

Perceived Stress and Resilience among Early Married Home-makers and Working Women

Vahiba K. I.^{1*}, Durga K. S.²

ABSTRACT

The common tradition of women getting married in their early ages of 18-21 is changing in the present days, but this change cannot be considered as an abrupt one. The life conditions of early married women have always been part of discussions and academic studies and the present study also tries to tap on this significant population. The agenda of the present-day struggles of empowerment are around financial autonomy or economic stability of women, and keeping this concern in mind, the present study tries to understand the impact of having an occupation among women who married in an early age. The major variables of concern were the Perceived stress of women and their Brief resilience and the present study revealed that there isn't any significant difference in the variables of concern among early married women who were employed and unemployed. The study was conducted on a sample of 60 women with equal proportion of working and non-working women. The tools used for the study were Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen and Mermeistein (1983) and Brief Resilience Scale by Smith et. al. (2008). The data was statistically analysed to reach the conclusion. Major limitations of the study and the possible future orientations have been discussed further in the research paper.

Keywords: *Early marriage, Employment Status, Perceived Stress, Resilience*

Stress is a very common psychological distress that is experienced by everyone in different periods of their lifetime in varying intensity. It has become very common to discuss stress and stressors along with the differing coping strategies and management techniques. The term stress refers to a wide range of conditions and processes, from stressful life events to marital issues to the hormone variations that accompany those experiences (Story, L. B., & Bradbury, T. N., 2004). Stress can be operationalized on the basis of the definitions of WHO, where stress is considered as a person's biological, psychological and physical response to life circumstances which are demanding beyond one's capabilities and knowledge, thereby challenging their ability to cope. The extent to which stress can impact the life of people, both physically and psychologically makes it more crucial to tap on the factors that can lead to stress. Stress is named differently based on different conditions causing stress such as work stress, academic stress, marital stress and so on. While marital

¹BSc. Psychology, Christ College Autonomous, Irinjalakuda, Kerala, India

²Assistant Professor, Christ College Autonomous, Irinjalakuda, Kerala, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: June 14, 2022; Revision Received: March 13, 2023; Accepted: March 18, 2023

Perceived Stress and Resilience among Early Married Home-makers and Working Women

stress in itself is a kind of stress, marital life and the related marital satisfaction are potential stressors that influences the life of people. Understanding potential stressors has been a followed agenda by researchers in order to understand better about stressors and try developing effective stress management strategies.

Resilience is a novel idea with little research works in the field of education to support any pedagogical uses (Rubin et. al., 2006). It is a concept that has been mostly discussed in relation to stress and stress management. Resilience is considered as an innate ability of a person to adapt positively to the life demands and stay committed to live their life using their resources and potential (Rubin et. al., 2006). While few scholars consider it as an inherited trait, others have come up with counter arguments on resilience being an ability that is acquired during the process of growth (Hu et. al., 2015). It is expected that resilient people carry the skills to tackle and manage the negative situations in life, which includes having a strong sense of self-worth, good emotional adjustment skills, good social interaction skills, being autonomous, compassionate, hopeful and optimistic, and having good problem-solving abilities, as well as having family and friend support (Chang & Song, 2007). Better comprehension of the dynamic effectiveness of resilience was explained using a vulnerability–resilience stress model. The vulnerability–resilience stress model for mental disorders argued that protective and risk factors were on opposing sides when it comes into influencing an individual's adaptive mechanism in stressful situations. While high levels of stress can lead to vulnerability, strong levels of resilience can help people adapt to difficult situations in a positive way that leads to better results (Breton et. al., 2015). Resilience becomes a significant part of human life as it impacts academic performance, social competence, and the avoidance of dangerous conduct which seems to have a role in fostering desirable and satisfying life paths (Roeser et. al., 1999).

The objective characteristics of stress and the subjective perception of stress are two distinct reports about the same condition that must be studied separately in order to understand their relative contributions in the different aspects of a person's life. According to a prior study report by Williams (1995), couples' perceptions of stress are said to be more closely linked to marital functioning than their objective experiences. The presence of negative stressors in domains other than the relationship is frequently related with changes in individuals' attitudes and ideologies inside the relationship, a phenomenon known as stress spill over (Repetti & Wood, 1997). Work-Life balance and the related stress are related concerns that call attention. Marriage is a social institution which has a strong socially constructed base (Barber, 2004). Discourses around marriages in the psychological research field are immense as marriage and relationships are considered as significant factors that influence the life of any individual. With the rise of the biomedical model of healthcare and a wider acceptance of the model, the social and environmental causal factors are given equal importance as any other biological explanations for the health concerns of people (Sheridan & Radmacher, 1992). Family relations and marital status thereby overpowers the discussions related to psychological well-being of people (Cochrane & Stopes-Roe, 1981). Even when marriage as a term carries a very common shared meaning all around the world, it has a very dynamic understanding when examined through a temporally and spatially grounded lens. The socially constructed ideals around marriage vary significantly along with the customs, rituals, beliefs, norms, and social expectations (Aniciete & Soloski, 2011). The age by which young adults are expected to engage in the institution of marriage has been and still is a significant part of social and judicial discussions. From the acceptance of child marriages to the recent judgment of the minimum age for men and women to get married being 21 (Sharma & Bhasin, 2021), changes have been major even when they are slow-paced. While

