

Impact of Life Stress on Self Regulation among working women

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Abstract: This study assessed the effects of life stress on self regulation in working women. Women's role in maintenance and advancement of society has always remained proactive. Increased pressures of globalization have forced more and more participation of women in economy and they ventured in various jobs. 318 married and working women were studied on these dimensions. Statistically significant differences were observed between the low and high stress subjects on the measures of different indices of self regulation i.e. planning, implementation and self evaluation etc.

Keywords: Life stress, self regulation, working women

INTRODUCTION

In the present scenario role segregated and segmental identity of women has put them in a situation where females have to perform multiple roles and adapt to diverse kind of psychological environments. In contemporary society the women's employment is considered equally important as that of men's and it is influenced by certain factors like social, marital and familial roles etc. The jobs of women tend to intrude upon their socially attributed primary responsibilities related to home. They are always under pressure to rearrange their traditional roles of wife, mother and home maker in order to accommodate their nontraditional roles as earner. These pressures tend to predispose them to life stresses, sometimes leading to reduced psychological wellbeing.

Some theories suggest that demanding conditions impair self-regulation, by undermining autonomy, interfering with skilled performance, working memory and depleting energy resources. Others, however, suggest that demanding conditions improve self-regulation by mobilizing super-ordinate control processes. Koole, Jostmann & Baumann integrated both kinds of theories by proposing that the self-regulatory impact of demanding conditions depends on how people adapt to such conditions [1]. When people are action-oriented, demanding conditions may lead to improved self-regulation whereas state-oriented, demanding conditions may lead to impaired self-regulation. Consistent with this idea, action versus state orientation strongly moderates the influence of demands on self-regulatory performance. The impact of

demanding conditions on self-regulation is thus not fixed, but can be modified by psychological processes.

There is ample empirical evidence that self efficacy and self regulation are positively correlated. Studies related to self efficacy reveal its negative relationships with stress. Several studies have demonstrated that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of mental health [2,3,4]. There is a negative relationship between self-efficacy and depression, stress and emotional coping strategy [5,6]. Other studies have also shown that low self-efficacy expectations are concomitant with a higher use of emotion-focused coping strategies, including denial and self-criticism [7]. Researchers found the relationship of self efficacy with depression, stress, psychosomatic and negative well-being [8,9]. Self-efficacy expectations are shown to have a positive correlation with positive attitude, and tension reduction strategies and a negative relationship with psychological symptoms, self-isolation and passive/avoidance acceptance strategies.

Women participation in the work force has tremendously increased. Despite the different kind of cultural inheritance about the position of women in Indian society as shakti, the socially conditioned perceptions of men about women in general have put women in subservient position. Irrespective of gender referenced individual differences in males and females society tend to have the same expectations from female as from males ignoring their increase in the number of roles and division of their psychological resources for work, family and society. Despite her multiple roles and

pressures to come upto the expectations at all fronts, it has been observed that women seem to exercise better volitional controls over their behaviors as compared to men. The construct of self regulation has been evolved in psychology to account for the mechanisms of volitional control and ego's capacity to plan and execute adaptive ways of dealing with problem situation. There has been ample evidence that self regulation resources are depleted under stressful life conditions.

As roles increased, demands and expectations keep women always under pressure, stress is the inevitable which seriously affect their adaptive capacity as well as psychological wellbeing. Present study has been conducted to study the effect of stress on self regulation in working women

METHOD

Sample

Sample of the present study comprised of 318 subjects (married and working women, their age ranging between 30 to 45 yrs). Minimum education of subjects was graduation (Arts, Sciences and technical) and working in different professions. All the subjects had minimum of 5 years of experience in respective jobs. Incidental sampling was used.

Tools

The measures used for this study is Presumptive Stressful Life Events Scale by Gurmeet Singh, Dalbir Kaur, Harsharan Kaur [10]. It consists of 51 life events which were further classified in (a) whether they were personal or impersonal (not dependent on the individual's action). (b) whether they were (i) desirable (ii) undesirable (iii) ambiguous.

The Self Regulation Questionnaire by Brown, Miller & Lawendowski, based on the foundational work of Frederick Kanfer [11,12,13]. Questionnaire contains 63 items. Items are answered on a 5 point Likert scale.

Some items are worded negatively. Hence the scores for these items also are reversed.

Hypotheses

Self Regulation in women with high Life Stress would be dysfunctional as compared to women with low Life Stress.

Statistical Analyses

Means, Standard Deviations, t-test and Pearson's Product correlation were calculated to test the hypothesis

RESULTS

Quantitative data obtained for present study pertaining to variables of self regulation, and stress was subjected to statistical analysis in terms of Pearson Product Moment Correlations as well as t-ratio

The means for indices of self regulation namely Receiving (REC), Evaluating (EVA), Triggering (TRI), Searching (SEA), Formulating (For), Implementing (IMP), Assessing (ASS) and Total score for Self Regulation Questionnaire are 32.54, 28.65, 29.57, 32.94, 30.03, 30.72, 30.10 and 215.55 and standard deviation for these indices are 4.92, 3.62, 3.94, 4.69, 4.50, 4.76, 4.21 and 21.91 respectively.

