



## Research Article

# Quality of life and sense of coherence among working and non-working women

Nitu<sup>1</sup>, Shivangi Bansal<sup>2</sup>, Mamta Sharma<sup>3</sup>, Tanya Sharma<sup>4</sup>, Vivek Singh<sup>4</sup>, Ravindra Singh<sup>5</sup>, Venus Sharma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Dr. S.K.S. Womens' College, Motihari, Bihar, India

<sup>2</sup>Masters Student, <sup>4</sup>Research Scholars, Department of Psychology, Central University of Haryana, Mahendragarh, Haryana, India

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Shri L.B.S. PG College, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>5</sup>Assistant Professor, Graphic Era (Deemed to be University), Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

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### Abstract

Women's roles in India are rapidly changing due to a remarkable shift from domestic solitude and active social inclusion, but this process requires several compromises that are affecting their quality of life (QoL) and sense of coherence (SoC). The main objective of this study was to investigate the association of a sense of coherence with quality of life among "working and non-working women" in Haryana state of India. 100 women between the age ranges of 25 to 45 years were conveniently drawn from the different districts of Haryana (Mahendragarh, Rewari, Charkhi Dadri, Bhiwani, etc). The study participants were "50 working women and 50 non-working women". Measures like, sense of coherence and WHOQOL-BREF were applied for the data collection. Independent t-test and correlation analysis have been applied to analyse the data. Findings show no significant difference between "working and non-working women" in "sense of coherence and quality of life". The findings of the correlational analysis indicated that "sense of coherence" has not exhibited a significant association with the "quality of life" of participants. These findings highlight the complex interrelationship of women's overall well-being, workplace participation and gender roles in India.

### Keywords:

Sense of coherence, Quality of life

### Corresponding author:

Dr. Nitu  
Email: nituupd@rediffmail.com

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### Introduction

The complete well-being of a community is measured by the vital part women play in their homes and in society in particular. Most women skillfully balance both their home and work life, which has made a remarkable change in the society's attitude towards the traditional roles of women in recent years.<sup>[1]</sup> This changing landscape of responsibilities is given by expectations of society and fluctuations in the economy around the

world. Employment for women has increased significantly in recent decades, especially in urban India. As a result, it is difficult for women to find the right track between the responsibilities of their home and work goals. The task is more complicated by increasing professional expectations in the work sector, increased workload, and work stress as an obstacle to completing their daily life activities. It impacts their physical, psychological, emotional and social well-being. The task to improve the situation of the women in society requires political and economic reform to realize the importance of women's empowerment.<sup>[2]</sup> Contrary to popular belief, a study indicated that the health status of married working women was better even when they were doing two jobs.<sup>[3]</sup>

In recent years, the , studies on psychological well-being with a special focus on quality of life (QoL) have received good attention in working women.<sup>[4,5]</sup> "World Health Organization (WHO, 1992)" defines the quality of life "is an individual perception of his position in life in association to their culture and values in which he/she lives and his goals expectations concerns and standards".<sup>[6]</sup>

Several structures like, gender, class, age, education, health, disability, socio-economic status and social environment influence the complex structure of women.<sup>[7]</sup> In one of the studies, significant differences in positive "well-being among working and non-working women" were explored.<sup>[8]</sup> In another study, 82 working and 82 non-working mothers participated, and findings showed that the quality of life of working mothers was better than that of unemployed mothers.<sup>[9]</sup> These new findings highlighted the complex relationships between gender roles, work status and general well-being among women and indicated that more research is required in this area.

Within the salutogenic paradigm, Antonovsky's concept of sense of coherence (SOC) explains the differences in health outcomes that people experience in stressful situations. Drawing upon internal resources, SOC serves as a buffer against emotional and physical disruptions.<sup>[10]</sup> In the pursuit of health promotion, SOC emerges as a valuable

tool, manifesting as a reliable gauge for depression rates, burnout tendencies, and job satisfaction levels.<sup>[10]</sup> Positive correlations have been established between coping strategies and SOC, with both SOC and engagement inversely linked to exhaustion.<sup>[11]</sup> A compelling finding is an inverse relationship between SOC and posttraumatic stress, analogous to the stress instigated by the "COVID-19 pandemic", though the correlation takes a positive stance concerning extra version tolerance and frustration.<sup>[12]</sup> However, the precise causal nature of the SOC's association with posttraumatic stress necessitates further scrutiny, alongside the identification of modulating variables.<sup>[13]</sup> The repercussions of posttraumatic stress reverberate through increased anxiety and depression, with a higher prevalence documented among women, carrying substantial burdens for public health systems and individual well-being.<sup>[14,15]</sup> Exploring the dynamics of working women within multifaceted roles, one research has found that discernible connection between the strength of salutogenic constructs, including SOC, and the adaptive capacity of working women to navigate diverse responsibilities.<sup>[16]</sup>

As the interplay between a "sense of coherence, quality of life", and gender-specific roles unfolds, this paper seeks to contribute a nuanced understanding of these complex relationships.

