

Research Paper

Resentment in Relationship and Types of Anxiety Manifestation Among Married Women: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study aimed to assess the relationship that exists between the type of anxiety and resentment among married women. **Materials Required:** A correlational research design-based study was conducted on a sample of 104 married women (50 working and 54 non-working), selected using Non-random Sampling: Convenience Technique. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire based on the Resentment Rating Scale for Couples and the Hamilton Anxiety Scale. The data was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test and Spearman Correlation. **Results:** The study revealed a strong correlation between the psychological, somatic, and total anxiety and resentment in relationships among non-working married women ($\rho=0.72$, $\rho=0.73$, $\rho=0.79$), respectively. While a moderate correlation was found between the psychological, somatic, and total anxiety and resentment in relationships among working married women ($\rho=0.38$, $\rho=0.33$, $\rho=0.41$), respectively. Also, a significant difference was found between the anxiety levels of working and non-working married women, and no significant difference was found in the resentment among working and non-working married women. **Conclusion:** the study highlights the effect of suppressed emotion in marital relationships, and its effects on both working and non-working married women in the manifestation of types of anxiety. It is helpful for psychologists, specially couple therapists, in tackling the relationship issues and focusing on overall well-being.

Keywords: *Resentment, Psychological, Somatic, Anxiety, Working, Non-working, Married Women*

Anxiety

Anxiety is characterized as an intense feeling of impending doom. It is defined as an emotion characterized by "feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure. They distinguish it from fear, noting that anxiety is a future-oriented, long-acting response focused on a diffuse threat, whereas fear is an appropriate, short-term response to a present, clearly identifiable threat"(American Psychological Association, n.d.).

Anxiety is a very common and necessary emotion that an individual experiences throughout their life. A certain level of anxiety is necessary for an individual to perform the various tasks of their life, and even helps in achieving various goals that one wants to achieve. On

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the other hand, when this minimal or necessary level of anxiety increases beyond a certain limit and starts to impact the daily functioning of an individual, it starts developing into anxiety disorders.

Resentment

Resentment is a complex emotional response that can have significant implications for both mental and physical health (Ahmed, 2024). Resentment is considered to be a very intertwined, multilayered emotional reaction to being mistreated or wronged by another person, situation, or series of circumstances. Often, it feels like a merging of anger, bitterness, disgust, disappointment, and disapproval towards the person or the events that led to the perspective (Cleveland Clinic, 2023). In a relationship, when resentment stems its like a slow-burn which ultimately ruins the future. Especially when it comes to married couples, a slight misunderstanding or loss of communication can lead to emotional suppression in the spouse, which later transforms to deep rooted resentment, reducing marital satisfaction. Resentment is different from anger. While anger is often immediate and reactive, resentment is prolonged and internalized. It's the grudge that is silently held, the bitterness that starts to resurface in conversations, and the cold distance that replaces warmth in relationships. For example, one partner usually does the daily chores, does the errands, is more emotionally invested, while the other does not even appreciate the immense work done by the person, and when that person does not address this thing with their partner to slowly leads to the building up of resentment.

The Analogy Between Suppression and Resentment in Relationships

In order to understand the analogy between suppression (a psychological defense mechanism) and resentment in a relationship, we must understand how the unexpressed energy behaves. According to Sigmund Freud suppression is a type of defense mechanism in which an individual consciously pushes distressing thoughts, feelings, or impulses out of awareness to cope with stress and maintain functionality, on the other hand, resentment in relationships is a complex emotion that arises when a partner feels unappreciated and is investing more in the relationship, and also does not confront this feeling with the other partner. Both function as two sides of the same coin, which is an attempt to hide the truth to maintain a façade of peace.

- *The pressure cooker effect:* to understand the relationship between suppression and resentment, the pressure cooker effect explains the analogy in the simplest way possible.

