



## EFFECT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG HOUSEWIVES – A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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### Abstract

The objective of the study is to compare the Housewives of different Socio-economic status (High, Medium, Low) on Mental Health. To study the relationship between Socio-economic status and Mental Health. Mental Health, health status and socio-economic status are important of an individual's wellbeing. There are thought to be important interactions between these dimensions of wellbeing with casual links running in both directions. Poor health and poor mental health can reduce earning ability, through their effects on education and employment, and poverty can lead to lower educational attainment, poor physical health and depression. In India women are seen as nurturer's and care takers but despite this the social scenario shows a dismal picture of women and for most of the part they have been neglected. Woman form about half of the population of the country, but their situation has been grim. For centuries, they have been deliberately denied opportunities in name of religion and socio-cultural practices. A strong patriarchal society with deep-rooted-socio-cultural values continues to affect gender equity and women's empowerment. The Mental health of women is affected by socio-economic status, structure and culture of each society. The sample consisting of a total number of 30 housewives between the age range of 35-45years and were married for 10-20 years were selected randomly for the study. Socio-economic status scale developed by Kalia.,Shahu (Rohtak) 1971, and Mental Health Inventory developed by Davies., Sherbourne., Peterson., Ware., (1998) were used. Results showed no significant difference between the mental health of housewives belonging to different socio-economic status and housewives belonging to low socio-economic status have a higher level of mental health.

**Keywords:** Housewives, Socio-economic status, Mental Health

### Introduction

According to psychological dictionary **Socio-economic status** means -The position of a person or group on the socio economic scale that is determined by a combination of economic and social factors. It is commonly known as SES. Socio Economic status (SES) is evaluated as a combination of factors including income, level of education, and occupation. It is a way of looking at how individuals or families fit into society using economic and social measures that have been shown to impact individuals' health and well- being.

Socioeconomic status and health are closely related, and SES can often have profound effects on a person's health due to differences in ability to access health care as well as dietary and other lifestyle choices that are associated with both finances and education. The disparity in people's income and standard of living across the globe is astonishing .On one hand there are poorest regions of the world, living in desperate conditions, and the consequences this has for life chances. On the other hand there are some rich regions of the world having good quality of life. Traditionally, the poverty of a person has been understood in reference to income and Gross National Product. Increasingly, poverty has come to be understood in reference not only to income, but also to Human Rights and development (**Rohleder 2012**).

**Amartya Sen(1999)** argues that income inequality affects the life that people are able to lead, defining poverty not just in terms of economic resources, but instead in terms of 'human capabilities', where, for example, people living in poverty may not have the ability or freedom to make social and political demands with regards to things like education and health. Thus, poverty should be seen as "deprivation of basic capabilities" rather than just low income (**Sen, 1999**). **Prilleltensky (2003)** understands poverty in terms of the lack of power that an Individual or groups of people have in benefiting from vital entitlement.

**Socioeconomic status (SES)** is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on **income, education, and occupation**. When analyzing a family's SES, the household income, earners' education, and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, versus with an individual, when their own attributes are assessed. Socioeconomic status is typically broken into three categories, high SES, middle SES, and low SES to describe the three areas a family or an individual may



fall into. When placing a family or individual into one of these categories any or all of the three variables (income, education, and occupation) can be assessed.

**Mental Health** is a level of psychological well-being or an absence of a mental disorder, it is the “psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioural adjustment.” From the perspective of Positive Psychology or Holism, mental health may include an individual’s ability to enjoy life, and create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

The World Health Organization(WHO) defines mental health as a “state of subjective well being,perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and self-actualization of one’s intellectual and emotional potential, among others” .WHO further states that the well-being of an individual is encompassed in the realization of their abilities, coping with normal stresses of life, productive work and contribution to their community cultural differences, subjective assessment, and competing professional theories all affect how “mental health” is defined. Evidence from the World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that nearly half of the world’s population are affected by mental illness with an impact on their self-esteem, relationship and ability to function in everyday life. An individual’s emotional health can also impact physical health and poor mental health can lead to problems such as substance abuse. Maintaining a good mental health is crucial to living a long and healthy life. Good mental health can enhance one’s life, while poor mental health can prevent someone from living an enriching life.

**Mankani.,Ganga.,Yenagi (2010-11)** in the areas of Dharwad district of Karnataka studied the influence of socio-economic status on mental health of working and non-working women. The results revealed no significant difference between mental health dimension of working and non-working women and both classes of women exhibited average level of mental health. Another research was conducted by (**Dhudhatra., Jogsan 2011**).The main purpose of this research was to find out the mean difference between working and non-working woman in mental health and depression. The results indicated that there were significant differences in mental health among working and non-working woman. The non-working woman have better mental health compared to working woman. Further, there was a significant difference in depression among working and non-working woman. The depression of non-working woman is lesser than that of working woman. Thus mental health was better and depression was lesser of non-working woman as compared to working.

Out of all the studies conducted only one such study has studied the effect of SES status on the mental health of housewives which indicated that working women have better mental health than housewives. All the other researches have studied both the variables that is SES and Mental Health separately. The present study was thus conducted to assess the mental health of housewives or non-working women belonging to different socio-economic status (High, Medium, Low).

