



## Resilience in relation to Loneliness and Depression among Empty Nest Mothers

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**Abstract :** *The present study investigated the relationship between resilience, loneliness and depression among empty nest mothers. The sample consisted of 100 Patna based empty nest mothers (50 working and 50 non-working) between 40-70 years of age. Resilience scale developed by Narain and Lakshmi (2016), UCLA Loneliness Scale developed by Russell et al. (1978) and Depression Scale (a subscale of Anxiety, Depression and Stress Scale) developed by Bhatnagar et al. (2011) were used. The results revealed that empty nest mothers having low loneliness and depression were found to be more resilient in comparison to mothers who were high on loneliness and depression. Significant differences were*

*observed among working and non working empty nest mothers. Accordingly, working empty nest mothers were found to be more resilient than their non-working counterparts. Non-significant negative correlation was observed between loneliness, depression and resilience.*

**Keywords:** *Resilience, Loneliness, Depression, Empty Nest Mothers.*

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### Introduction :

Empty nest is a condition which parents may face when their children leave home after their marriage, to live on their own, attend a university or join a job, etc. If not dealt with well, over a period of time this can result in loss of purpose for parents, leading them to experience the empty nest syndrome. Empty nest syndrome is a maladaptive response to the post parental transition, which is stimulated by reactions to loss (Borland, 1982). It has been pointed out that, in some ways, the middle class woman, whether she is working or not, is even more child-centred than her traditional counterpart. For instance, she takes the primary responsibility for the education of her young children and plays a key role in arranging their recreation activities, that earlier belonged to the domain of the husband and elder male

members of the joint family. The life of the non-working woman seems to be wholly organized around her children's needs, while the rhythm of her day is determined by their various activities. The achievements of the children, especially educational, are her biggest source of satisfaction and validation as a woman. It has been observed that, irrespective of whether she is working or not, the middle class woman's maternal role is not an imposition but freely and joyfully chosen; motherhood remains the acme of a fulfilled life (Kakar, 2015). Therefore, the present study focused on empty nest mothers and their *resilience* in relation to *loneliness* and *depression*.

Resilience is the capacity to adapt positively, or regain levels of functioning after difficult life experiences (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Staudinger, Marsiske & Baltes, 1995). Furthermore, it has been proposed that resilience constitutes not just recovery, but growth and strengthening from adversity (Bonanno, 2004; Hardy, Concato & Gill, 2004; Ryff, Singer, Love & Essex, 1998). On the other hand, loneliness is a complex and usually unpleasant, emotional response to isolation or lack of companionship. It is a feeling of social disconnectedness in which a person wishes for better social relationships. Depression is a state of low mood and aversion to activities that can affect a person's thoughts, behavior, feelings, and sense of wellbeing.

### Hypothesis :

In the background of the brief introduction of the concepts, it was hypothesized:

1. There would be a significant difference between the level of resilience and high and low loneliness scores of the empty nest mothers.
2. There would be a significant difference between the level of resilience and high and low depression scores of the empty nest mothers.
3. There will be a significant difference in resilience between the working and non-working empty nest mothers.
4. Resilience in empty nest mothers will be negatively correlated with their loneliness.
5. Resilience in empty nest mothers will have negative correlation with the depression score of the respondents.

### Method :

#### Sample

The sample consisted of 100 mothers (50 working and 50 non-working) between the age range of 40 to 70 years from Patna. Incidental-cum- purposive sampling was used for the purpose.

#### Instruments

1. Resilience scale developed by Narain and Lakshmi (2016) was used. It is a five point Likert type scale consisting of 22 items having both positive and negative items. The test-retest reliability of the scale is 0.78. Some of the scale's positive items are: I am not deterred by challenges, I am in full control of myself, Adversities have made me more strong, etc. A couple of negative items of the scale read as follows: I am not able to overcome the death or distance from a loved one, I am not able to adapt to new situations, etc.
2. University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) loneliness scale: The loneliness scale was first published in 1978 by Russell, Peplau and Ferguson, and was revised in 1980 and 1996. Its name derives from its having been developed at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The test-retest reliability of the scale is 0.73. UCLA consists of 20 items of the following nature: I lack companionship, there is no one I can turn to, I feel starved for company, I feel left out, etc.
3. Depression scale, a subscale of Anxiety, Depression and Stress Scale was developed by Bhatnagar et al.(2011). It consists of 15 items representing the different symptoms of depression. Reliability of the Depression subscale as measured by Cronbach's Alpha appeared to be 0.75 and 0.86 when measured by Spearman Brown coefficient. Some of its items read as follows: I don't feel good about anything, I feel sad and disappointed, I often cry without obvious reasons, I don't see any future prospects, etc.

#### Procedure

Working and non-working empty nest mothers were identified through acquiring some relevant

information. The scale for measuring resilience, depression, and loneliness were individually administered on the respondents.

