

## A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence in Working Women and Homemakers from a Global Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

The cultural narrative of "women having it all" about successfully balancing family and professional lives has sparked discourse on whether this is truly possible for women. This paper attempts to explore the Emotional Intelligence (EI) of women working as housewives and as employees. The objective of this paper is to map out the patterns in the household management, quality of life and social adjustments reflecting upon the cognitive, affective and behavioural skills by comparing housewives and working women on their emotional competency. This paper also aims to synthesize literature investigating the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence including self-regulation, resilience and emotional regulation in the two cross-sections of the women globally. The applicative value of the report may lie in the identification of appropriate strategies to facilitate women's psychological well-being across their various roles at home and at work and in development of effective ways to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships with others.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Working Women, Housewives, Homemakers*

Over the ages, womanhood has been praised, discussed, and reverted. In the mythological worlds, women were viewed as divine beings; Saraswati symbolized wisdom, while Durga embodied strength. Vedic Indian women were educated in scriptures, philosophy, and warfare, with figures like Gargi and Maitreyi exemplifying their wisdom. Their autonomy in education, marriage, and decision-making reflected a society that valued their intellect and contributions. However, with the medieval age unfolding and changing definition of gender roles, women's position was seen to decline that frequently limited women to household duties. Self-determination theory and feminism have influenced the modern era, which places a strong emphasis on emotional intelligence and autonomy in striking a balance between the personal and professional domains. Women's identities have evolved over the years with the influence of changing cultural norms. (References -- *Education and empowerment of women in ancient India*, ICERT Publication, 2024)

The impact of emotional intelligence on social adjustment, quality of life, and household management is examined in this study of working women and housewives. The idea of "having it all," balancing career and family seamlessly, has sparked extensive discourse on

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## **A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence in Working Women and Homemakers from a Global Perspective**

the challenges and realities of modern womanhood. While some embrace the dual responsibilities of work and home, others dedicate themselves entirely to household management, each path requiring immense emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, plays a crucial role in a woman's ability to manage personal and professional spheres effectively.

As housewives, women assume a variety of duties in the household, ranging from leadership to management. Just as leaders motivate their teams to create a vision for them and managers manage daily business operations, housewives, also known as "homemakers," play an important role in boosting family members' confidence while also handling household tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and washing. Women who work as housewives create stability and continuity inside the family through their foresight. Working women integrate professional demands with personal and social obligations, demonstrating perseverance, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. Their lifestyle entails multitasking, time management, and ongoing learning to advance in their careers while also fulfilling family and societal obligations.

In 1997, John Mayer and Peter Salovey proposed the idea of emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman described emotional intelligence as people's ability to recognise and accept their own and others' feelings to promote interpersonal relationships. His book "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ" emphasised the significance of this characteristic in a person's professional, social, and personal life. Many studies support the importance of emotional intelligence in determining one's success in life. Individuals with high EI skills exhibit emotional appraisal and regulation abilities, allowing for adaptive outcomes and receiving attention from the scientific and public spheres due to theoretical and practical implications (Mayer et al., 2008). Emotional intelligence has five primary domains:

1. Emotional intelligence: People who are emotionally intelligent are better able to control their emotions since they can identify when they are experiencing a given emotion and think about it as they do. Women who can recognise their emotions are better able to communicate them to others in the household and at work, preventing arguments and preserving peace.
2. Managing emotions: Individuals who can manage their emotions can more easily rebound from setbacks, disappointments, and frustrations, while those who are poor managers of their feelings find themselves always fighting feelings of distress and anger. This is an indication that women with high EI can maintain relationships without the impact of undue negative emotions and distress in family and in work life.
3. Self-motivation: Focus, mastery, creativity, and self-motivation all depend on the ability to control one's emotions to accomplish a goal. Women with self motivation can overcome family feuds and role conflicts easily and regain control over life.
4. Being able to identify others' feelings: Self-awareness leads to empathy, or the capacity to sense another person's subjective experience; those who are more competent at comprehending their own emotions will also be better at comprehending those of others. Through the process of attunement between parent and child, empathy development starts in infancy. Parents that are attuned can communicate to their children that they understand how they are experiencing. As

## **A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence in Working Women and Homemakers from a Global Perspective**

women are biologically and socially programmed to be sensitive, they are better able to navigate situations with care and concern.

