aged married (couple) would exhibit higher level of life satisfaction than married (single) and unmarried middle agers and the unmarried middle agers would exhibit poorest level of life satisfaction.

4. The fourth problem of the present research pertained to role of gender in life satisfaction.

It was hypothesized that male middle agers would show more life satisfaction in comparison to female middle agers.

5. The fifth problem pertained to interaction effects of the four independent variables i.e., alexithymia, BPD, marital status, and gender, on life satisfaction of middle aged people.

It was hypothesized that there would exist genuine interaction effects of the four independent variables i.e., alexithymia, BPD, marital status, and gender, on life satisfaction at first-, second-, and third-order levels.
METHODOLOGY

The Sample

Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the final sample of 240 middle agers maintaining male-female ratio as 1:1 from a larger population (n = 2100) in Raipur city. Care was taken to select equal number of middle ager males and females aging 41 to 60 years and belonging equally to one of the three marital status groups i.e., unmarried, married (couple), and married (single). On the basis of $Q_1$ and $Q_3$ statistics for scores on alexithymia scale and BPD questionnaire the middle agers were classified as high alexithymic and low alexithymic, and as normal and BPD. Finally, equal number of middle agers (n = 10) were selected in 24 sub-groups formed on joint basis of alexithymia, BPD, marital status, and gender.

Instruments Of The Study

Indian adaptation (Ajawani, 2009) based on Toronto Alexithymia Scale – 20 (Bagby et al., 1994) and Online Alexithymia Questionnaire G2 was used to assess alexithymia level in middle aged subjects.

Borderline Personality Disorder Questionnaire (Ajawani, 2009) was used to determine borderline personality disorder.

Assessment of life satisfaction was done using Life Satisfaction Scale by Alam & Shrivastava (2001).

All the tests are highly reliable and valid.

Research Design And Procedure

A 2x2x3x2 factorial design was used to study the role of four independent variables i.e., alexithymia (low and high), borderline personality disorder (normal and BPD), marital status (unmarried, married (couple) and married (single)), and gender (male and female).
Firstly, an incidental initial sample (n = 2100) of middle agers with age range of 41 to 60 years was drawn, equally (n = 700) from three marital status groups i.e., unmarried, married (couple), and married (single). Care was also taken to maintain male and female ratio as 1:1.

Firstly, all these middle agers were administered alexithymia scale and borderline personality disorder questionnaire. On the basis of \(Q_1\) and \(Q_3\) statistics for the obtained scores on alexithymia scale these middle agers were classified as low alexithymic (below \(Q_3\)) and as high alexithymic (above \(Q_3\)).

For classifying into BPD and normal, again \(Q_1\) and \(Q_3\) statistics were used on BPDQ scores. Middle agers scoring below \(Q_1\) were screened out as normal and those scoring \(Q_3\) were screened out as with BPD.

Finally, 10 middle agers were selected randomly in each of the 24 sub-groups formed on joint basis of the four independent variables i.e., alexithymia, BPD, marital status, and gender, as specified in sample section.

These finally selected 240 middle agers were further administered life satisfaction scale to seek their life satisfaction scores, which served the base data for further computations.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The obtained data were analysed with the help of F, protected t and t statistics. Assumption of homogeneity of variance was ascertained before applying these statistics with the help of Hartley Test of Homogeneity of Variance.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In regard to role of alexithymia, as hypothesized, it was found that low alexithymic middle agers truly showed greater life satisfaction than high alexithymic middle agers.
In regard to role of borderline personality disorder, as hypothesized, it had been observed that normal middle agers genuinely had more life satisfaction than those with borderline personality disorder.

In regard to role of marital status, as hypothesized, married (couple) middle agers had shown highest level of life satisfaction and unmarried middle agers the least.

In respect of role of gender, though it was hypothesized that male middle agers would show greater life satisfaction than female middle agers, nonsignificant difference n favour of female middle agers was observed.

In regard to interaction effect of these independent variables, it was observed that most of the interaction effects were significant indicating true joint role of alexithymia, BPD, marital status, and gender in life satisfaction of middle agers.