During suppression, an individual holds back a valid emotional reaction to a partner's behaviour, and this leads to the accumulation of those unexpressed emotions over time. During suppression, the main intent of the individual is to avoid conflict, which transforms into preserving the status quo of the relationship during resentment. Ultimately, the result of suppression is emotional exhaustion and physical stress (Butler et al., 2003), and the resentment results in passive-aggressive behavior of the partner and formation of emotional distance (Gottman, 1994).

The step-wise function of analogy:

- *The trigger:* The partner did something hurtful or made their partner feel unappreciative of all the effort they put into the relationship, and the individual, instead of addressing this, the individual suppresses the hurt to "keep the peace".

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- *The Accumulation:* Since the issue was not addressed or the conflict was not resolved between the couple, the emotion did not disappear; it transformed. This accumulation of suppressed emotion, like one brick on top of another, ultimately forms an invisible wall, causing emotional distance. Just like in a pressure cooker, the heat of emotional distancing and suppression acts as the fuel; in this context, chronic suppression acts as a fuel for resentment.
- *The Leakage:* Just like a pressure cooker eventually releases steam, similarly suppressed emotions in the relationship surface as resentment. This often manifests as contempt, one of the "Four Horsemen" that predict relationship failure (Gottman, 1994).

Suppression is most likely similar to a "loan" taken out on the relationship's future. You get immediate peace (the interest), but eventually, the "debt" of resentment must be paid back, usually with interest in the form of an explosive argument or total emotional shutdown.

"Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die."(McCourt, 1998).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim

The study aimed to assess the relationship that exists between the type of anxiety and resentment among married women.

Operational Definitions

- **Resentment:** Resentment is defined as a persistent feeling of displeasure, anger, or indignation resulting from a sense of being wronged, mistreated, or unfairly treated (APA, 2018).
- **Psychological anxiety:** Psychological anxiety is defined as the cognitive distress arising from the inability to meet unattainably high societal and familial standards. It manifests as a feeling of being "trapped" or "overwhelmed" by the mental labor required to manage a household and sustain emotional intimacy (Rema & Kaur, 2020).
- **Somatic Anxiety:** Somatic anxiety is the "idiom of distress" where marital conflicts (like lack of intimacy, financial stress, or power imbalance) are converted into physical symptoms (headaches, back pain, gastrointestinal issues) to legitimize the need for support (Pereira et al., 2022).

Objective:

1. Correlation between resentment and psychological and somatic anxiety among working and non-working married women
2. To determine the difference in resentment in relationships among working and non-working married women
3. To determine the difference in anxiety among working and non-working married women

Hypotheses:

- H₁: A significant positive correlation exists between resentment in a relationship and psychological anxiety in working married women.

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- H₂: A significant positive correlation exists between resentment in a relationship and somatic anxiety in working married women.
- H₃: A significant positive correlation exists between resentment in a relationship and the level of anxiety in working married women.
- H₄: A significant positive correlation exists between resentment in a relationship and psychological anxiety in non-working married women.
- H₅: A significant positive correlation exists between resentment in a relationship and somatic anxiety in non-working married women.
- H₆: A significant positive correlation exists between resentment in a relationship and the level of anxiety in working married women.
- H₇: A statistically significant difference exists in the levels of resentment between working and non-working married women.
- H₈: A statistically significant difference exists in the levels of anxiety between working and non-working married women

Research Design

The study follows a correlational research design. This research design measures the statistical relationship between two or more variables without manipulating them. This research design aligns with the aim of our study and is extremely helpful in understanding the type of relationship that exists between the resentment in the relationship and the level of anxiety among working and non-working married women.

Variables

- Predictor variable: Resentment
- Criterion variable: Psychological anxiety and Somatic anxiety
- Demographic variable: employment status (since we have grouped the data into working and non-working married women)
- [Marital status is being used as a control variable in the study]

Sample

The study included a total of 104 married women, 50 of whom were working, and 54 were housewives/non-working. The particular sample was chosen because the relationship of resentment with anxiety among married women was least explored. According to the UN, globally, around 64% of the population consists of married women, while in India, according to the latest government consensus, 49.9% of the population is of married women. Since our target population is half of the total population and was least explored in the area of our study, it is a very important sample to be studied.