### Analysis

Statistical treatment of the data was done to find support for the proposed hypotheses of the study. Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D.) were computed for examining the levels of **resilience**, **depression** and **loneliness** reported by the working and non-working mothers. *t*-ratio was calculated to examine the significant difference, if any, between the high and low scoring mothers from both the working and non-working categories on the major variables of the study. Finally, resilience was correlated with the outcome variables of depression and loneliness.

For testing the first hypothesis of the study all the 100 respondents were categorized into 'high' and 'low' loneliness groups. The grouping was done on the basis of the Median score for loneliness which was 24.5. Accordingly, all the mothers scoring above the Median on the measure of loneliness were placed under the 'high' loneliness category and those scoring below the Median into the 'low' loneliness group. The 'high' and 'low' levels for the rest of the variables of the study were determined in the same manner i.e., by utilizing the Median score as the cut point for deciding the 'high' and 'low' groups on the respective variables.

### Results :

Table 1. shows that the obtained Mean scores for **resilience** are 82.07 (S.D. 10.4) and 46.52 (S.D. 19.35) respectively for the 'high' and 'low' **loneliness** groups of empty nest mothers. Further, the difference between the said Mean scores is also statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ).

In the light of the above observation, Hypothesis 1 of the study gets supported, as a significant difference was observed between the resilience scores and the hypothesised levels of loneliness. The findings are also in line with the findings of Kumpfer (1999) and Richardson (2002) in this context.

For testing Hypothesis 2, which stated: "There would be significant difference between the level of resilience and high and low depression scores of the empty nest mothers", an identical method was used to categorize the groups as 'high' and 'low' on the measure of **depression**. The Median score at this instance was 3.00. The findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2, shows that mothers categorized as 'low' on the level of **depression** (Mean 81.47, S.D. 11.07) were significantly 'high' on the level of **resilience** ( $t=7.97$ ;  $p < .01$ ) in comparison to those who appeared 'high' on the measure of **depression** (Mean= 64.8, S.D.= 9.87).

Hypothesis 3 of the study stated: "There will be significant difference in **resilience** between the working and non-working empty nest mothers". For this purpose, the scores of working and non-working empty nest mothers were compared on **resilience**. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 reveals significant difference ( $t=6.96$ ;  $p < .01$ ) between the levels of **resilience** between the groups of working and non-working mothers. In this case, the **resilience** Mean score for working mothers (Mean= 81.7, S.D.= 10.57) was significantly higher than the Mean score 66.38 of the non-working mothers' group. The findings gave some clue to believe that the empty nest working mothers were likely to be more 'resilient' in comparison to their non-working counterparts. The finding of the present study finds support in the studies of Black and Hill (1984), Borland (1982) and Cooper and Gutmann (1987).

Hypothesis 4 which stated that "Resilience in empty nest mothers will be negatively correlated with their loneliness," could not be supported from the observation. At this instance, the negative coefficient of correlation ( $r = -0.11$ ) appeared non-significant. However, the finding might have something of relevance with the finding of Perron, Cleverly and Kidd (2014) who reported insignificant relationship between loneliness and psychological distress.

Hypothesis 5 of the study, namely, "Resilience in empty nest mothers will have a negative correlation with the depression score of the respondents", could not be substantiated either ( $r = -0.18$ )

### Conclusion :

On the basis of the present study's findings, it could be concluded that **resilience** is one such strength that can help people adapt positively in life. The findings suggested that empty nest mothers who measured 'high' on the levels of **resilience** reported 'low' level of **loneliness**. It may be said that 'resilient' individuals stand a better chance to handle adversities and rebuild their lives. It is suggested that by picking up hobbies, voluntary work, travel or joining classes of interesting subjects might help the lonely and depressed empty

nest mothers to revive and gain their resilience for living their lives enthusiastically and in a better spirit. However, there was no support for the conjecture that **resilience** will be negatively correlated with **depression** and **loneliness**.

**LIST OF TABLES**

**Table 1. Mean and S.D for the Levels of Resilience and t-ratio between the High and Low Loneliness Groups of Empty Nest Mothers**

Comparison Groups	Resilience Score			t-ratio	Level of significance
	N	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Low Loneliness	56	82.07	10.4	10.95	.01
High Loneliness	44	46.52	19.35		

N=100; df=98

**Table 2. Mean, S.D. and t-ratio for the Empty Nest Mothers on Resilience under the High and Low Depression Groups**

Comparison Groups	Resilience Score			t-ratio	Level of significance
	N	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Low depression	55	81.47	11.07	7.97	.01
High depression	45	64.8	9.87		

N=100; df=98

**Table 3. Mean, S.D. and t-ratio for the Working and Non-working Mothers on Resilience**

Comparison Groups	Resilience Score		t-ratio	Level of significance
	Mean	SD		
Working empty nest mothers	81.7	10.57	6.96	.01
Non working empty nest mothers	66.38	11.40		

N=100; df=98

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