



# Work, Identity, and Well-Being: A Psychological Comparison of Women's Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem

Dr. Hakalyah Palaparthi, Degree Lecturer in Psychology, Department of Psychology, MJPTBCWR Degree college, Telangana University.

Dr. Tavitha Tulasi, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Sri Padmavathi Mahila University.

## Abstract

The present study investigated differences in two variables that are life satisfaction and self-esteem between working and non-working women. A total sample of 197 women age ranging from 25 to 45 years was selected, which comprising 101 working women and 96 non-working women. Standardized psychological instruments were utilized, including the Life Satisfaction Scale (Kumar & Dhyani, 1982) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) along with the demographic data sheet. Results of the descriptive statistics revealed that working women have reported higher mean scores both on life satisfaction and self-esteem scales when compared to non-working women. Independent samples t-tests results confirmed that these differences were statistically significant which indicates that employment status plays a major and meaningful role in shaping psychological well-being. Results of the Pearson correlation analysis further demonstrated that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction across both groups, with the association being stronger among working women. These findings of the study suggest that employment status can contribute to greater identity, autonomy and self-worth, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction. On the other hand, non-working women, while deriving satisfaction from family and caregiving to the children's roles, reported comparatively lower self-esteem. The study underscores the importance of work participation, family support, and cultural context in determining women's well-being.

**Keywords:** Life satisfaction, psychological well-being of women, working and non-working women, self-esteem among women.

## Introduction

The role of women in contemporary society has been undergoing a huge transformation that increasing their participation in the workforce. This transformation eventually reshaping the traditional notions of identity, self-definition, life satisfaction and psychological well-being [1]. While work life offers great opportunity for financial independence, social recognition, as well as personal growth it also comes with challenges such as balancing professional and domestic responsibilities, stress and sometimes role conflict at workplace. Contrariwise, non-working women often experience a great fulfilment through family responsibility yet suffers from issues such as dependency, limited autonomy and feelings of low self-worth especially in societies where success is measured by professional achievements.

This study seeks to explore the comparative dimensions of life satisfaction and self-esteem working and non-working women. By examining how employment status interplays with psychological well-being the present study aims to uncover deep patterns that underscores and highlights the benefits and challenges of both roles. The study also tried to throw some light in considering the broader cultural framework, as norms of the society and expectations it poses often dictate the perceived worth of women's contributions not only inside but also outside the workplace.

Understanding these dynamics is very essential because it is highly significant not only academically but it is also very much relevant to the society.

## **Operational Definitions**

### **Working women**

‘Working women are those women who earn money by working or serving in a government or private organization.’ Working women are generally defined as females who perform paid job outside the house. Women who work full time (i.e., 5 to 8 hours a day) in the public sector or private sector.

### **Non-working women**

‘Non-working women are those women who spend all their time taking care of their families, in other words they can also be called housewives.’

### **Life Satisfaction**

Life satisfaction can be defined as how an individual evaluates his or her own life and how far the individual is satisfied about overall quality of his/her life. In psychology terms, life satisfaction is “Overall assessment of feelings and attitude about one’s life at a particular point in time ranging from negative and positive” [2].

### **Self-esteem**

One of the founders of the term [3], defined that self-esteem is related to an individual’s overall good opinion of oneself. Self-esteem is universally defined as a comprehensive gauge of self-evaluation, encompassing cognitive assessments of overall self-worth and emotional responses tied to these evaluations [4].

## **Literature Review**

### **Studies related to Life Satisfaction of women**

Research on life satisfaction shows that relative income significantly impacts individual wellbeing, with income widely recognized as a positional good [5,6,7,8,9]. A study carried out which tried to compare employed and unemployed women in terms of physical stress, family stress, role stress and life satisfaction and the study results reported that there was no significant difference observed in unemployed women [10]. Along with this, employed women exhibited greater levels of life satisfaction compared to unemployed women. Studies also suggest that working women experience significantly greater role stress compared to non-working women and life satisfaction was elevated among working women in contrast to nonworking women. [11]. Anxiety levels have a major impact on Married women who are both working and non-working [12]. Life satisfaction between working and nonworking women did not differ by age, education, or number of children [13]. In terms of satisfaction in marriage also working women reported higher satisfaction when compared to non-working counter partners indicating that working women express greater satisfaction with their marriages [14]. Studies reported substantial differences between working and unemployed women in terms of their level of well-being [15].

