

QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED WOMEN IN REMO COMMUNITY: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

Background: Employment is a key factor in quality of life of women. Unemployment may lead to lack of satisfaction in life as well as in marriage which may likely affect quality of life in general among women. Previous studies have established a link between employment and quality of life. However, one factor that has not been fully explored is the extent to which employment status will determine the quality of life of women in Remo Community. This research is aimed at empirically discovering differences in the assessment of the psychological, social and environmental domains of quality of life among group of working and unemployed women. **Materials and Methods:** This cross-sectional study was carried out in Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria, among 538 married women aged between 20 – 65 who are formally employed in different organizations including educational institutions and banks which are the major employers of labour in this community and full-time house wives who do not have jobs outside the home and hence do not receive paid salaries or wages. The subjects were selected randomly and were assigned to two groups consisting of 1) formally employed (n = 297) and 2) unemployed (n = 241). The respondents filled the Psychological, Social and Environmental aspects of BREF WHO Quality of Life Scale. Respondents were personally contacted at their working places, homes, schools, worship centres and market places. Data collection lasted for three months (between December 2021 to March, 2022). **Statistical Analysis:** Participants' demographic data were analyzed by means of frequency counts. Each of the hypotheses was tested using Student's t-test at the .05 alpha level. All statistical analyses were executed using SPSS version 27 software. **Result:** The working women had higher mean scores in all the 3 categories. The mean score of general health domain in working women was 6.04 compared to 3.87 among non-working women which is the lowest category. Similarly in the domain of psychological, working women had significantly higher mean score (18.63) compared to non-working women (13.31). This implied that working women had better psychological quality of life in comparison to non-working women. In the environmental domain, working women scored 27.59 as against 17.71 among the unemployed. This was followed by the social category showing means of 12.33 for employed and 7.95 for the unemployed. **Conclusion:** Findings of this study reveals that working women have better quality of life in the domains studied comprising of social, psychological and environmental. This may be attributable to a sense of self-esteem, security and independence that goes with being engaged in work.

Keywords: Quality of life, employed women, unemployed women, Remo Community

INTRODUCTION

Quality of life is a construct that has been greatly researched due to its relevance to the wellbeing of humans. Quality of life is the way a person perceives his position in life in terms of how he is meeting up with goals, expectations and concerns in line with his values and cultural expectations (World Health Organization Quality of Life, 2012; Bileviciene et al, 2016). Quality of life is a complex construct that has relationship with physical health, autonomy, relationship with others, beliefs, status and environmental

factors (Masoumi, Garousian, Khani, Olaiei & Shayan, 2016). Health, employment, environment, mental and physical health, level of education, safety, security and social affiliations are important predictors of quality of life (Gregory, Johnson, Pratt & Watts, 2009; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Barcaccia, 2013; Bileviciena, Bileviciute & Drakas, 2016; Mir et al, 2016).

Employment status is linked with quality of life (Merchant et al, 2014) since work is among the major factors that have an influence on an individual's existence and well-being (Czekirda et al, 2017), self-esteem and contribution to society (Afroz, 2018; Marck et al, 2020; Carlier et al, 2013). Work determines who we are and defines our standard of living and self-identity but can affect our quality of life negatively when it is stressful (Malamardi, et al, 2015). Quality of life therefore depends on certain external factors among which is good living conditions, accommodation, employment, income and material welfare (Ruzevicius, 2014), therefore employment is the key to the achievement of the factors above as it provides the means to achieve them. Unemployment on the other hand have many detrimental effects on quality of life because lack of income could lead to financial problems, poverty, stress and health related challenges (Worach-Kardas & Kostrzewski, 2014), loss of social identity, low academic achievement for children, stress and strain on the family due to inability to pay bills, personal and marital distress (Talbot, 2011), ill-health, poor mental state, high death incidents due to inability to access quality medical services, physical and psychological problems (Griep et al, 2015), poor socio-economic status (Vernekar & Shah, 2019); weakened quality of life and a hindrance to reaching one's potential in life (Lucas, et al, 2004; Hult et al, 2020). Larson (1984) and Talbot (2011) went further to conclude that unemployment could lead to lower marital satisfaction while Rabiepoor et al (2018) and Martins et al (2021) exclaimed that unemployment worsens quality of life.

