

Quality of Life among Working and Non-Working Women in a Community

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Job is considered one of the most essential factors for determining women's quality of life. However, due to dual responsibilities of women i.e., job and traditional house chore roles, they often suffer from physical as well as mental problems. Many factors may influence quality of life of women amongst them work is the important one. The aim of the study was to compare the quality of life of working and non-working women.

Methods: Descriptive cross sectional research design was used. Sampling method was convenient sampling technique with total sample 140 women, among them 70 working and 70 non-working women of Rampur municipality. Face to face interview was taken to collect data using quality of life measurement tool developed by WHO (WHOQOL-BREF). Descriptive statistic (frequencies, percentage mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (chi square and independent t test) were used to analyze data.

Results: Working women had high mean score in all domain WHOQOL-BREF. There was significance difference in mean score of physical (working 62.19 ± 13.30 , non-working women 59.59 ± 14.43), ($p < 0.001$), psychological (working 56.85 ± 14.43 , non-working women 51.90 ± 13.77), ($p = 0.013$) and environmental (working 52.50 ± 12.93 , 49.51 ± 14.30 with p value 0.034) domains in working and non-working women respectively.

Conclusion: Working women have a better quality of life compared to non-working women. Moreover, literate women reported a better quality of life than illiterate. Hence, strengthening initiatives that improve women's education and skill levels, enabling them to access better employment opportunities, which significantly contribute to their quality of life.

Keywords: Quality of life, working women, non-working women

INTRODUCTION

Quality of life is an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns^{1,2}. Worldwide, around one in two adult women is employed, compared to three out of four men, low quality of life was reported by 2,976 out of 50,583 individuals.³

In Nepal, as in many other countries, women's work is often unrecognized and undervalued. Women spend long hours on household activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing, child-rearing, working in the fields, and caring for livestock, as well as community work. Despite this, their contributions are not considered economically significant, leading to the perception of men as breadwinners and women as dependents. A review of seven African and Asian countries, including Nepal and Bangladesh, found that

women's household contributions were 2.5 to 14 times greater than those of men.⁴ Women have been bearing the primary burdens of housework, childcare, and other family responsibilities. The unequal share of care responsibilities between women and men further worsens the disadvantages of women in balancing public and private life, with an impact on their quality of life.⁵ Additionally, being a housewife is often associated to lower quality of life, especially when it comes to mental well-being. However, this connection depends on the individual's social and economic status. For women with lower education and income, homemaker wife tends to lead to a lower quality of life compared to working women, but this difference disappears for women with higher education and income.⁶ Furthermore, non-working women generally had a better quality of life than working women, although the differences were not statistically significant in the physical, psychological, and environmental domains. However, in the social domain, non-working women had a significantly better quality of life (68%) compared to working women (40%).⁷ Working mothers are at risk of developing serious health problems due to a combination of factors, including chronic stress, sleep deprivation, lack of physical activity, prolonged sitting, heavy workload, and unhealthy eating habits.⁸

Nepal has traditional patriarchal setup, women typically bear the burden of household responsibilities, childcare, and elderly care, while men are the primary breadwinners. However, as societal attitude is changing, more women are entering the workforce and contributing to the family income. Despite this, they still do the bulk of domestic duties, while others who wish to work are confined to household chores. Both working mothers and homemakers face unique challenges and benefits that influence their overall quality of life.⁹ Both home maker and working women are playing multiple roles to maintain their personal and family life. These roles directly and indirectly touch their quality of life. So the researcher wants to examine the quality of life of these two groups, as this research has not been conducted before in Nepal and it will shed light on the exact situation of mothers and filling a significant research gap.

METHODS

A descriptive cross sectional research design⁶ was conducted in Rampur Municipality, Palpa District of Lumbini Province, Nepal. The study population were the working and non-working women and who were 20-60 years of age and residing in the study setting.

The inclusion criteria of working women were all the working women married and unmarried residing in Rampur Municipality, working more than 6 months and only one woman was included from one house. The exclusion criteria of working women were women who work from home, diagnosed mentally ill, and who cannot understand the Nepali language or are unable to communicate.

