

## Gender differences in Health among Unemployed Adults

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### Abstract

**Background:** Health simply means a psychological, physical and social wellbeing of an individual. In the present world human health is facing challenges especially among unemployed adults. It has been reported that there are a lot of differences in health between male and female adults.

**Aim:** The study sought to determine gender differences in health among unemployed adults.

**Methods:** The present paper consists of 300 unemployed adult, out of which 200 were male and 100 female. General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)-28 were used to collect data from the participants. For data analysis, t-test was used to determine the significance of difference between the means of the sample.

**Results:** The results revealed the Mean value (M=28.73) among females is higher compared to male unemployed adults (M=26.18).

**Conclusion:** The study revealed that unemployed females showed high mean score than male unemployed adults. This is an indication that females' health is poorer than male unemployed adults.

**Keywords:** Health; Gender; Unemployed; Adults

### Introduction

Health is a state of wellbeing with physical, cultural, psychosocial, economic and spiritual attributes, not the absence of illness. WHO [1] defined health as 'a state of complete physical, social and spiritual wellbeing, not merely the absence of illness.' Argele, Martin and Crossland [2] understood the health in terms of three components: positive affect (pleasant mood and emotions), absence of negative affect (unpleasant mood and emotions) and satisfaction with life as whole. According to Webster [3] Dictionary, health is defined as the "state of being hale sound or whole, in body, mind, or soul, especially the state of being free from physical disease or pain. Gender determines the sex of a person as male and female.

Unemployment is known as one of the prevailing social problems in the world. Unemployment is said to be a key player in deteriorating health of an individual. Various studies on unemployment and its consequences show a strong association between unemployment and ill health. Unemployment might be expected to increase anxiety and depression, lead to lower self-esteem, and produce adverse physical health consequences, particularly when efforts to locate work are met with failure over a long period of time.

Numerous literatures showed that unemployment has affected male and female adults differently. Leeftang, Klein-Hesselink, and Spruit (1992) compared life situation and health effects of short term and long term unemployed in 30-50 years old urban men and women. They concluded that present or anticipated financial problems were the mediating factors between unemployed status and reported health problems in both men and women.

Analysis of the Census Longitudinal Study for England and Wales showed that for younger unemployed men, mortality from injuries and poisoning including suicide was particularly high. Unemployed young women were found to have high mortality from coronary heart disease and from injuries and poisonings, including suicide [4]. It has also been revealed that the mental health consequences appear to be more apparent among middle aged people, rather than the younger or older unemployment, among men and single women, rather than married women, and among long term unemployed (i.e. over four months) rather than those that experience a short period of unemployment [5].

A study [6] shows that unemployment had more of an effect on the mental health of men than that of women. The study [6] further argued that gender differences in effects were related to family responsibilities and social class.

McKee-Ryan et al. [7] also found that unemployed women have worse mental health and Paul and Moser [8] find that men are more distressed by unemployment than women.

Strandh et al. [9] in a longitudinal showed that unemployment was more negatively related to mental health in men than among women in Ireland, while men and women were equally affected by unemployment in Sweden. The study [9] further revealed that factors related to the family and economic situation, as well as gender selection into the unemployment population, explains the differences in mental health between unemployed men and women in Ireland.

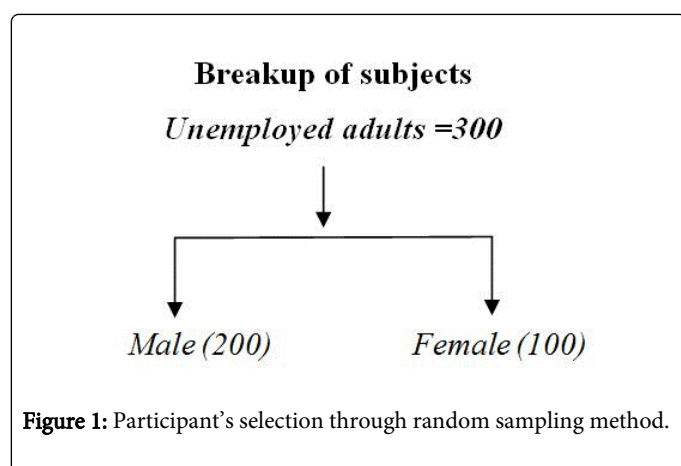
## Aim of the study

Health is a main issue in this contemporary world as regards to gender and there are a lot of differences in health between men and women. It has been found that men have a low life expectancy and high mortality rate while women show greater morbidity rate. The main objective of the research is to determine the gender differences in health among male and female unemployed adults.

## Methods

### Study Participants

The present study consists of 300 unemployed adults, 200 of whom were males and 100 were female participants. Those participants who have completed at least first degree were recruited into the study. The participants were selected through random sampling method (Figure 1).



