MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING AMONG WORKING MARRIED AND UNMARRIED WOMEN

Dr Shannaz Parveen (Post Doctoral Fellow)
Department of Psychology
Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

ABSTRACT

When we look at the previous year’s researches, we found that so much work is done on the mental health and well being of the women but as we know that every research is a drop that can be added to the ocean of knowledge. So I found it challenging and interesting to work on the mental health and well being of working married and unmarried women. The current study aims to determine the differences in mental health and well being of working married and unmarried women. The sample of the study was chosen 100 in which fifty were working married and fifty unmarried women. The mental health check list developed by Kumar (1991) and psychological well being scale developed by Nishizawa (1996) was chosen for the study. For statistical analysis we selected t’ test as it was found suitable to make a comparison. Significant differences were found in the mental health and well being of both the groups. Mental health and well being of working married women was found to be better as compared to the working unmarried women.

Keywords: Mental Health, Well being, working, married, unmarried

‘Woman’, is not just a five lettered word, rather a world in itself. She encompasses, she embraces, she cuddles, she loves and so on and so forth. The list of her deeds is endless and the journey is short. Hence, due to the pivotal role of women in the social arena we have taken her the very base of our research.

Indian women have been gradually coming out of traditional roles and entering into the male dominated areas. In recent years the role and status of the women have been changed tremendously. With increasing female education and more liberty for their rights and privileges, women’s attitude towards their stereotyped role has changing. Their participation in education and work place has also led to their increased sociofamilial roles. Women who work outside the home are required to make many socio-familial adjustments that may contribute more stress and anxiety. The problem of stress in women, particularly working women is an important aspect on the process of social and emotional changes. Women in India today have more opportunities to pursue their higher education and more and more women have started taking up the jobs outside their homes.

Transformation in the pattern of women's role has received a lot of research attention. When a woman works, it may not impart her a necessary status as being employed increases her physical burden and it may intensify her family responsibilities too (Sunder, 1981). Family's greater demand on women takes a higher toll on women's mental health in dual-earning families as compared to male earning families (Barnett et.al, 1995).

Women are existing under cultural norms and values so the working women are expected to make adjustments with the family. So this in turn leads to a number of stress and strain among working women. WHO defines health as a state of ‘complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’. Mental health has been reported as an important factor influencing an individual’s various behaviors, activities, happiness and performance. Mental pressure is a vital cause of the mental...
health problems which arise due to various conditions. Mental health can be defined as the ability to make adequate social and emotional adjustments to the environment on the plane of reality. In other words it is the ability to face and accept the realities of life.

Mental health is more than the absence of a mental health condition or illness: it is a positive sense of well-being, or the capacity to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. Mental health impacts each and every one of us. We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. People living with a mental health issue or condition can experience positive mental health, and an individual may experience poor mental health without a mental health condition. Mental health is not fixed. It is influenced by a range of factors, including our Life experiences, workplace or other environments, and the social and economic conditions that shape our lives (or the social determinants of mental health).

Mental health is a level of psychological well-being, or an absence of mental illness. It is the "psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioural adjustment (Mental health, Word Net Search 2014.)From the perspective of positive psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life, and create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health includes "subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, inter-generational dependence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential, among others (The world health report 2001). The WHO further states that the well-being of an individual is encompassed in the realization of their abilities, coping with normal stresses of life, productive work and contribution to their community (World Health Organization 2014). Cultural differences, subjective assessments, and competing professional theories all affect how "mental health" is defined (The world health report 2001).

