

## Zest for Work: A Gender Based Study in Tamil Nadu

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### ABSTRACT

The societal in an individual's life has a pervasive impact on their enthusiasm. Gender discrimination has clipped the wings of women in this industrialized world. This study examines the zest for work of young adults between 20 and 25 in Tamil Nadu. A total of 86 working people comprising of 45 males and 41 females from various sectors were chosen through snowball method of data collection. Zest for work Scale (ZWS) was the tool used in this study and the data collected were analysed using Mann-Whitney U test. The result shows that there is a significant difference between both genders when it comes to their zest for work. The existence of prejudice and gender discrimination in the society curbs the strength of women in workforce. Understanding the importance of this character strength in overall development of the society is mandatory. Further research can be done on academic zest and grit of women in India to explore if they have an influence on a female's existential identity. The rebirth of a society with positivity and openness to change is the sole resolution for the existing gender based social conditioning.

**Keywords:** *Zest for work, Prejudice, Gender stereotyping, Character strengths, Empowerment.*

Globally, women spend more time on household responsibilities when compared to men (Heath, 2019). In India less than 30 percent of working age women are currently employed when compared to 80 percent of men in India (Sharma, 2019). The number of women working in developed countries has increased, but the number of working women in the low- and middle- income countries of South Asia has declined. Only 53% of female students pursue their undergraduate degree and among them only 69.6% pursue their post graduate degree. The participation of women in labour force in 2018 is only 23.6% compared to 78.6% of men. Women in rural areas are leaving the workforce faster than urban women. The constitution of India provides women with equal rights and opportunities in all fields. But women cannot make use of this provision due to several reasons.

Work has both direct and indirect effect on the physical and mental wellbeing of women. Research indicates that working women had higher Psychological wellbeing than homemakers and nonworking women (Sinha, 2017). Health benefits model states that,

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employment help to maintain and enhance women's health. This model states that job environment provides opportunities to build self esteem, confidence, decision making skills, social support, and experience that enhance life satisfaction (Sorensen, 1987). Employed women are more satisfied with their life than unemployed women.

Zest can be defined as living life with an excitement, anticipation, and energy. It includes enthusiasm and approaching life as an adventure. It is one among the 24- character strength in positive psychology. It is predicting a person's happiness and level of contentment from his work life and his personal life. For women life satisfaction is predicted by zest, gratitude, hope, appreciation of love and beauty meanwhile for men it is predicted by creativity, perspective, fairness and humour. Zest makes people highly active and lively which makes our brain form neural networks that make one joyful. Usually zestful people are great performers, good team workers and high achievers (Chowdhury, 2019). Both men and women have this strength but, the zest for work of women is affected due to several factors.

Women also have higher aims and ambitions which they strive to achieve. But they face a lot of obstacles, while a man having the same ambition, achieve it definitely. When a woman faces these inequalities in all fields, especially in education and work, it affects their zest for work and ambition, eventually leading women to give up their ambitions. Some female students even fear of having big dreams because they believe that won't be permitted to accomplish that. The perception on women she is weak and fragile is still prevalent in this modern world. In ancient times, men involved in activities like hunting and fishing while women in fruit plucking, cooking, weaving and bearing children. But in modern times even women acquire skills which make them equivalent to men. Women in rural areas are still expected to be ancient women.

Gender and sex role typing is also a factor through which people define certain cultural preferences and expectations for gender behaviours. Indian women have been seen as a responsibility of others, whether as daughters, wives, or mother. India is a country which followed child-marriage. But when the prohibition of child marriage act of 2006, came in to force, the marriage age became 18 and 21 for female and male respectively. So, in some culture a girl is expected to get married as soon as she attains her 18. After marriage women were not encouraged to work because of the myth that women should earn less than men ("Top 10 myths about marriage—Times of India," 2011). In India, researchers found that employed women were more likely to marry than unemployed women because parents concern about daughters interacting with other men in workplace and make them get married soon to safeguard their reputation (Allendorf & Thornton, 2017). This affects the enthusiasm of women seeking job which is adventurous and needs more commitment. Child bearing, virginity valuation, are also some causes. Several myths about marriage in different Indian cultures are also the causes for women getting married sooner. Different culture and communities have different perspectives for girls. A study in Tamil Nadu that examined the reasons behind preference for one boy child and one girl child is that boys were desired for economic and social reasons whereas girls were valued for affection and emotional support, household help and maintaining a good family name. Aitareya Brahmana states, "The son is a boat of salvation, a light in the highest heaven. A wife is a comrade but a daughter misery" (Sharma, 2017). Thus, even in different communities gender inequalities are seen.