Contrast to the above results, few studies reported that there was no discernible difference in physical and familial stress between working and non-working women, and that working women reported higher life satisfaction than non-working women [16]. Another study found that self-esteem scores of married and single women did not significantly differ from one another [17]. There is no meaningful distinction between the levels of life satisfaction based on education and family income [18]. Results indicated no noticeable difference between working and non-working women concerning physical stress or household stress [10].

### **Studies related to Self-esteem among women**

People felt more accepted and loved by their partner on days when their professional lives were marked by success and high self-esteem. Women experienced minor levels of acceptance and love on days when their professional lives were characterized by failure [19]. The correlation between life quality, toughness, and self-efficacy was positive. And they often feel high self-esteem in married women who work when compared to

women who do not work [20]. Research in this field carried out reported that that a greater number of non-working women exhibit low self-esteem in comparison to working women [21]. These findings indicates that level of self-esteem is contingent on being employed or not to a large extent [22, 23]. Research indicates that here is a significant difference between working and nonworking Women in terms of Self-esteem and it results in their overall psychological well-being [24].

## Methodology

Present study employed Comparative cross-sectional design with comparison of two groups of women working and non-working—on measures of life satisfaction and self-esteem. two groups. A total of 197 working and non-working women were selected with the help of purposive sampling technique from workplaces, residential communities, and social organizations in Nizamabad District, Telangana.

### Inclusion criteria:

- Women who are interested to take part in the study.
- Women who are in the age range of 25-45.
- Women who are working in government and private organizations at least from one year.

### Exclusion criteria

- Women who are not interested to take part in the study.
- Women who are not falling in the age range of 25-45.
- Women who are working in government and private organizations less than one year.

### Procedure

- Participants are briefed about the study and provide informed consent.
- Questionnaires are administered individually in a quiet setting.
- Responses are collected anonymously to reduce social desirability bias.

### Psychological tools

- **Demographic questionnaire:** Demographic information such as age, education, marital status, number of children, and employment details from the participants.
- **The Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS):** The Life Satisfaction Scale was developed by Dr. Pramod Kumar and Dr. Jayshree Dhyani in the year 1982 [25]. It is a standardized tool widely used in Indian psychological research which consists of 54 items across five domains namely mental, job, social, marital, and family. The scale has been shown to possess good reliability and validity, and high internal consistency which is reported as high, with Cronbach's alpha values above acceptable thresholds ( $\geq 0.70$ ) making it suitable for assessing subjective well-being in diverse populations
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is used for measuring global self-esteem which is developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965 [26]. It is a 10-item self-report inventory designed to assess an individual's overall sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. All ten items on the survey have four-point Likert scales. For research and therapeutic treatment purposes, this scale is ideal for assessing self-esteem due to its high reliability and validity. RSES has a high degree of reliability which shows in Cronbach's alpha values between 0.77 and 0.88, as reported, indicate that the RSES exhibits a high level of internal consistency.

## Data Analysis

- **Descriptive statistics:** Mean, standard deviation, frequency distributions.
- **Inferential statistics:**
  - Independent samples t-test was carried out to compare working vs. non-working women.
  - Correlation analysis to examine relationships between identity, self-esteem, and life satisfaction.
  - Regression analysis to identify predictors of psychological well-being.

## Ethical Considerations

- Confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation was ensured to all the participants of the study.
- Participants were well informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study if they do not want to continue without any explanation.

## Results

Presented in the tables below are the findings, which aim to provide a complete picture of the study's participants. The demographics, descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated with the help of SPSS version-27 and presented in the tabular form.

**Table-1: Demographic Data Table (N = 197)**

Variable	Category	Working Women (n=101)	Non-Working Women (n=96)	Total (N=197)
Age Group	25–30 years	27	25	52
	31–35 years	31	29	60
	36–40 years	24	23	47
	41–45 years	19	19	38
Marital Status	Married	83	80	163
	Single	12	11	23
	Divorced/Separated/Widowed	6	5	11
Education Level	Secondary	19	19	38
	Undergraduate	41	38	79
	Postgraduate	32	30	62
	Professional/Other	9	9	18
Family Type	Nuclear	63	60	123
	Joint	38	36	74
Number of Children	None	14	13	27
	One	35	32	67
	Two	40	38	78
	Three or more	12	13	25

