



## **ROLE OF FAMILY STRUCTURE IN STRESS RESISTANCE OF WOMEN**

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### **ORIGINAL ARTICLE**



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ROLE OF FAMILY STRUCTURE IN STRESS RESISTANCE OF WOMEN The only problem of the research was to observe role of family structure in stress resistance of women. It was hypothesized that women in joint family would excel those in nuclear family structure in regard to their stress resistance. The incidentally selected samples were comprised of 400 women living in nuclear families and 400 women living in joint families.

#### **Abstract :-**

The only problem of the research was to observe role of family structure in stress resistance of women. It was hypothesized that women in joint family would excel those in nuclear family structure in regard to their stress resistance.

The incidentally selected samples were comprised of 400 women living in nuclear families and 400 women living in joint families.

The data were collected by administering a stress resistance scale.

The finding did not show any significant difference between the two groups of women in regard to their stress resistance.

#### **Key words :-**

Stress Resistance, Family Structure.

#### **Introduction :-**

Stress is defined as “a state of psychological and physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual's ability and motivation to meet those needs”. Stress has become a major feature of modern living caused by changes in the type of work, the breakdown of traditional family structure, and by many features of contemporary urban environment. People who are under stress often experience psychological (anxiety, tension, and depression) and physical (fatigue, headache, and illness) consequences (Wickrama et al., 1997). Cooper & Dewe (2004) also viewed stress as a response of physiological arousal elicited by a troublesome event.

According to Chrousos (2009), “a stressor is considered a stimulus that threatens homeostasis and the stress response is the reaction of the organism aimed to regain homeostasis”.

Women, in modern era, have a lot of balancing to do between social and personal requirements. The issues of maternity, menopause, parenthood, gender roles, conditions at home and workplace, familial, and social support etc., often blight women's life in the long run.

The family is a dynamic system of interdependent relationships embedded in community, cultural, and historical context. Family plays a very important role in development of a person and it has been said the, corner-stone of the human society. Family systems theory conceptualize a family as a system, means that the family like the human body, is truly a whole consisting of interrelated parts, each of which contributes to the functioning of the whole (Bornstein & Sawyer, 2006; and Parke & Buriel, 2006).

On the basis of structure, the family has been classified into nuclear and joint or extended family. A nuclear family is one which consists of the husband, wife and their children. The children leave the parental household as soon as they are married. A nuclear family is an autonomous unit free from the control of the elders.

A joint family can be viewed as a merger of several nuclear families. The joint family is continuous, while nuclear family is not. In joint family a person is a member of residential kin group which has probably persisted for many generations.

Stephens et al. (2001) assert that a woman who is always wholly responsible for a dependent elder may feel angry and resentful because she has no time for herself. She may experience role conflict between her caregiver role and roles as wife, mother, and employed that undermines her sense of well-being. She is at risk for depression.

The family can act both as a buffer against sources of stress, such as periods of ill health, and as a source of models of positive coping behaviour. Families may also have a negative effect on health, through family-role-related demands and unhealthy interactions, especially for females. Women are more likely to experience depression and reduced psychological functioning as a result of poor quality relationship (Kiecott- Glaser & Newton, 2001).

Kendler (2005), in a study, observed that women were often socialized to develop their sense of self from their relationships or the quality of their relationship. As a result, when women felt their relationships were poor, this had enormous influence on their emotional well-being. Denton et al. (2004) observed that family structure was important determinant for women in respect of their health.

Ramamurti & Jamuna (1984) reported that individuals, both men and women, living in joint family were better adjusted than individuals living in nuclear families. The studies pointed towards the possibility that perception of availability of social support must be associated with better adjustment among older and retired women as well as housewives.

Nuclear family creates more stress as compared to joint family. Support from joint family acts as buffer against stress. Pandey & Srivastava (2000) also identified that respondents belonging to nuclear family had expressed more interpersonal work stress than joint family respondents.

Iqbal et al. (2004) found that women in joint family system were more frequently diagnosed with anxiety; but that association was not statistically significant. Ugwu (2010)

found that women who cared sick parents experienced more stress than their counterparts.

Akram & Khuwaja (2014) conducted a study on depression observed that the working women who lived in nuclear family system reported higher level of depression than those for joint family system because in joint family system the relatives might helped the working mothers in child raising and other household work, whereas there was no significant difference in level of depression of nonworking women living in both family systems.

### Problem and Hypothesis :-

The only problem of the research was to observe role of family structure in stress resistance of women. More specifically, the problem was whether women in nuclear family structure and those living in joint family structure differ in regard to their stress resistance?

It was hypothesized that women in joint family would excel those in nuclear family structure in regard to their stress resistance.

### Methodology :-

#### Sample :

Incidental samples of 400 women from nuclear family and 400 women from joint family structures were selected.

#### Tools :

Stress Resistance Scale constructed and standardized by Ajawani & Varwandkar (2010) was used to assess stress resistance ability of women.

#### Procedure :

After selecting the required sample of 400 women in each of the two groups i.e., nuclear family and joint family structures, stress resistance scale was administered to them in individuals setting. The scores on the scale served as the basis for further computations.

### Analysis and Result :-

Average stress resistance scores of the women in nuclear family and in joint family structures and other statistical details are given in Table 1.

**Table 1 :** Average Stress Resistance Scores of Women in Nuclear and in Joint Family Structures and Obtained t Ratio

Comparison Groups	n	M	$\Sigma x^2$	Obtained t-ratio	Level of Significance
Nuclear Family Structure	400	98.615	69570.15	0.99	P>.05 Not Significant
Joint Family Structure	400	97.670	75850.35		

A perusal of Table 1 revealed that average resistance score of women in joint family (M = 97.67) was lesser than that of women in nuclear family (M = 98.615). The obtained t-ratio (t = 0.99) is not significant at any acceptable level of significance for 798 degrees of freedom and hence null hypothesis is accepted in regard to difference in stress resistance scores of women in nuclear and in joint families. It can be concluded that there did not exist any true difference between women in nuclear family and women in joint family structures in respect of their stress resistance.

Though, initial difference indicated that women in nuclear family were more stress resistant than those in joint family. This is contrary to the hypothesized trend in the present research. However, the non-significant result clearly indicated that the two groups of women virtually did not differ in respect of their stress resistance.

### Conclusion :-

It was expected that the women in joint family structure would be more stress resistant than those in nuclear family due to the reason of high emotional and social support a women may receive in joint family. However, due to the social change, now-a-days nuclear family is the choice for maximum population and this might have made the members of nuclear family to compensate level of emotional and social support which they could have received in joint family. Dependency of each member of nuclear family probably forces them to provide required emotional and social support to other family members and thus increasing stress resistance. Thus, it seems that nuclear family environment may be a fertile source for stress resistance, however not significantly different from that of joint family environment which continues to be the source of emotional and social support to the family members, if it prevails.

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