Well-being is one of the most important goals which individual as well as societies strive for. The term denotes that something is in a good state. It doesn't specify what the 'something' is and what is meant by 'good'. Well-being can be specified in two ways: first by specifying the 'what' and secondly by spelling out the criteria of wellness (Veenhoven, 2004). So many terms such as happiness, satisfaction, and hope, positive affect positive mental health, well-being and quality of life have been used in the literature synonymously and interchangeably. The word 'well-being' is mostly used for specific variety of goodness, for example, living in a good environment. Psychological well-being is a part and parcel of man's life style. Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith (1999) conceptualized psychological or subjective well-being as a broad construct, encompassing four specific and distinct components including (a) pleasant or positive well-being (e.g. joy, elation, happiness, mental health), (b) unpleasant affect or psychological distress (e.g. quite, shame, sadness, anxiety, worry, anger, stress, depression), (c) life satisfaction (a global evaluation of one's life), and, (d) domain or situation satisfaction (e.g. work, family, leisure, health, finance, self).

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Mental wellbeing encompasses a person's sense of positive feeling about their life situation and their personal health, both physical and mental. Each person is unique. Some people who experience mental ill health may still enjoy a good quality of life and mental wellbeing. Some people may not have a specific mental health problem, but experience poor mental wellbeing and quality of life.

Tiwari and Bisht (2012) conducted a study of marital adjustment of working and non-working women and their attitudes towards marriage. The analysis of the results indicated that working women have a positive attitude towards marriage where as non-working women have negative attitude towards marriage. Working women have better marital adjustment as compared to non-working women. Johal and Pooja (2016) in their study indicated positive correlation between mental health and psychological well being. After reviewing the studies conducted in the past, we take an effort to study the mental health and psychological well being of women to take the knowledge to the next level.

Objective

The main objective of the study was to find out the difference in mental health as well as psychological well being of working married and unmarried women.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant difference between working married and unmarried women on mental health.

2. There will be significant difference between working married and unmarried women on psychological well being.
Method

Sample

Sampling is an essential technique in the field of research to collect the data from a particular population. It is not only difficult but also impossible to reach every member of the population. For this purpose, a sample is taken which is representative of the population. The conclusions are drawn and generalizations can be made about the whole population based on the examination of some part of the whole. The process of using a part as a basis for an estimate of the whole is known as sampling. After having ascertained the suitability of the tools to be used for the present study, the next step was to select a representative sample of the working married and working unmarried women on which the tests could be administered. The sample of the present investigation was selected from a large population of working women from Aligarh. The total strength of the sample constituted of 100 women of which 50 were the married and 50 were working unmarried women.

Research Design

Present work is a comparative study. The investigator applied ‘t’ test to measure the mean differences between the two groups taken for study.

Tools Used

The selection of suitable instrument or tool is of vital importance for collection of data in any research study. Following tools were used in the study.

Mental health check list

A. Mental Health Check list developed by Kumar (1991) was used in the study. Mental health check-list: Mental health Check List consists of 11 items - 6 mental and 5 somatic, presented in a 4 point rating format e.g. ‘rarely’ ‘at times’, ‘often’ and ‘always’. A numerical value of 1, 2, 3, and 4 is assigned to the 4 response categories, i.e., for ‘rarely’, ‘at times’, ‘often’ and always, respectively. The total score varies from 11 to 44, showing the highest to the lowest (poorest) mental health status of the person.

Split-half reliability, correlating the odd-even items (applying the 101 Spearman-Brown formula for doubling the test Length) has been found to be .70 (n=30) with an index of reliability is also been studied. It has been found to be .65 (n=30) with an index of reliability of .81. The retest was given with a time interval of two weeks. The value of .70 and .65, reliability have been found to be significant at .01 level; of confidence, showing that the test is reliable both in terms of its internal consistency and stability of scores.

The face validity of the mental health check-list appears to be fairly high as items were prepared by asking teachers of psychology to list all such symptoms which according to them showed poor mental health. The content validity was adequately assured as only those symptoms which showed 100 percent agreement amongst the judges regarding their relevance to the study of mental health were selected.