In ancient India, the position of women in the society and family was significant. They were given greater emphasis on all aspects of society, religious rituals and education. They were also part of political and administrative services. They were the primary decision makers in

the house hold activities. During this period, there were many women rishis. The system of sati and child marriage was not prevalent. Women at that period were also well versed with vedas, hymns and sanskrit literature. There were several women scholars who had high respect in the society. There were also female teachers known as “upadhyaya” or “upadhyayi”. At the end of the vedic period, women were deprived of social and religious rights. Their participation was denied in social, religious and cultural functions. Slowly, the position of women declined to such an extent that the birth of the girl child within the family was regarded as a misfortune. Then birth of a female child was considered as something that could affect the well-being of family and society. At the same time, the male children were regarded as assets. There was prevalence of a viewpoint among the individuals that males would be the assets and enhance the status and promote welfare of their family as well as the entire community. Thus women began to lose her independence and identity in a patriarchal society. The dependence of women upon their fathers, husbands and sons was primarily due to the reason that they did not have the right to property. Even if some of the social evils against women have faded during the British rule, the traces of it still remain in the Indian society. Even if gender discrimination intruded as a social concept, today it sediments in the minds of people as a psychological component. Gradually, it began to establish its illogical presence in the life satisfaction and positivity of people.

The human development report shows that India has positioned as 129<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries according to Human Development Index (HDI). India’s ranking, however, dropped to 122 when the HDI was adjusted for gender parity. The report further acknowledged a “new generation” of inequalities that are emerging, driven by climate change and technology. The Gender Gap Index, by World Economic Forum depicted that the position of India has dropped to 112<sup>th</sup> among 105. It has calculated gender gap between men and women in four key areas, health, education, economy and politics; in health and survival and economic opportunities. The Gender Gap index has tried to measure the disadvantages women have counterpart with men in these areas.

The economic participation of Indian women in the last few years is also poor. There has been a large decline in the labour force participation of women (23.3 percent in 2017-18 and 26.9 percent in 2018) and it is below world average (48.47 percent in 2018; World Bank). Women are also getting less economic opportunities than men due to various reasons. In the villages, women do most of the housework and other unpaid work and have no time to do outside jobs but for urban women, even when they get jobs there is concern about the safety of transport from the family, low pay and sexual harassment.

In education, female students are spending less years in school than male students. The mean year of schooling for girls is 4.7 years whereas for boys it is 8.2 years. Once girls attain puberty they were restrained from going to school and acquiring other skill training. One of the main reasons said by their parents was that there is no separate toilet for girls in school of rural areas. Another major source of concern in India is female foeticide and its consequence of having abnormally skewed sex ratio at birth at 91 girls for every 100 boys.

India has, however, improved on the political empowerment sub index at 18<sup>th</sup> place, largely because the country was headed by a woman for 20 years in the past 50 years. But political representation of women in the Parliament is low at 14.4 percent. (122<sup>nd</sup> rank) and 23 percent in the Cabinet. India also has very few women on the boards of corporate companies.

Today violence against women is also an important issue why parents want their daughters not to be more social. Sexual violence and unsafe environment for women also stops them seeking paid work outside their home, especially the case for Muslim and lower caste women (Sharma, 2019). Knowledge about these things makes women fearful.

In addition to this knowledge about workplace discrimination also affects their zest for work. Occupational discrimination is evident in most sectors. Women earn only 65 percent of what their Male colleagues earn for performing the same work. Statistics show that only 26 percent of surveyed companies had hired women in the top five job roles in past five years. Of India's largest companies, women occupy only 15 percent board seats. In-group bias in workplace also affects employment of women. Even women of superior competence are discriminated against in vocational world. Nowadays media, both directly and indirectly affects the zest for work of women.