Sampling method: For data collection, a convenience sampling technique was used. The technique used is a non-probability sampling technique in which we choose participants based on their ease of availability. Since the target sample was working and non-working married women, the convenience sampling technique was very useful in obtaining the data, as the forms were given to the participants in person, and was made sure that all the required information for the study was collected effectively, making our data more authentic and reliable.

Inclusion Criteria

- The Participants who are in the range of 25-50 years of age.

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- Duration of marriage is 5 or more than 5 years
- The minimum educational qualification is 10th standard

Exclusion Criteria

- The participants who are pregnant
- The participants who have any ongoing legal matters related to their marriage
- No debilitating condition (illness, disorder, or deficit) was present.

Data Collection Method

The data collection process was a highly structured interview in which the participant was asked to complete a 7-point and a 5-point Likert scale. Since the data collection involved a Likert scale and was mostly in the presence of the researcher, the data obtained were quantitative and authentic.

Tools Used

- The **Resentment Rating Scale for Couples (RRS-C)** was used to measure the resentment in the relationship. The test's Cronbach's alpha showed acceptable **reliability, $\alpha = 0.93$** . The validity of the scale is supported by **strong convergent correlations** with related constructs. (Agbalog & Yukawa, 2019)
- The **Hamilton Anxiety Scale (HAM-A)** was used to measure the level of anxiety and the psychological and somatic anxiety. The **Cronbach alpha for the total scale was $\alpha = .90$. $\alpha = .88$ for the Psychic/psychological factor and $\alpha = .82$ for the Somatic factor**. These values indicate good to excellent reliability. A **strong construct validity**, with a two-factor model (psychic and somatic) providing good fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.3$, CFI = .94, GFI = .97, RMSEA = .056, SRMR = .050) (Jeong & Lee, 2024).

Statistical Tools

- The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to check if the data collected lay on the NPC
- **Spearman correlation** was used to check the existing correlation among the variables (resentment and psychological, somatic, and total anxiety in both working and non-working married women)
- **The Mann-Whitney U-test** was used to assess the difference that exists in the level of resentment and level of anxiety among working and non-working married women. [Non-parametric tests were used in our study for statistical analysis because the data obtained were skewed.]

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The main focus of the research was the assessment of the relationship that exists between various types of anxiety and resentment in relationships among working and non-working married women.

Normality Test

The data collected was carefully recorded, and its normality was checked to determine the type of statistical tests to be used. The sample we used includes 104 married women, of whom 50 were working, and 54 were non-working.

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Table 1: Representation of the findings of the Shapiro-Wilk test

Variable	Group	W-stat	p-value	Decision	Distribution
Resentment	Non-Working	0.934	0.00513	Rejects H ₀	Skewed
Psychological Anxiety	Non-Working	0.957	0.04816	Rejects H ₀	Skewed
Somatic Anxiety	Non-Working	0.957	0.04855	Rejects H ₀	Skewed
Total Anxiety	Non-Working	0.974	0.29870	Fail to reject	Normal
Resentment	Working	0.944	0.02006	Rejects H ₀	Skewed
Psychological Anxiety	Working	0.947	0.02626	Rejects H ₀	Skewed
Somatic Anxiety	Working	0.938	0.01119	Rejects H ₀	Skewed
Total Anxiety	Working	0.946	0.02441	Rejects H ₀	Skewed

The current findings, as mentioned above in Table 1, suggest that, except for the data on total anxiety in non-working married women, which is normally distributed on the NPC curve, the remaining data representing the remaining variables are not normally distributed. Thus, indicating the use of non-parametric tests for inferential statistical analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2.1: Represents the mean and SD of non-working married women (housewives)

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Resentment	54	40.63	21.58
Psychological anxiety	54	10.33	5.63
Somatic Anxiety	54	11.11	7.29
Total anxiety	54	21.44	11.81

Among the total sample of 104, 54 were non-working married women. Their data was analyzed carefully and scored on the relevant variables. Then, from the pooled data, the mean and SD were calculated. The values mentioned in Table 2.1 represent the calculated mean and SD for all variables used.