The inclusion criteria of non – working women were all non-working women who are not involved in any kind of economic work, do only household chores and look after their families, only one woman was included from one house. The exclusion criteria for non-working women were diagnosed mentally ill women, students and women who cannot understand Nepali language and not able to communicate. Non probability convenience sampling was used.⁷ Data was collected from ward no. 5 of Rampur municipality. The pooled estimate of quality of life of all working and non-working women was 23.3 %.¹⁰ Thus, based on this population proportion with 95% confidence interval and 7% allowable error, sample size was calculated using a standard formula $n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$ Cochran, 1977

Where, $Z = 1.96$ for 95% confidence level $p = 23.3$ ¹⁰, $q = 1-p = 1-0.233 = 0.767$, $e =$ permissible error i.e., 7 %. Therefore, $n = \frac{(1.96 \times 1.96 \times 23.3 \times 76.7)}{7 \times 7} = 140.05$. That is $n_0 = 140$. Sample size was 140 (70 working and 70 non-working) women. World Health Organization Quality of Life Brief Version (WHOQOL- BREF)¹¹ Nepali Version was used to collect data. WHOQOL-BREF is a standard tool which consists of the short version of WHOQOL-BREF tool. WHOQOL of 26 statements are rated in Likert scale 1-5 (1- not at all, 2- a little, 3- moderate amount, 4- very much, 5- extremely with internal

consistency Cronbach's Alpha ranges between 0.75 and 0.85.

Pretesting was done with 10% of the sample size i.e 7 respondents in each group of working and non-working women in ward no. 4 of Rampur municipality after taking authority permission. For measuring the internal consistency of the tool, Cronbach's alpha calculation was done. The alpha values have been found to be satisfactory good, which is 0.80 for physical health. 0.74 for psychological health, 0.70 for social relation and 0.75 for the environment domain of selected tool. Ethical approval was obtained from Institutional Review Committee, Institute of Medicine, Tribhuwan University with reference number

144/081/082. Formal approval for data collection was taken from the authority of selected municipality. Verbal and written consent were taken from each respondent. Data were collected through in-person interview method. In each day 8-10 respondents were interviewed within 25-30 minutes individually dated from 18th Kartik 2081 to 15th Mangsir 2081.

Data was summarized using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. chi-square was used to measure association of dependent and independent variables ¹⁰ and T test was used to compare the quality of life of working and non-working women. ¹²

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n-140)

Characteristics	Working women n=70		Non-working women n=70	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Age in completed years				
20-40	46	65.7	47	67.1
41-60	24	34.3	23	32.9
<i>Mean Age ± SD = 34.68 ± 10.23</i>				
Marital status				
Married	50	71.4	58	82.9
Unmarried	10	14.3	7	10
Single	10	14.3	5	7.1
Ethnicity				
Janajati	33	47.1	40	57.1
Brahmin/Chhetri	27	38.6	19	27.1
Dalit	8	11.4	10	14.3
Muslim	2	2.9	1	1.4
Religion				
Hinduism	61	87.1	64	91.4
Christianity	5	7.1	14	5.7
Buddhism	2	2.9	1	1.4
Islam	2	2.9	1	1.4
Education				
Not able to read and write	4	5.7	15	21.4
Read and write only	11	15.7	29	41.4
Basic Education	18	25.7	18	25.7
Secondary education and above	37	52.9	8	11.4
Economic status				

Not enough to eat a year	3	4.3	8	11.4
Enough to eat for a year	28	40.0	19	27.1
Extra saving	39	55.7	43	61.4
Type of family				
Nuclear	42	60.0	43	61.4
Joint Family	28	40.0	25	35.7
Extended	-	-	2	2.9
Age of youngest child				
Less than 5 years	15	21.4	25	35.7
More than 5 years	37	52.9	41	58.6
No child	18	25.7	4	5.7
Husband support in household chores				
Yes	43	61.4	37	52.9
No	27	38.6	33	47.1
Having bedridden and seriously ill family member				
Yes	7	10.0	8	11.4
No	63	90.0	62	88.6

Table 1 shows a total of 140 women participated in the study, with 70 working women and 70 non-working women. Mean age of respondents was 34.68. Both working and non-working women were predominantly in the 20-40 age group, with

a slight difference (65.7% vs. 67.1%). Almost all working women (95.7%) had enough food for the year or extra savings, compared to most of non-working women (88.5%) who reported the same.

