



A Study on Self-esteem, Attachment Style Psychological Distress among Working and Non-Working Women of 45-60 Years

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, psychological distress, and attachment among working and non-working women in the age group of 45-60 years. The scales used were: Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Morris Rosenberg), and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). A sample of 30 working and 30 non-working women was collected. The results found that: there was a positive significant correlation between the attachment styles, a negative significant correlation between psychological distress and self-esteem, and working women tend to have higher self-esteem than non-working women. The study should include a wider age range in which individuals from different life stages are included.

Keywords: *Self-Esteem, Attachment Style, Psychological Distress, Working Women, Non-Working Women.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, most people are struggling with the problem of low self-esteem, which leads to several psychological problems like distress, self-doubt, under confidence, and overthinking, which further contributes to having issues in relationships. The study was limited to the age group of 45-60 years.

Self-esteem and attachment style go hand in hand. If the individual has high self-esteem, the person turns out to have a secure attachment style, and individuals with low self-esteem end

up being insecure in relationships. High self-esteem acts against distress; on the other hand, low self-esteem acts in favor of distress, leading to depression, poor defense mechanisms, and negative self-talk. The more secure the individual's attachment style is, the fewer the chances of individuals suffering from psychological distress.

Maurya and Kumari (2025) conducted a study on self-esteem and psychological distress among migrants which involved 200 randomly selected Bihari participants who were working in different states, wherein it was found out that boosting self-esteem can help improve the mental health of migrants.

Study conducted by Sechi et al. (2020) aimed to explore attachment styles, self-esteem and quality of life in individuals with a diagnosis of fibromyalgia. It involved sample of 371 diagnosed women, with a mean age of 42.7 years. The results showed that secure attachment relationships and high self-esteem turned out to act as protective factors for women with fibromyalgia, while the contrary emerged for insecure attachments and low self-esteem.

Self-Esteem

A global, stable, and affectively loaded index of individuals' attitude or evaluation of the self is arguably one of the most studied constructs in psychology (Donnellan et al., 2011). Self-Esteem refers to an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value (Ali & Malik, 2014; Parthi & Rohilla, 2017).

Study conducted by Zeab and Ali (2015) conducted a study on a sample of 250 (125 working and 125 non-working) women to explore the difference in self-esteem between working and non-working women in Pakistan. The results showed that non-working women are likely to have higher self-esteem than working women in Pakistan.

Psychological Distress

Psychological distress is a term used to describe the state of impaired psychological health which consists of a combination of symptoms extending from depression and anxiety to personality traits, functional disabilities, and behavioral problems (Aline, Alain & Beaulieu-Prévost, 2012; Mirowsky & Ross, 2014).

It is characterized by the coexistence of symptoms of depression and anxiety, which can be seen as an imbalance between oneself and their ideal self, gradually eroding an individual's self-esteem (Arvidsdotter et al., 2015).

Viertiö et al. (2021) conducted a study to investigate the factors contributing to psychological distress among working population, with a focus on gender differences. It consisted of sample of age above 20 and 96,668 in number, it was found out that women reported more psychological distress than men. Satisfying work, family life and being able to successfully combine the two are important factors of psychological well-being for both genders in the working population.

Attachment style

Bowlby (1969) maintained that attachment motives affect how people think, feel, and behave in close relationships “from the cradle to the grave.”

Towler and Stuhlmacher (2012) tested a model with data from 206 working women across various U.S. organizations. Women with avoidance attachment style tended to have intimate relationships that were low in satisfaction and cohesion as well as low-quality relationships with their supervisors. Women in cohesive intimate relationships were likely to be satisfied with their job, experience low conflict at work, and report few physical symptoms. Women who had quality relationships with their superiors also had low conflict at work and were satisfied with their jobs. Results show an important association among relationships at home and work related to quality of life.

Wise et al. (2022) conducted a study which examined the relationship between employee attachment style, organizational factors, and career satisfaction among adult employees in Turkey consisting of 288 (167 female and 121 male) employees. The results revealed that organizational factors and attachment styles are important predictive measures of job satisfaction, and there was a positive relationship between dismissing attachment and career satisfaction.

2. Purpose

To study self-esteem, attachment style, and psychological distress among working and non-working women of 45-60 years.

3. Hypothesis

H1: There will be a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and psychological distress.

H2: There will be significant differences in attachment styles among working and non-working women.

4. Method

4.1 Sample

A total sample of 30 working women and 30 non-working women in the age group of 45-60 years was collected from the city of Rajpura.

4.2 Measure

Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990): The Adult Attachment Scale was used to measure attachment styles among working and non-working women in the age group of 45-60 years. The scale developed consisted of 18 items, and the rating scale included a 5-point Likert scale: 1(Not at all characteristic of me)5 (Very characteristic of me). It has 3 subscales.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Morris Rosenberg): The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure self-esteem among working and non-working women in the age group of 45-60 years. The scale was developed by Morris Rosenberg. The scale developed consisted of 10 items, and the rating scale included a 4-point Likert scale: 1 (Strongly Agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Disagree), and 4 (Strongly Disagree).