Table 2.2: Represents the mean and SD of working married women

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Resentment	50	34.04	13.45
Psychological anxiety	50	7.16	4.09
Somatic anxiety	50	7.2	5.03
Total anxiety	50	14.36	8.10

Among the total sample of 104 married women, 50 were working married women. Their data was analyzed carefully and scored on the relevant variables. Then, from the pooled data, the mean and SD were calculated. The values mentioned in Table 2.2 represent the calculated mean and SD for all variables used.

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Inferential Statistics

Wilcoxon rank sum test

Table 3: Represents the difference in resentment and total anxiety among non-working (housewives) and working married women

Variable	Group	W-statistics	p-value	Interpretation
Resentment	Non-working vs Working	1186	0.287	Fail to reject H_0 — no significant location shift
Anxiety	Non-working vs Working	1839.5	0.001**	Reject H_0 — significant difference in location

**p is less than 0.05, **p is less than 0.01*

As mentioned in Table 3, we found that for resentment, the p-value was 0.2873, which exceeded the critical values at 0.05 and 0.01. This indicates that we fail to reject the null hypothesis, and there was no significant difference in the resentment in relationships between the groups compared. When it comes to the aspect of anxiety in working and non-working married women, the p-value was calculated to be 0.001, which was far below the tabulated value at 0.05 and 0.01. The results hence suggest that we reject the null hypothesis and show a significant difference in anxiety between the two groups.

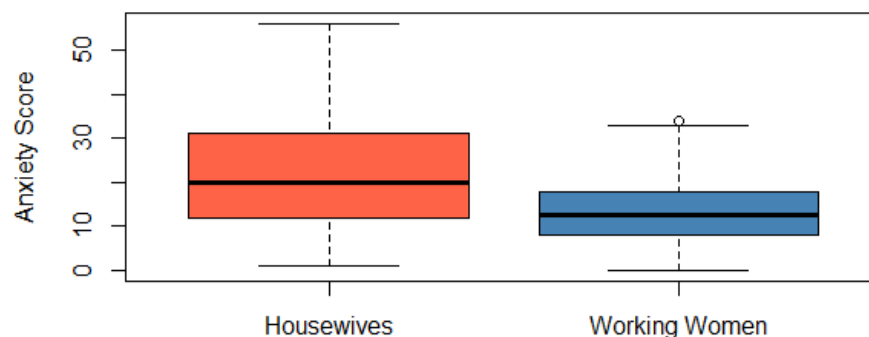


figure 1. Represent the median values of the total anxiety scores of working and non-working (housewives) married women, respectively.

Spearman Correlation

Table 4: Represents the correlation between resentment and types of anxiety among non-working married women (housewives)

Variable 1	Variable 2	p-value	ρ (rho)	Strength
Resentment	Psychological anxiety	0.00**	0.733	Strong positive
Resentment	Somatic anxiety	0.00**	0.722	Strong positive
Resentment	Total anxiety	0.00**	0.799	Very strong positive

**p is less than 0.05 and **p is less than 0.01*

From Table 4, we can deduce that all types of anxiety have a very strong positive correlation with resentment in relationships among the non-working married women. The calculated p-value is much less than the ρ (rho) value for all three correlations, making us reject the null hypothesis and indicating that the findings are highly significant. The strongest correlation is seen to exist between resentment and total anxiety, with a ρ (rho) value of 0.799, which approximates to 0.8, depicting a very strong positive correlation. Also, the psychological

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and somatic anxiety have a ρ (rho) value of 0.733 and 0.722, respectively, depicting a strong positive correlation with resentment.