## Rationale

Gender roles encompass the societal delineation of behaviors and expectations attributed to individuals based on their gender. The implementation of these roles is governed by the social norms, different cultural values, class division, age dynamics and historical context of a particular society. Earlier traditional gender roles have changed over time. Now originally representing men as service providers and women as home makers are not true and should not be accepted. One prominent change is the rise of dual-income households where both husband and wife are working, and this trend is becoming more and more common. However, in several other countries, deep-rooted gender stereotypes place

an even burden of care and housekeeping on women, even as domestic responsibilities are redistributed in some societies through double incomes for both sexes.

Consequently, women in the workplace are faced with the challenging task of handling their multiple responsibilities as spouses, mothers, employees, and daughters. The complex interactions between work and home obligations can have different effects on people's "sense of coherence and quality of life". Working women often experience augmented financial autonomy and heightened self-esteem, while their non-working counterparts might grapple with feelings of insecurity and limited social engagement. Recognizing a research gap in this domain, the current study seeks to address this dearth of investigation by formulating pertinent objectives and hypotheses, aiming to illuminate the nuanced interactions between gender roles, societal pressures, and well-being for women in both employment contexts.

## Objective

1. To measure and compare the QoL and sense of coherence among two groups of women (Working and Non-working).
2. To explore the correlation of sense of coherence with the quality of life of two groups of women (Working and Non-working).

## Method

This cross-sectional investigation encompassed a cohort of 100 women, with 50 engaged in employment and 50 in non-working roles, falling within the age range of 25 to 45, and representing different districts of Haryana, including Mahendergarh, Narnaul, Charkhi Dadri, Rewari. Rigorous ethical protocols were upheld, entailing informed consent from participants and the assurance of strict confidentiality. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, incorporating three sections encompassing (a) demographic particulars such as age, education, and gender, (b) Sense of Coherence assessment involving 13 items, and (c) Quality of Life evaluation with a battery of 26 items.

Utilized within this study, the 13-item abridged version of Antonovsky's Orientation to Life Questionnaire (1987) was employed to measure the formulated sense of coherence.<sup>[10]</sup> This condensed scale comprises distinct facets: "meaningfulness, comprehensibility, and manageability". For each question, respondents were asked to assess their degree of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (meaning "never") to 7 (meaning "always"). The strong internal consistency of the scale is demonstrated by Antonovsky (1993), whose research shows alpha coefficients ranging from 0.85 to 0.91 in 29 different studies.

Quality of life (QoL) was assessed using the World Health Organization Quality of Life Brief Version (WHOQOL-BREF). The scale has been developed with 26 items consisting of different domains. "General quality of life and general health (2 items), physical health (7 items), psychological health (6 items), social relationships (3 items), and environment (8 items)". Participants are required to respond on a five-point Likert scale to rate each item. Mean scores for each item were summed to obtain domain-specific scores using the WHOQOL-100 QoL assessment framework. According to the WHO criteria, these values were converted into points between 0 and 100. The WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire has a strong internal consistency. The internal consistency of the scale was highlighted by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Results

The objective of the current study was to assess and compare "sense of coherence and quality of life" among "working and non-working women", and further it was also aimed to explore the association between "sense of coherence" and "quality of life" in the context of "working and non-working women". Data from the participants were analyzed using the appropriate statistical software. Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation (SD) and inferential analysis, such as t-tests and correlation tests, were applied according to the research objective. The findings of the study are carefully summarized in Tables 1, 2 and 3, providing a complete visual presentation of the results of the study.

Table 1 : Means, SD and t-ratio of “working and non-working women” on quality of life

Measures	Working Women (50)		Non-Working Women (50)		df	t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Physical Health	93.90	12.97	96.34	13.68	97	-.89
Psychological Health	43.20	7.20	44.14	6.56	97	-.67
Social Health	43.20	7.20	44.14	6.56	97	-.67
Environment	109.50	15.99	109.63	12.80	97	-.04
Quality of Health & Perception	7.33	1.14	7.11	1.08	97	.91
WHOQOL-BREF (Total)	301.36	30.79	300.79	4.01	97	-.60

Table 1 presents the results, indicating no statistically significant difference in the overall quality of life (WHOQOL-BREF Total) between “working and non-working women” ( $t = -.60$ ). It is observed that working women ( $M = 301.36$ ,  $SD = 30.79$ ) tend to exhibit a slightly higher level of quality of life compared to non-working women ( $M = 300.79$ ,  $SD = 4.01$ ). Exploring the specific dimensions of WHOQOL-BREF, no significant distinctions were evident in Physical Health ( $t = -.89$ ), Psychological Health ( $t = -.67$ ), Social Health ( $t = -.67$ ), Environment ( $t = -.04$ ), Quality of Health & Perception ( $t = .91$ ) dimensions.

