

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY OF LIFE AND PERCEIVED

STRESS: A CASTE PERSPECTIVE

RICHA RANI YADAV

Department of Psychology, DAV P.G. College, BHU, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

The present study was done on 200 (General-N=100 and SC-N=100) women of Varanasi belongs to joint and nuclear family. They were chosen according to the stratified sampling method. Data collection tool was Perceived Stress Scale: 14 items (Cohen, Kamarck and mermelstain 1983) and Quality of Life was developed by THE WHOQOL GROUP in 1991. Data was analyzed with the help of correlation. Findings explore that perceived stress and quality of life has been positively correlated in General and SC caste women of nuclear and joint family.

KEYWORDS: Perceived Stress, Quality of Life, Joint and Nuclear Family and Caste

INTRODUCTION

The word "family" comes from the Latin word "familia", which means household. In India the family is so much more than the basic, nuclear family. In India, cousins are considered siblings, biological aunts and uncles are like parents and strangers are referred to as auntie and uncle. The family is the most important institution that has survived through the ages. This was truly applicable to a joint family in India. Living together under the same roof with grandparents, their sons and grandsons, with their wives and children, is indeed a unique experience, especially in Indian villages.

Family is one of the universal and permanent institutions of mankind. In every society and at every stage of development we found some sort of family. As a result we found different types of family all over the world. But in India we found a peculiar family system which deserves special attention. The family in India does not consist only of husband, wife and their children but also of uncles, aunts and cousins and grandsons. This system is called joint family or extended family system. This joint family system is a peculiar characteristic of the Indian social life. Usually a son after marriage does not separate himself from the parents but continue to live under the same roof eating food cooked at one hearth participating in common worship and holding property in common and every person has share in it. All the members of joint family keep their earnings in a common fund out of which family expenses are met. Accordingly Indian Joint family system is like a socialistic community in which every member earns according to his capacity and receives according to his needs. This joint family or extended family is organized on close blood relationships. It normally consists of member of three to four generations.

The **nuclear family** or **elementary family** is a term used to define a family group consisting of a pair of adults and their children. This is in contrast to a single-parent family, to the larger extended family, and to a family with more than two parents. Nuclear families typically center on a married couple, the nuclear family may have any number of children. The term *nuclear family* first appeared in the early twentieth century. The concept that a narrowly defined nuclear

family is central to testability in modern society has been promoted by familialists who are social conservatives in the United States, and has been challenged as historically and sociologically inadequate to describe the complexity of actual family relations. Family structures of one married couple and their children were present in Western Europe and New England in the 17th century, influenced by church and theocratic governments. Alternative definitions have evolved to include family units headed by same-sex parents, and perhaps additional adult relatives who take on a cohabiting parental role; in this latter case it also receives the name of conjugal family. The term *nuclear* is used in its general meaning referring to a central entity or "nucleus" around which others collect.

The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It contains adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults.

Hence, a nuclear family is an autonomous unit free from the control of the elders. Since there is physical distance between parents and their married children, there is minimum interdependence between them.

Womenfolk are commonly blamed for the breaking up of a family because they are the most sufferers due the disadvantages, which is more evident in most of the cases. Modern stresses, city strains and rampant materialism conspire to make urban joint families irrelevant or even extinct. It becomes difficult for an independent lady with self esteem and self ego to survive in a situation like this.

Stress is a feeling of strain and pressure. Small amounts of stress may be desired, beneficial, and even healthy. Positive stress helps improve athletic performance. It also plays a factor in motivation, adaptation, and reaction to the environment. Excessive amounts of stress, however, may lead to bodily harm. Stress can increase the risk of strokes, heart attacks, ulcers, dwarfism, and mental illnesses such as depression. Stress can be external and related to the environment, but may also be created by internal perceptions that cause an individual to experience anxiety or other negative emotions surrounding a situation, such as pressure, discomfort, etc.