Table 2: Work-related Variables of the Working Women (n=70)

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Types of occupation		
Service	44	62.9
Business	15	21.4
Labor	11	15.7
Working distance		
Less than 10kms	60	85.7
10-20kms	8	11.4
More than 20km	2	2.9
Work experience		
Less than 1 year	9	12.9
1-5 years	26	37.1
More than 5 years	35	50.0
Working hours		
Less than 6 hours	2	2.9
6-8hours	35	50.0
> 8 hours	33	47.1

Table 2 shows that. Most (62.9%) of women do service followed by business (21.4%) and only 15.7% women rely on labor work. Regarding work

distance, most of (85.7%) women traveled less than 10 km to their workplace, with only 1.4% travel more than 20 km.

Table 3: Respondents' Item-Wise Response on Quality of Life (n=140)

Statement	1 Not at all	2 A little No (%)	3 A moderate amount No (%)	4 Very much No (%)	5 An extreme amount No (%)	Mean	SD
Satisfaction with the quality of life	2(1.4)	17(12.1)	67 (47.9)	50 (35.7)	4 (2.9)	3.3	0.8
Satisfied with health	2(1.4)	25(20.0)	61(43.6)	47(33.6)	2(1.4)	3.1	0.8
Physical Pain *	43(30.7)	42(30.0)	32(22.9)	18(12.9)	5(3.6)	3.7	1.1
Need any medical treatment to function in daily life *	27(19.3)	41(29.3)	36(25.7)	28(20.0)	8(5.7)	3.4	1.2
Enjoyment of life	5(3.6)	23(16.4)	59(42.1)	44(31.4)	9(6.4)	3.2	0.9
Meaning fullness of Life	9(6.4)	(18(12.9)	69(49.3)	40(28.6)	4(2.9)	3.1	0.9
Ability to concentrate	6(4.3)	14(10.0)	69(49.3)	47(33.6)	4(2.9)	3.2	0.8
Feeling safe in daily life	3(2.1)	12(8.6)	65(46.4)	47(33.3)	13(9.3)	3.4	0.9
Healthy physical environment	8(5.7)	33(23.6)	52(37.1)	44(31.4)	3(2.1)	3.0	0.9
Having enough energy for everyday life	2(1.4)	21(15.0)	72(51.4)	41(29.3)	4(2.9)	3.2	0.8
Accepting body appearance	6(4.3)	16(11.4)	72(51.4)	38(27.1)	8(5.7)	3.2	0.9
Having enough money to meet	12(8.6)	34(24.3)	51(36.4)	5(3.6)	1.0	2.9	1.0
Available of information need in day-to-day life	14(10.0)	31(22.1)	60(42.9)	28(20.0)	7(5.0)	2.9	1.0
Having opportunity for leisure activities	13(9.3)	30(21.4)	59(42.1)	33(23.6)	5(3.6)	2.9	1.0
Able to get around physically	9(6.4)	17(12.1)	54(38.6)	48(34.3)	12(8.6)	3.3	1.0
Satisfied with sleep	2(1.4)	13(9.3)	43(30.7)	65(46.4)	17(12.1)	3.6	0.9
Satisfied with ability to perform daily living activities	1(0.7)	8(5.7)	58(41.4)	66(47.1)	7(5.0)	3.5	0.7
Satisfied with work Capacity	1(0.7)	15(10.7)	50(35.7)	68(48.6)	6(4.3)	3.5	0.8
Self-Satisfaction	2(1.4)	14(10.0)	65(46.4)	50(35.7)	9(6.4)	3.4	0.8
Satisfied with personal relationship	3(2.1)	21(15.0)	46(32.9)	61(43.6)	9(6.4)	3.4	0.9
Satisfied with sex life	1(0.7)	17(12.1)	46(32.9)	68(48.6)	8(5.7)	3.5	0.8
Satisfied with friend` s support	7(5.0)	22(15.7)	53(37.9)	49(35.0)	9(6.4)	3.2	1.0
Satisfied with the conditions of living place	6(4.3)	16(11.4)	66(47.1)	46(32.9)	6(4.3)	3.2	0.9
Satisfied with access to health services	12(8.6)	32(22.9)	61(43.6)	30(21.4)	5(3.6)	2.9	1.0
Satisfied with transport	9(6.4)	17(12.1)	69(49.3)	40(28.6)	5(3.6)	3.1	0.9
Production of negative feeling	6(4.3)	29(20.7)	75(53.6)	18(12.9)	12(8.6)	3.0	0.9