5. Managing connections. Interpersonally intelligent people are adept at social analysis, group organisation, problem-solving, and personal connection. The ability to manage other people's emotions is largely responsible for the ability to establish and sustain relationships. Women can use this extra benefit of emotional intelligence to create and maintain harmony with people both inside and outside the house.

Gender also significantly influences emotional regulation flexibility and strategy use, with women using ER strategies more frequently and utilizing a wider repertoire, contrasting with men's more acceptance and suppression strategies. (Goubet & Chrysikou, 2019)

*The following study is undertaken to answer the objectives described below:*

1. To analyze the emotional intelligence of working women.
2. To analyze the emotional intelligence of housewives.
3. To observe the difference, if any, between working women and housewives in emotional intelligence.
4. To draw a comparison of emotional intelligence between working women and housewives.
5. To understand the implications of emotional intelligence of women in organizational setup in view of the differences and comparison drawn.

### **A BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Studies published during the last few years have been reviewed. The studies have been arranged according to the main theme of the review objectives.

A 2019 study by Sharma and Sharma found that Indian housewives with greater EI had reduced levels of stress and despair. This aligns with research from other Asian countries, like Wang et al. (2017), which found that emotional intelligence (EI) shields Chinese and South Korean women against emotional distress.

Asian countries, such as India, place a strong emphasis on interdependence and collectivism, which influences how housewives develop their emotional intelligence. People from collectivist cultures may be better able to handle relationships because they are more sensitive to the feelings of others, according to research by Markus and Kitayama (1991). Indian women frequently repress their own feelings to preserve family unity, according to a study by Gupta and Singh (2021), highlighting a distinctive feature of emotional intelligence shaped by cultural norms.

In India, Jain and Sinha (2020) discovered that while working women performed better on emotional intelligence (EI) tests pertaining to self-regulation and problem-solving, housewives had superior EI in areas pertaining to empathy and interpersonal connections. According to Ali and Nisar (2019), professional women had higher emotional resilience, while housewives possessed superior social and familial emotional intelligence.

According to a study conducted in India by Das and Mukherjee (2020), housewives with higher EI had better communication and more marital harmony. In Pakistan, Akhtar et al. (2016) found that emotionally intelligent women had better life satisfaction and stronger marital ties. Research indicates that emotional intelligence (EI) helps working women

## **A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence in Working Women and Homemakers from a Global Perspective**

combine their obligations to their families and their jobs, which helps create a positive marriage atmosphere (Ghazali, Yusoff, & Kamaruddin, 2021).

A study by Jain and Sinha (2020) in India found that working women scored higher on EI measures related to problem-solving and self-regulation, whereas housewives exhibited greater EI in areas related to empathy and interpersonal relationships.

Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002) found that employment offers organised social connections and cognitive demands that improve EI. Housewives, on the other hand, develop emotional intelligence through familial relationships and caregiving tasks, both of which are necessary for emotional regulation within the family unit.

Schutte et al. (2009) conducted a study comparing EI levels among women in Spain and discovered that while working women had superior self-motivation and leadership skills, housewives had more emotional awareness in family contexts.

Another study conducted in Germany by Bastian, Burns, and Nettelbeck (2005) discovered that emotional intelligence was positively connected with life satisfaction in both working women and housewives, however the sources of emotional fulfillment varied across the two groups.

### **DISCUSSION**

As per the research findings, it may be inferred that both working women and homemakers with high EI have good interpersonal skills. However, the areas of successful relationships differ in the two cases. The former is more focused on job roles and work performance where EI is a tool for climbing the corporate ladder. Decision making and problem solving are the key activities of accomplishment leading to better negotiation with clients, better satisfaction for customers and better working relations within the organisation. Kumar and Thomas, 2016, revealed that there is a significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence and stability, relationship management, self-motivation between professionals (female higher secondary teachers) and non-professionals (housewives) emphasizing on the presence of interpersonal skills in the working population. Intergroup differences are constructively mitigated by women with high EI.

