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A Socio-psychological Study of Mental Health and Stress Among Divorce and Non-Divorce Women

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Abstract

The present study was undertaken mental health and stress among divorce and non-divorce women. As a result, measurements and comparisons of the relationships between stress and mental health were made systematically for both divorce and non-divorce women. The Mental Health Questionnaire (MHQ) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) were given to 75 divorce and 75 non-divorce women in Bihar who were available for selection. The data were analyzed using the t-test and product-moment correlation (r). The following are the outcomes: There was a substantial difference seen in the mean mental health ratings of divorce and non-divorce women. There was a discernible difference in the mean stress ratings of divorce and non-divorce women. A significant positive relationship between mental health and stress of divorce women was obtained.

A significant positive relationship between mental health and stress of non-divorce women was work out. The goal of the study is to increase the awareness of divorce women about the many types of stressors and coping mechanisms that can help them better manage their stress and deal with mental health issues.

Key Words

Mental Health, Stress, Divorce women, Non-divorce women.

Introduction

Now a day, divorce is one of the most controversial topics in societies and its rate has increased markedly in most countries. Some problems such as deviations, crimes, and suicides can be seen following the urbanization, modernity and progress in technology. Divorce is another consequence of these changes that can be related to structural transformations of society and has considerable effects on people. Many researches in Iran and other countries indicated some symptoms such as anxiety, depression, hopelessness, irresponsibility, and stress in families in which divorce has occurred. These symptoms in severe cases can lead to mental disorders such as severe depression, hysterical states, and even paranoia (Vakili, et al., 2007).

Divorce is a threat for basic needs and leads to anxiety as a natural response to critical status. In divorced families, children fear being abandoned, changing in life conditions, shame, and sin; they concern about later separation and fear later unknown problems (Legrand, 1990; Millar., 2006). Also there is the possibility of anxiety and depression for each of parents after divorce. On the other hand, divorce has profound

effects on economic, social, and psychological conditions of men and women and it can also affect the whole of society. Some researches indicate that in divorced, single, separated and widowed men and women, mental disorders are more common than married people. Also there is the higher rate of depression in divorced people relative to widowed ones (for example due to death of spouse) (Mokhtari et al., 2013). Some studies have reported a positive relationship between divorce and increased rate of suicide (Inoue, 2009; Chuang & Huang, 2007). Also according to investigations, there is the greatest likelihood of suicide (1.5 to 3 times) in divorced men and women in comparison with married people (Corcoran & Nagar, 2010). Carr et al. and Koball and coworkers showed a reduction in cardiovascular disease and increase in mental health of married people relative to single and divorced ones (Koball et al., 2010). Liu (2012), Waite and Hughes (2009) and other researchers believe that the physical and psychological health may deteriorate, at least temporarily, following marital disruption and divorce (13-14).

Mental Health

Mental health is a crucial aspect of one's overall well-being, indicating that they are in a state of cognitive and emotional balance, and free from mental disorders. Positive psychology and holism emphasize the importance of mental health as the capacity to find joy in life, maintain a healthy balance in all areas of one's existence, and actively work towards strengthening one's psychological resilience. Therefore, prioritizing mental health in our lives is essential to lead a fulfilling and happy life. On the other hand, a mental disease or mental illness is defined as an uncontrollably occurring psychological or behavioural pattern that a person encounters and is thought to result in misery or incapacity that is not expected as part of everyday development or culture. Many factors, such as the following, may contribute to this discomfort or impairment: One of the biggest determinants of mental health and sickness is a person's gender. Compared to gender-specific characteristics and processes that promote and preserve mental health and foster resilience in the face of stress and adversity, the morbidity associated with mental illness has garnered a great deal more attention.

Indian Concept of Mental Health

In Indian culture, mental well-being is viewed as including both physical and mental health. Health is not just the absence of disease; it is also defined as well-being in its widest meaning. Biological, sociocultural, psychological, economic, and spiritual elements interact intricately to determine one's level of well-being. For traditional Indians, being well is experiencing happiness or a sense of bodily and spiritual well-being (prasanmantanaendriyamanh) (Dalal, 2011, Sinha, 1990). Verma (1998) asserts, quoting from Bhagvad geeta, that human well-being develops on three levels: cognitive, conative, and emotive. The cognitive level discusses the ego and its attachments, desires, and lusty tendencies (Asakti). Well-being at the conative level is derived from carrying out one's karma, or responsibility. People internalise a belief system that shapes the meaning of health and sickness because they are part of a sociocultural environment. It is assumed that women are positioned at the cognitive level by adopting gender viewpoints; nevertheless, at the emotive level, Indian women are seldom envisioned, therefore this area also becomes defined by male perspective. Boys in a family are ready to face obstacles in life with their individuality, recognition, and financial independence, but females are simply ready to conform to the ideals of womanhood, which include modesty, selflessness, and putting the needs of others before their own. In conclusion, women are often considered passive individuals, and mental health is defined as adverse.