Table 5: Represents the correlation between resentment and types of anxiety among working married women

Variable 1	Variable 2	p-value	ρ (rho)	Strength
Resentment	Psychological anxiety	0.00**	0.386	Moderate positive
Resentment	Somatic anxiety	0.01*	0.335	Moderate positive
Resentment	Total anxiety	0.00**	0.412	Moderate positive

* p is less than 0.05 and ** p is less than 0.01

From Table 5, we found that all three types of anxiety have a moderate positive correlation with resentment among working married women. The results are statistically significant in all three. The strongest correlation that exists in working married women is between resentment and total anxiety, though it is a moderate positive correlation, yet it is the most robust among the three.

DISCUSSIONS

The main purpose of the study was to assess the relationships that exist between resentment and types of anxiety among working and non-working married women.

Relationship of Resentment and Types of Anxiety Among Working Married Women

Our first set of hypotheses (H_1 , H_2 , H_3) focuses on the relationship between resentment in a relationship and types of anxiety among working married women. On applying Spearman correlation to the respective group of data, we found a significant and weak-to-moderate positive correlation between the variables.

- After relevant statistical analysis, we accept our H_1 , which states that a significant positive correlation exists between resentment and psychological anxiety among working married women. The rho value was found to be 0.386, which approximates to 0.4 (*see table 5*), representing a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that other factors also significantly affect the outcome even when a correlation exists between the two variables mentioned. A cross-sectional study conducted by Chamnanchang et al. (2025) on the association of work–family conflict with psychological distress and mental disorder among Japanese working women found that severe work-family conflict increases the tendency of psychological distress profoundly. Another research suggested that factors like subjective health status, physical activity, thoughts about husband, family decision-making, and work-life balance were in strong association with depressive symptoms among working married women (Jeong, Kang, and Kang, 2025).
- Our H_2 suggests that a significant positive correlation exists between resentment and somatic anxiety in working married women. The rho-value was found to be 0.335 (*see table 5*), which suggests a weak positive correlation. This indicates that although the data stands significant, a lot of other factors are responsible for the outcome. In a study aimed at examining the relationship between intimate partner relationships, coping strategies, and somatic symptoms in married women, it was found that poor relationship quality and emotion-focused coping were significantly associated with somatic complaints or symptoms. (Akhtar, Rani, Hassan, Khan, & Rahim, 2025)

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- The H_3 suggested the existence of a significant positive correlation between resentment and total anxiety in working married women. A moderate positive correlation of 0.412 (*ref table 5*) was found, suggesting that although a directly proportional relationship exists between the two variables, there are other confounding variables that affect the relationship between the two. In a cross-sectional study aimed to assess the mental health status of married working women residing in Chennai, India. It was established that the following factors were also responsible for poor mental health of women, younger age, lack of support from spouse and husband's addiction, chronic illness in family members, lack of yoga or meditation or any kind of physical activity, and unfavorable workplace atmosphere (Tharini, Sheeja, & Shanmughapriya, 2021).

Relationship of Resentment and Types of Anxiety Among Non-Working Married Women

Our next three hypotheses (H_4 , H_5 , H_6) focus on the relationships that exist between resentment in a relationship and different types of anxiety among non-working married women. The necessary statistical analysis suggested a very strong positive correlation among the variables (*ref table 4*). The correlation coefficients make us accept all three alternative hypotheses, proving that the result is highly significant.