However, homemakers use their skills in better conflict management in family. Differences with in-laws and spouse are potentially well handled by housewives. This translates into a more positive approach towards life and wellbeing. Studies bear empirical evidence to the observation that homemakers high on emotional intelligence have better life satisfaction (Mittal, 2020). EI acts as a safety net in such cases. Both fulfilling personal life experiences (Goleman 1995; Marques 2006) and dynamic leadership (Emmerling & Goleman 2005; Goleman 2000; Boyatzis & McKee 2002); Kerr et al. 2006; Rosete & Ciarrochi 2005) have been closely linked to emotional intelligence skills.

In EI dimensions including leadership, self-control, and problem-solving, working women in India, Spain, and Germany routinely score higher (Jain & Sinha, 2020; Matthews et al., 2002). This implies that, irrespective of cultural origin, structured work environments consistently promote cognitive aspects of emotional intelligence.

## **A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence in Working Women and Homemakers from a Global Perspective**

Housewives in collectivist civilisations such as China and India have better emotional intelligence (EI) in empathy and family relationships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Gupta & Singh, 2021). In contrast, women in Western cultures such as Spain and Germany display emotional intelligence (EI) through personal fulfilment and self-motivation (Schutte et al., 2009; Bastian et al., 2005).

It may be added here that while working women are good "leaders", housewives are good "managers". The importance of emotional intelligence (EI) for professional performance has been acknowledged multiple times (Goleman 1998; Kirch et al. 2001; Rozell et al. 2002), leading to recommendations for the inclusion of EI skills in curricula (Chia 2005; Holt & Jones 2005; Low & Nelson 2005). Executive function and self-regulation skills are crucial for planning, focusing attention, remembering instructions, and juggling multiple tasks. They help the brain filter out distractions, prioritize tasks, and restrain impulses. Housewives, like air traffic control systems, manage various household chores like cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, nursing, and budgeting. These chores do improve executive functions by requiring individuals to plan, self-regulate, and switch tasks, either through self-chores or family-care chores. (Tepper et al., 2022).

While working women are trained to exercise resilience in times of organisational crisis, homemakers are experientially prepared to practice resilience and develop strategic planning in times of personal crisis. While self motivation and regulation are found to be intrinsic to the job environment for working women, awareness and empathy in housewives are found to be integral to healthy family.

To sum up, it can be said that, research indicate that both working women and homemakers with high emotional intelligence have good interpersonal abilities. However they use EI in different situations. By emphasizing decision-making, problem-solving, and productive working relationships, working women use emotional intelligence (EI) to improve job performance and advance their careers. To improve their well-being and life satisfaction, homemakers, on the other hand, use EI. Research has shown that among housewives, emotional control and happiness are significantly and positively correlated (Mittal, 2020). Furthermore, because household chores require people to plan, self-regulate, and switch between tasks, Tepper et al. (2022) found that doing them can improve executive functions including self-regulation and planning. EI expression is also influenced by cultural factors: homemakers in collectivist nations, such as China and India, are excellent at empathy and family bonds, whereas working women in Western cultures place more emphasis on self-motivation and personal fulfillment. In general, working women are more likely to be successful leaders, while stay-at-home women are better at running their homes.

### **CONCLUSION**

Working women and housewives are playing the same roles but in different contexts where emotional intelligence is a precursor to the degree of their accomplishment. In both cases, emotional management is vital to their survival and growth be it in family or be it in work. Emotional regulation is a prerequisite to survive the effects of daily wars at home and at work by each woman in their own unique ways. As long as the right kind of balance is maintained in the level of emotional involvement, women will have satisfaction in their personal and professional lives.

## A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence in Working Women and Homemakers from a Global Perspective

### *Implications*

1. Reintegration of women working as housewives may be considered into the active workforce because of their time management, conflict management and interpersonal skills adding to the repertoire of the managerial and Non managerial output of any organization.
2. Women with strong domestic experience are resourceful for an organization working on diversity and inclusion initiatives, thereby expanding on the realm of innovation and perspectives. Team effectiveness is likely to increase with such endeavours.
3. Decision and policy making in organizations may be navigated with greater effectiveness with the help of insights drawn from studies about women grappling with family responsibilities. Organizational culture may be recreated to potentiate women's flexibility to balance work and family and, therefore, transcend to positive organizational behaviour.

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## **A Comparative Study of Emotional Intelligence in Working Women and Homemakers from a Global Perspective**

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

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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