



## BALANCING WORK AND LIFE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SECTOR

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper, Balancing Work and Life: A Comparative Study of Women in Education and Corporate Sector aims to examine the adjustment patterns of working women with higher education in relation to four key life components: home, health, social, and emotional aspects. For the study a sample of 30 married working women in the age group of 30-40 years belonging to upper-middle-class families living in urban areas has been taken. To draw a comparison the sample was divided into two groups: 15 working as professors in a local college and 15 in the private sector. An adjustment inventory, based on Bell's Adjustment Inventory, was used to assess the respondents' adjustment levels across the four components.*

**Keywords:** Adjustment, Resilience, Home, Health, Social and Emotion.

### INTRODUCTION

Adjustment is the main component of human life. Living is a process of adjustment and it is a process of unique importance in human life. It is a satisfactory and harmonious relationship of an organism to its environment. It is the process of finding and adopting modes of behaviour suitable to the environment or to the changes in the environment. The word adjustment is used many a times without clarifying its exact meaning. The concept of adjustment was originally borrowed from biology and was modelled after biological term adaptation, which refers to the efforts by species to adjust to changes in its environment. Just as a field mouse has to adapt to an unusual winter, a person has to adjust to changes in circumstances in life. The demands of everyday life are diverse, so in studying the process of adjustment it can be significantly put forth that the personality of an individual really affects the people's patterns of adjustment, how are they affected by stress and how do they use coping strategies to deal with stress.

Lot of adjustment is called forth in interpersonal context such as social conflict, behaviour in group, marriage, gender roles, and career development and so on. The process of adjustment influences individual's psychological health and here the positive psychology has a positive role to play. It is a behavioural process by which humans maintain an equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments. A sequence of adjustment begins when a need is felt and ends when it is satisfied. In general, the adjustment process involves four parts, i.e. a need or a motive in form of a strong persistence stimulus, the thwarting or non-fulfilment of that need, varied activities or exploratory behaviour accompanied by problem solving and some response that removes or at least reduces the initiating stimulus and completes the adjustment. Social

and cultural adjustments are similar to the psychological adjustments mentioned above. People strive to be comfortable in their surroundings and have their psychological needs met. When needs arise in new or changed surroundings, they impel interpersonal activity meant to satisfy those needs. In this way the people increase their familiarity and comfort with their environments and try to meet their needs in different ways. However, at times they are unable to adjust and this leads to anxiety and depression and it is further reflected in other aspects of life. The capacity of a person to adjust in life varies and that in turn invites stress but one should be permeable to change to avoid stress in modern day life. This is what adjustment is all about and depends greatly upon one's attitude towards life. In life an attitude adjustment will make the difference between failure and success, winning and losing. Keeping your attitude in check is a very important task. In life things happen. Whether we react or respond to what happens is largely due to our attitude about that situation and one should learn to make a positive attitude adjustment and watch what happens in one's life.

### WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Indian society is extremely complex and its social and economic structures are significantly different from those in the western industrial societies. There has been a structural change in the economic patterns. Women in India have always been contributing to the family income though majority have been engaged in the un-organized sector. However, due to the structural changes that have been taking place in the Indian economy the number of women working in the organized, sector though quite less has increased. It is an accepted fact that a woman who is well educated and working is better capable of taking care of her family and her own health, but in trying to balance

out different parameters stress has also permeated more so in the lives of working women who are walking the tight rope of family and professional commitments. The modern urban woman wants to be a multi-tasker-an efficient career woman, a loving mother, a caring wife and an active socialite and thus inviting stress without even realizing it. It may in turn lead to a host of diseases, emotional burnout and even reduced creativity. Management of stress and attitude here has an important role to play.

**METHOD**

In the present study, we have concentrated on women having received higher education and post-graduate and diploma degrees, and divided the sample of 30 working women in two parts, i.e. of 15 of them working as Professors in a local college and 15 in the private sector. All the respondents were in the age group of 30-40 and were married. Most of them were living in joint families and belonged to progressive upper middle-class families. An adjustment inventory that included four essential components of one’s life Home, Health, Social and Emotional was used to study that how these working

women, working in different environment were able to adjust to the four essential components of life.

