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A Study of Demographic Indicators of Mental Health amongst Middle Aged Indian Women.

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Mental health is a term used to describe either a level of cognitive or emotional well being or an absence of a mental disorder. From the perspective of positive psychology or holism mental health may include an individuals ability to enjoy life and procure a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. ***The World Health Organization*** defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community".

The concept of mental health has a long developed process starting with the mental illness from the dark age of barbarism in going through the humanitarian enlightment and ultimately reaching the modern scientific level.

Mental health problems have become a major public health concern, epidemiological studies show that up to one-fifth or one-quarter of the general population suffer from some sort of mental disorder at a given time.

From the time of ***Hippocrates*** and ***Kretchsmer***, researchers tried to conceptualize the term mental health. But because of the varying meaning of the term mental health they would not agree on its general application.

Most of the researches which studied mental Health in relation to demography concentrated more on the illness part rather than its positive area ie health. Some studies which related demographic variables like employment status and educational level in relation to reported mental disorders and suicide attempts are done by ***pirkis et al, 2000, Andrews et al, 2007, Weich & Lewis. 1998, Kohn et al, 1998.*** Significant socio-economic status trends have been found in conditions such as schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and anti social personality disorders, studies using individual socio-economic measures have shown similar relationships of higher suicide attempts with lower income ***(Goodman 1999)***, unemployment ***(Ostamo etal 2001)*** and lower educational level ***(Beautrais etal 1998).***

A study by ***Archana Singh, Clarke and Nichael Marmot (July 2002)*** compared different measures of adult socio economic position (SEP) and psychosocial health. More recently ***Dalgard, Mykletum, Rognerud, Johansen and Zahl (2007)*** investigated the association between level of education and psychological distrers.

As there is dearth of this kind of literature, researchers took an attempt to do such an investigation in which some demographic variables are related to Mental Health.

The prime objective of this study is to explore risk factors in form of demographic correlates to mental health in middle aged women.

Method of Study

Design :- Stepwise multiple regression analysis is computed for determining the contributory role of different demographic correlates in determination of Mental Health,

Variables:- Two sets of variables employed in this study are as follows.

I – Mental Health :- Mental Health indicates individuals intra-psychic balance, the adjustment of his psychic structure with the external environment and social functioning. In general usage mental health often means both psychological well being and mental illness.

In the present study six area of mental health are studied –

A. Positive Self Evaluation
B. Perception of reality
C. Integration of Personality
D. Autonomy
E. Group Oriented Attitude
F. Environmental Mastery

II – Demographic Variables :- Following set of demographic indices were used in this study –

a - Level of Education : Six categories of Level of Education are as follows

Table 1.1

Levels	Educational Categories
LE 1	Below High School
LE 2	High School
LE 3	Intermediate
LE 4	Graduation
LE 5	Post Graduation
LE 6	Other Higher Qualifications

b – Occupational Position :

Table 1.2

Levels	Categories
OP 1	Not Employed
OP 2	Employed

c – Marital Status : Another important predictor is divided into four categories.

Table 1.3

Levels	Categories
MS 1	Married
MS 2	Unmarried
MS 3	Widow
MS 4	Divorcee

d – Monthly Family Income : Three categories of income are given below.

Table 1.4

Levels	Income Range (in thousands)
FI 1	Above Rs 40000
FI 2	Rs 20000 – 40000
FI 3	Below Rs 20000

e – Caste : Caste as one of the demographic correlate consists of three categories

Table 1.5

Levels	Caste
C 1	General
C 2	OBC
C 3	SC/ST

Sample : The sample size of this study consists of 150 middle aged women.

Tools : The following two tools were used in this study :-

1. **Mental Health Inventory :** This inventory was developed and standard by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983). It consists of 56 statements, which covers 6 areas of mental health mentioned earlier.
2. **Questionnaire for Demographic Information :** Another questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to tap information regarding subjects demographic characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since there are six components of Mental Health and each of these components have been examined in relation to five predictor variables by applying regression analysis and F – values were also obtained for further analysis of the data pair wise Multiple Comparison test was applied.

Table 1.6

Regression Analysis with Mental Health – Component 'A' - Positive Self Evaluation

Variable in the Equation	B–Value	SEB	Beta Standard Zed B-Value	Multiple R	Multiple R2	Change in R2	F Value	d f
Caste	0.597	0.245	0.124	0.204	0.042	0.012	4.532*	1,148
Level of Education	0.308	0.157	0.106	0.221	0.048	0.009	4.481*	2,147
Income	0.653	0.471	0.072	0.231	0.053	0.0055	4.021*	3,146
Marital Status	0.343	0.161	0.112	0.164	0.026	0.015	4.624*	4,145

* Significant at .05 level

For Mental Health Component A. Positive Self Evaluation, four predictors namely Caste, Level of Education, Income and Marital Status have emerged significant. The mean scores (M) for the three caste groups indicate decreasing trend (Mc_1= 12.60, Mc_2= 10.30, Mc_3= 9.50). A similar pattern of score is seen for Level of

Education and Income. Regarding Marital Status higher mean scores are depicted by women who are married (M=12.80).

An analysis of this result indicates that there is more positive self Evaluation in women belonging to higher dimensions of these demographic variables.

