

## **AUTONOMY - NEED AMONG MARRIED FEMALE SCHOOL - TEACHERS**

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### **Abstract**

The present research compared level of autonomy among married female teachers of government and private schools. A sample of 120 married female subjects (58 private and 62 government school teachers) was drawn from different schools of Lahore city within the age range of 26-40 years, with a minimum work experience of one year. The researchers used Questionnaire Measuring Autonomy-Need Among Married Female Teachers (QMAN) which was administered to the subjects, individually. Analysis of the data revealed positive correlation ( $r = 0.11$ ) between subjects' age and their autonomy-need. Nevertheless, t-test results did not indicate significant difference between government and private school teachers in terms of their autonomy-need.

### **Introduction**

The present research investigated the difference in the level of autonomy among married female teachers of government and private schools.

A sense of autonomy develops in childhood and is strengthened by one's experiences through life. Ziegler and Hjelle (1992) describe autonomy as "the inner sense that one is a self-governing person, able to exert some influence over those events that affect one's life (p.235). Edwards (1959) defines the need for autonomy as, "to be able to come and go as desired, to say what one thinks about things, to be independent of others in making decisions, to feel free to do what one wants, to do things that are unconventional," (p.11). Achievement need is defined by Murray (1938) as, the 'desire to accomplish something difficult...to excel one's self...to rival and surpass others" (Murray as cited in Northcott 1991 p.32). Northcott (1991) defines achievement motivation as "the propensity of individuals to desire achievement and / or to act on their desire to achieve" (p.5). According to Hurlock, (1987), achievement brings personal satisfaction as well as social recognition (Hurlock, (1987). A realisation of one's need for autonomy can thus be considered a precursor to achievement motivation. There is a general tendency to use the two terms interchangeably. However, their actual definitions should be sufficient to show that the achievement motivation actually stems from one's need for autonomy.

Engler (1985) refers to Allport's proposition that self-esteem consists of feelings of pride within the young child as it develops his/her ability to do things (Allport as cited in Engler, 1985). According to Engler (1985), this is comparable to Erikson's stage of autonomy, which reflects the child's need to feel that it can control him/her self and others.

Erikson (1959) has spoken of a period during the second and third years of a child's life, which is critical to the acquisition of a sense of autonomy. He defines this as self-confidence, independence and self-approval rather than

approval derived from others (Erikson as cited in Nash, 1973).

“Current theories...claim that competence, self-actualisation and ego autonomy are equally basic features of human motivation” (Bischof, 1970, p.291). Maslow’s (1971) concept of self-esteem needs consists of the need to perceive oneself as competent and achieving; and the need for admiration and respect” (Maslow as cited in Engler, 1985, p. 270). Harlock (1987) states that a strong desire for independence develops in early adolescence and reaches a peak as this period ends. He further states that since girls are expected to conform more to parental wishes than boys, they rebel more against home restraints.

Because men and women have distinctly different roles to play in society, levels of autonomy between the genders may vary. In most societies of the world, females are expected to attend to childcare and men are expected to engage in paid work. Women are not traditionally expected to engage in paid work unless forced to by economic necessity (Merton & Nisbet, 1976). Since women are traditionally bound to look after the household, we assume that women who work outside the home do so, because of some pressing need. This need may be monetary or it may be a desire to prove her independence. Even if it is the former, we may say that the woman who goes beyond the limits of her traditional boundaries has a certain need for independence within her.

According to Afshar and Agarwal (1989) ideological representations often stem from the dominant class in a society and end up becoming the norms governing all classes. Upper class women may, on the one hand, be more strictly bound by the dictates of certain cultural practices;

and on the other hand, their class position and / or higher education may enable them to individually challenge these dictates and bypass conventions from which poorer women have no escape.

