

Study of Adjustment among Working Women in relation to Social Support

Sangita Kumari

M.A., Ph.D., Department of Psychology, B.R.A.Bihar University, Muzaffarpur

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 13 March 2019

Keywords

Working women, Social Support, Emotional adjustment, Health adjustment, Family adjustment, Social adjustment, Work adjustment and General adjustment.

ABSTRACT

In this paper we discuss about adjustment among working women in relation to social support. In the case of working women, place of work and time to be spent in the work place cause great strain. The women who were employed part time expressed the most life satisfaction. Their situations apparently gave them the social and psychological benefits of employment but also allowed them more times to fulfil their social responsibilities. In the case of couples who live apart suggest that marital forms inherent strains make it a difficult life style. Time and place discontinuities result from two residence living. Two residences mean that spouses are not able to mesh and coordinate time schedules nor do they share the common base of their CO-resident counterparts. Because of the social problems, role strain is increasing. This causes many psychological problems. In this paper we examine the influence of social environment on various dimensions of adjustment namely, (1) emotional adjustment, (2) health adjustment, (3) family adjustment, (4) social adjustment, (5) work adjustment and (6) general adjustment. The study also explores the relationship of psychological variables such as self concept and personality on various dimensions of adjustment.

1. Introduction

The roles and activities of women tend to be matters of controversy and concern in industrializing and industrial societies. In agrarian civilizations, with much productive work centered on the household, women could usually combine their productive tasks and their family responsibilities, if not without friction, then at least without causing moral disquiet. Industrial production, and the expansion of employment opportunities for women outside the household, brings with it a new set of worries about how that combination can be managed in new circumstances. A frequently expressed concern is the possible harm that might be done to the young child by being deprived of the attention of the mother while the latter is out at work. The employment of women has also been judged, by some, as harmful to the quality of family life and the proper upkeep of the home.

Involvement in multiple roles has been found to offer certain benefits. Some women with multiple identities have reported superior health (Thoits, 1983). Some employed women have a more autonomous sense of self as a result of working and a number of dual - career families rate their life - styles positively. Skinner (1980) found that the healthiest women have multiple roles - a job, husband and often children.

Social support has been thought both to build stress resistance and to serve as a buffer when stress is present. The needs of persons under stress can include emotional support, informational support and instrumental support. The benefits of social support may depend on the degree of individuals integration into a large social net work (Cohen and Wills, 1985).

Theoretical Aspect of Adjustment

Even though there are many theories in psychology to view adjustment of which mostly applied are psycho analytic perspective, behaviouristic, the social - learning perspective and the humanistic perspective.

Psycho analytic perspective

Sigmund Freud who originated this theory gave much importance to hidden primitive impulses particularly sexual and

aggressive impulses as influencing human behaviour than conscious ideas. Freud believed that processes of personal adjustment are mostly, unconscious and that we are unaware of the real reasons for much of our behaviour.

Social Learning Perspective

Social learning theory is based on the principles of learning especially classical conditioning, operant conditioning and observational learning. From a social learning point of view, adjustment implies learning rewarding responses to environmental stimulations. Social learning theorists argue that maladjustment as in the case of an appropriate social expectations or excessive anxieties, is also learned through experience.

Behaviouristic Perspective

Behavioural psychology is an approach that emphasizes the learning process. It calls attention to such concepts as habits and conditional responses. The subject matter of behavioural psychology is behaviour itself, not the mind. Thus behavioural psychology tends to down grade such concepts as ego, unconscious motives and defence mechanisms. Behavioural psychology sees human problems as the result of learned error tendencies.

Humanistic perspective

Humanistic psychologists give much importance to the individual. According to them each individual must try to be self aware of himself and thereby be able to react appropriately to the changing situations. The humanist adjustment implies that each individual should accept one's own self for what he is. Humanists do not deny that some sources of motivation are necessary to respond to the environment according to principles of learning. But to them the essential qualities of being human are self awareness and the ability to make conscious choices to define behaviour and one's own unique personality.