In India, the societal expectations placed on women can have a significant impact on their mental well-being. Women are expected to be content with their roles as obedient wives and mothers, and those who have not experienced parenthood are often seen as incomplete. This idealized standard of contentment can leave women feeling fractured and disconnected from their true selves. It's essential to recognize that every woman is unique, and their happiness should not be measured against gender norms. Let's work towards creating a society that values every individual for who they are, rather than forcing them to conform to rigid standards. The fulfilling social function determined for ideal women takes into consideration the subjective

feeling of well-being. According to the majority of psychological research, women are more likely than males to have mental health issues including anxiety, depression, conversion, etc. Although these issues are portrayed as personal issues and personality traits, they have societal roots in addition to being reactions to oppression and collective issues facing the oppressed minority.

Good health is more than just the absence of disease or impairment. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), it encompasses full physical, mental, and social well-being. Mental health has a significant impact on our lives, including our habits, hobbies, enjoyment levels, and performance levels. Unfortunately, mental strain is a leading cause of mental health issues that can arise due to various circumstances. However, by strengthening our minds, we can overcome such challenges. For instance, women who take care of their mental health can handle their family responsibilities with ease and raise their children well. They can identify obstacles and work to overcome them, plan for the future, and socialize confidently. Therefore, let us all prioritize our mental health to enjoy all the benefits that come with it. Practically speaking, one's ability to make a sufficient social and emotional adjustment to their surroundings might be seen as an indicator of their mental health. In other words, it's the capacity to acknowledge and embrace life's facts. Women who are expected to satisfy both professional and household responsibilities while working outside the home often experience higher levels of stress due to the conflicting demands of their personal and professional lives. In the end, this causes stress for the person, which has an adverse effect on their mental health.

Stress

The father of stress researchers, Selye (1956), presented the notion of stress to science for the first time. The natural sciences provided the inspiration for the idea. The Latin term "stringers" is where it came from. He makes the observation that all noxious stimuli cause severe tissue damage. Multiple bodily organs are impacted by the stressor, which is the precursor stimulus that causes stress. The body's defence system kicks in right away to assist the body cope with the stressor. The body essentially generated alarms and developed defence mechanisms against the "enemy." However, if an individual's environment persists, intense exposure and resistance deplete the body's energy or adaptation response, and fatigue sets in as a result of excessive "wear and tear" on the body and mind, this negatively impacts the individual's physical, emotional, and mental health and lowers their capacity to perform well in their line of work. Stress is an inevitable and pleasant part of life. Stress arises from a significant disparity between an organism's ability to respond to its environment and its need for resources. "A forced pressure exerted upon a person who resisted the forced pressure in his effect to maintain his original state in the process suffers the same degree of discomfort" is the definition of stress in physical science.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Chrousos (2009), stress is defined as the real or perceived difference between a person's total capacity to adapt to external pressures and those needs that are deemed essential for survival. Humans are driven to become adapted because, in order to exist, they must continually adjust to the demands of a changing environment. Stress may be thought of as a sequence of uncomfortable bodily sensations and psychological responses that often occur when people perceive threats to their health that they might not be able to avoid.

The cognitive-phenomenological approach offers a novel interpretation of stress by prioritising goal-directed conduct, the experiential aspect of human existence, and the intentionality of human endeavour. People experience stress when they find themselves in situations they cannot control. Symptoms of stress are our bodies' way of telling us that we are taking on more than is healthy. varied people have varied reactions to stress. According to their personality and circumstances, each person may exhibit a distinct stress indicator or symptom. Stress affects our physical and mental health, and too much stress can lead to illness, according to widely held beliefs.

“The pattern of reactions an organism has to a stimulus event or situation that upsets equilibrium and is greater than a person’s capacity for coping” is known as stress.

“Stress is defined as intense, difficult experiences that persist over an extended period of time and are linked to impulsive behavioural and physiological changes.”

In addition to physical issues like coronary heart disease, blood pressure changes, body aches, tension headaches, short menstrual cycles, digestive issues, and back pain, women who experience chronic occupational stress also experience psychological issues like depression symptoms, insomnia, dissatisfaction, rage, anxiety, fearfulness, feelings of guilt and shame, and withdrawal. Functional behavioural manifestations include sickness absenteeism, frequent job changes, career interruption, and job withdrawal due to negative job attitudes. Divorce women may experience stress as they juggle several responsibilities (wife, mother, daughter-in-law, daughter, etc.).