Interestingly, non-working women ( $M = 96.34$ ,  $SD = 13.68$ ) ( $M = 44.14$ ,  $SD = 6.56$ ) ( $M = 44.14$ ,  $SD = 6.56$ ) ( $M = 109.63$ ,  $SD = 12.80$ ) displayed marginally elevated levels of physical health, psychological health, social health, and environment compared to working women ( $M = 93.90$ ,  $SD = 12.97$ ), ( $M = 43.20$ ,  $SD = 7.20$ ), ( $M = 43.20$ ,  $SD = 7.20$ ), and ( $M = 109.50$ ,  $SD = 15.99$ ), respectively. Conversely, working women ( $M = 7.33$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) appeared to manifest a slightly higher quality of health and perception compared to their non-working counterparts ( $M = 7.11$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).

Table 2: Mean, SD, and t-ratios of “working and non-working women” on Sense of coherence

Measures	Working Women (50)		Non-Working Women (50)		df	t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Comprehensibility	19.35	5.05	19.81	4.34	97	-.49
Manageability	17.28	3.12	15.64	3.65	97	2.31*
Meaningfulness	15.83	3.97	15.85	3.27	97	-.03
OLQ (Total)	52.45	7.60	51.31	7.63	97	.73

\* =  $p < .05$

Table 2 presents the findings, revealing no statistically significant distinction in the overall sense of coherence (OLQ total) between “working and non-working women” ( $t = .73$ ). Notably, working women ( $M = 52.45$ ,  $SD = 7.60$ ) appear to exhibit a slightly higher sense of coherence compared to non-working women ( $M = 51.31$ ,  $SD$

$= 7.63$ ). Among the dimensions encompassed by the Orientation to Life Questionnaire, no significant disparities emerged within the Comprehensibility ( $t = -.49$ ) and Meaningfulness ( $t = -.03$ ) dimensions. However, a noteworthy difference manifested within the Manageability dimension ( $t = 2.31$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Interestingly, non-

working women ( $M = 19.81$ ,  $SD = 4.34$ ) and ( $M = 15.85$ ,  $SD = 3.27$ ) appeared to possess greater “Comprehensibility and Meaningfulness” respectively, compared to working women ( $M =$

$19.35$ ,  $SD = 5.05$ ) and ( $M = 15.83$ ,  $SD = 3.97$ ). Conversely, working women ( $M = 17.28$ ,  $SD = 3.12$ ) exhibited higher Manageability in comparison to non-working women ( $M = 15.64$ ,  $SD = 3.65$ ).

**Table 3: Correlation coefficients between “Sense of Coherence and Quality of Life”**

Measures	Physical Health	Psychological health	Social health	Environment	WHOQOL BREF (Total)
Comprehensibility	.271*	.101	.101	-.012	.14
Manageability	.06	.14	.14	.05	.10
Meaningfulness	.16	.05	.05	.03	.03
OLQ (Total)	.12	.15	.15	.03	.12

\*= $p < .01$

The outcomes detailed in Table 3 demonstrate an insignificant yet positive correlation ( $r = .12$ ) between the “sense of coherence (OLQ total) and quality of life” (WHOQOL-BREF total). A similar pattern of insignificance is observed across various dimensions of “sense of coherence and quality of life”. Specifically, sense of coherence (OLQ total) exhibits an insignificant yet positive correlation with distinct quality of life dimensions, including physical health ( $r = .12$ ), psychological health ( $r = .15$ ), social health ( $r = .15$ ), and environment ( $r = .03$ ). Similarly, quality of life (total WHOQOL-BREF) has an insignificant but positive correlation with the dimensions of sense of coherence: “Comprehensibility ( $r = .14$ ), manageability ( $r = .10$ ) and meaningfulness” ( $r = .03$ ).

Further examining the relationships between the “sense of coherence and quality of life” dimensions, the comprehensibility dimension shows a non-significant positive correlation with psychological health ( $r = .101$ ) and social health ( $r = .101$ ). At the same time, it has a non-significant negative relationship correlation with the environment ( $r = -.012$ ). Interestingly, a significant positive correlation was found with physical health ( $r = .271$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, the manageability dimension shows a non-significant positive correlation with “physical health ( $r = .06$ ), psychological health ( $r = .14$ ), social health ( $r = .14$ ) and environment” ( $r = .05$ ). Finally, the meaningfulness dimension shows a non-significant positive correlation with physical health ( $r = .16$ ) and a non-significant but positive correlation with psychological health ( $r = .05$ ), social health ( $r = .05$ ) and environment ( $r = .03$ ).