Social Support

Social support has been broadly defined as a range of significant interpersonal relationships that have an impact on the individuals functioning (Capalan, 1974). Hirsch (1980) notes that social support encompasses those people who are at present significant and who are either members of one's social network (i.e., family or friends) or non mental health professionals (such as physician or clergy). Social support refers to the resources potentially useful information and things provided to individuals or social units (e.g. a family) in response to the need for help and assistance (Cohen and Syme, 1985; Dunst and Trivette, 1990). The person and institutions with which a family and its members come in contact either directly or indirectly are referred to as the family's personal social network that is the primary source of support to families and individual family members (Dunst and Trivette, 1990).

Supportive social systems are presumed to provide tangible assistance, promote more active coping and help individuals maintain their sense of self esteem in the face of difficulty (Heller and Swindle, 1983). Social support can moderate stress experience and its effects. Caplan (1976) has suggested that support system may aid members to mobilize their psychological resources, master strain, share tasks and obtain necessary supplies such as information and skills. Observations in a variety of setting have led to the idea that social support (a) contributes to positive adjustment and personal development and increased well-being in general (Cohen and Wills, 1985; Brenda et al., 1990). (b) provides a buffer against the psychological consequences of exposure to stressful life events (Cohen and Syme, 1985; Cohen and Wills, 1985; Kessler and McLeod, 1985).

Recently, much attention has been given to two ways of social support; perceived support and received support. Perceived support refers to the psychological sense of support derived from feeling loved, valued and part of a network of reliable and trusted social relationships (Gottlieb, 1985). It is more stable over time because it is not context dependent. Received support, on the other hand, represents concrete instances of helping derived from one's social network, with this help or 'provisions' usually being categorized as emotional support, instrumental support, appraisal support and informational support (House and Kahn, 1985). The term 'enacted' support in the place of received support has been used by some authors (Barrera, 1986; Tardy, 1985). The presence of caring relationships and the experience of social support indisputably contribute to the quality of person's life. Workload and quality of experiences at work and at home are major predictors of work family strains. On the contrary, social support and sex role attitudes are major predictors of work family gains (Barnet, Rosalind and Nancy, 1993). We can therefore suggest that the social support is to be provided by friends, workmates and neighbours. These relationships are intimate levels of social support.

Friends

Friends may engage in leisure time activities and talk a lot with, and this may displace negative emotions such as depression and anxiety, which may have damaging bodily emotional and mental effects. Friends have been found to produce direct benefits on mental health, particularly with those who have lost other relationships. Studies of happiness, reveal

that being with friends is the most common source of joy. They could provide help or advise to control emotions. And some kinds of talk can be successful when it solves problems, when it produces a more constructive outlook or allows catharsis, as in psychotherapy. It seems very likely that cooperation leads directly to positive relations between people, and to positive emotions (Argyle, 1991). Women give more social support than men. Women having more intimate relationship with both family and friends, are more comfortable with intimacy than men are and benefit more from social support (Hobfoll, 1988).

Workmates

Workmates can buffer the effects of a work stresses on physical and mental health. Workmates can cooperate and provide help at work. They operate partly like friends and also engaged in many non work activities, visiting homes talking or gossip, discussing personal life, having coffee or meals together and look after. This kind of support is more useful than family support to help with work difficulties and this results work stresses being perceived as less stressful (Argyle 1989).

Neighbours

Neighbour's support is considerably weaker than of friends. For the traditional families, neighbours lived very close are a major source of help and support. For eg. financial support, and food etc. To seek support, working women are required to maintain friendly relations with immediate neighbours and need to bother to know most of their neighbours.

Family support

It has the greatest effect on the mental health of working women. Many studies have shown the importance of close relationships for both physical and mental health. The family is a special kind of social group, engaging in a kind of biological cooperation, in which members eat and sleep together and look after each other, in a high degree of intimacy (Argyle, 1991). It is found that in a close or "Communal" relationship, those involved are much concerned with the needs and welfare of one another, and that doing things to help the other is a source of joy (Williamson and Clark, 1989). The benefits for physical health come from family members looking after one another, with the result that there is better health behaviour and in addition, the immune system is strengthened by intimate attachments (Argyle, 1991). Family support increases self-esteem and feeling of mastery.