Girls from rural areas, when they are exposed to social media they tend to waste time and causing distractions. Gender advertisements also affect the zest for work by creating gender stereotypes. For instance, gender ads sometimes depict sex appropriateness in jobs. Incompetent education system in some states is also a reason why women losing interest in work. It is essential to note that the women's participation in the labour force and development is complex and reflects changes in economic activity, educational attainment, fertility rates, social norms and other factors (Verick, 2014). Gender role biases in Indian television have served to reinforce and even enhance the degradation of women in the broader society. Fictionalized dramas reinforced the sex role stereotypes of men as decisive, assertive, dominant, and career- oriented, and of women as emotionally dependent, eager to please, sentimental, and primarily concerned with family relationships. Female characters in these series were most often housewives, secretaries, teachers, or nurses. Women were featured more often than men in Indian commercials, yet were shown performing stereotyped female activities such as shopping, preparing meals, and dressing to obtain the sexual approval of men. (Behera, 1989)

Some female students even prefer not to go for work. Some female students have society maintaining work attitudes having little or no interest their work but only for self respect and sense of worth. When women are unable to find jobs suitable for their abilities, training and expectation they get frustrated (Hurlock, 1953). This affects both social and personal adjustment. The success and failure in these adjustments have tremendous influence on the physical and psychological wellbeing and also life satisfaction.

Today, government of India has launched several women empowerment schemes such as Mahila E- haat ,Swadhar Greh, Beti bacho beti padao etc. Even then the situation remains to be the same in some region. Recently the Supreme Court has dismissed the Union government's submissions that women are physiologically weaker than men as a "sex stereotype" and has declared that the Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers are eligible for permanent commission and command posts in the Army irrespective of their years of service.

The study is important because the participation of women in labour force is an important catalyst to a nation's growth and development. Furthermore, work life also contributes to the health of women. Thus, zest plays a major part in a woman's life. This study will help to identify the difference in how socio-cultural factors affect the ambitions by affecting the academics and work life, the need for empowerment of women in Tamil Nadu. Due to the

above- mentioned factors the women, especially in India where cultural aspects plays a major role, have low level of zest for work when compared to men. And this study focuses on gender differences in the zest for work among young adults of Tamil Nadu.

### ***Purpose of the present study***

The purpose of the present study was to identify the gender differences in zest for work among young adults of Tamil Nadu. The hypothesis is (H1) zest for work will be high for males when compared to females and (H2) there will be significant difference between both genders when it comes to their zest for work.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Sample***

The sample of young adults between the age of 20 and 25 were chosen for the study. 86 working people, 45 male and 41 females from various districts in Tamil Nadu participated in the study. For data collection snowball method was used. The participants were from various districts of Tamil Nadu like Madurai, Virudunagar, Ramanadapuram, Kanyakumari, Thirunelveli, Tuticorin, Erode, Chennai etc.

### ***Tools used***

The Zest for Work Scale (ZWS) was used for the study. This scale was designed by Onur Erdogan in the year 2013. It is used to assess the level of zest for work. In this study ZWS is used to study the zest for work of young adults in Tamil Nadu. The zest for work scale consists of seven five-point Likert scale items. It is theoretically based on the 240-item character assessment scale by Peterson, Park and Seligman (2005), which was originally developed to assess the character strengths. There was no reversely scored item, so high scores are interpreted as high levels of zest for work. The validity and reliability research conducted by Peterson et al. (2005) identified the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient as 0.82.

### ***Procedure***

The sample for the study was working men and women between the ages of 20 and 25 from Tamil Nadu. The sample was selected by convenience sampling method. Initially, they were given a consent form and if they were willing to take part in the study they were asked to rate the scale containing seven items in Google form. For data collection snow ball technique was used. When the response was obtained, the scoring process was done and the result was acquired.

### ***Design***

The ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. Data analysis of this study was done after collecting the data from the subject. The raw data is obtained and data editing and data analysis is done. The hypothesis testing was done. Mann-Whitney U test was applied. SPSS was used for statistical analysis.

## **RESULT**

The result shows the level of zest for work among the young adults of Tamil Nadu.

**Table 1 Mean and standard deviation of male and female**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Female	41	22.29	7.205
Male	45	28.28	5.411

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation of male and female. The mean and standard deviation of the scores of 45 male participants are 28.28 and 5.411 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the scores of 41 female participants are 22.29 and 7.205 respectively. There were huge variations in scores and had scores of extreme levels. Among 45 men 5 have scored the maximum score of 35 and among 41 women only one has scored the maximum score. The lowest score men have scored was 11, while that of women was 9.