Perceived Stress and Resilience among Early Married Home-makers and Working Women

the age of marriage becomes the core focus of the discussion, the number of people who have been into a marital life early in their life would be quite a significant number (Bhagat, 2016). The ones who have been into an early marriage can also be considered as prone to becoming early-parents and get into their stage of parenthood from a young age. All these possible life situations can be considered as an early baggage of stressors in their lives.

A review of literature shows that women experience greater mental symptoms than males, but this has nothing to do with marital status. Being married, rather than reducing symptoms, is thought to keep a potential patient out of the hospital (Cochrane & Stopes-Roe, 1981). The experiences of women in early marriages have not been a major focal point in studies even when the topics of stress and resilience have been common in research. It is also mentioned that whether or not a woman works outside the home for a living is a significant predictor of symptom levels, particularly in depression. Women whose husbands are unemployed are likewise more prone to suffer from depression. However, there is no effect of a wife's employment level on her husband's psychological well-being (Cochrane & Stopes-Roe, 1981). The life patterns and social conditions of women are slowly changing in the present era and attracting attention to understand the dynamic influence of early marriage and employment status in the stress and resilience level of women.

Scope and Significance of the study

Early marriages are on its path of deterioration where people prefer to empower women through education and financial autonomy. Even though the change is happening at a quick pace, a good number of women are still into the traditional system of early marriages. The choice of being a home-maker or an employed woman are available for a few while such choices do not exist among others. Taking this population into consideration it is important to understand the impact of early marriages and unemployment among the women population. The present study thereby helps in understanding the difference in the level of perceived stress and the level of resilience among working and non-working early married women. Lots of assumptions remain in this area and the present study helps in decoding the fact from the myth. The study also opens up further opportunities to focus on this population and work further for the improvement of their life conditions and develop strategies to educate the society about the issues concerned with early marriages.

Aim

The major aim of the present study was to understand if there are any differences in the Perceived stress and Resilience of women who are working and who are early married home-makers. The study also aims to understand if the variables of concern are related with each other among women population of Kerala.

Objectives

- To understand if Perceived stress and Resilience are related with each other among women of Kerala
- To know if there is a difference in the Perceived stress of early married women of Kerala who are working and those who are home-makers
- To clarify if there is any difference in the Resilience level among early married women of Kerala who are working and those who are home-makers

Hypotheses

- Perceived stress and Resilience are not correlated among women of Kerala

Perceived Stress and Resilience among Early Married Home-makers and Working Women

- There is no significant difference in the mean Resilience scores of early married Keralite women who are working and those who are home-makers
- There is no significant difference in the mean Perceived stress scores of early married Keralite women who are working and those who are home-makers

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The population considered for the study were the women of Kerala who had got married early in their life (before their age of 21). The sample data consisted of 60 women belonging to the said population which included 30 working women and 30 home makers. The age range considered for the study was between 20-50 years. The sampling method used was convenient and snowball sampling to make it easier to reach to the population which is difficult to reach to.

Instruments

Self-report questionnaires were used for collecting data from the participants of the quantitative study. The tools used to measure Resilience and Perceived stress are mentioned below.

- **Perceived Stress Scale.** The scale has been developed by Cohen and Mermeistein (1983) to measure the extent to which stress is experienced or perceived by the participants. It is a 10-item 5-point Likert scale which focusses on the feelings of people over the past month. The total score of the scale ranged in between 0-40 which can be divided into low, moderate and high perceived stress. The scale has also been found to have a high internal consistency reliability of .78 and a moderate criterion validity of .38.
- **Brief Resilience Scale.** The 6-item 5-point Likert scale developed by Smith et. al. (2008) is used to understand and score the ability of a person to recover from their life stresses. The scale was found to be highly reliable with the Cronbach's alpha score varying between .80 - .91 (Smith et. al., 2018; Gloria & Steinhardt, 2014). The scale helped in classifying people into three categories based on their resilience as low, normal and high based on their resilience scores.