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10): The Kessler Distress Scale was used to measure psychological distress among working and non-working women in the age group of 45-60 years. The scale was developed by Kessler. The scale developed consisted of 10 items, and the rating scale included a 5-point Likert scale: 5 (All of the time), 4 (Most of the time), 3 (Some of the time), 2 (A little of the time), 1 (None of the time).

5. Analysis of Data

Results

Table1: N, Mean and Standard Deviation.

	Group	Close	Depend	Anxiety	Self-esteem	Psychological Distress
N	Working	30	30	30	30	30
	Non-Working	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	Working	2.70	2.99	1.99	16.2	18.3

	Non-Working	2.82	2.84	2.02	14.8	20.2
Standard deviation	Working	0.502	0.542	0.566	1.73	7.19
	Non-Working	0.660	0.726	0.827	1.95	6.15

Table 2: *Correlation between attachment styles, self-esteem and psychological distress*

	Close	Depend	Anxiety	Self Esteem	Psychological Distress
Close	—				
Depend	0.650***	—			
Anxiety	0.514***	0.383**	—		
Self Esteem	-0.003	0.145	-0.116	—	
Psychological Distress	0.067	0.101	-0.012	-0.329*	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3: *T-test*

		Statistic	df	p
Close	Student's t	-0.771	58.0	0.444
Depend	Student's t	0.907	58.0	0.368
Anxiety	Student's t	-0.152	58.0	0.880
Self Esteem	Student's t	2.872	58.0	0.006
Psychological Distress	Student's t	-1.120	58.0	0.267

Note. $H_a \mu_{Working} \neq \mu_{Non-Working}$

Table 4: *Group Descriptives*

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Close	Working	30	2.70	2.75	0.502	0.0916
	Non-Working	30	2.82	3.00	0.660	0.120
Depend	Working	30	2.99	3.00	0.542	0.0990
	Non-Working	30	2.84	2.92	0.726	0.133
Anxiety	Working	30	1.99	1.92	0.566	0.1032
	Non-Working	30	2.02	1.92	0.827	0.151
Self Esteem	Working	30	16.20	16.00	1.730	0.3159
	Non-Working	30	14.83	15.00	1.949	0.356
Psychological Distress	Working	30	18.30	16.00	7.188	1.3123
	Non-Working	30	20.23	19.00	6.146	1.122

6. Discussion of Results

The study aimed at investigating the relationship between self-esteem, attachment style and psychological distress among working and non- working women of the 45-60 years age group.

The result of correlation showed positive significant relationship between attachment styles close and depend result ($r=0.66$, $p<0.001$) showed that women who felt close to others also reported higher dependence on them, anxiety and close result ($r=0.51$, $p<0.001$) showed that closeness in relationship is associated with anxiety, and result for anxiety and depend result ($r=0.38$, $p<0.01$) showed that higher anxiety leads to more dependence in the attachment styles. A significant negative correlation was found in psychological distress and self-esteem ($r=0.38$, $p<0.01$) which implied that women who suffered with psychological distress caused them to have a low self-esteem. T-test was used to find differences in self-esteem, attachment styles and psychological distress among both the groups, which showed a significant difference in self-esteem among both the groups ($t= 2.87$, $p=0.006$), which interprets that being employed inculcates positive emotions or thoughts in women which builds a high self-esteem amongst them. Lastly, no significant difference was found in terms of attachment style and psychological among the two groups.

ChuYinh Cui et al. (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study which focused on the effects of self-esteem on the association between infertility related stress and psychological distress among infertile Chinese women in which overall 548 eligible participants were included, and 536 effective responses were received it was revealed that Chinese infertile women had a high prevalence of depression and anxiety. Self-esteem was negatively associated with depression and anxiety.

Agrawal and Srivastava (2016) conducted a study on emotional maturity and self-esteem among working and non-working women which aimed to find out the relationship between self-esteem and emotional maturity and the difference in variables between both the groups. The sample consisted of 100 working and 100 non-working women in the age group of 30 to 50 years. The results reveal that self-esteem among working and non-working women was insignificant but the emotional maturity among working and non-working women is significant.

It was concluded that non-working women are likely moderately stable in this, and working women were mostly unstable.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, psychological distress and attachment among working and non-working women among the age group of 45-60 years. The scales used were: Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Morris Rosenberg) and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). Sample of 30 working and 30 non-working women was collected. The results found out that there was a positive significant correlation between the attachment styles, negative significant correlation between psychological distress and self-esteem and working women tend to have higher self-esteem than non-working women.

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