



“Sense Of Purpose: An Indicator Of Quality Of Life & Depression Among Working And Non-Working Women”

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Abstract: Study of purpose has gained significant importance in the times we live in. as life gets challenging, having a strong sense of purpose keeps us grounded and enables us to have a better quality of life. It also helps keep depression at bay. In the Indian context, women historically have been playing traditional roles. With time, women’s educational levels are improving dramatically. However, many women are still confined to playing domestic roles. This paper aimed at studying potential differences between working and non-working women in terms of their depression levels, quality of life, and sense of purpose.

Index Terms - working women, non-working women, purpose in life, quality of life, depression, role of purpose, psychological well-being, sense of purpose, role of education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose in life is a much-studied concept in modern times and is gaining popularity with a lot of books being written about it. Psychologists consider this subject as a matter of interest as many current research studies suggest. The more comfortable our lives become, the more important it becomes to connect with a clear sense of meaning because modern comforts and ready availability of resources diminish the struggle to exist and shift the focus on thriving, thereby causing more void in our lives than before.

Purpose

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Life purpose is defined as having set goals and a direction for one's life (Hill et al., 2010). A sense of purpose can be defined as an intrinsic motivation caused by an intrinsic goal that individuals have. In that sense, it can vary from individual to individual depending on their intrinsic values and personal desires combined with the actions taken, as well as individual ability to connect with the larger picture and the external world.

Quality of Life

In psychological terms, quality of life is the experience of personal satisfaction based on different dimensions such as relationships, financial security, job satisfaction, health, psychological well-being, spiritual connection etc. It goes beyond the material concept of wealth. Quality of life (QOL) is defined by the World Health Organization as "an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns".

Depression

Depression is a widespread, common mood disorder affecting about 3.5% of the global population characterized by persistent feeling of sadness, lack of motivation, loss of interest and pleasure in activities. It goes beyond feeling low or unhappy for a few days.

Relationship between Quality of Life, Depression and Purpose

Relationship between Quality of Life, Depression and sense of Purpose is inextricably linked together. According to Veenhoven (2024), having a clear purpose in life can increase 4 psychological well-being, reduce stress, and encourage healthier lifestyle choices, all of which contribute to a higher quality of life. In contrast, a high quality of life, defined by excellent health, financial stability, and supportive social ties, fosters the discovery and pursuit of one's purpose. In this interrelationship, purpose makes up around 60% of the variability in improving quality of life, whereas an excellent standard of life provides approximately 40% of the ability to find and retain a sense of meaning (Rock & Chung, 2024).

Good mental health promotes a higher quality of life by allowing people to enjoy life, handle stress, and keep up strong relationships. In contrast, poor psychological wellness can reduce feeling of enjoyment, good relationships and increase stress leading to lower quality of life.

When one's mental health is harmed, such as in cases of anxiety or depression, it can cloud one's sense of purpose. Individuals may struggle to establish and achieve significant goals, resulting in a lack of direction and fulfillment (Yıldırım, & Ahmad Aziz, I., 2020). Depression frequently induces thoughts of hopelessness and worthlessness, whereas anxiety can cause overpowering fear and avoidance, both of which impede the pursuit of a meaningful life. In contrast, a strong sense of purpose can considerably improve mental health and quality of life. Purpose gives people motivation, direction, and purpose, all of which are essential for mental health. Engaging in activities that are consistent with one's values and aspirations promotes a sense of success and happiness, boosting overall quality of life (Moreno, 2020).

II.STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Women who work and stay-at-home mothers have distinct yet equally significant roles to play, each with unique responsibilities, challenges, and life experiences. We can have a better understanding of these discrepancies' effects on obligations, social relationships, financial autonomy, and mental health by calculating the percentages associated with them. While homemakers are financially dependent on others, working women are self-sufficient and do not rely on others for financial support Song et.al. (2024). While stay-at-home moms might find it difficult to manage some situations sensibly, working women frequently possess a better developed thought process that helps them handle a variety of scenarios more effectively. Furthermore, compared to stay-at-home moms, working women had lower rates of depression, which promotes greater mental health and reduced anxiety Song et.al. (2024). It revealed that women in the workforce had lower rates of depression than do stay-at home moms. Gaining a feeling of purpose from work, as well as social connection and financial independence, can all improve mental health. On the other hand, homemakers could experience social isolation, rejection, and little support from others, which makes them more susceptible to depression Bucciarelli et.al. (2022). Workplace regularity and structure, as well as chances for professional and personal development, can all have a favorable effect on mental health. Consequently, the involvement and external validation that come with having a job seem to give some protection against depression for women, even though both occupations have their obstacles Bangasser & Cuarenta, (2021).