Although some traditional societies expect women to stay at home and function as caregivers while the men work outside the home as bread winners (Talbot, 2011; Mir et al, 2016), yet many women in Ogun State today generally and in Remo community specifically work and earn income outside the home. According to Uwannah et al (2022), 76% of women in Ogun State are in full time employment. When women work outside the home, they receive salaries that go with some economic and non-economic benefits (Eliason & Storrie, 2009; Worach-Kardas & Kostrzewski, 2014). Among these benefits include psychological well-being, more power of negotiation in marriage, more social networks and social support that may not be enjoyed by their non-working counterparts who are most often not socially valued because they may be identified as not contributing at all economically and hence may likely be prone to depression, distress and psychological imbalance (Hori, 2017).

Despite the above, Artazcoz et al (2004) discovered that for women, unemployment may have some beneficial effects on health as long as the husband is employed. On the other hand, when a working woman have inflexible work schedules, long working hours, lack of accessible day-care facilities for those with young children, dissatisfaction may be imminent and quality of life may be negatively affected (Ross & Reskin, 1992), In terms of this therefore, full housewives may have better quality of life than employed women. Treas, van der Lippe & Tai (2011) in their studies discovered that full-time housewives had better well-being than employed women in the area of happiness. It is along this line that this study aimed at assessing quality of

life in the psychological, social and environmental domains among employed and unemployed women in Remo Community.

OBJECTIVE

This study attempts to describe the differences in subjective assessment of the psychological, social and environmental domains of quality of life among employed and unemployed married women.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This cross-sectional study was conducted among employed and unemployed married women in Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. The sample size consisted of 538 women aged between 20 – 65 who were randomly selected from different organizations including primary, secondary, tertiary institutions and banks where they work because most women employees in Remo community are employed in these institutions. Full-time house wives who do not have jobs outside the home and hence do not receive paid salaries or wages were selected from their various homes, worship centres, market places and at their village meetings. The subjects were selected randomly and were assigned to two groups consisting of 1) formally employed (n = 297) and 2) unemployed (n = 241). The inclusion criteria for the employed group were as follows: full-time employment, not on leave of absence, not presently on annual leave, not single, must be aged between 20 – 65 years, willingness to participate in the study, must be married but does not matter whether living with spouse, divorced, separated or divorced and must be resident in Remo Community. The inclusion criteria for the unemployed group were as follows: not earning a salary outside the home, not working part-time, not working outside the home, must be aged between 20 – 65 years, willingness to participate in the study, must be married but does not matter whether living with spouse, divorced, separated or divorced and must be resident in Remo Community. Respondents who were unwilling to participate in the study were excluded. The participants were acquainted with the objectives of the study and procedures and their informed consent were obtained. The Respondents were personally contacted at their working places, homes, schools, worship centres and market places. Data collection lasted for three months (between December 2021 to March, 2022).

Measurement Tools

The respondents filled the Psychological, Social and Environmental aspects of WHO Quality of Life Scale - BREF.

The World Health Organization Quality of Life – BREF scale prepared by the WHO contains five domains but this study adopted the psychological, social relationships and environmental domains. The psychological domain contains 5 items, the social relationships have 3 items while the environmental aspect contains 9 items. This scale also has 2 other questions that evaluated general quality of life and health status. The scale has 19 items. The response was placed on a 5-point likert scale and a score of 1 – 5 is assigned to each item. Prior to their responses on the scale, a set of demographic questions were asked to which the respondents provided answers to such as employment status (working and not working); marital status (living with spouse, separated, divorced or widowed); place of residence; age and educational attainment. Masoumi et al (2016) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79 for

environmental dimension. Barisin et al (2011) reported a reliability coefficient of above 0.75 for psychological dimension and above 0.68 for the social dimension.

Statistical Analysis

Participants' demographic data such as age, educational attainment, employment status, marital status and place of residence were analyzed by means of frequency counts. Each of the hypotheses was tested using Student's t-test at the .05 alpha level. All statistical analyses were executed using SPSS version 27 software.