Stress is negative emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, psychological, cognitive and behavioural changes that are directed either toward altering the stressful event or accommodating to its effects.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Singh, M. and Singh, A.(2000) shows in their study that women's psychological health status may likely to get affected during middle age due to psychological changes occurring in this phase primarily because of biological changes and changes in the familial environment. Programmed interventions like meditation, relaxation and their attitudes, behaviors', cognitions, quality of life, thereby maintaining their overall status.

Surti, K., Sarupria, D. (1981) explores in their research findings that much higher level of role stress experienced by women who live in nuclear families. For women in nuclear families, the act of balancing personal and professional roles is a much challenging and even daunting experiences, and takes a heavier psychological and physical toll than for women in extended families.

Lazarus, (1999); Maddi & Khoshaba, (2005) found in their result that, "Our view of the world depends on which stimuli we attend to and how we interpret, them. Any potential stressor, where it is a crowded elevator or a deskful of

work, usually has a more negative impact on those who perceive it as a threat than on those who see it as challenge.”

Adejumobi, A. and Odunmosu, O. (1998) found in their study the two indicators of quality of life are pointing to two different things. Subjective indicators focus on pleasure as the basic building block of human happiness and satisfaction of quality of life. However, the objective indicator on the other hand, focuses on a radically different perspective. To those who are working with this indicator, the important question to ask at the individual level are whether people are healthy, well fed, appropriately housed, economically secure and well educated or not rather than whether they feel happy.

Young-McCaughan S., Sexton D.L. (1991) shows in study that, “the women who exercised perceived significantly fewer barriers to exercise as measured by the Perceived Barriers to Exercise Scale (PBE Scale) and were more likely to be married or living with a significant other.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

India has its glorious past. If we consider its family structure in its social frame work we come to know the Joint family structure, as its base comprises all uniformity and strength of the entire member as structure shells. People belongs to joint type of family are considered to be stress free than Nuclear family as it works as support system for the family members having better Quality of life whereas, Nuclear family structure introduced as an influence of the western social family culture comprises husband wife and children. For this type of family it was thought of that the all members of this family have their all mutual freedom and leads to stress free family life as joint family.

Here, in the present study it has been planned to examine the correlation pattern of perceived stress and Quality of life these women of general and Sc caste women of Joint and Nuclear family.

Objective

- To examine the co-relational patterns of perceived stress and WHO Quality of Life in the women of joint and nuclear family of general and scheduled caste.

Hypothesis

- There would be significant co-relational patterns of perceived stress and WHO Quality of Life in the women of joint and nuclear family of general and scheduled caste.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The present study was conducted on a sample of 200 General and Scheduled caste women (100 +100) of joint and nuclear families study has been drawn on the basis of stratified proportionate random sampling from joint and nuclear families of Varanasi city. Their age range 30 – 45 years.

Tools

Perceived Stress Scale: 14 Items (Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstain 1983)

The perceived stress scale (PSS) was developed to measure how controllable and unpredictable people viewed their lives, an important component of the experience of stress. The original version had 14 items asking participants to

rate their stress over the past month with 7 items negatively stated and 7 items positively stated. The response set ranges from 0 (never) to 4 (very often) and positively stated items are reverse coded. Higher score indicating more stress scores for the 14 items from range from 0-56.

Quality of Life (Brief) WHO

The World Health Organization Quality of Life was developed by *THE WHOQOL GROUP in 1991*. The aim was to develop an international cross-culturally comparable quality of life assessment instrument. It assesses the individual's perceptions in the context of their culture and value systems, and their personal goals, standards and concerns the WHOQOL instruments were developed collaboratively in a number of centers worldwide, and have been widely field-tested. The WHOQOL-BRIEF instrument comprises 26 items, which measure the Four broad domains: - physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment. Age range of this test is 18 and above.