Since educational institutions in Pakistan are segregated, teaching and education enjoy prestige and are especially popular among middle-class women. According to the 1981 census, the second-largest number of gainfully employed women nation wide worked in the teaching and educational occupation. At the beginning of 1980, 68.9% of Punjabi women were teachers (Klein & Nestvogel, 1992). A major disadvantage is the low pay, especially of teachers teaching the 'typically female subjects' (Klein & Nestvogel, 1992). Shaheed (1989) states that the concentration of women in occupations which offer all female workforce has led to a restriction of female job opportunities, creating a sex segregated labour market, which has enabled employers to assign women lower paid jobs or lower salaries as compared to men (Shaheed, 1989). According to Northcott (1991) women in male-dominated professions are more independent, self-confident and unconventional. It is generally assumed that only financial necessity forces the women to work, or that they only find employment to pass the time before they get married and 'settle down'. It is worth mentioning here that the majority of women in Pakistan are conditioned to submit their personal desires to those of the husband, family or household. Mumtaz and Shaheed (1987) note that economic necessity has forced many women from all classes into paid labour. This has enabled women to "gain access to information, step out into the world outside, and for the first time have money of their own to spend" (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987, pp. 33-34). This economic independence seems to have given them

confidence in their own abilities to earn, contribute and make decisions.

In a study about the psychological consequences of multiple social roles, Pietromonaco, Manis and Frohardt-Lane (1986) found that among employed women, higher self-esteem and greater job satisfaction were associated with holding more roles. Farmer and Fyans (1983) conducted a research to investigate the effect of some psychological and environmental factors on the achievement and career motivation of married women. Research findings indicated that the Home self-esteem measure was significantly related to achievement motivation but not to career motivation. The social self-esteem measure was significantly related to career motivation. A research conducted on women's achievement motivation and their participation in the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) by Khan (1989) showed that women with a high income level had high achievement motivation and high participation level in the AKRSP. An Indian study conducted by Sood (1991) indicated that higher socio-economic status and higher level of education were associated with the higher status of women in their society. The results also indicated that the type of occupation affected the self-esteem of the women.

The objectives of the present research were thus to make women aware that they have every right to give importance to their needs and desires, and that they have the potential to do so; and to find out whether age and socio-economic status affect the need for autonomy among married working women. The present research thus investigated the difference in the level of autonomy-need among married female teachers of government and private schools. Since government schools have to adhere to government policies regarding curriculum and

administration, it was expected that teachers in these schools would have a lower level of autonomy-need as compared to the teachers of private schools.

## **Methodology**

For the present study, (retrospective) ex post facto research design was used. The sample consisted of 120 subjects; 62 female married teachers of government institutions and 58 female married teachers of private institutions with mean ages of 35 and 36 years respectively. The 62 government school teachers were selected from eleven different government schools in Lahore city. Whereas the 58 private school teachers were selected from thirteen different private schools in Lahore city. For both groups of subjects that level of education ranged from Matric to Masters level. The government school teachers had a monthly income of Rupees 14360 ( $SD=7404$ ) and the private school teachers had an average monthly income of Rupees 22349 ( $SD=13193$ ).

## **Instruments**

The researchers devised a Questionnaire Measuring Autonomy-Need Among Married Female Teachers (QMAN) in English. It consisted of twenty-eight items which used the basic rationale underlying the items pertaining to autonomy-need in the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (Edwards, 1959).

For example:

1. How would you like to manage your household finances?
  - (a) controlling them all by yourself

- (b) by sharing the responsibility with your husband.
- (c) by sharing the responsibility with your parents-in-law.
- (d) by seeking advice from others

Responses of the subject were scored as follows:

A score of three (3) was given if the respondent marked option 'a'.

A score of two (2) was given if the respondent marked option 'b'.

A score of one (1) was given if the respondent marked option 'c'.

A score of zero (0) was given if the respondent marked option 'd'.