RESULTS

The greatest proportion of the participants (33%) were 40 – 49 years old, followed by those who were 50 – 59 years old (22%), 30 – 39 years old (20%), 20 – 29 years old (14%), and 60 years old and above (12%). The greatest proportion of the participants (42%) had tertiary education. This was successively followed by those who had secondary education (35%), primary education (14%) and no education at all (8%). Finally, a majority of the participants (74%) were married and living with their spouses. This was successively followed by those who were separated (12%), divorced (8%) and widowed (6%) (Tab.1).

The analysis demonstrates that employed women (mean = 6.04) had better general quality of life than unemployed women (mean = 3.87) leading to the rejection of hypothesis one and the conclusion that there is a significant difference in general quality of life between employed and unemployed women in Remo community (Tab. 2)

In terms of the psychological quality of life, there is a significant difference between employed and unemployed women in Remo community. Employed women (mean = 18.63) had better psychological quality of life than unemployed women (mean = 13.31) (Tab.3)

The evaluations assigned by the respondents to the Environmental Quality of Life were similar to the psychological domain leading to the conclusion that there is a significant difference in environmental quality of life between employed and unemployed women in Remo community. Employed women (mean = 27.59) had better environmental quality of life than unemployed women (mean = 17.71) (Tab. 4).

Analysis of the social domain also came out with similar results which led to the conclusion that there is a significant difference in social quality of life between employed and unemployed women in Remo community. This analysis further revealed that employed women (mean = 12.33) had better social quality of life than unemployed women (mean = 7.95) (Tab. 5).

Table 1: Participants' Demographics

S/No	Variable	Category N = 536	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age (in years)	20 – 29	75	13.9
		30 – 39	105	19.5
		40 – 49	178	33.1
		50 – 59	117	21.7
		60 & above	63	11.7
2.	Highest Education	Noneat All	44	8.2
		Primary	76	14.1
		Secondary	190	35.3
		Tertiary	228	42.4
3.	Employment Status	Employed	297	55.2
		Unemployed	241	44.8
4.	Marital Status	Living with spouse	400	74.3
		Separated	63	11.7
		Divorced	42	7.8
		Widowed	33	6.1

Table 2: T-Test Of Difference In General Quality Of Life Between Employed And Unemployed Women

Employment Status	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	T	Sig.
Employed	297	6.0370	1.5052	536	16.998	.000
Unemployed	241	4.8714	1.4245			

Table 2 revealed significant results (df = 536, t = 16.998, $p < .05$),

Table 3: t-Test of Difference in Psychological Quality of Life between Employed and Unemployed Women

Employment Status	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	T	Sig.
Employed	297	18.6296	3.6895	524	19.672	0
Unemployed	241	13.3071	2.5685			

Table 3 revealed significant results (df = 524.436, t = 19.672, $p < .05$)

Table 4: t-Test of Difference in Environmental Quality of Life between Employed and Unemployed Women

Employment Status	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	T	Sig.
Employed	297	27.5926	6.3835	498	21.118	.000
Unemployed	241	17.7054	3.8569			

Table 4 revealed significant results (df = 497.940, t = 21.118, $p < .05$),

Table 5: t-Test of Difference in Social Quality of Life between Employed and Unemployed Women

Employment Status	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	T	Sig.
Employed	297	12.3333	2.1467	477	21.648	.000
Unemployed	241	7.9461	7.9461			

Table 5 revealed significant results (df = 477.236, t = 21.648, $p < .05$)

DISCUSSION

Quality of life is the outcome of the evaluation of an individual or society's general well-being which could be negative or positive (Masoumi et al, 2016). Employment can be linked with quality of life. Women as other humans desire better quality of life, however, their quality of life is affected by employment status as well (Worach-Kardas & Kostrzewski, 2014; Vernekar & Shah, 2019). This study considered the quality of life of employed and unemployed women in three domains of psychological, social and environmental. The psychological aspect of quality of life is comprised of positive feelings, learning, self-esteem, bodily image and appearance and negative feelings (Ruzevicius, 2014). Social aspect embraces personal relationships, social support and activities as provider or supporter while the third domain which is environmental covers security, home environment, work satisfaction, financial resources, accessibility to quality health and social care, leisure, physical environment and transport (Gregory et al, 2009; Bileviciene et al, 2016). Both employed and unemployed subjects in the study were asked to rate their quality of life in these three domains in addition to the two questions on general quality of life.

