

# Occupation or Home: Comparison Housewives and Working Women in the Variables of Stress, Depression and Perception of Quantitative, Mental and Emotional Home Demands

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## Abstract

In recent years, the employment rate of women, particularly in the service sector has been increasing and at the same time, researchers interested on the psycho-social consequences of women's employment especially on health. This study compared housewives and working women in terms of stress, depression and perception quantitative, mental and emotional home demands. For this purpose, a sample consists of 94 working women and 94 housewives among Isfahan women selected via convenience sampling and completed warttig et al. perceived stress questionnaire, Beck Depression II and peters et al. home demands questionnaire. Results revealed that working women perceived more depression and quantitative and mental home demands, but no differences between working women and housewives in terms of stress and emotional home demands. According to effort-recovery model, it seems that the pressures of work and family role, especially time pressure means that despite the positive role of work in working women, they were psychologically vulnerable because of the multiplicity of tasks. The results highlight the importance of culture in terms of the role of men in the house, especially in the case of families who identify working women.

**Keywords:** working women, housewives, stress, depression, home demands

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, with changing family structures and changes in the labor force, including the entry of women into the labor market, home duties have been added to work responsibilities for both sexes (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998) and the boundaries of traditional gender roles were more flexible (Mueller & Dato-On, 2008, pp. 3-20). The results show that women continue to bear the responsibility of parenting and household chores (Lundberg, Krantz, & Berntsson, 2003, pp. 245-254) and "do it all" has become a social norm for women (Jacques, 2008). The researchers stated that employed women in addition to their jobs have a job at home receiving no salary and both workloads get along with depression, stress and symptoms are associated with physical disorders (Barnett & Hyde, 2001, pp. 781-796). In this regard, the theory of separation of roles theorizes that allocation and separation of family roles is the unity factor of the family that the man is the base of livelihood and woman is the housewife (R). In contrast, feminist theories heavily emphasize on equal opportunities for men and women's work (Redclift, Sinclair, & Sinclair, 2013, pp. 8-24).

According to the effort-recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), performing job duties require effort and when the individual does not want to do mental or physical effort, recovery is conducted. The basic assumption of this theory is that effort in jobs is associated with serious reactions such as high blood pressure, heart disease and fatigue. Recovery is being limited if stress continues and its repetition reduces the possibility of recovery (Geurts & Sonnentag, 2006, pp. 482-492), increases depression probability (Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, & Houtman 2003, pp. 532-559) and sleep problems (Sluiter, Van der Beek, & Frings-Dresen, 1999, pp. 573-583) and reduces mental wellbeing and positive emotions (Fritz, Yankelevich, Zarubin, & Barger, 2010, p. 977; Trougakos, Beal, Green, & Weiss, 2008, pp. 131-146). The scarcity hypothesis (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000, pp. 178-199) also states in this regard that people have fixed and finite resources which are not enough to be allocated to their

multiple roles and leads them having feelings of guilt, anxiety and reduces psychological well-being (Marks, 1977, pp. 921-936).

In contrast to these theories, the theory of role accumulation (Sieber, 1974, pp. 567-578) argues that an individual with variety of roles compensates failure in a role with other roles and indeed these roles cause resources increase, social connections, power, prestige and emotional satisfaction for the person (Thoits, 1983, pp. 174-187; Lahelma, Arber, Kivelä, & Roos, 2002, pp. 727-740). Researches also confirm that people with multiple roles in comparison with people with roles of low diversity, experience less mental and physical problems (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001, pp. 781-796). According to the theory of role accumulation, women by working outside of home, increase their social relationships and financial independence and as a result their self-esteem and their capacity to deal with violence are increased because of their multiple resources.

Undoubtedly, conducting work and family roles need a Superwoman (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015, pp. 1-24), and on the other hand, the resources available to a working woman (financial independence, social status, sense of efficiency, etc.) create a sense of satisfaction and energy for playing a dual role. Researchers have revealed conflicting results for working and nonworking women. For example, Singh (2014, pp. 121-128) has shown in his research that nonworking women are more stressful and have lower life satisfaction than working women. In addition, some researchers have shown that psychological well-being, health and adaptability of working women are more than nonworking ones (Alex, 2015, pp. 7-12; Janzen & Muhajarine, 2003, pp. 1491-1503; Ahrens & Ryff, 2006, pp. 801-815) and their family conflicts, marital adaptability problems and depression are less (Plaisier et al., 2008, pp. 63-72; Joshi, Singh, & Jaswal, 2013, pp. 55-60; Rani, 2013, pp. 40-44). In contrast, some researches show that anxiety and sleep disorders of working women are more than nonworking ones (Nazarpour & Bakery, 1393). Some studies also have found that there is no difference between working and nonworking women in mental health and marital satisfaction (e.g., Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2002, 2014, pp. 24-28; Sahu & Singh, 2014, pp. 24-28; Gupta & Nafis, 2014, pp. 61-72; Schoon, Hansson, & Salmela-Aro, 2005, pp. 309-319).