The construction of this questionnaire was required because no other culture-fair English test was available for measuring the autonomy-need of the Pakistani population. The concept of autonomy itself is relatively new for the Pakistani women since they, "like some other third world women... continue to be the most underprivileged, under-educated, and the most traumatised group" (Farooqi, 1992).

The questionnaire was administered to the subjects individually.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results in Table 1 show that there is no significant difference in autonomy-need among private and government school teachers.



**Table 1**  
**Autonomy Level of Government and Private**  
**School-teachers**

<b>Groups</b>	<b><u>M</u></b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>	<b><u>N</u></b>	<b><u>T</u></b>
Government-Schoolteachers	50.26	8.29	62	0.73
Private School-teachers	49.26	6.7	58	

P>0.05

This result may have been due to the same (teaching) profession of both groups of subjects. Thus it may be argued that autonomy-need among government and private school teachers is not significantly different. Tables 2,3 and 4 display mean score along the home, professional and general interpersonal dimensions. These results also indicate that autonomy-need does not differ significantly between the two groups of subjects on these dimensions.

**Table 2**  
**Autonomy Level of Government and Private**  
**School-teachers along the Career Dimension**

<b>Groups</b>	<b><u>M</u></b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>	<b><u>N</u></b>	<b><u>T</u></b>
Government-Schoolteachers	12.87	3.24	62	1.24
Private School-teachers	13.6	3.23	58	

P>0.05



**Table 3**

**Autonomy Level of Government and Private School-teachers along the Home Dimension**

<b>Groups</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>T</b>
Government-Schoolteachers	15.02	2.8	62	038
Private School-teachers	15.19	2.05	58	

P>0.05

**Table 4**

**Autonomy Level of Government and Private School-teachers along the General Interpersonal Dimension**

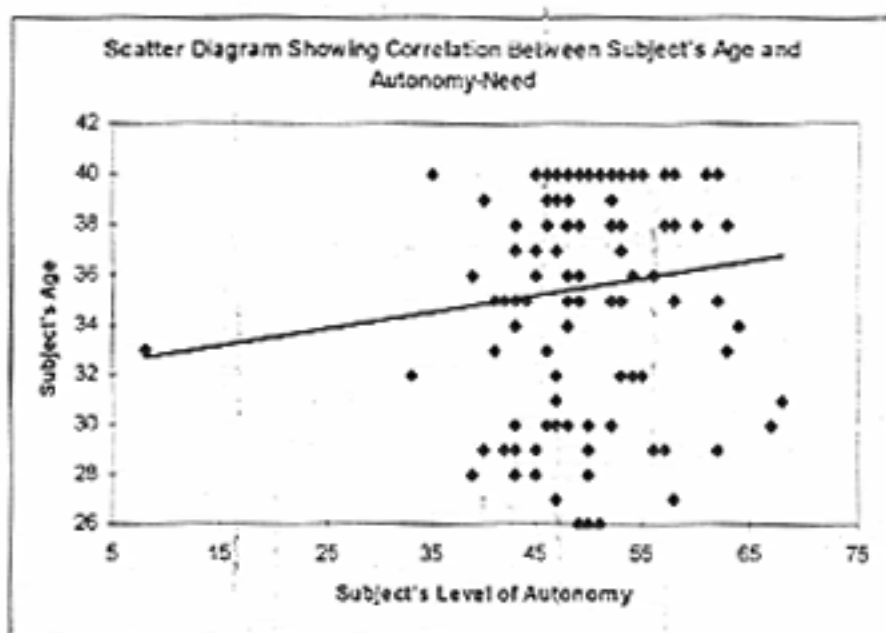
<b>Groups</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>T</b>
Government-Schoolteachers	21.03	6.15	62	0.57
Private School-teachers	21.53	3.01	58	

P>0.05

Nevertheless further analysis of data shows that there is a positive correlation ( $r=0.11$ ) between age and autonomy-need experienced by the subjects. The age group between 30-38 years obtained relatively higher scores on the

questionnaire than the age groups between 26-29 years of age.