### **Rationale of the Study**

Mental Health, health status and socio-economic status are important determinants of an individual’s wellbeing. Poor health and poor mental health can reduce earnings ability, through their effects on education and employment, and poverty can lead to lower educational attainment, poor physical and depression.

Socio-economic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person’s work experience and of an individual’s or family’s economic and social position in relation to others based on income, education and occupation. The position of a person or group on the socio-economic scale that is determined by a combination of economic and social factors. When analyzing an individual’s SES, the household income, earners education, and occupation are examined.

In India women are seen as nurturer’s and care takers but despite this the social scenario shows a dismal picture of woman and for most of the part they have been neglected. For centuries, they have been deliberately denied opportunities of growth in the name of religion and socio-cultural practices. A strong patriarchal society with deep-rooted-socio-cultural values continues to affect gender equity and women’s empowerment. In spite of the Constitutional provisions and 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment, women continue to be treated as lesser human beings irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Further previous researchers on women indicated that 80% of women who get enrolled in business schools, out of them only 25% join the work force and the remaining 55% prefer to stay at home and not work.

The present study was thus conducted to assess the mental health of these women that is housewives or non-working women who choose to or preferred to stay at home rather than work outside the homes after being well qualified and belonging to



different socio-economic status. The main aim was to see whether the housewives belonging to different levels of socio-economic status that is high, medium and low, does this categorization have any effect on their mental health, and also if there is any relationship between socio-economic status and mental health.

## Methodology

### Objectives

1. To compare the housewives of different Socio-Economic status (High, Medium, Low) on
2. Mental Health.
3. To study the relationship between Socio-Economic status and Mental Health.

### Hypotheses

- There is a significant difference among housewives of different Socio-Economic status (High, Medium, Low) on Mental Health.
- There is a positive correlation between Socio-Economic status and Mental Health.

### Tools

#### • Socio-economic status scale

The socio-economic status scale developed by **Kalia., Shahu** (1971), was used to assess the socio-economic status of the housewives. It is a 40 item scale. The scale is divide into two parts, Part A and B, Part B which was further divided into five parts. The items are scored using the manual.

#### • Mental Health Inventory

The mental health inventory, developed by **Davies.,Sherbourne.,Peterson.,Ware.(1998)**, was used to assess the mental health of the housewives. The scale consisted of 38 items and the items are scored according to six-point rating scale(1-6range),except two items 9 and 28 which are scored according to a five-point rating scale(1-5range).

### Sample

A total number of 30 housewives who were between the age range of 35 -45 years of age and were married for 10 – 20 years were selected randomly for the study. The housewives were chosen according to different socio-economic status that is high, medium, low. Thus they were categorized accordingly into 3 groups, each group having 10 housewives each.

## Results and Discussion

**Table No 1: Showing the difference in Mental Health among housewives Using One-Way Anova**

Source of variance	Df	SSA	MSS	F – RATIO
Among the Group	2	5.6	2.8	0.02
Within the Group	27	2915.2	107.97	
Total	29	2920.8	107.97	

**Inference** : obtained value 0.02 is < table value 3.35 (at 3 and 27 df). Hence there is no significant difference.

**Table no.2: Showing the correlation between Socio-Economic status (High, Medium, Low) and Mental Health of housewives.**

Socio-economic status	r
High	-0.41
Medium	0.58
Low	0.29

**Inference:** High socio-economic status and mental health have a negative correlation of -0.41 indicating low level of mental health. Medium socio-economic status and mental health have a positive correlation of 0.58 indicating average mental health. Low socio-economic status and mental health have a positive correlation of 0.29 indicating high level of mental health.

In this study two hypotheses were formulated. First, there is a significant difference among housewives of different Socio-economic status (High, Medium, Low) on Mental Health. Second, there is a positive correlation between Socio-economic status and Mental Health.



In order to determine whether there is a difference in Mental health among housewives of belonging to different socio-economic status One-way Anova was used. Table No.1 as above shows that the obtained **F-ratio** is **0.02** which is less than the table value at **3** and **27**. Hence indicating that there is **no significant difference** in the Mental health of housewives of different Socio-Economic status (high, medium, low). Thus the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference in Mental health of housewives of different socio-economic status is **rejected**.

Further in order to determine the relationship between the socio-economic status and mental health Pearson 'r' was applied. Table No.2 as above shows the correlation between Socio-Economic status (high, medium, low) and Mental health of Housewives. The women of high socio-economic status obtained a correlation of **-0.41**, indicating **low** mental health as it is a negative correlation. The correlation between medium socio-economic status housewives and the mental health is **0.58** indicating average mental health. While correlation between low socio-economic status and the mental health of housewives is **0.29** indicating high mental health. Thus women of low socio-economic status have better mental health as compared to high and medium socio-economic status housewives. Hence there is negative correlation and the hypothesis is being rejected. The findings of the present study indicate that there is no significant difference in Mental health of housewives belonging to different socio-economic status. These findings are consistent with earlier findings which indicate that both working and non-working women have an average level of mental health and that socio-economic status have no such effect on mental health (**Mankani.,Ganga.,Yenagi (2010-11)**). Also further the results indicate that there is a negative correlation between socio-economic status and mental health of housewives and housewives belonging to low socio-economic status have better mental health as compared to high and medium. This suggest that these women although do not have all luxuries of life have adjusted themselves to their present conditions and are satisfied and happy.

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