Procedure

The process of data collection was done through an online mode in which a google form containing both the tools mentioned were attached along with the personal data sheet that asked for basic demographic details and informed consent. A direct conversation happened between the researcher and the participants of the study where a good rapport was maintained and the ethical guidelines were explained to the participants including the matters of anonymity, confidentiality and right to drop out from the process of data collection. The google form link was shared and the data was collected from the participants. The collected data was later coded and scored appropriately and further analysed statistically using SPSS version 25 to reach the significant conclusions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The major aim of the present study was to understand if there are any variations in the resilience and perceived stress scores of Keralite women who had been into their married life from an early period, say between 18-21 years of age, and are employed or unemployed home-makers. The results of the study were not in line with earlier literature and thereby it calls attention.

Table 1. t-tests on Perceived stress and Brief Resilience among early married women who are working and who are home-makers

Grouping variables Dependent variables	Woking women			Home-makers			t-value	p
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Perceived stress	30	15.64	5.02	30	16.86	5.72	1.07	.318
Brief Resilience	30	18.83	37.27	30	18.46	33.37	.483	.631

Table 1 shows the t-test results of both Perceived stress and Resilience of early married women of Kerala and it is revealed that there are no significant differences in the scores of both the variables among employed women ($t = 1.07, p > 0.05$) and home-makers ($t = .483, p > 0.05$). Checking on the mean values from the table makes it clear that the differences in the mean score among both the groups for both the variables of concern are negligible and thereby it can be concluded statistically that there is no significant difference in the Perceived stress and Resilience of early married Keralite women irrespective of their occupational status. Having or not having a paid job does not reveal to be significantly making a difference in the stress experienced in life or the potential of resilience among the early married women.

Vemuri and Sahai (2020) had reported that the resilience of working women is comparatively higher than the non-working married women while the present study reports do not line with this finding. The difference between the two groups of women, even when the result of t-test is insignificant, shows a negligibly small difference in the brief resilience where the working women are seen as more resilient than the non-working women. This result can't be taken forwards as a core finding due to the statistical insignificance of the results, but through another critical lens it can be comprehended that there is no difference in the resilience among early married women who are working or non-working as resilience is an innate and developed intrinsic ability of a person which does not differ based on their employment status. Getting into a job might be influenced by different factors like greater goal orientation (Van Hooft, & Noordzij, 2009., achievement motivation (Liu et. al., 2021), higher grit (Vaart et. al., 2021). The basic ability of women to manage and cope effectively with the negative life events remains the same among women irrespective of them being employed or not. Similarly, the perception of stress among early-married women are also similar as per the current results which points fingers at the social construction of the gender role expectations and the adherence to these by the society which makes women develop the sense of managing their life struggles irrespective of their age in which they take up greater relational responsibilities in life. The readiness to perceive stress among working women and its acceptance can be similar to the readiness of a home-maker woman in dealing with her life stressors. This is one possible explanation of the result while this cannot be considered as the only reality.

Table 2. Correlation between Perceived stress and Resilience among early married women of Kerala

Variables	1	2
1.Perceived stress	-	
2.Brief Resilience	.123	-

$N = 60, p > 0.05$

Perceived Stress and Resilience among Early Married Home-makers and Working Women

Table 2 shows the correlation between perceived stress levels and Brief Resilience of women irrespective of them being employed or not. It reported that there isn't any significant relationship between perceived stress and resilience among women based on the collected data. The chances for error are pretty high as the p value exceeded the limit of 0.05 and thereby this result called for critical understanding of the results of the present study. As the correlation report is not in line with the earlier literature which abundantly points fingers at a direction that resilient people manage stress better and also perceives stress in a better manner (Breton et. al., 2015). This result brings in the necessity to tap on the limitations of the study as an insignificant correlation between perceived stress and resilience is tough to comprehend. The study can therefore help in opening a possibility for many other research works that can clarify this contradictory finding and confirm the reality behind the relationship between variables of concern.

Limitations and future suggestions

The present study has a number of limitations which must be rectified in the future research works in order to reach better conclusions. One of the major limitations of the study has been the sample size considered. The study has to be replicated on a greater mass of people in order to reach proper statistical understanding of the results and also generalise or universalise them. The study has also been limited to a group of people belonging to a specific geographical area with the sampling technique used being non-random sampling methods. As the study only focussed on the early married women, a comparison between the early married and late-married women was not possible which closed many of the doors for better understanding of the variations. It should also be mentioned that researchers had a directional pattern of thought orientation from the very beginning of the research regarding the resilience of working women who married early in life in comparison to those who remained as home-makers. This positionality will be clearly evident throughout the paper even when the results do not align with the same. The use of English language in the questionnaire used for data collection would also have influenced the results negatively which could be taken care of in the future research works. The present study opens immense possibility of in-depth qualitative studies in the same area, along with longitudinal and comparative quantitative studies.