- A strong positive correlation of 0.73 (*see table 4*) is found between psychological anxiety and resentment among non-working married women, which holds our H_4 true. The strong correlation suggests a direct relationship between psychological anxiety and resentment among the housewives. A longitudinal study reported that the perception of injustice in the division of labor when it came to family chores and childcare experienced by the housewives, the psychological distress increased proportionately (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999; Tao, Janzen, & Abonyi, 2010).
- Our H_5 suggests a significant positive correlation between resentment and somatic anxiety among non-working married women (housewives) is accepted with a strong positive correlational coefficient of 0.722 (*see table 4*). This indicates a directly proportional relationship between resentment and somatic anxiety, suggesting that with an increase in resentment in marriage, the somatic manifestation of anxiety will also increase at an equal pace among the housewives. A cross-sectional study on Indian women that focused on assessing the somatic symptoms and quality of life among married women having a distant relationship with their spouses found that women who were in a distant relationship with their husbands showed increased somatic complaints. Indicating a direct link between marital separation and the physical and mental health of the women (Pereira, Mathias, Shivakumara, & Jacob, 2022).
- The H_6 has the strongest positive correlational coefficient of 0.79, which approximates to 0.8 (*see table 4*), suggesting a very strong relationship of direct proportionality between resentment in the relationship and total anxiety among the non-working married women. This indicates a direct and strong link between the variables. A strong correlation was found between marital satisfaction and quality of life, and another strong negative correlation was also found between quality of life and anxiety among middle-aged women. The results suggested that marital dissatisfaction leads to poor quality of life, which manifests as anxiety and stress among the housewives (Rakhshani et al., 2024).

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Differences in Resentment and Level of Anxiety, Respectively

Our last set of hypotheses (H₇ and H₈) focus on the differences that exist between working and non-working married women in relation to resentment and anxiety.

- No significant difference was found in resentment amid working and non-working married women (*see table 3*), thus we fail to accept our H₇. The results indicate that resentment in marriage does not depend on whether a woman is working or not; both groups can share the same levels of resentment. A longitudinal study by Schoen, Rogers, and Amato (2006) suggested that whether a woman was employed or not hardly affected the marital quality and adjustment with her spouse. Another comparative study of marital adjustment of the married working and non-working women found no significant difference between the two groups (Trivedi & Singh, 2026).
- The statistical analysis showed that a significant difference exists in the levels of anxiety amid working and non-working married women (*see table 3*), enabling us to accept H₈. The results show a clear difference in the manifestation of anxiety among working and non-working married women, with non-working married women (housewives) more prone to showing anxiety symptoms as compared to working married women (*ref graph 1*). This can be because of a very simple reason that working women can share their problems with their colleagues, and a positive workplace environment helps in improving their mental health. On the other hand, the non-working married women often face extreme burnout and improper division of labor in the house chores and childcare (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). Another study by Sharma, Kaur, Sharma, Saini, Pebma, and Kaur (2018) revealed that housewives were statistically more prone to develop chronic illness as compared to working married women.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of the research suggests a strong relationship between the types of anxiety and resentment in relationships among non-working married women, suggesting that suppressed emotions in marital life directly affect the psychological and somatic manifestation of anxiety in housewives. In contrast, in working married women, the relationship is moderate, and many influencing factors determine the outcome. It must be noted that resentment is independent of the employment status of the women; both working and non-working married women can have the same level of resentment in their relationship. On the other hand, the manifestation of anxiety symptoms due to a resentful relationship is seen to be present more in the non-working married women as compared to their working counterparts.

Limitations

Our study holds a unique viewpoint and is conducted with great precision, but it has a few limitations that need to be addressed.

- The study was conducted on only the North Indian women living in Uttar Pradesh, which does not represent the target population accurately.
- The sample size was also comparatively small, limiting the generalization of the results.

Future Suggestions

The study elaborates on the topic of resentment as a psychological construct and its effect on the anxiety levels among working and non-working married women.

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- It should be ensured that the sample size is large and accurately represents the population. The scales used should be in multiple major languages spoken in India for quality data.
- Future research can be done to gain a deeper understanding of the effect of resentment in marriage among working and non-working women and how it manifests into various symptoms of anxiety, and its effect on the overall life satisfaction and well-being of married females.
- Further studies can also be done to establish how the duration of marriage affects the presence of resentment among women.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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