

LIFE SATISFACTION, DEPRESSION AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG HOUSEWIVES IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate life satisfaction, depression, and marital satisfaction among housewives in Malaysia. A total of 398 housewives, aged 20 to 60 years old was drawn based on convenience and snowball sampling techniques. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and Emirates Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) were employed. The data were analysed using a statistical software, SPSS version 20.0. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between depression and life satisfaction ($r = -.591, n = 398, p = .000$); marital satisfaction and life satisfaction ($r = .668, n = 398, p = .000$); and marital satisfaction and depression ($r = -.637, n = 398, p = .000$). Moreover, the analysis revealed that there was a significant difference in life satisfaction among housewives based on their socio-economic status ($F(2,395) = [14.9], p = 0.000$). Interestingly, there was no significant difference in life satisfaction among housewives based on their education level ($F(4,393) = [1.741], p = 0.140$). However, a significant difference in life satisfaction among housewives based on their involvement in social activities [$t(231) = 3.67, p < 0.01$] was found. Several implications and recommendations for future studies are also discussed. This study implicates the status of wellbeing among housewives who need to be continually become the focus of the relevant ministries and agencies. Empowerment program for intervention should become the highlights to enhance their psychological, emotional and overall wellbeing so that they are able to effectively and satisfactorily contribute to their family, and community.

Key words: housewives, life satisfaction, depression, marital satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

A report by Khazanah Research Institute (KRI) on The State of Households 2018: Different Realities, shows that 2.6 million women in Malaysia are not participating in the labour force even though most of them are well-educated and in their prime-working age (Syarafiz, 2018). Abdul Rahim, (2016) found that among the contributing factors that hinder married women from participating in the labour force are insufficient support from their spouse in helping with household chores, issue of trust in childcare centres or facilities, lack of awareness of employers regarding women's reproductive issues, making own decision to be a fulltime housewife, social expectations to be a good wife and mother such as husband as the key decision maker in the family, as well as culture and gender role expectations. Zainuddin & Talib (2018) also agreed that impracticality of childcare facilities and soft discrimination towards women also contribute them from participating in labour force in Malaysia. Besides that, Abdullah, Ismail, Mohd Noor and Ahmad (2012) added that, having to look after a family with small children, living in a town, and perceived adequate household earnings are among the contributing factors that lead married women to be a full-time housewife. Although the housewives' jobs do not directly contribute to the economic and social development of a country, their role in preserving the family's wellbeing must be valued and cannot be overlooked (Putri & Sudhana, 2013). In fact, stay-at-home mothers or housewives make up significant portion of the population. Despite of their significant role, it is very perplexing to find that they have been largely neglected in the social scientific literature (Cranney & Miles, 2016).

Housewives are vulnerable to physical and mental health conditions since they are burdened with expectations to perform their motherhood roles (Mavric, B., Alp, Z.E., & Kunt, 2016). Additional information in KRI report declared that about 34.7% of unpaid workers or housewives were stated as having high blood pressure or hypertension compared to other workers (government/semi-government employees at 29.4%; private sector employees at 18.8%; self-employed persons at 30.7%) (Halid, 2020). A tight daily routine in doing house chores and managing children prevent them from having social interaction with people outside their household (Nguyen et al., 2015). As a result, housewives are often reported feeling alienated, isolated, and perceived to receive a lack of social support.

Housewives are more susceptible to mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression compared to their counterparts who are employed (Arman et al., 2015, Rafiee & Babaei, 2016) as they are expected to manage their daily routine while getting insufficient support from their spouses (Sipon, 2020; Mavric et al., Alp, Z.E., & Kunt 2016; Handayani, 2016; Wibowo, 2017). In contrast, according to Okulicz-Kozaryn & Valente, (2017), studies like Treas (2011), Haller and Hadler (2006) highlighted that housewives are happier than working women, meanwhile some long-standing studies like Benin and Nienstedt (1985), Wright (1978) and Freudiger (1983) found no difference in subjective well-being between housewives and career women. Although the majority of studies on this issue compared life satisfaction among working women and non-working women (Ahmad & Khan, 2018; Apsaryanthi & Lestari, 2017; Baslevent & Kirmanog'lu, 2017; Gere & Schimmack, 2017; and Mavric et al., 2016), there are a very few studies that have been carried out specifically focusing on housewives, particularly in Malaysia setting.