For Life Stress, the means and SD's for Stress past one year (S_one year) are 3.34 & 2.34, for Stress life time (S_LT) 12.54 & 4.74; for Stress total (S_total) 15.88 & 5.35; for Stress personal (S_per) 8.65 & 5.33; Stress Impersonal 7.47 & 2.81; Stress Desirable 4.32 & 2.10; Stress Undesirable 6.36 & 2.76; and for Stress Ambiguous are 5.20 & 2.23 respectively.

Obtained t-ratio for the composite score of self regulation ($t = 14.55$, $P < .01$) as well as subscales of self regulation (Receiving, 11.89; Evaluating, 4.69; triggering, 8.28; Searching, 10.06; formulating, 9.82; Implementing, 10.13; and Assessing, 8.01) are significant at .01 level.

Table-1: Showing Means, SDs and t-ratios of high and low stressed individuals on Self Regulation

Variable s	Stress Level				t-ratios
	Low(n=140)		High(n=111)		
	Means	SD	Means	SD	
REC	35.02	4.07	28.75	4.25	11.89**
EVA	29.33	3.46	27.21	3.68	4.69**
TRI	31.17	3.20	27.25	4.30	8.28**
SEA	35.09	3.50	29.79	4.83	10.06**
FOR	32.05	4.12	27.08	3.80	9.82**
IMP	33.12	4.23	27.73	4.13	10.13**
ASS	32.50	3.98	28.51	3.83	8.01**
Total SRQ	228.28	17.08	196.32	17.52	14.55**

**Significant at .01 level

Differences in mean scores of self regulation for low and high stress subjects confirm the Hypotheses that subjects who possess better self regulation capacity tend to be low on life stress and this appears to be made possible by the appropriate planning, implementation, realistic self evaluation, as they are able to deal with the

life situations more effectively and realistically as compared to those with high stress level subjects.

The two groups with varying stress level i.e. low and high have been found to on all the components of self regulation linked self efficacy with depression, stress and negative well-being.

Table-2: showing Pearson's Product Moment Correlations

	REC	EVA	TRI	SEA	FOR	IMP	ASS	Total SRQ	Ist Yr	Life time	Stress Total	Per	Im	Des	Und	Amb
REC	1.00															
EVA	0.32	1.00														
TRI	0.48	0.15	1.00													
SEA	0.65	0.30	0.52	1.00												
FOR	0.58	0.22	0.36	0.47	1.00											
IMP	0.65	0.13	0.36	0.54	0.55	1.00										
ASS	0.51	0.35	0.33	0.51	0.25	0.40	1.00									
Total SRQ	0.86	0.47	0.64	0.82	0.71	0.76	0.67	1.00								
Ist Yr	-0.46	-0.15	-0.29	-0.37	-0.36	-0.30	-0.30	-0.46	1.00							
Life time	-0.34	-0.17	-0.37	-0.32	-0.30	-0.34	-0.30	-0.43	0.03	1.00						
Stress Total	-0.50	-0.21	-0.46	-0.45	-0.42	-0.43	-0.40	-0.58	0.46	0.90	1.00					
Per	-0.25	-0.04	-0.29	-0.21	-0.18	-0.18	-0.23	-0.28	0.24	0.46	0.51	1.00				
Im	-0.38	-0.21	-0.39	-0.40	-0.38	-0.39	-0.37	-0.51	0.38	0.80	0.88	0.36	1.00			
Des	-0.35	-0.10	-0.36	-0.31	-0.30	-0.23	-0.33	-0.40	0.46	0.65	0.77	0.41	0.68	1.00		
Und	-0.37	-0.16	-0.31	-0.29	-0.34	-0.34	-0.22	-0.41	0.33	0.72	0.79	0.39	0.71	0.43	1.00	
Amb	-0.41	-0.20	-0.37	-0.43	-0.32	-0.40	-0.36	-0.51	0.27	0.65	0.70	0.36	0.59	0.39	0.26	1.00

Abbreviations

REC Receiving
 EVA Evaluating
 TRI Triggering
 SEA Searching
 FOR Formulating
 IMP Implementing
 ASS Assessing
 Total SRQ Self Regulation Questionnaire

Ist Yr Stress_Past one Year
 Life time Stress_Life Time
 Stress Total stress_total
 Per Stress_Personal
 Im Stress_Impersonal
 Des Stress_Desirable
 Und Stress_Undesirable
 Amb Stress_Ambiguous

Correlations coefficients between self regulation and life stress are -.58, (P< .01). Total score of stress correlate negatively and significantly with all the indices of self regulation, values of r ranging between (-.21 to -.50). Correlations reveal that self regulation capacity is positively associated with life stress i.e. higher the stress, poor the self regulation capacity and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

Self regulation in case of women with high life stress was dysfunctional as compared to women with low life stress.

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