Diagram 1

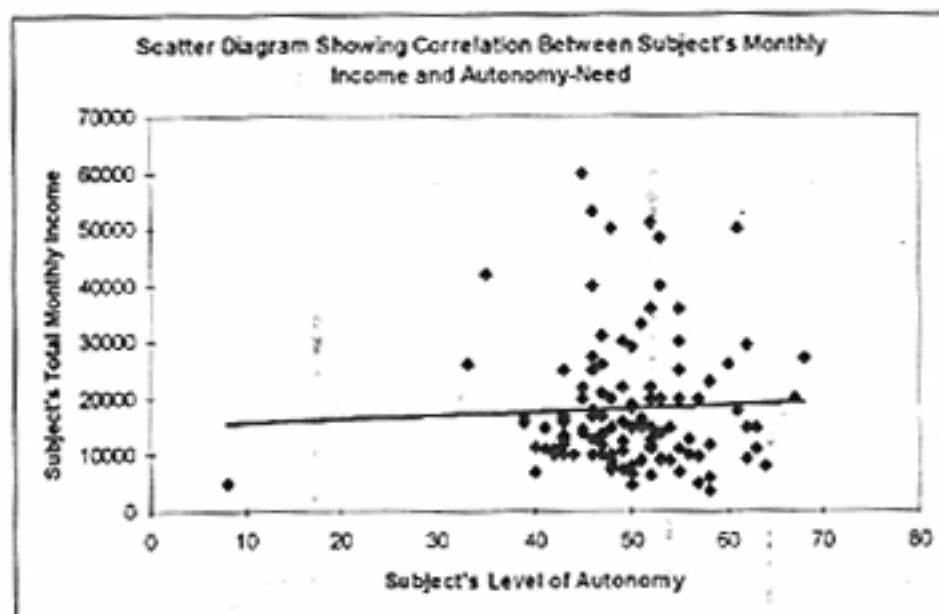


$$r = 0.11$$

Thus, it may be argued that although autonomy-need develops during childhood, it continues to develop throughout life.

Analysis of scatter diagram 2 indicate a slight positive correlation ( $r=0.043$ ) between socio-economic status of the subjects and their autonomy-need.

Diagram 2



$$r = 0.043$$

This supports the results of the Indian study by Sood (1991). Sood's study suggested that a higher socio-economic status was related to a higher degree of self-esteem. In the present study a higher autonomy need seems to be related to a higher socio-economic status as indicated by the subjects' total monthly income. These results are also supported by a Pakistani study by Khan (1989). The study consisted of women's achievement motivation and their participation in the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP). The results showed that women with high income levels had high achievement motivation and showed greater participation in the AKRSP.

It is worth noting that the mean score of the private school teachers ( $M=50.26$ ,  $SD=6.7$ ) was higher than the mean score of the government school teachers ( $M=49.26$ ,  $SD=8.29$ ) on the questionnaire. This could be due to the relatively greater independence private institutions provide regarding the administration and curriculum. Whereas, the public schools run by the government would be expected to leave little room for exercise of personal autonomy since their educational ideology and curriculum would be based on government policies.

Future researchers on this topic should investigate the difference in autonomy-need among working women from different professions. For example, comparison between executives and teachers, rather than selecting samples from the same profession (teaching) as was done in the current research. Unfortunately, ten percent of the questionnaires were not returned. This was partly due to the lack of resources available to the researchers who could not pursue the matter thoroughly, and partly due to the non-serious Pakistani attitude toward any academic oriented research. All these factors could have adversely influenced the results. In future, the researchers should ensure the individual administration of questionnaires so that results are not affected. It is recommended that further researches be conducted to

investigate the relationship between age and autonomy level. Moreover, samples from different profession, socio-economic groups and diverse populations for comparative analysis should be used. The important influence of developmental changes on the human personality should also be considered in any future research on the subject.

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