Therefore, the present study was aimed to investigate whether life satisfaction among housewives in Malaysia correlates with variables of depression and marital satisfaction. Besides, the present study aims to investigate any difference in life satisfaction based on the housewives' educational level, economic level as well as their participation in social activities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 LIFE SATISFACTION

A global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his/her chosen criteria is the meaning of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). According to Diener et al., (1985), judgements of satisfaction depend one's own circumstances with what he or she thinks to be an appropriate standard. The theoretical foundations for life satisfaction measures are derived from a variety of conceptual frameworks, such as the judgement theories, associationistic theories, pleasure and pain theories, activity theories, and top-down and bottom-up theories (Meadow et al., 1992).

Judgement theories explains the degree of life satisfaction experienced by a person at any given moment in time, is a direct function of a cognitive comparison between some standard and actual condition (Diener, 2009; Meadow et al., 1992). There are several other theories included in judgement theories such as the social comparison theory, adaptation-level theory, and aspiration-level theory (Meadow et al., 1992).

Associationistic theories are also included in the discussion on life satisfaction. The theories are based on memory, conditioning, or cognitive principles under the associationistic models (Diener, 1984). Perceived good events will lead to happiness regardless of the attribution made. Another famous theory in discussing life satisfaction is the activity theory, which is commonly used in gerontology studies (Diener, 1984). People will be happy by being involved in diverse activities such as social contacts, physical activities, hobbies, and participation in formal organizations. The happiness arises from the behavior rather from achieving the endpoints.

In bottom-up theory, Diener (1984) posits that a person judges his/her happiness based on the accumulation of small pleasures. Meanwhile, the top-down theory views that a person enjoys pleasures because he or she is happy, i.e., a person's personality influences his or her ways to react. In modern psychology, the distinction between bottom-up and top-down approaches is getting its popularity, hence parallel questions can be found throughout the scholarly history of happiness (Diener, 2009). One recent study by Iliés and Liang, (2018) had applied the bottom-up theory to explore how domains such as education, job fit, and job satisfaction contributed to the individual's overall life satisfaction. The study found that each domains satisfaction independently predicts general life satisfaction, which it was parallel with the bottom-up theory on life satisfaction. The bottom-up theory explained that life satisfaction proposes that individual's satisfactions with specific life domains contribute to their overall life satisfaction.

2.2 LIFE SATISFACTION AND DEPRESSION

Satisfaction of life among married women are also influenced by their mental health. Understandably, married women who avoid psychological distress tend to experience a higher life satisfaction (Mavric et al., 2016; Zainab et al., 2012). According to Mavric et al., (2016), a happy person is unlikely to experience depression. They conducted a study among 100 employed married women and 200 housewives aged 20 and above in Ankara, Turkey which aimed to investigate the relationship between depression and life satisfaction, as well as to examine the difference in the level of depression and the level of life satisfaction between both groups. The study used the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) to examine level of depression and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to measure level of life satisfaction among the respondents. The study also wanted to find out whether employment affects the level of depression and the level of life satisfaction among the respondents. The result found that there was a significant correlation between depression and life satisfaction. Moreover, they found that the housewives were significantly more depressed compared to the employed married women. However, the difference in life satisfaction between the employed married women and housewives was not significantly different, but the mean scores showed that housewives were less satisfied compared to the employed married women. It was concluded that when a person feels depressed, there is a tendency to think negatively, which results in feeling of less satisfaction with his or her life, while the reverse is also true. In addition, the researchers also explained that employment outside the home improves the mental health among married women by providing temporary relief from the demands of childcare and marital roles, as well as having more friends and being financially independent, in which these advantages are not experienced by housewives.