2. Review of Literature

Adjustment of working women depends on a host of factors ranging from personal to situational. Among a variety of situational factors, social support appears to be the most significant. Here some studies are discussed to find the aim of our study.

Curtona, Russel and Rose (1986) positive resources such as social support have beneficial effects on health in the context of stressful life experiences. Studies conducted among elderly persons indicate that major life events are predictive of deterioration in mental functions, physical health, morale and leads to depression (Amster and Krauss, 1974, Sands, 1981-82; Holahan, Holahan and Belk, 1984, Ayuso-Gutierrez, de Diego and Martin, 1982; Linn, Hunter and Harris, 1980).

Panda (1996) found marital and social adjustment as negatively affected by employment. Vasudev and Chaudhary (1998) compared working-non working women in marital adjustment and found that working women had higher marital adjustment. Adjustment problems of working women in relation to non working has been examined by Singh and Bawa (1996). They observed that working women are better adjusted at home and socially and non working women found better adjusted emotionally.

Robinson and Garber (1995) observe that social support contributes to well being by meeting the basic human need for affiliation and attachment. That is regardless of the stress encountered social support has a negative impact on distress and a positive relation with adjustment. Having supportive life with family and friends lessens distress and thus helps individuals to live happy and productive lives. Social support is also hypothesized as preventing the initial occurrence of stressful life events that would add to distress and maladaptive outcomes.

3. Research Methodology

The present study consisted of 300 working women from various government and non-government institutions. The sample was drawn randomly from these institutions in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. From the selected institutions only those women who were willing to participate in the study were included for data collection.

The present sample belonged to the age group 25-55 years. Women from different socio-economic and education status, religion, living background, marital status and age group were chosen. Every attempt was made to make the sample representative group of the working women in Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

Tools used

The following inventories were used in the present study:

1. Adjustment Inventory
2. Family Environment Scale
3. Social Support Scale
4. Self Concept Scale
5. Personality Questionnaire and
6. Personal Data Sheet

All the tests are self administering. The instructions are given on the facing sheet of each test. The answers are to be marked in separate answer sheets specified for each test. After giving general informations, the bio-data are collected and the inventories are administered one by one with specific instructions needed for answering the items in each test. The answer sheets are scored with the help of the scoring keys prepared for each test. A personal data blank is also used to collect information about the demographic variables.

4. Objectives

To examine six areas of adjustment, viz., emotional adjustment, health adjustment, family adjustment, social adjustment, work adjustment and general adjustment in relation to Social Support.

5. Hypotheses

1. Working women from better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families differ significantly on their emotional adjustment.
2. There are significant differences among groups of working women from better supported moderately supported and poorly supported families on their health adjustment.
3. There are significant differences among working women from better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families on their family adjustment.
4. Working women from better supported moderately supported and poorly supported families differ significantly among themselves on social adjustment.
5. Women for better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families show significant difference among themselves on work adjustment.
6. There are significant differences among working women from better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families on general adjustment.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Social support plays a vital role in the adjustment of working women. Literature review shows that support of family members, friends, spouse etc. facilitates adjustment of working women social support is the best medicine at the time of stress. The objective of the present is to examine the effects of social support on various areas of adjustment viz. emotional adjustment, health adjustment, family adjustment, social adjustment, work adjustment, and General adjustment. For the purpose of analysis of data the entire sample is divided into three groups viz. groups of working women from poorly supported families, moderately supported families and better supported families. This is done by dividing the score distribution (total social support score) at the first and third quartiles. Thus subjects who fall above Q3 constitute the better supported family group and those who fall between Q1 and Q3 constitute the moderate group.

The scores by the three groups on each of the different areas of adjustment are subjected to one way of analysis of variance. In cases where F ratio's show significant differences among the groups, the mean scores between different groups are compared to see if the differences between the means are significant.

