Comparative study on Self-Esteem of Working and Non-working Women in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

Background: Even though the frequency of self-esteem is documented globally, however, the level of self-esteem and its contributing factors varies across the world and could be unique when we are talking about Pakistan due to unique local cultural and social beliefs.

Objective: To compare the self-esteem level among working and non-working women in selected organizations of Peshawar, Pakistan.

Methodology: This cross-sectional study was conducted in selected areas (University Town and Hayatabad) Peshawar during 2018. Data was collected using Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSES). A total of 150 research participants (75 working and 75 were non-working each), were selected from the different institutes of Hayatabad and University Town. Analysis was carried out through SPSS-20. Chi-square test was used for comparing the frequency while t-test was used for comparing the mean considering a p-value ≤0.05 as significant.

Results: A total of 150 subjects with a mean age of 33.9±6.9 years (range 25-50 years) participated in the study. The self-esteem of the overall subjects revealed a mean score of 17.9±5.4 (ranged from 1 to 28). The prevalence of low self-esteem was 42 (28%), out of whom 40 (26.7%) accounted in non-working women and only 2 (1.3%) were found in working women (p=0.001). Furthermore, 5 (3.3%) were found with high self-esteem levels out of whom 4 (2.7%) were from working women and only 1 (0.7%) were from non-working (p=0.0001).

Conclusion: It is concluded that a higher proportion of non-working women have low self-esteem as compared to working women, indicating that the alternate hypothesis was true i.e. self-esteem of working women is higher as compared to non-working women.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Women, Working status

Introduction

The working status of an individual plays a significant role in the progress of a nation.[1] A well-being of humans is vital and our potentialities and self-esteem are the feelings of an individual referring to themself as an important part of society. It is a society itself that could be positive or negative.[2] It is the image or self-concept in another person's eye, which he or she sees for himself or herself. If that image is positive her/his self-esteem gets high or positive and if the image in front of others is negative that person's self-esteem gets lower.[3] Self-esteem is considered as the inner feeling of proficiency of an individual. It is the powerful constituent of self-acceptance and mostly it is evolved or adopted.[4] Notably lesser conceptual self is the prime indicator for low self-esteem. The conceptual self-image depends upon the social environment of the person and is influenced by the feedback given by the people.[5]

Healthy self-esteem is stranded on our potentialities to assess oneself completely and is in a position to admit and avail ourselves unrestrictedly.[6] This means being faithful about one's own shortcomings and strong-mindedness, at the same time admitting ourselves as creditable and substantial without our circumstances and uncertainties. Self-esteem is one link between culture and norms and whether that person with high self-esteem is an extrovert or with low self-esteem is an introvert. Baumeister presented that those women who work have the potentiality to play various roles may lead to high self-esteem because engaging with different people and doing multiple tasks may increase their abilities to do their work efficiently. It is found that high self-esteem lesser the risks of anxiety, making it possible to cope with the situation and boosting physical health.[9]

Women are more prone to depression and low self-esteem than men in Pakistan, and it is estimated that 30 to 66% of women had anxiety and depression.[10] It

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is reported that working outside adversely affects the main roles of women in society and they feel more insecure as result women are less likely to get topmost managerial appointments.[11] Healthy working environment encourages working women to be confident and open for all discussions. Besides this women are quite talkative and they always want to share matters with others. So, the working women's self-esteem is a bit high compared to non-working women. In some or other way the working women's freedom need is also satisfied.[11] In comparison to the rural areas, urban areas have proper schools and transport. Now women are encouraged to do the job all over the world including Pakistan, though in the past conservative culture did not allow them. Increased levels of education among the general population and media have changed the conservative attitude.[12] A local study conducted in Karachi revealed females in urban are getting more opportunities in education and jobs as compared to males.[12] Self-esteem varies among individuals and is based on multiple factors as a huge difference is seen in urban and rural areas. Culture plays an important role in the working status of women. The working of women is overlooked hence are restricted to the home, especially in the peripheral areas of the city. The objective of this study was to compare the level of self-esteem among working and non-working in, Peshawar Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Methodology