Another study by Fatima and Parvez (2016) also confirmed that employment provides positive effects on women's psychological health because it may serve as a buffer against stress, allow women to have more friends as well as having their own income. The study involved 28 housewives and 32 employed married Muslim women from different parts of Aligarh. The researchers used the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) to measure the level of depression among the respondents. They found that there was a significant difference in the level of depression between the housewives and the working married women. The housewives' mean score for their level of depression was higher compared to the employed married women. The researchers also further explained that, although the average household income for housewives was higher than the employed married women, factors such as having more than the average number of children, being less educated and lack of opportunities for making friends had contributed to their depression.

Tammanaeifar and Leis (2019) also highlighted that there is a relationship between mental health and life satisfaction among employed and unemployed married women. The study employed two instruments, namely the General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to evaluate the relationship between mental health and life satisfaction as well as to compare mental health and life satisfaction among these groups of women. The result of the study showed that there was a significant correlation between mental health and life satisfaction, and it also showed that housewives scored lower in mental health and life satisfaction when compared to employed women.

2.3 MARITAL SATISFACTION AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG HOUSEWIVES

Satisfaction with marital relationship also influences an individual's overall life satisfaction (Dyrdal et al., 2011). According to Carr et al., (2014), satisfaction with marriage through marital quality is positively associated with subjective well-being and this association is typically stronger among women than men. Other studies also confirmed that satisfaction on marital relationship is predictive of future life satisfaction (Dyrdal et al., 2011) and the relationship between marital satisfaction is strong with one's life satisfaction (Kasapoğlu & Yabanigül, 2018; Ummet, 2017).

Increasing marital satisfaction with the enhancement of emotional intelligence and religious orientation had been suggested as a solution to increase the level of psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Ohakwe et al., 2020). The study by Ohakwe and colleague (2020) involving 435 participants of the Anglican Clergy has examined the emotional intelligence, religious orientation, and marital satisfaction as predictors of psychological well-being and life satisfaction among them. From the regression analysis made, it was found that emotional intelligence, religious orientation, and marital satisfaction have a statistically significant joint and independent prediction of life satisfaction among the respondents. Another study by Kasapoğlu and Yabanigül (2018) also confirmed that there is a significant correlation between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. The study which involved 586 married individuals residing in Istanbul, Turkey, of whom 525 were women and 61 were men, found that there was a significant and positive correlation between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. Then, from the regression analysis made, they found that marital satisfaction both directly and indirectly affect life satisfaction through spirituality.

In the similar vein, a study among 30 couples with the women as housewives and 30 couples with working wives in Pishva, Iran, also found that marital satisfaction and happiness among the working women were significantly higher than the housewives (Rafiee & Babaei, 2016). Besides, housewives in the study also scored lower in happiness due to repetitive activities and feelings of isolation compared to working women. Taking into account other variables, a recent study by Ferzaneh, Mehdi and Sheler (2022), in investigating the relationship between marital satisfaction and perceived social support from spouse with life satisfaction in married women with the moderating role of the occupation and perceived socioeconomic status found that, there was a significant direct effect of marital satisfaction ($\beta=0.588$, $t=12.734$), perceived social support of spouse ($\beta=0.179$, $t=2.449$) and perceived socioeconomic status ($\beta=0.199$, $t=5.158$) on life satisfaction. The study involved 452 married employed and housewives who were selected through purposive non-random sampling method. The instruments used for collecting the data were, Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Kansas Marital Satisfaction, and Zimet et al (1988) Perceived Social Support Questionnaires. It was clear that having satisfaction with marriage life could help women to feel satisfied with their life. Handayani (2016), in discussing the differences on marital satisfaction between employed married women and housewives also agreed that financial dependence on their husbands, difficulties in the relationship with their spouses, as well as a lack of opportunities to have social relationships outside the home are among the factors that contributed to marriage dissatisfaction among housewives. Meanwhile for career women, the culture milieu that forces women to respect and willing to serve their husbands, tend to contribute to marital distress among them, since they must work while also handling the house chores.