Given the ambiguity in literature review and given the powerful role of national culture in attitudes toward gender roles and its consequences, this study aims at examining differences between Iranian working and nonworking women in variables of stress, depression, and perception of home demands. This objective will be pursued with the three following hypotheses:

- 1) There is a significant difference between working and nonworking women's stress.
- 2) There is a significant difference between working and nonworking women's depression.
- 3) There is a significant difference between perception of home demands of working and nonworking women.

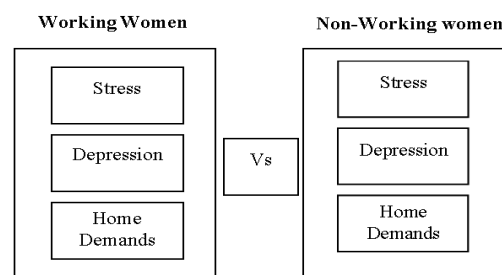


Figure 1. The proposed model

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Design, Sample, Sample Size

The research method is comparative. The research sample is all the working and nonworking women in 2016 in the province of Isfahan. 90 participants were chosen out of this sample for each group. Cohen (1988) method was used for checking the adequacy of the sample size for comparative studies. This amount of participants was selected according to the probability of 100 participants loss using the available sample (100 working, 100 nonworking) and 184 questionnaires (95 employed and 89 unemployed) could be used.

## 2.2 Instruments

Depression Inventory (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996) (BDI-II): This list includes 21 questions and is a self-scored index of the severity of experienced depression that was designed in 1996 by Beck et al. Each question has four alternatives scoring between 0-3 and the total score is between 0-63. Beck et al. (1996) reported the reliability of the questionnaire 0.92 for people with no depression symptoms and confirmed its validity. Neysi et al. (1384) also calculated the reliability of this questionnaire as 0.80 by split-half method and 0.90 by Cronbach's alpha.

Perceived Stress Scale (Warttig, Forshaw, South, & White, 2013, pp. 1617-1628). This questionnaire measures perceived stress of respondents. Responses are ranked through a Likert scale of 5 alternatives from Never (0) to Often (4). Warttig et al. (2013) calculated the internal reliability of the above questionnaire as 0.77 and confirmed its validity. In Iran, Dibaji (1394) reported the reliability as 0.7 and confirmed its validity using concurrent validity.

Demands questionnaire (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005, pp. 43-61). The questionnaire contains 10 questions: Three questions measure home demands, three questions home emotional demands, and four questions home mental demands. Peeters et al. (2005) reported the reliability of the questionnaire 0.8 for home quantitative and mental demands subscales, 0.76 for home emotional demands and confirmed its validity through factor analysis. In Iran, Dibaji (1394) reported the reliability of these subscales 0.79 for home quantitative demands subscales, 0.5 for emotional demands subscales, 0.74 for home mental demands and confirmed its validity through convergent and divergent validity.

## 2.3 Participant Characteristics

In terms of demographic variables, among working women 8.5% were between 15-25 years, 57.4% between 25-35 years, 27.7% between 35-45 years and 6.4% higher than 45 years old. Among nonworking women, 33% were between 15-25 years old, 43.6% were between 25-35 years, 17% between 35-45 years and 6.4% over 45 years old. In terms of education, among working women 7.4% were diplomas, 23.4% associate, 54.3% bachelor and 14.9% master and higher. Among nonworking women 53.2% were diplomas, 21.3% associate, 22.3% bachelor and 3.2% were master and higher. All of the working and nonworking women were married in both groups.

## 3. Results

In Table 1, descriptive statistics of research variables are shown in two groups of working and nonworking women.

Table 1. Means, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of study variables

Variables	Group	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Quantitative home demands	Working women	8.01	2.09	0.346	-0.683
	Nonworking women	7.21	1.8	0.612	0.656
Emotional home demands	Working women	5.99	1.16	0.237	-0.142
	Nonworking women	6.11	1.21	1.162	6.599
Mental home demands	Working women	11.17	2.69	0.892	1.098
	Nonworking women	9.52	2.3	0.188	1.155
Stress	Working women	10.61	6.29	4.587	25.761
	Nonworking women	10.63	3.26	0.16	-0.272
Depression	Working women	52.35	12.67	2.43	5.499
	Nonworking women	46.16	5.61	-1.31	1.861

The results in Table 1 demonstrate that working women in home quantitative demands, home mental demands and depression gained higher scores while nonworking women got higher scores in home emotional demands and stress.