This research aimed at finding the differences between working women and non-working women in their sense of purpose, quality of life and depression in order to explore futuristically methods of bridging the gap, if any, and enabling women to derive most out of their lives.

III.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Though the effects differ for men and women, the prevalence of depression and anxiety has a major impact on both the meaning of life and quality of life Mahta et.al. (2023). Research shows that women are more prone than men to suffer from these mental health issues; of them, 20–25% of women have depression, and 22.4% have anxiety disorders Mirza et.al. (2021). In contrast, men are more likely to encounter these conditions—11–14% and 16.3%, respectively. A combination of hormonal, psychological, and biological variables may be responsible for this discrepancy. An individual's feeling of purpose in life can be drastically diminished by depression and anxiety. These circumstances frequently result in depressing and unmotivating feelings, which makes it challenging for people to establish and work towards worthwhile objectives Curran et.al. (2020). The strain of juggling obligations to one's family, career, and culture can be particularly heavy on women.

The entwined ideas of life's purpose and life quality have a profound impact on an individual's mental existence, with each being essential to general well-being. Motivation and resiliency are fuelled by a sense of purpose, which offers a structure for direction as well as significance, Mensah, G. B., & Addy 2024. It is the motivation behind establishing and working towards objectives, personally and professionally, and it fosters a sense of success and fulfilment. Due to its ability to make people feel as though their experiences and labours are important and useful, intrinsic motivation is crucial for preserving a good life view Cullen, Gulati, & Kelly (2020). When someone has a clear goal in mind, they are more likely to approach setbacks with excitement and tenacity, seeing them as chances for personal development rather than impenetrable hurdles.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study compared the association between purpose and quality of life. It also revealed the link between purpose and depression and specifically compared working and non-working women. Standardized tests were used named Quality of Life (QoL), Beck's Depression Inventory and Purpose in Life test.

Objective

To investigate the link between working women, their sense of purpose in life, depression and quality of life.

Hypotheses

1. Working Women will have higher scores on Quality of Life (QoL) test.
2. Working Women will have higher scores on Purpose in Life test.
3. Working Women will have lower scores on Beck's Depression Inventory.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The total sample size was of 224 women between ages 30 to 50, out of which 120 were working and 124 were non-working. Using the Pearson correlation and student t-test the data was analyzed as depicted in table 1.

Table 1: Depicting females working and non-working parameters

	Parameter	Not Working		Working		t	P value
		N	Mean ± sd	N	Mean ± sd		
Female	Quality of Life Score	125	41.29±9.3	119	89.74±9.78	-39.66	<u><0.001</u>
	Beck's Depression score	125	20.9±4.37	119	7.21±6.21	19.845	<u><0.001</u>
	Purpose of life test	125	41.68±6.19	119	83.85±10.77	-37.272	<u><0.001</u>

The data depicted that the comparison of the Quality of Life Score between the two groups working, and non-working females shows that Quality of Life Score is higher in Working group with a t value of -39.66 and is statistically significant with a p value of <0.001. However, comparison of the Beck's Depression score between the two groups shows that Beck's Depression score is higher in non-working group with a t value of 19.845 and is statistically significant with a p value of <0.001.

Likewise, comparison of the Purpose of Life test between the two groups shows that Purpose of Life test is higher in Working group with a t value of -37.272 and is statistically significant with a p value of <0.001 giving an understanding that working women has a better purpose of life test in their life.

Thus, all 3 hypotheses are found significant and are supported by the results.

VI. CONCLUSION

Understanding the connection between purpose and mental health is essential to comprehending the wellbeing of women who work and those who do not. According to Hill and Turiano (2014), having a sense of purpose acts as a protective barrier against mental health issues including anxiety and depression. However, the stressors that both groups deal with can have an impact on their general quality of life and mental well-being. While non-working women may battle with social expectations and feelings of loneliness, working women frequently face stress connected to their jobs (Moen et al., 2011). Women in both groups are better able to handle these pressures when they have a strong sense of purpose, which improves mental health outcomes.

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