Rational of the Study

After conducting a thorough review of existing research, it was found that while many studies have been conducted on divorce women, the majority of them have focused on divorce conditions, such as wage discrimination, workplace sexual harassment, balancing work and home obligations, and the overall status of women in the labor force. Unfortunately, women continue to face various challenges in both their personal and professional lives, which can cause significant stress for divorce women. In India, divorce women face numerous psychological challenges that require a deeper understanding of their stress levels and mental well-being. However, the scarcity of studies addressing these issues highlights the urgent need for more research in this area. In light of this, a new study will be conducted to determine the significant differences in mental health and stress, as well as the correlation between these two variables in divorce and non-divorce women. The study will recruit divorce women from various location in Bihar and non-divorce women from Bihar. The study aims to shed light on the stress and mental health of both divorce and non-divorce women. By participating in this study, you can help us better understand the unique challenges faced by divorce women in India and contribute to creating a more supportive and positive work environment for all women.

Hypothesis

- H₁** There would be significant difference between mental health of divorce and non-divorce women.
- H₂** There would be significant difference between stress of divorce and non-divorce women.
- H₃** There would be significant relationship between mental health and stress of divorce women.
- H₄** There would be significant relationship between mental health and stress of non-divorce women.

Methods

The goal of this study was to examine women’s stress levels and mental health in two distinct groups: those who divorce and those who do not divorce.

Research Design

In the present study a two groups design (divorce women and non-divorce women) and correlational design will be used. Present study is examine the difference between mental health, and stress of divorce women and non-divorce women and also to find out the relationship between mental health and stress of divorce women and non-divorce women separately. A correlational research design was use because it gives the measure of a relationship among variables and there is no control over them. Therefore, two group design and correlational research design were used in this research.

Participants

A total of 150 women from various districts in Bihar were studied. There were 75 divorce women and 75 non-divorce women. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 45 years old. The respondents for the study were chosen using an availability sampling approach. The divorce women were drawn from Bihar.

Measure

In this study, stress and mental health were assessed using two different tools. The Mental Health Questionnaire, which was originally developed by Srivastava and Bhatt (1973), was utilized to evaluate the general state of mental health among the participants. The complete scale is available in Hindi as MHQ-48. A 3-point rating system was used for some items, while a 2-point scale was used for others. A low score on the questionnaire indicates normal mental health, whereas a high score suggests the presence of mental health issues. Using the split-half approach, the entire test showed a reliability value of 0.70. Reliability coefficients for each of the subscales were 0.88 for OBS, 0.76 for PHO, 0.72 for SOM, 0.68 for DEP, and 0.66 for HYS.

In contrast, Cohen et al. (1994) created the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). This tool has ten statements with a four-point rating system. A total score ranging from 0 to 40 is calculated by reverse scoring the four favourably phrased items and then adding all of the scale elements. A higher score indicates greater levels of perceived stress. PSS-4 is based on psychometric concepts and is thought to be valid. However, the restricted four-item shortened scale has poor internal reliability ($r=.60$). It gives a less accurate picture of subjective stress levels than bigger scales. Shorter time intervals have the highest test-retest reliability and predictive validity. The 10- and 14-item self-report questionnaires are reliable and valid ($r=0.85$).

Results

Table 1: Means, SDs, and SED and results of t-ratio of divorce women and non-divorce women on stress

Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD	SED	T	P
Stress	Divorce Women	75	26.40	4.223	0.572	9.359	<.001
	Non-Divorce women	75	20.47	2.601			

From the table 1 it was obvious that the mean of the overall scores on the stress of divorce women was higher than non-divorce women. The mean score of divorce women was 26.40, whereas, for the non-divorce women group it was 20.47. Similarly, the standard deviation value of the divorce women group were 4.223 and non-divorce women group it was 2.601. The difference in the mean scores for the two groups were satisfactory and it was found to be statistically significant ($t = 9.359$).

Table 2: Means, SDs, and SED and results of t-ratio of divorce women and non-divorce women on mental health

Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD	SED	T	P
Mental Health	Divorce women	75	42.11	3.772	0.688	17.713	<.001
	Non-divorce women	75	39.04	4.726			

From the table 2 It was found that divorce women had greater overall scores on mental health compared to non-working women. The mean score of divorce women was 42.11, whereas, for the non-divorce women group it was 39.04. Similarly, the standard deviation value of the divorce women group was 3.772 and non-divorce women group it was 4.726. The difference in the mean scores for the two groups were satisfactory and it was found to be statistically significant ($t = 17.713$). According to the norms of the scale, a higher score on mental health means they face more mental health-related problems than those with a lower score.