Table 1: Break-up of sample on the basis of family environment

Groups	Number of sample
Working women from poorly supported families	41
Working women from moderately supported families	222
Working women from better supported families	37
Total	300

The scores of the three groups of working women on each of the different areas of adjustment are subjected to one way analysis of variance with a view to study the effect of Social

support on their adjustment. In cases where F.ratios show significant differences among the groups, the mean scores of the different groups are compared to see if the differences among the means are significant.

Hypothesis: Working women from better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families differ significantly on their emotional adjustment.

The summary of the analysis of variance on Emotional adjustment of the three groups of working women is tabulated in Table 2. The results show significant effect for social support on emotional adjustment.

Table 2: Summary of analysis of the scores on emotional adjustment

Sources	df	SS	MS	F ratio
Between means	2	383.82	191.91	
Within groups	297	2749.56	9.25	20.74*
Total	299	3133.38		

* Not significant

The scores are further analysed using 't' test. The results, given in Table 3 indicate that the mean scores of the three groups of working women differ significantly in the area of emotional adjustment. Between the poorly supported groups and better supported groups, between the poorly supported

groups and moderately supported groups the difference in mean score is significant at 0.01 level. With respect to moderately supported group and better supported groups, the difference in mean score is significant at 0.05 level.

The hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3: Means, SDs and 't' values of the three groups of women on emotional adjustment

S.No	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Groups compared	't' value
1	Poorly supported family group	41	9.04	3.35	I&II	5.64**
2	Moderately supported family group	222	12.03	3.06	I&III	5.99**
3	Better supported family group	37	13.10	2.54	II&III	2.03*

* P<0.05 ** P<0.01

The results suggest that better supported group of working women are better adjusted emotionally than the moderately and poorly supported groups. The result in the emotional adjustment measure explains that poor social support promote emotional problems and affect the mental health of working women. Whereas better social support lowers the emotional problems like anxiety, frustration, fear etc. and facilitates good mental health

supported and poorly supported families on their health adjustment.

Recent literature review reveals that role overload and poor support of family members causes severe stress and related physical ailments among working women. The results presented (Table 4) show the summary of analysis of variance of the scores on health adjustment of the three groups of working women namely, better, moderately and poorly supported groups.

Hypothesis: There are significant differences among groups of working women from better supported, moderately

Table 3: Summary of analysis of the scores on health adjustment

Sources	df	SS	MS	F ratio
Between means	2	134.21	67.10	
Within groups	297	2433.76	8.19	8.19**
Total	299	2567.97		

** P<0.01

The findings suggest significant effect for social support on health adjustment. In the health adjustment measure of working women a significant difference is observed among all the three groups (Table 3). The poorly supported group and moderately supported group differ significantly at 0.01 level. Similarly, poorly supported group and better supported group

also differ significantly at 0.01 level. In all these cases the results explain that the better supported group has less health problems. Social support seems to enhance health adjustment of working women.

The hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4: Means, SDs and 't' values of the three groups of women on health adjustment

S1.No	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Groups compared	't' value
1	Poorly supported family group	41	10.54	3.06	I&II	3.99**
2	Moderately supported family group	222	12.50	2.87	I&III	7.74**
3	Better supported family group	37	12.24	2.63	II&III	0.52

** P<0.01

The finding is in line with the findings reported by Singer *et al.* (2001) that social net works and social support have been found to be beneficial to the health of individuals in a variety of ways reducing mortality rates, improving recovery from serious illness and increasing use of preventive health practices. Social relationships appear to be particularly important to women.

Hypothesis: There are significant differences among working women from better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families on their family adjustment.

The results in Table (4) shows the summary analysis of variance of the scores of the three groups of working women on family adjustment.

Table 4: Summary of analysis of the scores on family adjustment

Sources	df	SS	MS	F ratio
Between means	2	804.54	402.27	
Within groups	297	7432.3	25.02	16.00**
Total	299	8236.84		

** P<0.01

The results presented in Table 24 show significant differences in mean score between groups of poorly supported and moderately supported, poorly supported and better supported and also between better supported and moderately supported groups. In all the cases the comparably better

supported groups seem to be better adjusted in family. The results suggest that better social support facilitates adjustment of working women in their family.