An adjustment inventory was prepared by us, keeping in mind that Home, Health, Social and Emotional aspects are greatly affected when a woman goes out to work. The four parts of the inventory had 25 questions which were to be answered in Yes or No. If the respondent agreed to the statement the answer was Yes and if the answer was negative, i.e. one did not agree to the facts mentioned in the statement then the answer was No. There was no time limit but all the questions had to be answered. The scoring of the inventory was easy and all the Yes were counted for it was purely a negative inventory. For when the answer was Yes it indicated her difficulties. The answer No indicated that the individual had no such difficulty. Though the questionnaire was remodelled from the standardized Bell’s Adjustment Inventory to suit the sample under study, yet for the scoring the General Norms for the Post Graduate Students from the Bell’s Adjustment Inventory was taken as a measuring rod for adjustment as the sample under study fell in that category.

**MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION FOR COLLEGE EDUCATORS AND PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS**

| College  |      |                    | Private  |      |                    |
|----------|------|--------------------|----------|------|--------------------|
| Category | Mean | Standard Deviation | Category | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Home     | 4.4  | 2.84               | Home     | 4.13 | 2.79               |
| Health   | 6.8  | 3.20               | Health   | 5.13 | 2.33               |
| Social   | 5.8  | 4.21               | Social   | 8.26 | 3.69               |
| Emotion  | 10   | 5.76               | Emotion  | 7.26 | 3.6                |

**RESULTS**

The results of the study indicated that there was not much variation in the adjustment of working women for both the categories as far the four components of the study were concerned, yet it has been found that women working in the private sector were slightly better adjusted for all the categories except where social life was concerned.

As far as the adjustment of working women to their **home** was concerned, though minimal difference, yet quite contrary to our expectations, it was found that private sector workers were better adjusted. On further analysis about the issue we found that the probable reasons for such a result could be that the regularity and fixed working hours in the lives of private sector women had rendered more consistency in their lives and their behavioural patterns at home. They were treated more at par with men by their family members and hence fewer expectations were made from them. Moreover, the sympathy factor attached to the long working hours got them benefits from family, which the college professors could not avail of. The college professors felt that their jobs were not given due importance and a lot was expected from them in terms of home management that accounted for this difference in the adjustment patterns observed.

Coming to the aspect of **health**, not much difference was

recorded in the mean levels of the two groups under study. Once again it was found that the private sector employees fared better. The reasons that could be accounted for such results could be less stress on home front, better support system and regularity of life style that led to better eating habits. On the other hand, the second group i.e. of college professors felt that teaching was a job that required lot of speaking and thus drained a lot of energy. This made them take unnecessary cups of tea with snacks affecting their digestive system. They thus adopted this undesirable way of coping with stress.

A considerable difference in results was observed as far as the **social** life of the two groups under study was concerned. The fact that college teachers had a better social life than the private sector workers could be attributed to the nature of their job which gave them more social skills at work place that in turn was reflected in their socializing outside. Private sector respondents on the other hand felt that they did not have enough time to socialize as they had to look after their home and children after getting back from work. Also, their communication skills and areas of interest were found to be limited probably because of their job profile. Their socializing was to quite an extent limited to their job concerns.

As far as the **emotional** aspect was concerned the private sector respondents were found to be considerably better off than the college professors. This could be attributed to the role ambiguity expected out of this category of respondents. They were not only expected to teach but also deal with the problems of the students and be their role models, which definitely added to personal stress and emotional drain. The high emotional stress could also be accounted for and correlated with high home and health stress that these respondents experienced in contrast to the second group of respondents for the reasons already discussed above.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Possible limitations of the study included the sample of population which was small, due to limitation of time. All the working women chosen belonged to upper middle-class families and were residing in an urban area.

### CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the study that both the group of respondents were quite well adjusted to the four components under study. This was reflected in the low mean values and low standard deviation that was calculated on the basis of the responses from the respondents. Further on comparing the results obtained from the study with the standardized results of Bells' Adjustment Inventory for the Post-Graduate female students normalized in terms of mean and standard deviation, the investigators found that both the samples under study were well adjusted as far as all the parameters were concerned. It could be thus concluded that working women have opted for adjustment and flexibility to manage stress in life and also as the way to move ahead and balance different aspects of their life.

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