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that there is no significant difference in the level of Perceived stress and Brief resilience among early married young women of Kerala and thereby calls for further researches to explore critically the gender narrative and social schema to weave in with the earlier literature.

REFERENCES

- Aniciete, D., & Soloski, K. L. (2011). The social construction of marriage and a narrative approach to treatment of intra-relationship diversity. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 23(2), 103-126.
- Barber, J. S. (2004). Community social context and individualistic attitudes toward marriage. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 67(3), 236-256.
- Bhagat, R. B. (2016). The practice of early marriages among females in India: Persistence and change. *International Institute for Population Sciences Working Paper*, (10).
- Breton, J. J., Labelle, R., Berthiaume, C., Royer, C., St-Georges, M., Ricard, D., ... & Guilé, J. M. (2015). Protective factors against depression and suicidal behaviour in adolescence. *Canadian journal of psychiatry. Revue canadienne de psychiatrie*, 60(2 Suppl 1), S5.

Perceived Stress and Resilience among Early Married Home-makers and Working Women

- Chang, H. Y., & Song, L. Y. (2007). Adolescent resilience: The concept and related research analysis. *Soochow J Soc Work*, 17, 171-192.
- Chen, Y. L., & Kuo, P. H. (2020). Effects of perceived stress and resilience on suicidal behaviors in early adolescents. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 29(6), 861-870.
- Cochrane, R.; Stopes-Roe, M. (1981). *Women, marriage, employment and mental health. The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 139(5), 373–381. doi:10.1192/bjp.139.5.373
- Hu, T., Zhang, D., & Wang, J. (2015). A meta-analysis of the trait resilience and mental health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 76, 18-27.
- Liu, S., Hong, Z., Zhou, W., Fang, Y., & Zhang, L. (2021). Job-search self-efficacy and reemployment willingness among older adults: roles of achievement motivation and age. *BMC geriatrics*, 21(1), 1-10.
- Repetti, R. L., & Wood, J. (1997). Families accommodating to chronic stress. In *Coping with chronic stress* (pp. 191-220). Springer, Boston, MA. Repetti, R. L., & Wood, J. (1997). Families accommodating to chronic stress. In *Coping with chronic stress* (pp. 191-220). Springer, Boston, MA.
- Roeser, R., W., Eccles, J.S., & Freedman-Doan, C. (1999). Academic functioning and mental health in adolescence: Patterns, progressions, and routes from childhood. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 14, 135–174
- Rubin, K.H., Bukowski, W., & Parker, J. (2006). Peer interactions, relationships, and groups. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (6th ed., Social, emotional, and personality development, pp. 894–941). New York: Wiley.
- Rutter, M. (1984). Resilient children. *Psychology Today*, 18, 57-65.
- Sharma, A., & Bhasin, S. (2021, December 16). *Minimum age for marriage of women from 18 to 21: Cabinet clears proposal*. NDTV.com. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/cabinet-clears-plan-to-raise-minimum-age-for-marriage-for-women-to-21-2653953>
- Sheridan, C. L., & Radmacher, S. A. (1992). *Health psychology: Challenging the biomedical model*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Story, L. B., & Bradbury, T. N. (2004). Understanding marriage and stress: Essential questions and challenges. *Clinical psychology review*, 23(8), 1139-1162.
- Vaart, L. V. D., Zyl, L. E. V., & Wingerden, J. V. (2021). Developing Gritty Job Seekers: A Need-Supportive Approach to Grit Interventions. In *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Grit* (pp. 239-260). Springer, Cham.
- Van Hooft, E. A., & Noordzij, G. (2009). The effects of goal orientation on job search and reemployment: A field experiment among unemployed job seekers. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(6), 1581.
- Vemuri, N. and Sahai, A. (2020). A Study on resilience among working and non-working married women. *International journal of Advanced Research*. 13 (36).
- Williams, L. M. (1995). Associations of stressful life events and marital quality. *Psychological Reports*, 76(3_suppl), 1115-1122.

Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Vahiba K. I. & Durga K. S. (2023). Perceived Stress and Resilience among Early Married Home-makers and Working Women. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(1), 1384-1390. DIP:18.01.140.20231101, DOI:10.25215/1101.140