

Employment as a predictor of life satisfaction among women

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Economic growth generally brings about changes in the interpersonal relationships as well as in the satisfaction one derives from the life. The education and employment of women, which is an important aspect of economic development, also serve this purpose to a great extent. Education and employment help in improving the quality of life of women leading to greater life satisfaction. Keeping this theoretical explanation in mind, the present study was planned with 200 married women (100 employed and 100 unemployed) living in Ludhiana city. Life satisfaction scale by Alam and Srivastava was used to assess life satisfaction of the respondents. Findings revealed that majority of the employed women were found to be more satisfied in their life as compared to unemployed women. A significant positive relationship existed between employment status and life satisfaction. Education was found to be significantly associated with life satisfaction in case of unemployed respondents. Employment improves personal and social life of women thus improving their life satisfaction. Hence, employment seems to be most important tool in the empowerment of women in contemporary Indian society.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Life satisfaction, Employment, Women

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Life satisfaction is a sum total of the perception of an individual towards his various aspects of life. It is his life in family, society and the environment he lives in. It is a composite measure comprising of physical, mental and social well-being as perceived by each individual or by group of individuals. It includes happiness, satisfaction and gratification as health, marriage, family work, financial situations, educational opportunities, self-esteem, creativity, belongingness and trust in others.

Life satisfaction is attained when a person's needs are fulfilled by his interaction with his environment (Zibbell, 1971). Life satisfaction is the subject's general feelings of well being and contentment (Bonhan and Johnson, 1982). Maddox (1987) used the concept of life satisfaction as one's subjective evaluation of the overall quality of inner experiences along a positive and negative continuum. Life satisfaction is a composite measure comprising of physical, mental and social well-being as perceived by each individual or by group of individuals, that is to say happiness, satisfaction and gratification as health, marriage, family work, financial

situations, educational opportunities, self-esteem, creativity belongingness and trust in others.

It is generally held that economic growth brings about changes in the interpersonal relationships as well as in the satisfaction one derived from the life. The education and employment of women, which is an important aspect of economic development, is also believed to serve this purpose to a great extent. Economic growth, education and employment also help women to get the injustice, perpetuated through sex discrimination and other social practices vindicated. They have an equal access to health, education and occupations. Within the family they have an equal say in the decision making and control over their lives. In short education and employment help in improving the quality of life of women leading to greater life satisfaction. In traditional Indian society, employment of women beyond her domestic engagement was considered a taboo. In modern society, especially in India education and employment has been considered as one of the major tools for empowerment of women (Bala and Monga, 2008).

It is not out of context to point out that in modern world women are increasingly entering in almost all occupations which were earlier dominated by men. In this context, a pertinent question emerges, whether education and employment improves life satisfaction of women? It can be assumed that employment leads to reduction in household responsibilities of the working women and places them at a higher level of status. Employment makes women more conscious about their individual rights, they are more conscious in the matter of interaction with other people. Enhanced family income, reduced disparity between earning and purchasing power improve quality of life in terms of food and nutrition, their illness behaviour, living condition education, recreation, health, social aspect of well being and economic autonomy in the form of equality between men and women in the decision making (Bergman, 1986).

In India number of females obtaining education and entering into labour force has increased. This indicates change in traditional social attitude towards female education and employment. In this backdrop of theoretical explanations that education and employment improve level of life satisfaction among women, present study was planned.

RESEARCH METHODS

The present study was undertaken in Ludhiana city, the industrial capital of Punjab. It is also known as 'Monchester of India', which is country's biggest hosiery centre and spare parts maker having population of more than 2.5 million. The purposive sample consisted of 200 married women within age range of 35 to 45 years of age. Out of total sample of 200, 100 women were employed and 100 were un-employed. The employed women were working in public sector. Life satisfaction scale by Alam and Srivastava (2001) was used to assess the life satisfaction of the respondents. The scale consisted of 60 items related to satisfaction about their health,

personal, economic, marital, social and job aspects to be rated on two point rating scales.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 depicts the impact of employment on the life satisfaction of women. On the whole it was found that majority of the women were satisfied from their life. As about three fourth (76.5 per cent) of the respondents expressed their satisfaction and the remaining (23.5 per cent) said they were dissatisfied with their life. On comparing life satisfaction between employed and unemployed groups, it was observed that majority of employed women (97.00 per cent) were satisfied with their life as against 56 per cent in the unemployed category. The calculated χ^2 was found to be 46.75 which is significant at 0.01 per cent level of significance indicating that a significant relationship existed between employment status and life satisfaction. Employment status is responsible for achieving higher level of satisfaction in life.

It can be concluded that employment significantly affected life satisfaction level of women. It may be due to the fact that on one hand employment adds to economic gains and on the other hand, enhances one's position in the society and exposure to outside world which brings change in the attitude and outlook towards life.

Table 2 depicts the relationship of educational level with life satisfaction of women. It is very much evident from the table that women having educational level of matric and beyond were having higher life satisfaction. However, on comparing both employed and unemployed groups, having education upto to matriculation, it was seen that more employed (96.87 per cent) indicated satisfaction from their life as against 73.99 per cent of the unemployed women. Similar observations were evident in case of women having education upto graduation and above. All graduate and above women in unemployed group showed full life satisfaction. To be

Table 1: Relationship of employment status with life satisfaction

Level of satisfaction	Employed women	Unemployed women	Total	χ^2
Satisfied	97	56	153(76.5)	46.75*
Dissatisfied	03	44	47(23.5)	
Total	100	100	200	

* indicate significance of value at $p= 0.01$, respectively

Table 2 : Relationship of level of education with life satisfaction

Level of satisfaction	Employed women		Total	Unemployed women		Total
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied		Satisfied	Dissatisfied	
Illiterate	00 (00.00)	00 (00.00)	0	10 (41.66)	14 (58.34)	24
Matric	62 (96.87)	02 (02.33)	64	38 (73.99)	30 (26.61)	68
Graduate	35 (97.22)	01 (02.88)	36	08 (100)	00 (00.00)	08
Total	97	03	100	56	44	100

$\chi^2 = 0.514$ NS $\chi^2 = 21.22$ * S * indicate significane of value at $p= 0.05$, respectively

more explicit the number of dissatisfied low educated respondents in unemployed group was more whereas in employed low educated respondents, no one expressed dissatisfaction with life. Higher proportion of satisfied subjects in employed educated respondents may be due to the fact that education along with employment contributes towards life satisfaction of the respondents by providing psychological and economic security. Statistical analysis shows that in case of employed respondents, education was not found to be associated with life satisfaction as calculated χ^2 value was 0.514, insignificant at 0.05 per cent level of significance. In case of unemployed respondents, education was found to be significantly associated with life satisfaction as χ^2 value was 21.22, significant at 0.05 per cent level of significance.

The present finding corresponds to the views held by Sethi (1988); Kumar (1993); Das and Leena (1993); UNICEF (1998); Suswagata and Khan (1999) and Vijayapriya (2001) who on the bases of their research studies indicated that employment improves personal and social life of women thus improving their life satisfaction. Hence, employment seems to be most important tool in the empowerment of women in contemporary Indian society.

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