### Data Collection Tools

The General Health Questionnaire-28(GHQ-28) developed by Goldberg in 1978 was devised in this study [10]. The instrument consists of items and each item is followed by four options that is "Not at all", "No more than usual", "Rather more than usual" and "Much More than usual". Through factor analysis, GHQ-28 was divided into four factors namely somatic (item 1-7), anxiety/insomnia (item 8-14), social dysfunctioning (item 15-21) and severe depression (item 22-28). The GHQ-28 can be scored from 0 to 3 for each response with total possible scores ranging from 0 to 84. The total score of 23-24 is the threshold for the presence of distress. For the purpose of reliability of present scale, Cronbach's alpha was applied on 300 unemployed adults. Further, the Cronbach's alpha of GHQ-28 was found to be 0.88 which is quite high and shows reliability of the said scale.

### Recruitment Procedure

First of all, the investigator met with the participants personally, to explain the purpose of the study and solicit their support in completion of questionnaire. Thereafter, he reassured them of utmost confidentiality of data obtained from them in the course of the study. Having obtained their consent to participate, the General Health Questionnaire-28 along with personal data sheet was administered to recruited unemployed educated adults individually.

## Data analysis

The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 to determine the Mean and SD of the sample as well as t-test was computed to determine the significant difference in health among male and female unemployed adults.

## Results

The present study sought to determine the gender difference in health among unemployed adults. The results of present study are given below. Table 1, shows that the Mean value among unemployed females (M=28.73) is higher than male unemployed adults (M=26.18).

Gender	N	Mean (M)	Stnd. Deviation (S.D.)
Male	200	26.18	12.43
Female	100	28.73	11.94

**Table 1:** Mean and S.D of male and female unemployed adults.

Gender	N	M	S.D.	M.D	S.ED	t	Sig.
Male	200	26.18	12.43	2.54	1.5	1.69	0.91
Female	100	28.73	11.94				

**Table 2:** Difference in health between male and female unemployed adults.

The results given in the Table 2, shows that the obtained t value (t=1.693>0.05) is not significant. It means that there is no significance of difference in health among male and female unemployed adults.

## Discussion

The main aim of the present paper was to determine the gender difference in health among unemployed adults. The results showed that the Mean and S.D (M=28.73, S.D=13.94) in female unemployed adults was higher as compared to male unemployed adults (M=26.18, S.D. = 12.43). The result of the present study can be corroborated with the findings of O'Leary and Helgeson [11] which shows that financial barriers may prevent more women, more than men, from engaging in healthier lifestyles and desirable behavior change. While further comparing the both groups that is male and female unemployed adults, the results further indicate that no significance difference (t= 1.695 >.05) in health among unemployed male and female unemployed adults. It means that there is no or slight difference in health among unemployed adults.

## Conclusion

The overall result of the study suggested that women showed worse health as compared to their male counterparts on the basis of mean score differences and no or slight significance differences were found in health among male and female unemployed adults. So, we can interpret that unemployed women are mostly affected as compared to male adults in respect of their health concerns. Due to the external demands and requirements of daily life and male partner could not manage it alone in this existing world. So, female also wants to share the burden of family expenses but due to limited jobs opportunities for females, they become more vulnerable to mental disorders like

depression, stress and anxiety etc. In addition, sexual violence against women as compared to men also debar females to enter into the job market. Strandh, et al. [9] also argued that factors related to the family and economic situation, as well as gendered selection into the unemployment population, explains the difference in mental health between unemployed men and women in Ireland.

## Recommendations

Unemployment is said to be great cause of mental disorders. So, application of psychological interventions for unemployed people would have positive effects on mental health.

More and more job opportunities should be generated by government and private entrepreneur and selection should be done on non-discriminative basis. So that each and every person can get his livelihood easily

Clinical counseling centers should be opened in those areas where a chance of unemployment rate is high. So that they can provide help whenever there is unemployment crisis.

Job oriented courses and placement cells as well should be open in colleges and universities and skills training programs should be provided so that unemployed people could also develop the idea of small businesses, probably receiving government funding.

Each state government should advance women through policy changes and provide more conducive working environment for women.

Women should be given equal respect as men and gender discrimination and gender discrimination and violence at work places should be looked into. Punishment should be instituted at workplace to deter perpetrators.

Sexual harassment at work places is commonly found. Lot of womens are not willing to work because of sexual violence. There should be a vigilant organization that will look upon all these crimes happened at workplaces.

## Limitations

In this study, only gender was taken into consideration while other variables like age, socioeconomic status, residence etc. were not taken into with considered in the study.

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