There are several studies that investigated marital satisfaction that are primarily focused on comparing housewives and employed wives. For example, a study conducted by Arman et al., (2015) in Tehran among 42 employed women and 42 housewives, with most of them having a diploma or higher degree qualifications, found that there was no significant difference on marital satisfaction between both groups. Their study used the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire as their instrument in a cross-sectional design and descriptive analytical study. Although the result showed that there was no significant difference on marital satisfaction between employed women and housewives, the latter showed about 12% higher marital dissatisfaction compared to only 9.5% of employed women whose scored the same. In addition, 79.2% of the housewives scored a moderate satisfaction in comparison to only 54.8% of the employed women. Meanwhile, more than 35% of the employed women scored a higher marital satisfaction compared to only 12% of the housewives. Using Pearson correlation to investigate the relationship between the demographic profile and marital satisfaction, the researchers found that the monthly income has a significant relationship with marital satisfaction. This factor was believed to be a significant contribution to the negative influence on marital satisfaction among housewives because their unemployment prevented them from having their own income.

Meanwhile, another study in Indonesia by Wibowo, (2017), comparing marital satisfaction among employed women and housewives found that there was a significant difference on marital satisfaction between them. The study used a cross-sectional design that involved 249 married women. Out of this total, 128 were career women, while 121 were housewives with the age range of 25 to 45 years old, a minimum duration of marriage of 3 years and at least have had a child with a minimum age of 3 years old. This study also used the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale to evaluate the respondent's level of marital satisfaction. From the independent sample T-test, it was found that the housewives' mean score for marital satisfaction was lower than the employed wives. The researcher concluded that factors such as financial dependence on their husbands and having communication difficulties can influence the marriage dissatisfaction among housewives.

2.4 MARITAL SATISFACTION AND DEPRESSION AMONG HOUSEWIVES

Satisfaction with the marital relationship increases an individual's well-being and mental health (Taufiq et al., 2018). As such, the relationship with a spouse can affect the mental health and well-being to a greater extent than other forms of social relationships (Saeedifard et al., 2015). The marital relationship has a strong association with mental-health of family members, whereby marital conflicts would cause negative effects on the spouse and children (Kalhor & Olyaie, 2017). Depression, for instance is reported to also be developed from difficulties in the marital relationship. Husbands who are controlling, emotionally distant, angry, and negative, selfish, faithless, overly responsible, insecure, and lack balance in life, contributed to their spouses' depression (Mavric et al., 2016).

In the context of married working mothers, they show greater subjective well-being, cognitively as well as affectively, compared to non-working married women (Wildani, 2014). This is because working and having income are important determinants for an individual's life satisfaction (Aini & Puspikawati, 2020). Being a full-time housewife has been suggested as to negatively affect women's life satisfaction (Gokdemir & Tahsin, 2013; Kala Singh, 2014; & Shaheen, 2015) because they are disadvantaged

in terms of employment and income. In addition, comparing themselves with other people as well as the lack of opportunity for social contact or social relationships outside the home also produce a feeling of dissatisfaction among housewives (Mavric et al., 2016).

2.5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, LEVEL OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND LIFE SATISFACTION

Gere and Shimmack (2017) stated that higher income earned was found to contribute to higher life satisfaction. Their study also found that housewives tend to be happier when the household income is higher and benefited all members of the family. This study involved big data from the World Values Survey that comprised of 24,631 primary income-earner husbands, 20,192 wives who were homemakers and 11,406 wives who worked full-time but were not primary earners from 80 nations within the years of 1989 to 2008.