**Table 2 Mann-Whitney U test**

Variable	Men		Women		U	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Zest for work	28.28	5.411	22.29	7.205	477.500	0.000***

*Significance at  $P < 0.001$ \*\*\**

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine whether there were gender differences in zest for work among young adults of Tamil Nadu. Results of the analysis indicated that there was a difference,  $z = -4.196$ ,  $p = 0.000$ \*\*\* with men having high level of zest for work than women.

## DISCUSSION

The result of the study reflects the existing gender difference in the zest for work among young adults in Tamil Nadu. The result also shows women have low zest for work when compared to men. The reasons for this disparity are numerous. A multi-dimensional change is necessary. A holistic empowerment is said to be the primary intervention.

Elizabeth. B. Hurlock suggests that when women are unable to find jobs suitable for their abilities, training and expectation they feel frustrated. Work engagement also plays an essential role in the mental wellbeing of women. A study on mental health issues and challenges in India emphasized that females are more predisposed to mental disorders due to rapid social change, gender discrimination, social exclusion, gender disadvantage like marrying at young age, concern about the husband's substance misuse habits, and domestic violence. To reduce the burden of mental disorders in women, there is need to do socioeconomic empowerment of women by improving access to education and employment opportunities (Reddy, 2019). Links between empowerment of women through income generation and education, reduction of discrimination based on caste and sex, and promotion of individual and community mental health were recognized (Kermode & Herrman, 2007). The engagement of women in work also have an impact on their physical health. Work engagement is associated with healthy, adaptable cardiac autonomic activity, particularly increased parasympathetic activity (Seppala & Mauno, 2012). Improving the work engagement may facilitate increase in zest for work. A combination of socio-cultural, economic, and psychological empowerment is expected.

The psychological empowerment is a blend of self esteem, self efficacy, self determination, self confidence, self awareness, positive thinking and it ultimately leads to wellbeing and happiness of women. A woman who is psychologically empowered has a capacity to increase

self image and conquer stigma. Empowering psychologically means enabling women to access skill, knowledge and cope with the stress cum trauma of present as well as future.(Mishra,2016).

Economic empowerment is one of the most powerful routes for women to achieve their potential and advance their rights. A more feminist point of view stresses that access to financial resources presents an opportunity for greater empowerment of women (Morduch ,2005). Women's ownership of land increases women's decision-making authority and lowers their risk of experiencing marital violence (Allendorf, 2007). Education may increase women's bargaining power within their households because it endows them with knowledge, skills, and resources to make life choices that improve their welfare (Duflo, 2012 ).

This sex role stereotyping in the media is seriously impeding the struggles of women in India to achieve economic and political autonomy. To promote more positive role modelling and change women's self-image, Indian television must move immediately to portray women achieving self-realization through their careers and social participation and to depict cooperation between men and women in performing household chores (Behera, 1989).

Women's potential hidden power is to be utilized for which, her status in the society must be improved and economically she should be strengthened. The poverty is the main cause for her low bargaining power hence poverty should be removed. Empowering women and removal of poverty go hand in hand (Kadam, 2012).

Further research can be done on academic zest and grit of women in India. As education is the important factor that determines the value of a person in a society, research in academic zest among Indians may help apprehend how much enthusiasm they have for education. Research on grit of Indian women helps to understand their goal-oriented behaviour which again enhances their positivity in life.

The limitation of the study is that the data is collected using convenience sampling method. Sample size is also small, due to insufficiency of time. So the sample cannot be the exact representation of the population. Further implications can be done by increasing the sample size.

## **CONCLUSION**

Women empowerment is the need of the hour. The empowerment is an aid to help women to achieve equality with men or, at least, to reduce gender gap considerably. Women play a very strategic role in the development of society in particular and development of economy in general. Women contribute directly or indirectly for economic development. Though the nature has given the genetic power of reproduction especially to the women, the socio-economic status of women is so poor and the incidence of poverty is more on woman only. Being zestful contributes to life a satisfied and positive framework. Reducing the ignorance, bringing awareness, eliminating gender stereotypes in all aspects of life especially the work environment etc can make difference in the society. The rebirth of a society with positivity and openness to change is the sole resolution for the existing gender based social conditioning.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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