A Study of Level of Anxiety, Self Concept, Adjustment and Mental Health Problems of Housewives and Career Women

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of present research was aimed to examine level of anxiety, self concept, adjustment and mental health problems of housewives and career women. Keeping in view the objective of the study, an empirical investigation was undertaken and thereafter data was tabulated and analyzed with the help of t-test and stepwise regression analysis.

The thesis comprises of four chapters. Chapter–I emphasizes the introduction and review of relevant literature in relation to the variables of the-proposed research work.

The idea of concentrating specially on women in Indian society because of strict adherence of socially ridden custom that women have to perform many responsibilities all together, especially married career women have to play dual role as daughter-in-law, mother and housewife in the family and as an employee at their work place. Being subjected to the dual demands of home and work interface they are predisposed to face the catastrophe of adjustment in different areas such as home, emotion, health, social and so on that may create feeling of anxiety and many other mental or physical problems that immersed in our complex and civilized society. Researches conducted by various investigators have shown that long working hours might contribute to symptoms of anxiety and depression among employees (Bildt & Michelsen, 2002; Caruso et al.; 2004; Fujino et al., 2006; Kleppa, Sanne, & Tell, 2008; Michelsen & Bildt, 2003; Park et al., 2001; Shields, 1999; Sparks et al., 1997; Spurgeon, Harrington, & Cooper, 1997; Van der Hulst, 2003; Yamazaki et al., 2007).
Anxiety and depression in women may reflect the fact that women often have an extra burden due to extended hours of work and domestic chores (Artazcoz et al., 2001; Gjerdingen et al., 2000; Lundberg & Hellström, 2002; Lundberg & Parr, 2000; Matthews & Power, 2002). Thus, it was contemplated to examine these problems focused on women as they are the nuclease of the family who tied all members with each other with the thread of love, affection and care but it is an irony that their efforts mostly remain unnoticed in the family.

Anxiety is an inseparable part and parcel of human existence. Although anxiety can be unpleasant, it is a normal reaction to an environmental stressor, and a mild to moderate amount of anxiety can help people to recognize and more effectively deal with stressful situations. Anxiety is an unpleasant emotional state characterized by fearfulness and unwanted and distressing physical symptoms. It is a normal and appropriate response to stress but becomes pathological when it is disproportionate to the severity of the stress, continues after the stressor has gone, or occurs in the absence of any external stressor. Low levels of anxiety may temporarily increase a person's ability to do a simple task, because of the greater vigilance and narrowing of attention associated with anxiety, but as anxiety increases, behavior becomes more disorganized and ineffective. Anxiety can affect adaptive behaviors like subjective well-being, social function, performance and resilience.

The second variable chosen for the investigation was self concept as there has been a growing realization of importance of self concept by the social scientists in understanding and predicting human behaviour as it is an essential component of human personality which determines the amount of stressors. Self concept is the accumulation of knowledge about the self such as beliefs regarding personality traits,
physical traits, physical characteristics, abilities, values, goals and roles. Franken (1994) stated that “there is a great deal of research which shows that the self-concept is, perhaps, the basis for all motivated behavior. It is the self-concept that gives rise to possible selves, and it is possible selves that create the motivation for behavior.” Self concept also affects one’s way in adapting himself in new circumstances hence it may be said that it also influence the adjustment of an individual. It has been seen that people who have a low estimating rate of their self-concept are likely to show certain personality characteristics such as shyness, reserved state, seclusion and loneliness (Kaliopusks et al., 1991).

Another variable that was studied is adjustment. Adjustment is a continuous process by which an individual makes an adequate relation with his/her environment and fulfill his basic needs in a reasonably satisfied manner. In other words, it is the process by which a person varies his/her behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship between himself and the environment in which he/she lives. It has also been defined as the individual’s successful adaptation to and interaction with his environment.

The other variable that was taken for the purpose of investigation is mental health. Mental health is not only the avoidance of serious mental illness rather it is the springboard of thinking and communication skills, learning, emotional growth, resilience and self esteem of the individuals. It is concerned with how people look at themselves, their evaluation, their challenges and problems and exploration of choices. This includes handling stress, relating to other people, and making decisions. Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders rather it is a state of well being in which an individual holds the ability to balance emotions, to interact with
others, to make adjustments even in adverse situations effectively and to contribute to the society and community. Mental health refers to the full and harmonious functioning of the total personality which gives almost full satisfaction to the person.