B. Psychological Well-Being Scale

The psychological well-being scale developed by Nishizawa (1996) was used to assess psychological well-being of working and non working 71 women in the present investigation. This scale comprised of forty items. This scale measures the overall psychological well being as well as 8 dimensions of psychological well being namely good mental health, poor mental health, social support, social stressors, work support, personal support and personal stressors. It is a five point scale having five alternative response categories, ranging from, (5) Applies very well (4) Applies quite well (3) Applies moderately (2) Applies very slightly (1) don’t apply at all. The maximum possible score of the respondent on this scale is 200 and lowest scores are 40. This scale is highly reliable and valid scale. Its test re-test reliability is 0.79 and convergent validity is 0.83 respectively.

Procedure

The investigator approached the respondents at their homes or work places. Before distributing the tools to respondents, the purpose of the study was made clear to them. Then respondents were provided with the instructions regarding how to answer each item of the tool and were requested to give honest responses assuring that their identity would be kept confidential and information provided by them would be used exclusively for the purpose of research work. The tools were answered by all the respondents. Scoring of each tool was done as per the guidelines given in the manuals.
Statistical analysis

The data obtained from the groups of women was analyzed by means of the 't'-test. Keeping in view the comparison of the two groups of women on mental health and psychological well being 't' test is useful and serve the purpose of the investigation. The mean differences obtained between these variables will determine that how far these two groups of women's are different in terms of their mental health and psychological well being.

Result and discussion

Table 1: shows mean difference of the Mental Health as well as Psychological Wellbeing among Married and Unmarried working women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>18.40</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>25.06</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological well being</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>118.86</td>
<td>14.17</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>92.26</td>
<td>21.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 represents the mean, S.D. and t-value of mental health as well as psychological well being of working married and unmarried women. The mean score of mental health of working married women is found to be 18.40 and for unmarried it is found to be 25.06. The S.D. for both the groups is found to be 4.08 and 3.63 respectively. The t-value calculated is 8.60, which is significant at .01 level of confidence.

The mean score of psychological well being of working married women is calculated 118.86 and for second group it is found to be 92.26. The S.D. for the two groups is 14.17 and 21.41 respectively. The t value calculated for both the groups is 7.32, which is significant at .01 level of confidence. The mean score of mental health of working married women is lower than the working unmarried women.

As per the scoring system of scale, high score shows poor mental health and vice versa. This clearly indicated that working married women has better mental health as compared to unmarried women. As we talk about the psychological well being, the mean was found to be higher among working married women as compared to their counterpart. This shows that working married women has better psychological well being as compared to the second group. Tiwari and Bisht (2012), Johal and Pooja (2016) in their study indicated positive correlation between mental health and psychological well being.

Women’s well-being is not solely determined by biological factors and reproduction, but also by the effects of workload, nutrition, stress, war, migration (Van der Kwaak, van den Engel & Richters 1991 Tiwari and Bisht (2012), Johal and Pooja (2016)). The reason for mental health found to be poor among unmarried women may be because of Job insecurity, loss of control, fear of job loss, financial difficulties, workload increase and loneliness. The probable reason for good mental health and psychological well being among working married women may be the working women though they are tired and stressed they spend some time with their children and family which helps them to relieve their mental stress. So the mental health status of working women is better.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective needs to be coupled with mainstreaming mental health issues as well, because women disproportionately suffer from mental health disorders and are more frequently subject to social causes that lead to mental illness and psychosocial distress. There are several critical factors which characterize people with high wellbeing; people who ‘flourish’ in their lives. These include positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships and a sense of meaning, purpose and accomplishment. There is a strong body of evidence that suggests that intentionally engaging in activities to strengthen our psychological wellbeing will have a positive effect, and if we can make them into habits they will have a long lasting impact on our wellbeing and physical health.
Proper counseling time appropriation and meditation can also be the best remedies for the improvement in their mental health.

It is suggested that the workplace is a key environment that affects the mental health and well-being of working women. In order to promote and foster mental health, workplaces need to consider the importance of psychosocial well-being and the wellness of staff whilst providing an environment that supports and maintains overall health and work efficiency.

References