A comparative cross-sectional approach was used and this study was conducted at University Town and Hayatabad Peshawar. The study participants were comprised of both working and non-working women (aged 25-45 years). Workers were selected from schools and banks using convenient sampling techniques while a sample of 150 married women was selected in which 75 women were working and 75 were non-working women. Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale (RSES) was used for data collection. Scores between 15 and 25 are within the normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem and above 25 as high self-esteem. After informed consent, a questionnaire was handed over to the subject provided she was educated. If she needed help, the team member explained it to the subject and assisted them in filling out the questionnaire. Data analyses were done by using SPSS version 20. Frequency and Percentages were compared using the chi-square test, keeping $p \leq 0.05$ as significant. Ethical approval was sought from the ethics committee of the Khyber Institute of Child Health, Peshawar.
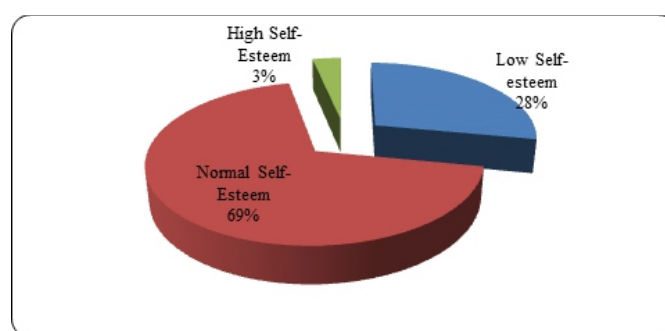
Results

Among a total of 150 participants who were included in the study, the mean age was 33.9±6.9 years (ranged from 25-50 years). Overall 76 (50.7%) have 1-2 children, 70 (46.7%) have 3-4 children, and 4 (2.7%) children. The self-esteem of the overall subjects revealed that the average score of self-esteem was 17.9±5.4 (ranged from 1-28) indicating that the majority had normal self-esteem. (Table-I)

Table-I: Descriptions of study variables among overall study participants

Variable	N	Mean±SD	Min–Max
Age in Years	150	33.9±6.9	25-50
Number of Children	150	3±1	1-6
Self Esteem Score	150	17.9±5.4	1-28

Further categories indicate that normal self-esteem was found in 69% of the women while low self-esteem accounted for 28% and 3% were found with high self-esteem as shown in figure-I.

Figure-I: Overall pattern of self-esteem among study subjects

To avoid preventable technical biases almost all demographic characteristics were kept similar to some extent as depicted from the result. Mean age of working women 33.6± 6.7 (ranged from 25-50 years) and non-working women 34.2±7.1 (ranged from 25-50 years) as indicated by p-value = 0.5.
The prevalence of low self-esteem was 42 (28%), out of whom 40 (26.7%) accounted in non-working women and only 2 (1.3%) were found in working

women. Similarly among the normal 103 (68.7%) (Normal ranged self-esteem group) majority 69 (46.0%) were working women as compared to 34 (22.7%). Furthermore, 5 (3.3%) were found with high self-esteem levels out of whom 4 (2.7%) were from working women and only 1 (0.7%) were from non-working women. The p-value from the chi-square test shows a significant difference in the self-esteem level among women of the two groups and the working women were more satisfied with their life. (Table-II)

Table-II: Comparison of Self-esteem level among working and non-working women

Self-Esteem Categories	Self-Esteem Categories		Total	p-value
	Working Women	Non-working Women		
< 15 Score: Low Self-esteem	2 (1.3%)	40 (26.7%)	42 (28.0%)	0.001
15-25 Score: Normal Self-Esteem	69 (46.0%)	34 (22.7%)	103 (68.7%)	
>25 Score: High Self-Esteem	4 (2.7%)	1 (0.7%)	5 (3.3%)	
Total	75	75	150	