Table-1 showing the demographic properties of the study. It shows that study comprised a total of 197 women, of which 101 were working and 96 were non-working. The participants of the study ranged in age from 25 to

45 years, with the largest proportion falling in the 31–35-year age group about 30%, this is followed by the age group which is aged from 25 to 30 years around 26%, the group of 36 to 40 years is consisted of 24% and 41–45 years age group is with 20%. Coming to the terms of marital status, the majority of respondents were married which is approximately 83%), while 12% were unmarried or single and the remaining 5% were divorced, separated, or widowed. Educational background of the participants showed that 40% had completed undergraduate studies, 32% were finished their postgraduation, 19% had secondary education and around 9% held professional or other qualifications. Regarding family type, 63% belonged to nuclear families, while 37% lived in joint family systems.

When considering number of children the participants have, 14% of women reported they had no children, 34% of them had one child, 40% which is the largest category had two children, and about 12% had three or more children. The employment status of the participants was evenly distributed by design, with 101 working women engaged in various occupations across government, private and self-employment sectors and 96 non-working women primarily identifying as homemakers or caregivers were taken up into the study.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Life Satisfaction & Self-Esteem**

Variable	Group	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Life Satisfaction	Working Women	101	72.45	8.32
	Non-Working Women	96	68.12	9.05
Self-Esteem	Working Women	101	24.87	4.21
	Non-Working Women	96	21.76	4.89

Table-2 showing the descriptive statistics of the study. Its bare strong variances between working and non-working women on measures of life satisfaction and self-esteem. Among the 101 working women, the mean score on the Life Satisfaction Scale was 72.45 (SD = 8.32), whereas the 96 non-working women reported a lower mean score of 68.12 (SD = 9.05). Similarly, self-esteem scores were higher for working women, with a mean of 24.87 (SD = 4.21), compared to 21.76 (SD = 4.89) for non-working women.

**Table 3: Independent Samples t-Test Results**

Variable	Group Comparison	t-value	df	p-value
Life Satisfaction	Working vs. Non-Working	2.94	195	0.004**
Self-Esteem	Working vs. Non-Working	4.12	195	0.001***

\* $p \leq 0.05$  \*\* $p \leq 0.01$  \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

Table-3 shows the results of the independent samples t-test. It was conducted to compare the scores of working and non-working women on life satisfaction and self-esteem. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in life satisfaction between the two groups, with working women ( $M = 72.45$ ,  $SD = 8.32$ ) reporting higher scores than non-working women ( $M = 68.12$ ,  $SD = 9.05$ ),  $t(195) = 2.94$ ,  $p = 0.004$ . Correspondingly, self-esteem scores of the scale were significantly higher among working women ( $M = 24.87$ ,  $SD = 4.21$ ) when compared to non-working women ( $M = 21.76$ ,  $SD = 4.89$ ),  $t(195) = 4.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . These results clearly show that employment status of the participants plays a meaningful and significant role in shaping women's psychological well-being, with working or employed women demonstrating greater life satisfaction and stronger self-esteem when compared to their non-working counterparts.

**Table 4: Correlation Between Life Satisfaction & Self-Esteem**

Group	Correlation (r)	p-value
Working Women	0.52	0.001*
Non-Working Women	0.34	0.002**
Total Sample (N=197)	0.44	0.005**

\* $p \leq 0.05$     \*\* $p \leq 0.01$     \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

Table-4 showing the results of correlation analysis which was conducted to examine the relationship between variables of life satisfaction and self-esteem among working and non-working women. For the working women group ( $n = 101$ ), the results showed a moderately strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which directly suggests that the variable higher self-esteem was closely associated with greater life satisfaction. Coming to the non-working women ( $n = 96$ ), the correlation was moderate ( $r = 0.34$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), but still it is statistically significant, indicating that self-esteem also contributed to life satisfaction in this group, though to a lesser extent. When considering the total sample ( $N = 197$ ), the overall correlation between life satisfaction and self-esteem was  $r = 0.44$  ( $p < .001$ ). These results confirm a consistent and significant positive relationship across both groups. The findings highlight that the variable self-esteem is an important predictor of life satisfaction, with the association appearing stronger among women engaged in employment.