Table 3: Results of Correlation between mental health and stress score of divorce women

Variables	Correlation	Significance level
Mental Health	0.335	< .01
Stress		

Table 4: Results of Correlation between mental health and stress score of non-divorce women

Variables	Correlation	Significance level
Mental Health	0.611	< .01
Stress		

From the table- 3 we will find that coefficient of correlation between mental health and stress of divorce women. was found as 0.335 which was significant at 0.01 level of significance. In the same way a look at table 4 reveals that relationship between mental health and stress of non-divorce women was 0.611 which was significant beyond .01 level of confidence.

Discussion

It appears that divorce women had higher levels of stress than non- divorce women, based on the data presented in Table No. 1. It shown that a divorce woman who works full-time may have elevated levels of stress and anxiety as a result, especially if her family does not provide support. The absence of familial support causes issues for Divorce women. Divorce women are facing the changing behavior of family members and don't have proper time for self-care. Therefore the increasing of social supports for more vulnerable women is required, because the various consequences of divorce and inadequate supporting plans can lead to serious social and mental damages in target group. Since more educated women have more profound understanding and different attitudes about life conditions, they are exposed to more severe mental health disorders. Families and social organizations can provide supporting programs for these persons to reduce their challenges and mental health problems and change their views for decreasing some concerns.

Thus the hypothesis presuming difference in the extent of stress among the two different groups (divorce women and non- divorce women) of women was found confirmed. On the other hand, the results of Table 2 indicate a different thing according to the findings: non-divorce women had fewer mental health problems than their divorce women counterparts. It reveals that the mental health of divorce women is significantly worse than that of women who are not divorced . As we know that divorce women are forced to deal with the challenges of role conflicts since they are simultaneously subjected to the numerous demands of both the home and the outside world. Because of the prevalent cultural norms and values, they are expected to carry out certain responsibilities at home in addition to the biological roles that they are designed to carry out. They are expected to carry out the responsibilities, duties, and specific commitments that are associated with their work simultaneously. Obtained results also got support by the findings of the study conducted by Dudhatra and Jogsan (2012), the study indicates that divorce women are more depressed and mentally disturbed as compare to non- divorce women. They have more work pressure and more responsibilities as compared to non- divorce women. Thus the hypothesis presuming difference between the two different groups (divorce and non- divorce) of women on mental health was found confirmed.

Correlation

Both divorce and non-divorce women showed a positive correlation between stress and mental health scores. It means whether mental health illness will be increase then stress will also increase and vice versa. The analysis of Tables 3 and 4 has yielded a highly significant outcome. The positive correlation between the variables is a strong indication of their direct and positive relationship. Consequently, hypotheses 3 and 4 are confidently accepted. As per the study, within the mental health illness role of a divorce women, there are various factors, with varying degrees of impact, which have been identified as the root cause of mental health

illness and stress. Moreover, the mental health illness and stress are both negative feelings and have equal detrimental effects on types of both divorce and non-divorce women resulting into relationship between the two variables. A negative state of mental health appears to be an outgrowth of job and life stress. There are supporting evidences which link diverse aspect of mental health to specific aspects of the work environment (Caplan, 1971; Kahn et al., 1962). This study show that poor mental health is related to conditions at work, work itself, shift work, supervision, the organization, wages and promotion. Our findings of the present study are also consistent with previous studies reporting negative life events to be meaningful predictors of symptomatology and health (Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1974). The present result provides support to the notion that stress can result in increase mental health illness and decrease of low level of performance.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the objectives to investigate the difference between divorce and non-divorce women on mental health and stress and also find out the relationship of mental health and stress of divorce and non- divorce women. t-test was used to find out the difference between divorce and non-divorce women on mental health and stress and pearson correlation was applied to find out relationship between mental health and stress score of divorce and non-divorce women separately. The following results were obtained:

1. The results of t- test reveal that divorce women achieved significant by greater mean score than non-divorce women on mental health.
2. Divorce women obtained significantly greater mean score on stress than non-divorce women meaning thereby that divorce women had significantly greater stress than non- divorce women.
3. Positive and significant relationship between mental health illness and stress of divorce women was obtained.
4. Positive and significant relationship between mental health illness and stress of non-divorce women was found.

The study results were analyzed in the context of the socio-cultural conditions and environments of the companies. The discussion highlights that divorce women experience significantly higher levels of mental health issues than non- divorce women. This is mainly due to the societal expectations and consciousness that place a greater burden on divorce women, as well as the work environments of the companies. Similarly, the study also found that divorce women experience significantly higher levels of stress compared to non- divorce women. This highlights the need for companies to prioritize the mental health and well-being of divorce women, and to create an environment that is conducive to their success. By doing so, companies can help divorce women to thrive, while also benefiting from their unique skills and perspectives.

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