Two independent sample t-test was done to check any significant difference between the two groups of working and nonworking women in research variables. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. T test for differences between two groups

Variables	t	df	sig	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
						lower	upper
Quantitative home demands	2.807	182	0.006	0.8	0.285	0.238	1.362
Emotional home demands	-0.659	182	0.511	-0.114	0.173	-0.452	0.227
Mental home demands	4.53	182	0.000	1.65	0.36	0.93	2.37
Stress	-0.029	182	.0977	-0.0215	0.73	-1.462	1.42
Depression	4.338	182	0.000	6.197	1.429	3.37	9.01

Results in Table 2 show significant difference in home quantitative and emotional demands and depression between the two groups of working and nonworking women, but there was no significant difference in the variables of home emotional demands and stress between working and nonworking women. According to the mean of the variables presented in Table 1, working women have higher mean in all three variables of home quantitative demands, home mental demands and depression.

#### 4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine differences between home quantitative, mental and emotional demands, stress and depression among working and nonworking women. Given higher home quantitative and mental demands and depression in working women and no difference in home emotional demands and stress between working and nonworking, it seems nonworking women have better status. The remarkable point is that in spite of no difference between working and nonworking women's stress, depression in working women is more than nonworking women. A probable inference for this finding is that working women due to over perception of quantitative demands feel that they do not have enough time for life and enjoyment and just have to think about spending family and work life and consequently it leads to depression. Meanwhile, according to the role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974, pp. 567-578), social supports are created by more resources and in spite of stress due to work and family duties contrasts, these resources modify working women's stress.

Since the time is not being extended, working women still confront lack of time and have to balance work and family obligations and personal life preferences that in most cases they are not successful. To deal with this situation they have to sacrifice their personal preferences. The result is that they feel they are working like a machine although they are less stressful than nonworking women because of more resources of social protection available to them. However, they are busy doing duties throughout the day and symptoms of depression such as loss of energy, fatigue, loss of interest in doing enjoyable activities are appeared and even aggression and irritability have been reported for them.

The findings of this research are compatible with effort-recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). While working women involving physiologically and psychologically doing work and family duties, they confront lack of opportunity to recover and consequently their well being is influenced (Demerouti, Bakker, Geurts, & Taris, 2009, pp. 85-123). Lack of opportunity to recover create psychological and physiological for working women and affects enjoyment level in them although they do not perceive much stress because of resources available to them. In this regard, researchers have shown that efforts without recovery may cause chemical changes in body that results in developing symptoms of depression (Wacogne, Lacoste, Guillibert, Hugues, & Le Jeunne, 2003, pp. 451-455).

In support of this point, it can be explained that after work hours, psychological challenges to do duties are continued and repeated and therefore recovery is not being completed and by starting the next work day, working women have to do more extra effort. This lack of recovery in no-work time periods increases likelihood of errors and reduces processing information. The result is that working women involve in the vicious cycle of doing efforts with no recovery and losing physical and mental resources. They make more effort by remained resources and gain no recovery while needing more recovery and finally the result of this cycle is burnout and depression even if working women with strategies like the feeling of self-efficacy, usefulness and social support do not perceive more stress than nonworking women.

On the other hand, a working woman has higher perception of quantitative and mental requirements because of having limited time. This lack of time causes the mental overload for doing her home chores and it can

jeopardize her well-being. The results of this research show that in addition to having the feeling of lack of time for doing home activities, working women are mentally occupied by doing their duties. In fact, since working women have to do home chores in limited time, they should have planning and prioritization which require mental activity for optimal use of remaining energy and time for the time period of no work.

Results of this research emphasizes the necessity of paying attention to working women and making macro policies for creating a culture to share home chores between men and women. In particular, it should be noted that depression due to mental overload is treatment-resistant because even if a depressed working woman-the most important symptoms of depression is feeling low energy-takes rest, her depression causes her to lose her effectiveness in social environments and therefore it tends to be permanent.

For further research, it is recommended to pay close attention to happiness in working and nonworking women and study the effects of spouse, family, friends and community supports of working women on stress and depression of working and nonworking women. It is also suggested to compare the stress and depression of husband of working and nonworking women.

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