Previous studies have buttressed the fact that quality of life improves with financial capability (Barisin, et al, 2011; Czekirda et al, 2017; Chinweuba et al, 2018) because it is expected that income will enable one afford the comforts and luxuries of life that will improve the various aspects of psychological, social and environmental life as well as accruing social acceptance with family, friends and the society (Bouwman et al, 2015). The result of the present study shows that working women had better quality of life in all the three domains studied. This is not unrelated to the previous findings where short and long-term unemployed women scored poor in dimensions of physical health, mental health, social relationship and environmental domain (Worach-Kardas & Kostrezewski, 2014; Jiang & Hesser, 2006; Martella & Maass, 2000; Barisin, et al, 2011).

Psychological dimension is vital aspect of quality of life. The period of unemployment is likely to affect a woman's psychological well-being negatively. In the group of employed women, the mean of 18.63 was obtained which is higher than 13.31 obtained from the unemployed respondents falling in line with Axelsson et al (2007) and Ritche et al (2020)'s finding that employed women had higher satisfaction in life than the unemployed. Vanassche et al (2012), Powdthavee (2010) have all concluded that the financial strength of a family affects their general quality of life. This is a pointer to the known fact that the unemployed tend to evaluate themselves lowly inflicting low self-esteem and low self-confidence with attendant consequences of negative emotions, experience of stress etc (Barisin, et al, 2011). Studies have also confirmed the importance of the social domain and how it is affected by employment status. For instance, satisfaction comes with the awareness that no one is unemployed in a family (Rojas, 2011). However, in a study carried out by Czekirda et al (2017) the unemployed subjects scored high on social and mental domain but the researchers explained the possibility of their receiving enough support from family and friends to buffer the effect of unemployment as the likely cause of that result. This present finding is not also in tandem with Treas, van der Lippe & Tai (2011) and Anand and Sharma (2017)'s findings where non-working females reported being happier, and having better physical, psychological and environmental quality of life. Warr (2004) and Geyer and Peter (2003) in their separate studies found that people who lose their jobs after six months start having feelings of fear, low self-confidence, depression and

at the long run suffer from chronic ailments. Barisin, et al (2011) studied quality of life among group of disabled employed and unemployed women and also discovered that the employed women had better quality of life in the social relationships, psychological and environmental aspect as well. Afroz (2018) found that work have significance in terms of people's self esteem and contribution to society.

From the environmental domain, the findings of this study align with previous findings of Aalaa et al (2012) that unemployed women were found feeling unwanted among their peers in addition to feeling insecure, stressed and aggressive.

CONCLUSION

Unemployment is stressful and is negatively related to the social, psychological and environmental quality of life. Women who are unemployed may likely see themselves as less valued and are more prone to being depressed, aggressive and stressed. T-test analysis confirmed that the employed experienced better quality of life in the domains assessed; psychological, social and environmental confirming Axelsson et al (2007)'s assertion that unemployment is a major challenge in West Africa of which Nigeria and Remo Land specifically is not an exception especially as the Government have no support for the unemployed presently. Although government made some policies to alleviate the effects of unemployment in the past, the policies were not properly implemented. Therefore, in order to alleviate the attendant consequences of poor quality of life in the areas evaluated, government should introduce and fund empowerment programmes as such intervention will enable women who could not have access to white collar jobs, opportunity to own their own businesses and make money. This will actually help in reducing the social distress associated with unemployment. Secondly, most young women do not work because of child-care, wifely and motherly demands. Government can open crèches, child care and elder-care centers in every town at subsidized costs to provide opportunity for such women to work. Finally, men should assist by sharing household chores with their wives giving them opportunity to be engaged in labour force.

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Ethical Approval

The Babcock University Research and Ethical Committee approved this research work

Declaration of Authorship

Competing Interests

There are no competing interests.

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