### Discussion

The present study carried out a psychological comparison of life satisfaction and self-esteem among women who are working and non-working. By examining how work identity, employment characteristics and contextual factors relate to these two key indicators of psychological well-being, this research findings of this study align with previous research showing that working women tend to experience greater self-esteem and psychological well-being than non-working women. Employment status offers decent financial independence, social recognition and above all a stronger sense of identity, which can collectively augment self-perception and confidence among in the individuals [27]. Income determines socioeconomic status, which may play a significant role in life satisfaction [28]. In contrast, non-working women often have to derive satisfaction from family and caregiving roles but many a times they may face challenges related to limited autonomy and need for external validation [29]. It is clear that life satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors such as education, residence, economic standing [30]. Taking everything into consideration, it could be concluded that employment boosts self-perception but may not directly increase life satisfaction [31].

Interestingly, although among working women group, self-esteem scores were consistently higher the variable life satisfaction is not constantly showing the same degree of difference. This difference of magnitude supports earlier studies suggesting that work status alone is not the sole determinant of life satisfaction [29]. This difference may be owed to the financial independence that provides employment, a sense of achievement, social interaction and opportunities for personal growth, all of which increase self-esteem [27]. In many women their level of satisfaction is shaped by multiple factors including marital quality, family support, and social networks. For example, women who resides in joint family systems may report higher satisfaction due to the availability of shared responsibilities, while those women reside in nuclear families may experience greater stress balancing work and home duties [29, 32].

The results of the present study highlight the positive correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction observed in both groups and it reinforces the idea that self-concept is a critical predictor of overall well-being. Prior studies have highlighted that women with higher self-efficacy and autonomy report greater satisfaction across life domains [29]. However, the stronger the correlation among working women suggests that employment amplifies the link between self-esteem and satisfaction, likely because professional achievements reinforce personal identity [33].

## Conclusion

The present study sought to observe the differences in life satisfaction and self-esteem between working and non-working women. The findings of the present study discovered that working women have scored significantly higher on both the scales which are life satisfaction and self-esteem when compared to their non-working counterparts. Hence, employment seems to provide women with greater autonomy, give financial independence, and offer desirable social recognition, which in turn enhances their psychological well-being. On the other hand, non-working women tried to derive satisfaction primarily from family and caregiving roles, though their self-esteem levels were comparatively lower.

The study results tried to highlight the importance of work participation as a factor in women's psychological health and well-being while correspondingly acknowledging the importance of family support, quality of marital life, and cultural expectations play a vital role in shaping satisfaction for non-working women. The study underscores the need for policies and interventions to promote women's empowerment, by creating flexible work arrangements, childcare facilities, and creating opportunities for skill development among women employees and to help and support women balance their professional and domestic responsibilities.

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to explore how transitions between employment and non-employment can affect women's well-being over a period time, and should also consider the impact of socio-economic and cultural contexts. By addressing these dimensions, scholars and policymakers can better understand and support women's diverse pathways to life satisfaction and self-esteem.

## References

1. Bryan, M. L., & Nandi, A. (2015). Working hours, work identity and subjective wellbeing. *Research Papers in Economics*. <https://scispace.com/papers/working-hours-work-identity-and-subjective-wellbeing-tinxgcnz9r>.
2. Beutell, N. J. (2006). *Life satisfaction*. Sloan Work and Family Research Network Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://wfrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Life-Satisfaction-encyclopedia.pdf>.
3. Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
4. Murphy, C. M., Stosny, S., & Morrel, T. M. (2005). *Change in self-esteem and physical aggression during treatment for partner violent men*. *Journal of Family Violence*, 20(4), 201–210. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-005-5983-0>.
5. Easterlin, R. A. (1995). Will raising the incomes of all increase the happiness of all? *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 27(1), 35–47. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-2681\(95\)00003-B](https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-2681(95)00003-B).
6. Clark, A. E., & Oswald, A. J. (1996). Satisfaction and comparison income. *Journal of Public Economics*, 61(3), 359–381. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0047-2727\(95\)01564-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0047-2727(95)01564-7).
7. McBride, M. (2001). Relative-income effects on subjective well-being in the cross-section. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 45(3), 251–278. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-2681\(01\)00143-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-2681(01)00143-0).
8. Ferrer-i-Carbonell, A. (2005). Income and well-being: An empirical analysis of the comparison income effect. *Journal of Public Economics*, 89(5–6), 997–1019. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2004.06.003>.