Table 1.7

Regression Analysis with Mental Health – Component 'B'- Perception of Reality

Variable in the Equation	B–Value	SEB	Beta Standard Zed B-Value	Multiple R	Multiple R2	Change in R2	F Value	d f
Caste	0.352	0.230	0.081	0.232	0.0534	0.006	3.992*	1,148
Income	0.519	0.231	0.132	0.116	0.015	4.952	3.881*	2,147
Marital Status	0.520	0.286	0.097	0.216	0.046	0.008	4.398*	3,146

* Significant at .05 level

Predictors that are contributing more towards the component 'B' Perception of Reality, Caste, Income and Marital Status have emerged to be significant Caste wise mean scores for this component is maximum for women belonging to SC/ST (Mc_3= 11.50), followed by OBC (Mc_2 = 10.83) and then by General (Mc_1=10.50). For other two predictors viz Income and Marital Status also Lower Categories seem to be more aware of Reality Component of Life.

Table 1.8

Regression Analysis with Mental Health – Component 'C' - Integration of Personality

Variable in the Equation	B–Value	SEB	Beta Standard Zed B-Value	Multiple R	Multiple R2	Change in R2	F Value	d f
Caste	0.480	0.224	0.113	0.121	0.015	0.015	5.262*	1,148
Education	0.432	0.278	0.081	0.173	0.029	0.007	3.700*	1,147
Occupational Status	0.512	0.219	0.126	0.112	0.013	4.843	3.964*	1,146
Income	0.330	0.206	0.086	0.155	0.025	0.009	4.331*	1,145

* Significant at .05 level

A quick glance at table 1.8 reveals that caste, Education, Employment and Income have emerged to be contributing towards Mental Health Component 'C' - Integration of personality. A surprising finding is revealed in terms of caste is that the mean score for Lower castes (m=12.60) is higher than other castes. Education and Income wise findings are consistent as mean values of higher level of both groups is higher than Lower levels. Women who are employed demonstrate more of personality Integration.

Table 1.9

Regression Analysis with Mental Health – Component 'D' Autonomy

Variable in the Equation	B–Value	SEB	Beta Standard Zed B-Value	Multiple R	Multiple R2	Change in R2	F Value	d f
Education	0.431	0.279	0.082	0.174	0.028	0.008	3.701*	1,148
Occupational Status	0.511	0.220	0.127	0.111	0.014	4.844	3.965*	1,147
Income	0.331	0.205	0.087	0.154	0.024	0.008	4.332*	1,146

* Significant at .05 level

Education, Occupational Status and Income are contributing demographic variables towards Autonomy. The women belonging to higher levels of these predictors are found to have more Autonomy in their personality as compared to their Counter parts at lower level.

Table 1.10

Regression Analysis with Mental Health – Component 'E' Group oriented attitude

Variable in the Equation	B–Value	SEB	Beta Standard Zed B-Value	Multiple R	Multiple R2	Change in R2	F Value	d f
Education	0.309	0.156	0.107	0.220	0.049	0.008	4.482*	1,148
Occupational Status	0.512	0.221	0.126	0.110	0.015	4.843	3.966*	2,147
Marital Status	0.342	0.162	0.113	0.163	0.027	0.016	4.625*	3,146

* Significant at .05 level

From Table 1.10 it is observed that Education, Occupational position and Marital Status are contributing a lot to group oriented attitude. A very interesting finding is that the group oriented activities are depicted more amongst women who are comparatively less educated and happily marries.

Table 1.11

Regression Analysis with Mental Health – Component 'F' - Environmental Mastery

Variable in the Equation	B–Value	SEB	Beta Standard Zed B-Value	Multiple R	Multiple R2	Change in R2	F Value	d f
Caste	0.596	0.244	0.123	0.205	0.041	0.013	4.533*	1,148
Education	0.307	0.156	0.107	0.222	0.047	0.008	4.482*	1,147
Income	0.654	0.470	0.071	0.232	0.054	0.0056	4.022*	1,146

* Significant at .05 level

A perusal of Table 1.11 reveals that Caste, Education and Income are contributing significantly for attaining Environmental Mastery amongst middle aged women.

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

This section of this paper aims at interpreting the findings and examining their validity in the light of the studies available.

Psychiatric epidemiologists were among the first to use the term social epidemiology and the role of the social environment in the etiology and course of major mental disorders continues to be investigated. A number of reviews published in the late 1990 documented the association between socio economic position (SEP) and Mental Health.

Kohn et al 1998 have reported inverse relationship of Socio Economic Status and psycho pathology. ***Hawton etal 2001, Goodman 1999, Ostama et al, 2007, Beautrais et al 1998*** from their studies have concluded that level of Education, Occupational Status and how Socio Economic Status have direct impact on individuals mental health. Regarding caste as an influential predictor variable, there is no Indian or Western evidence to support or defer the obtained outcome. In a recent study ***Archana Singh – Manoux, Paul Clarks and Michael Marmot (2002)*** found that education has indirect effect on psychosocial health and its indirect effect is due to the effect of education on proximal measures of social position, Occupation and income.

Other dominating demographic correlates of this study is marital status, which, when seen in Indian context has an important effect in an individuals life and when the study is focusing female subjects it becomes an important promoter of mental health. Marital status came out to be a significant variable in determination of Mental Health in the research work of ***Odd steffen Dalgard, Arnstein Mykletum, Marit Rognerud, Rune Johansen and Per Henrik Zahl. May 22, 2007.***

If a conclusion is to be drawn from this study then it can be said that apart from caste and Marital Status all the other three demographic variables namely Education, Income and Occupational status can be grouped into one category ie Level of Education. now level of education is an important risk factor for mental health and should be kept in mind in psychiatric prevention and mental health promotion. Schools should not only be a place for teaching of theoretical and practical skills, but should also contribute to psychological growth, with the strengthening of coping and mastery as important elements.

This study illustrates how demographic correlates may be used in exploring risk factors for mental health, thereby giving ideas for mental health promotion.

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