## Discussion

The main aim of this study was to investigate, compare and analyze the relationships between the “sense of coherence and quality of life” of “working and non-working women”. The study’s first hypothesis, that “There would be no significant difference between “working and non-working women” on quality of life”, was corroborated by the findings, which did not reveal a statistically significant difference. This outcome contrasts with some prior research, such as Anand and Sharma, whose findings suggested a superior quality of life among non-working females in comparison to their working counterparts.<sup>[18]</sup> Additionally, Dwivedi et al. reported heightened self-esteem among working married women due to their adept management of psychological needs, while Dudhatra et al. found non-working women exhibiting better mental health, contrary to the current study.<sup>[19,20]</sup> Suman et al. utilized SF-36 to assess the quality of life, revealing lower scores among working women, albeit without statistical significance.<sup>[21]</sup> Harilal and Santhosh reported higher stress levels among employed women, attributing the variance to family financial dynamics.<sup>[22]</sup> The current study’s outcomes hint at a nuanced possibility: that quality of life, being inherently personal, might be similar across “working and non-working women”, shaped by their respective life circumstances. This interpretation aligns with the complexity of individual experiences, suggesting that the interplay between quality of life and employment status is intricate, involving multifaceted determinants. These findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding

of the intricate relationships governing the quality of life within distinct employment contexts.

The study's second hypothesis, that "There would be no significant difference between "working and non-working women" on the sense of Sense of coherence", was validated by the results, which did not uncover any statistically significant distinction. However, this outcome diverges from previous research conducted on working women having complex multiple-role environments, wherein findings suggested that a connection was present between the robustness of working women's salutogenic constructs, inclusive of the sense of coherence and their adeptness in managing diverse roles.<sup>[23]</sup> Nonetheless, the present study's outcomes echo foundational tenets of the sense of coherence framework, emphasizing that stressors can be perceived as positive and meaningful challenges, effectively managed to yield optimal outcomes.<sup>[24]</sup> This perspective suggests that both "working and non-working women" espousing this constructive world view exhibit comparable resilience to stress effects. Their capacity to navigate stressful situations without succumbing to detrimental impacts appears similar. Consequently, the notion of the sense of coherence emerges as a unifying factor, transcending employment status and fostering a shared ability to confront and mitigate the adversities of stress. This interpretation underscores the robustness of the sense of coherence construct in fostering a positive mind set conducive to effective stress management across diverse contexts.

The study's third hypothesis, that "There would be positive significant relationships between "sense of coherence and quality of life" of "working and non-working", was refuted by the findings, which did not reveal any significant positive connection. This outcome finds incongruity with prior research, such as, which underscored a robust and positive association between a "sense of coherence (SOC) and quality of life" (QOL).<sup>[25]</sup> A plausible rationale for this outcome could be attributed to the relatively limited sample size of both "working and non-working women". The reduced sample size might have insufficient statistical power to unveil a meaningful and statistically significant positive correlation between the two groups. It is conceivable that a larger and more diverse sample might be essential to discern a significant

relationship between a "sense of coherence and quality of life" within the study's context.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, these data suggest that there is no significant difference in the "sense of coherence and quality of life between" "working and non-working women", and there is no significant relationship between the two subjects. This means that "working women and non-working women" have the same situation even if they have different characteristics and obligations. Most importantly, this study shows that despite the problems and difficulties these two groups face, their experiences may not be significantly different in terms of these psychological dimensions.

For researchers and practitioners in India, this study provides important guidelines by clarifying aspects of the "sense of coherence and quality of life between" "working and non-working women". While acknowledging its limitations, this research can inform policy decisions by relevant authorities, particularly in administrative contexts. Furthermore, this research may offer benefits not only for fostering healthy organizational cultures but also for addressing general and family issues. In fact, this study contributes to the discourse on women's lives in the complex relationships of work, family and personal experiences.

## Limitations and recommendations

Clearly, the present study has limitations that should be considered carefully. First, it is important to acknowledge that the research sample was limited to the population of Haryana. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to the geographic area of a country or country. Future studies should attempt to include more geographic areas within the state, with larger sample sizes and population diversity. This strategy increases the validity of the research findings and broadens their potential application.

Self-report measures have been used in the study, which has its own limitations. Participants may respond erroneously. A mixed method and qualitative method may be applied to overcome these limitations. In addition, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to identify causal relationships.

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**Conflict of interest:** None

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