9. Clark, A. E., Diener, E., Georgellis, Y., & Lucas, R. E. (2008). Lags and leads in life satisfaction: A test of the baseline hypothesis. *Economic Journal*, 118(529), F222–F243. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2008.02150.x>.
10. Javiya Vasant (2011). Life satisfaction and stress among working and non-working women Department of psychology, Saurashtra University, Rajkot.
11. Ashok Patel (2011), Life satisfaction and stress among working and non-working women. Research Department of psychology, Saurashtra University. Rajkot.
12. Navin derjit and others. (2011). A Comparative Study of working and non-working married women: effect of anxiety level of life satisfaction, *Indian Journal of psychology & Mental Health*,6(2), 169-178.
13. S G. Jadhav, (2013) A study of life satisfaction of working women and housewives, *Indian streams research journal*, Vol 2.
14. Siddiqui, Y. F. (2014). A study of emotional states and life satisfaction among working and non-working women [Doctoral dissertation, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University]. Shodhganga@INFLIBNET. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/98631>.
15. Muhammad Arshad. (2015). Life satisfaction among working and non-working women. *European Journal of Research in social sciences*, Vol, 3 No. 1, 2015.
16. Dudhatra, R. R., & Jogsan, Y. A. (2012). Mental health and depression among working and non-working women. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 2(8), 1-5. <http://www.ijsrp.org>.
17. Hansnain, Ansari and Sethi (2011)., Life satisfaction and self-esteem in married and unmarried working women. *Journal of the Indian academy of applied psychology*, volume 37 No (2) 316-316.
18. Gandhi, S. (2018). *Self-esteem and life satisfaction among university students of Eastern Uttar Pradesh of India: A demographical perspective*. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9(3), 382–386.
19. Murray, S.L., Griffin, D., Rose & P., Bellavia, G (2006) For better or worse? Self-esteem and the contingencies of acceptance in marriage. *Personality and Social psychology bulletin*,32,866-880.
20. Azar,S.(2006). Relationship between quality of life, hardiness, self-efficacy and self-esteem amongst employed and unemployed married women in zobol. *Journal of social psychology*, 30(6),158-165.
21. Bahadur, A., Ibrahim, M., & Tanner, T. (2015). *Measuring resilience: An analytical review*. Overseas Development Institute. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281086562\\_Measuring\\_Resilience\\_An\\_Analytical\\_Review\\_draft\\_under\\_review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281086562_Measuring_Resilience_An_Analytical_Review_draft_under_review).
22. Kompal Wadhawan. (2016) A Comparative study of self-esteem of working and non-working women in relation to their psychological well-being. *Int J Appl Res*;2(6): 531-532.
23. Akram, M. (2017). Learning and teaching English in Pakistan: Predicaments and solutions. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 19(1), 10–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2017.1377917>.
24. Pramod Kumar and Jayshree Dhyani., Life satisfaction scale (revised). Agra: National Psychological Corporation.

25. Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the Adolescent Self-image.*, NJ: Princeton University Press.
26. Aryavani Arya (2019) – *Satisfaction and Self-Esteem: A Comparative Study on Working and Non-Working Women's Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem.* Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.
27. Hlavac, J. (2011). Psycholinguistic, metalinguistic and socio-psychological accounts of code-switching: A comparative analysis of their incidence in a large Croatian-English sample. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 15(4), 543–563. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006911403205>.
28. Mariya Agnes & Akhila P.J. (2023). *Mental Health and Life Satisfaction: A Comparative Study Among Working and Non-Working Women.* International Journal of Indian Psychology.
29. Yogesh V. Machhi & Indrajitsinh D. Thakor (2024) – *Life Satisfaction Among Working and Non-Working Women.* International Journal of Indian Psychology, Vol. 12(1).
30. Arya, R. (2019). *Employment and its impact on self-perception and life satisfaction.*
31. Utkarsh Srivastava & Jaya Sharma (2025) – *A Comparative Study of Stress, Coping Strategies, and Social Support among Working and Non-Working Women.* University of Lucknow.
32. Chandni Mehra & Annie Khanam Singh (2023). *Assessment of Life Satisfaction in Relation to Self-Efficacy Among Indian Working and Non-Working Women.* IJRAR.
33. Loveleen Tiwari (2024) – *Self-Efficacy and Psychological Well-Being among Working and Non-Working Married Women: A Comparative Study.* International Journal of Indian Psychology, Vol. 12(4).