Discussion

This study focused on the estimation of self-esteem level and compared it among working and non-working women. The result of the study was based on a cross-sectional analytical approach. The burden of low self-esteem was observed among 28% of the women where the majority were non-working women. It is reported that women's identities have had a bad blow and they are fragile and conflictual in our society: at work, they feel like frauds and they feel worthless at home.[13] Women are ambivalent about whether they want to be feminine or masculine. Negative feelings, lack of control over life, illnesses, stressful life events lead to low self-esteem.[14] There is a positive relationship between depression and low self-esteem.[15] This would make females prone to mental problems, negative attitude develops due to which it becomes difficult to see the world in a positive way and to succeed in future.[16-18]

Employment increases the emotional maturity of working women, and studies have shown that work has shown greater emotional maturity than

non-working women in Peshawar city Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. In the present study, a total of 150 sampled subjects with mean age 33.9±6.9 years (ranging from 25-50 years) participated in the study. Employment serves as a resource for increasing trust and self-esteem, emotional maturity in females. This increases mental strengths and improves a sense of psychological well-being along with autonomy and expansion of their social network. Self-esteem on a certain threshold is a protective resource for women.[19] It is further testified that emotional maturity is achieved at the age of 30 and above and the same is reported in the present study.[20] The present study further indicates that mean self-esteem score 17.9±5.4 years (ranged from 1-28) indicating that majority had normal self-esteem. However, the average was low as compared to a study conducted in among Secondary School Students in the Klang District, who had a 27.31 score of self-esteem.[20]

In the present study low self-esteem was found in 28% of women regardless of working status, while 3% were found with high self-esteem. A study from Nigeria indicate that the mean self-esteem score for all respondents (male and female n=507) was 15.77±2.769 which was more or less similar to the present study. However, only 3.6% (4.3% females and 2.5% Males) were found to have low self-esteem. The adolescent was more affected as compared to young.[21] This indicated that low self-esteem among women is very high as compared to adolescence in Nigeria.

Keeping perspective of the biases and confounders matching among both groups (working vs Non-working) was done as revealed from the results that mean age of working women 33.6± 6.7 (ranged from 25-50 years) and non-working women 34.2± 7.1 (ranged from 25-50 years) as indicated by the p-value of 0.5 showing similar age values. Thus the rest of the result will be the true picture of both groups. The subcategories of age were also significantly differed in both groups. Similarly, the number of children also matched (p>0.05). The comparative analysis indicates that 40 (26.7%) of women with low self-esteem belong to a non-working group. On other hand, only 2 (1.3%) working women had low self-esteem (P<0.05). This indicates that working women were more satisfied with their life. This result was consistent with a similar study from Tehran, which

also reported high self-esteem in working women. This predicts that women's empowerment has a positive association with increased self-esteem, leading to satisfaction from life.[22] Comparatively high number of working women feel worthy as compared to non-working women (p<0.0001).[19] A higher proportion of working women perceive that they have qualities (p<0.0001), feeling successful, and a positive attitude towards themselves. However working and non-working were eager to have more respect as both of the group some time feel useless, are not good at all. however non-working women score higher in these two variables.[23]

A significant proportion (25.3%) and 38.7%) of non-working women also expressed that they are good at all meaning that they were lacking self-esteem and self-recognition. Literature indicates that those women may have lessor roles at home and society, therefore, feels inferior. They are needed to be involved in various roles at the house. This in turn will contribute to high adaptability in them for their identity and self-esteem.[24] Accepting more roles would enhance learning and develop self-efficacy through social interactions, moral and emotional support among women regardless of their working status.[25] This provides cognitive cushioning to the women gives gratification to them when things go wrong in a domain of life. Financial empowerment of women is associated with better physical mental and social health counter-balancing of the positive and negative things that happened in life.[26] However, stress felt by working women cannot be denied in the particular socio-cultural climate of Pakistan, especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Further study is recommended to see the self-esteem, stress, anxiety, and depression in relation to the working status of women in the different culturally diverse areas of Pakistan.

Conclusion

It is concluded that self-esteem is one of the important predictors of mental health and is strongly associated with women empowerment as depicted from the result of the present study where working women had high self-esteem levels and life satisfaction as compared to non-working women. Extensive research is needed to tackle the causes and preventive measures at the household level.

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