Reviewed studies on anxiety show contradictory results. Some of the studies found that career women are less anxious and some studies showed that career women had more anxiety than to the housewives. It has found in most of the investigations that career women have more positive view of themselves and evaluate themselves in affirmative way that enhances their self esteem.

Existing literature on adjustment reveals that employment increases marital adjustment as most of the studies have been conducted on the marital adjustment. But some of the studies found insignificant difference between the marital adjustment of housewives and career women. The researcher found out from the available literature on mental health that career women are more mentally healthy as compared with the housewives and more satisfied with life. But some studies show that career women experience more hazards due to multiple roles. There were five objectives made after reviewing the available literature pertaining to the variables of this work:

1. To examine whether housewives and career women differ on anxiety, self concept, adjustment and mental health.

2. To determine whether anxiety affect adjustment and mental health of women.

3. To determine the influence of self concept and its dimensions on anxiety, adjustment and mental health of housewives and career women.
4. To determine the influence of mental health and its dimensions on adjustment of housewives and career women.

5. To determine the role of demographic variables like age, family type and qualification on the level of anxiety, self concept, adjustment and mental health of women.

The alternative hypotheses were formulated to accomplish the mentioned objectives. In case of significant results, the hypotheses were accepted and in case of insignificant results, hypotheses were treated as rejected.

Chapter-II describes the method and procedure opted for accomplishing the research purpose. It is an important part of any research endeavour as there are number of methods developed, many designs created but the selection of appropriate research design depends upon the peculiar nature of sample, type of tools and restraints regarding the major manipulation of variables being studied. The choice of methodology is guided through the particular aims and variables of investigation. The present research is a correlational research and comparative in nature. The sample comprised of 400 women that were further distinguished as housewives and career women whose age ranges from 25 to 55 years. Participants were selected through purposive random sampling technique from Aligarh and adjoining cities. To measure the level of anxiety of both groups of women Comprehensive Anxiety Scale developed by Sharma, Bharadwaj and Bhargava (1992) was used. Self Concept Scale developed by Rastogi (1979) was found most suitable so as applied to obtain the information regarding the concept of ‘Self’ of women. The Global Adjustment Scale ‘Adult Form’ developed by Psy-com (1994) services was used to measure the...
adjustment and to assess the state of mental health, ‘Mental Health Inventory’ developed by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983) was used in the present investigation. Data was analyzed by means of t-test as it gives a clear idea about the significant difference between two groups. Regression Analysis was also used to determine the influence of self concept and mental health on the other variables.

Chapter-III is devoted to results and discussion. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of housewives and career women on anxiety, self concept and its dimensions, adjustment and its dimension and mental health and its dimensions. Career women scored lower on anxiety scale than housewives while higher on self concept, adjustment and mental health as compared with the housewives and the difference between the two groups was found significant. It was also found that level of anxiety influence the adjustment process and mental health of women whether they are housewives or career women.

Stepwise regression analysis revealed that self concept negatively predicts anxiety among women. It means that when women either employed or home makers are having higher self concept is more likely to cope in different situations. They experience less anxiety, depression, frustration and many other mental problems. In other words it may be interpreted that they are relatively more mentally healthy. Self concept also emerged as significant predictor of adjustment and mental health in housewives as well as in career women. The predictive influence of mental health upon adjustment is also seen and it was found that mental health predicts good adjustment. Some of the demographics variables like education, family type and age were also examined through t-test and no significant contribution were found. Only age was found to influence anxiety and self concept of women.
The findings of the present investigation are concluded in chapter IV. In the light of present research experience it is being suggested that further research is required for getting more information which may influence women's level of anxiety, self concept, adjustment and mental health. Socio-economic status can be studied across the cultures taking social support and personal values as variables for which observation and interview methods may be applied on a larger sample to draw more fruitful generalization and enrich the existing knowledge.