*Reverse scoring

Table 3 reveals that nearly half (47.9%) of respondents reported quality of neither poor nor good with mean score 3.3. Most respondents rated their enjoyment of life, ability to concentrate, having enough energy for everyday life and

accepting body appearance as moderate to good, with a mean score of 3.3. Financial adequacy, availability of information, and opportunity for leisure activities scored lower, with a mean of 2.9.

Table 4: Status of Quality of Life among Working and Non-Working Women (n=140)

Quality of Life	Working women n=70	Non-working women n=70
Below Average	30 (42.9%)	39 (55.7%)
Above Average	40 (57.1%)	31 (44.3%)

Table 4 show that 57.1% of working women had an above-average quality of life, that means good quality of life. However, 42.9% reported a below-average quality of life. in other hand 44.3% of non-working women had above-average quality of life, while the more than half of women (55.7%,) experience a below-average quality of life.

Table 5: Domain-wise Comparison of Quality of Life among Working and Non-working women (n=140)

Domain of Quality of Life	Working women Mean±SD	Non-working women Mean±SD	Statistical t-Test	p-value
Physical Domain	62.19±13.10	9.59±14.43	4.13	<0.001*
Psychological Domain	56.85±14.43	51.90±13.77	2.51	0.013*
Social Domain	60.60±18.22	57.02±17.59	0.48	0.626
Environmental Domain	52.50±12.93	49.51±14.30	2.14	0.034*
Total Quality of Life	58.03±11.59	56.27±12.06	1.76	0.080

*Statically significant level <0.05, t-test

Table 5 shows that there were statistically significant differences in mean score of physical, psychological and environmental domain, whereas no significant difference was found between the two groups in social domain.

DISCUSSION

The study shows that the mean quality of life score for working women is 58.03 with a standard deviation (SD) of 11.59, while non-working women had a mean score of 56.27 with an SD of 12.06. This indicates that the quality of life was slightly better among working women compared to non-working women; however, the difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.080). These findings contradict the findings of a study conducted in India where the sample size was 100 working. And 100 housewives, that depicts that the Mean score on Quality of Life among educated working women is slightly higher (M=56.64±SD7.20) when compared with educated housewives (M= 53.40±SD = 10.60), t (198) = 2.52, p < .01. This demonstrates that employment status has a significant influence

on the Quality of Life among educated working women. This difference may be due to different setting and sample size.¹³

This study reveals that the 57.1% working women had above average quality of life, and only 44.3% non-working women reported above average quality of life and 42.9% of working women and 55.7% of non-working women reported a below-average quality of life. Similar findings with this study was found in Iranian study where 26.7% of working women had good quality of life, only 20% non-working women reported good quality of life.¹⁰ This findings contradict the findings of the study conducted in the India, among 50 working and non-working females, identifies that non- working female had a better quality of life as compared to working females.⁷ The discrepancy in the findings of this study with the findings of previous study may be due to differences in sample size and setting.

Therewasasignificantdifferenceinthemeanscore of physical domain between working women and non-working women (p= <0.001). Working women

reported higher mean scores (62.19) compared to non-workings (59.59). The findings of two studies conducted in India got different findings than this study finding, where working and non-working women had no significance difference in physical Domain ($p > 0.05$).^{11,14} Regarding Social domain, there is no statistical difference in mean score of social domains between working and non-working women ($p = 0.626$). Findings of current study support the study done in India, revealed that non-working females had good quality of life (68%) as compared to working females (40%). But the differences were not statistically significant. ($p > 0.05$).⁷

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that working women have a better quality of life compared to non-working, particularly in physical, psychological, and environmental domains, although no statistically significant difference was seen in the social domain. Sociodemographic variables like age, marital status, education and husband support and who have bedridden or seriously ill family members significantly influence the quality of life. The study also reveals that women who were engaged in service have better quality of life than labor in worker.

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