Mode of administration of this test is Self- administered, interviewer –administered. This is self report questionnaire. Participants express how much they have experienced the items in the preceding 2 weeks likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

Procedure

Above mentioned questionnaire has been administered as per instruction provided in its respective manual before starting all participants has explain properly about the present study and confidentiality of information given by them. The interaction of above mentioned measure has been very clearly explain the participants and demonstrated. The formats of responses have been find time limit (30 mints for answering). After administrating test the scoring the data has been processed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In present research work data analysis has been done with the help of inferential (correlation) statistics. Result as per hypothesis is as follows -

Hypothesis

- **There would be significant correlation patterns of perceived stress and WHO Quality of Life in the women of joint and nuclear family of general and scheduled caste.**

For the verification of the above hypothesis on the variables perceived stress scale and WHO Quality of life with its Dimension for General Caste and Scheduled Caste women belongs to joint and nuclear families, regulation of correlation - coefficient has been analyzed. Results obtain have been shown in table 1. It is clear that between perceived stress and **Physical Health** dimension of Quality of life the correlation was ($r = -.02$) not found significant.

Table 1: Correlation among the Variables for the General and Scheduled Caste Women of Joint and Nuclear Family (N= 200)

Variables	Physical Health	Psycho-logical Health	Social Relationship	Environment	QOL Total
Perceived Stress	-.02	-.19**	-.08	-.18**	.18**

The result table explore that between perceived stress and **Psychological Health** dimension of Quality of life

highly significant and negative correlation ($r = -.19 P < .01$) was observed.

Therefore, increment in perceived stress is associated with decrement in Psychological Health dimension of Quality of life in the General and Scheduled caste women of joint and nuclear family.

Above result table also shows that between perceived stress and **Social Relationship** dimension of Quality of life insignificant and negative correlation ($r = .08$) was observed.

The result table 1 clears that between perceived stress and **Environment** dimension of Quality of life highly significant and negative correlation ($r = .18 P < .01$) was observed.

Therefore, increment in perceived stress is associated with decrement in Environment dimension of Quality of life in the General and Scheduled caste women of joint and nuclear family.

Table 1 speaks that between Perceived Stress Scale and **full scale** of WHO Quality highly significant and high positive correlation ($r = .18 P < .01$) was observed.

Therefore increment in perceived stress is associated with the enhancement of the WHO Quality of life.

By the above finding it seems that more than optimal level of stress is required to do the challenging task as making adjustment with other family members either joint family or nuclear family in present scenario for General and Scheduled caste women to improvise their Quality of life.

Stress theories of “cognitive cost” by Cohan (1978) and theory of “helplessness and stress” by Martin Seligman (1975) supports the above research findings.

CONCLUSIONS

- Stress adversely affect the psychological and social health, home environment, safety, security and finance of general and schedule caste women of joint and nuclear family.
- In both general and schedule caste women of joint and nuclear families perceived stress is working positively in taking the challenges of life which increases their quality of life.

REFERENCES

1. Adejumobi, A. and O. Odunmosu (1998). Survey of Quality of life of Nigerians. Ibadan: Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research. Pp 62 – 67.
2. Cohan, S. (1978). Environmental load and allocations of attentions. In A. Baum, J.E. Singer, & S. Valins (Eds), *Advances in environmental psychology* (Vol. I, pp. 1-29). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
3. Seligman, M. (1975). Generality of learned helplessness in men. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 31, 311-327.
4. Lazarus, R. S. (1999). *Stress and Emotion: A new synthesis*. New York: Springer.
5. McCaughan, Y. S, Sexton DL (1991). United States Army Nurse Corps, Madigan Army Medical Center, Fort Lewis, WA. *Oncology Nursing Forum* [1991, 18(4):751- 757].

6. Singh, M. and Singh, A. (2000). Study on Family and Psychosocial Health Status of Middle-Aged Working Women of Varanasi City. *The Internet Journal of Third World Medicine*. 2005 Volume 3 Number 2.
7. Surti, K., & Sarupria, D.(1981, November). Psychological factors affecting women entrepreneurs. Some finding, paper presenting at the 2nd international conference of Women entrepreneurs, New Delhi, India.