The hypothesis is accepted.

Table 5: Means, SDs and 't' values of the three groups of women on family adjustment

S1.No	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Groups compared	't' value
1	Poorly supported family group	41	8.32	3.68	I&II	8.38**
2	Moderately supported family group	222	12.70	2.96	I&III	7.74**
3	Better supported family group	37	14.10	2.82	II&III	2.69**

** P<0.01

The results indicate the role of social support in adjustment of working women. It is seen that receiving tangible, emotional and practical support from their partners at home and colleagues at work place as well as friends is helpful in balancing the competing demands of work and family. The findings are in conformity with the findings of Burke and Weir (1977).

Hypothesis: Working women from better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families differ significantly among themselves on social adjustment.

Summary of analysis of variance (Table 6) show that there is significant effect for social support on social adjustment.

Table 6: Summary of analysis of the scores on social adjustment

Sources	df	SS	MS	F ratio
Between means	2	170.68	85.34	
Within groups	297	2959.14	9.96	8.57**
Total	299	3129.82		

** P<0.01

The results in Table 6 indicate that mean scores of the better supported group and poorly supported group differ significantly. Poorly supported group and moderately supported group as well as moderately supported group and better

supported group also show significant differences with respect to social adjustment.

The hypothesis is accepted.

Table 7: Means, SDs and 't' values of the three groups of women on social adjustment

S1.No	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Groups compared	't' value
1	Poorly supported family group	41	8.17	3.64	I&II	3.69**
2	Moderately supported family group	222	10.16	3.08	I&III	4.41**
3	Better supported family group	37	11.54	3.04	II&III	2.51**

** P<0.01

The findings indicate that social support facilitate the social adjustment of working women. It may be assumed that support of the family members, friends and the wide social net work is likely to improve social adjustment of working women.

Hypothesis: Working women from better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families show significant difference among themselves on work adjustment.

The results reveal significant effect for social support on work adjustment indicate that working women having better social support are better adjusted at work than the less supported groups. The better supported group appears to be more socially adjusted than the other two groups and the moderately supported group is, however, more adjusted than the poorly supported group. The results show that social adjustment improves with improvement i n social support.

Table 8: Summary of analysis of the scores on work adjustment

Sources	df	SS	MS	F ratio
Between means	2	147.02	73.51	
Within groups	297	1779.57	5.99	12.27**
Total	299	1926.59		

** P<0.01

The scores are further analysed using 't' test. The results presented in the table 9 indicate that the mean scores of the better supported group and poorly supported group differ

significantly. The mean scores of poorly supported group of working women also differ significantly.

The hypothesis is accepted.

Table 9: Means, SDs and 't' values of the three groups of women on work adjustment

S1.No	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Groups compared	't' value
1	Poorly supported family group	41	12.00	3.56	I&II	4.89**
2	Moderately supported family group	222	14.08	2.26	I&III	2.26*
3	Better supported family group	37	14.32	2.00	II&III	0.62

** P<0.01 * P<0.05

The results indicate that women having better social support seem to be better adjusted in work and experience better job satisfaction. Partner support is highly significant for women's job satisfaction. The results support the findings of Roxburgh (1999).

Hypothesis: There are significant differences among working women from better supported, moderately supported and poorly supported families on general adjustment.

With respect to general adjustment of working women the summary of analysis of variance presented in Table 10 reveals significant effect for social support on adjustment. The results indicate that level of social support affects level of adjustment.

Table 10: Summary of analysis of the scores on general adjustment

Sources	df	SS	MS	F ratio
Between means	2	7255.70	3627.85	
Within groups	297	27150.67	91.42	39.68**
Total	299	34406.37		

** P<0.01

Further analysis of the mean scores using 't' test (Table 11) indicates that mean scores of poorly supported and moderately supported groups, poorly supported and better supported groups as well as better supported and moderately supported groups of working women differ significantly. The

better supported group seems to be better adjusted than moderately supported and poorly supported group. Also the moderately supported groups appears to be more adjusted than the poorly supported group.

The hypothesis is accepted.

Table 11: Means, SDs and 't' values of the three groups of women on general adjustment

S1.No	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Groups compared	't' value
1	Poorly supported family group	41	48.07	10.72	I&II	8.09**
2	Moderately supported family group	222	61.48	9.56	I&III	7.66**
3	Better supported family group	37	65.32	8.97	II&III	2.28*

** P<0.01 * P<0.05

The results suggest that social support, to whether it is from family, friends or co-workers, facilitates adjustment of working women. Better support reduces role strain and role conflicts of women and increases their physical and mental health. This is also likely to lead to better job satisfaction and work adjustment.

7. Results and outcomes

The following are the results obtained in the present study.

1. Among the groups of social support better supported group differs significantly from the moderately supported and poorly supported groups in the emotional adjustment. The better supported women are more adjusted emotionally.
2. The three groups of working women differ significantly in the health adjustment. Better supported group differ significantly from the moderately supported and poorly supported group. Better support seems to facilitate health adjustment.
3. In the family adjustment measure better supported group shows significant difference from the moderately supported and poorly supported group. Those with better social support are found to show good family adjustment.
4. The three groups of working women differ significantly in social adjustment. Better supported group differs significantly from the moderately supported and poorly supported group. Better supported women are found as better adjusted socially than the other groups.
5. Better supported group differ significantly from the moderately supported and poorly supported group in the dimension of work adjustment. Women with better social support seems to have better work adjustment.
6. In general adjustment measure better supported group differ significantly from the moderately

supported and poorly supported groups of working women. Better social support is found to enhance general adjustment.

7. In the case of self concept, groups of women with poor self concept, moderate self concept and better self concept differ significantly from each other in emotional adjustment. Groups with better self concept are better adjusted in emotional, health, family, social and general adjustment. In the dimension of work adjustment no significant difference is observed among the three groups of women. The three groups are found similar with respect to work adjustment.

8. Conclusions

The most important conclusions that emerge from the present study are:

1. Healthy family environment facilitates good adjustment among the working women.
2. Better social support leads to better adjustment of working women.
3. Better self concept enhances good adjustment of working women.
4. Demographic factors except location of living influence the adjustments of working women.

The findings of the study may be helpful to design programmes for creating awareness among the public regarding various issues of women. The information obtained from the study may be useful to the policy makers to plan programmes particularly related to women empowerment. The knowledge generated from the present study is likely to help in developing remedial counseling programmes to help women deal with problems at home and work place.

References

1. Agarwal, V. (1994). Stress and Multiple Role Women. *Indian Journal of Social Science* 7: (3854): 320-326.
2. Argyle, M. (1989). *The Social Psychology of work*. 2nd edition. Harmondsworth: Penguin
3. Asha, C.B. (1998). *Social Support Scale*. Unpublished test, Department of Psychology, Calicut University.
4. Budhwar, P. S., Saini, D. S., & Bhatnagar, J. (2005). Women in Management in the New economic Environment: The case of India. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 11(2), 179-193.
5. Coleman, J.C. (1976). *Abnormal Psychology and modern life* (5th edition) Bombay. D.B. Taraporevala.
6. Ferre, M.M. (1976). Working class jobs, House work and paid work as sources of satisfaction. *Social Problems* 23: 43 1-441.
7. Graham, C.W., Fischer, J.L., Crawford, D, Fittz Patrick, Bina, K. (2000) Parental status, social support and marital adjustment. *Journal of Family Issues*. 21(7): 888-905.
8. Mohan, S. and Aktar, M. (1986). Adjustment patterns and personality traits. *Indian Journal of Psychological Issues*, 6(142): 55-57.
9. Noor, N.M. (1995). Work and family roles in relation to women's well-being - A longitudinal study. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 34(1): 87- 106.
10. Rajasekhar, T., Bharath, T. and Reddy, K.S. (1991). Job satisfaction of men and women. *Indian Journal of Applied Psychology* 28: 92-96.
11. Sachs Ericsson, N, and Clario, J.A. (2000). Gender, Social roles, and mental health: An epidemiological perspective. *Sex Roles*, 43(9- 10): 605-628.