Besides, Gokdemir & Tahsin (2013) carried out a study that involved 510 women who were living in Northern Cyprus to evaluate their life satisfaction based on socio-economic factors. These researchers found that the variables contributed to negative effects on life satisfaction were being a full-time housewife and social reference income. Fulltime housewives were reported to have lack in the opportunity to participate in household expenditure, which also contributed to their dissatisfaction of life. Having a high household income was found to contribute to a high level of life satisfaction (Gokdemir & Tahsin, 2013).

Another study was carried out by Cranney and Miles (2016) that involved 9,926 women in the U.S.A. The data were taken from the General Social Survey (GSS) between 1974 to 2012 to examine trends in how satisfied stay-at-home mothers (SAHMs) are with their work, relative to employed mothers. The researchers found that SAHMs were less satisfied with their work compared to the employed mothers. However, by 1996 the difference in work satisfaction became statistically non-significant and remained so up to 2012 due to shifting cultural norms. They also found that women from higher household incomes tend to choose to be SAHMs. These middle or upper-middle-class women experienced the largest gains in satisfaction and by 2012 have predicted levels of satisfaction that were higher than those of employed mothers. The level of education also has some effects on life satisfaction. Education is considered as one of the basic elements that contributes to an individual's quality of life, life satisfaction and wellbeing and it has a significant positive association with self-rated life satisfaction (Javed et al., 2016). Married women with higher education also show higher life satisfaction (Aini & Puspikawati, 2020; Javed et al., 2016) regardless of whether they are working or not (Salinas-Jime'nez et al., 2013).

Javed and colleagues (2016) conducted a study among 100 educated housewives and 100 uneducated housewives within the age range of 23 to 45 years old in Aligarh using the WHOQOL-BREF and Wellbeing Scale instruments. The objective of the study was to assess and compare the quality of life and wellbeing among the respondents. Significant differences were found in three domains of wellbeing, i.e., mental wellbeing, social wellbeing, and emotional well-being. Educated housewives performed better in their social well-being, were less emotional and better in their mental wellbeing compared to uneducated housewives. Meanwhile, there was a significant difference in quality of life between educated and uneducated housewives. This was particularly seen in the three domains, i.e., physical health, psychological health, and social relationships. The educated housewives performed better compared to uneducated housewives.

Another factor that has an influence on life satisfaction is participation in social activities. By engaging in social activities, the opportunities to receive social support and build social relationships are higher. Married women who gain social support show a higher life satisfaction compared to those who do not (Sari et al., 2016; Yildirim & Isik, 2017). In addition, social relationships also positively correlate with a higher life satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2015). There are several studies that indicate the importance of having social relationships in providing positive outcomes on mental and physical health (such as those carried out by Deci & Ryan, 2002; Myers, 2000; Putnam, 2000). The absence of social relationships may cause individuals to face psychological distress (Nguyen et al., 2015). People gain a higher wellbeing when they receive support from other people, since social relationships serve as a buffer that helps to eliminate the negative consequences of stressful live events. For example, a study among people aged 18 to 64 years old conducted by Amati et al., (2018) found that the more integrated an individual is, the more life satisfaction he or she will get due to the positive coefficient related to social integration. Individuals who meet friends regularly were reported to have a higher level of satisfaction compared to those who meet friends occasionally or none at all (Nguyen et al., 2015).

A study by Sari et al., (2016) among 200 highly educated housewives at Kecamatan Tampan, Pekanbaru, Indonesia also found that there was a negative correlation between social support and stress faced by those housewives. Multiple regression analysis found that there were significant correlations between social support, self-efficacy, and stress among the respondents. Increasing the social support and self-esteem will reduce stress among highly educated housewives. Another study by Yildirim and Isik (2017) among 254 unemployed married women aged 15 and above, also showed that there was a positive relationship between social support and life satisfaction; their life satisfaction increased when they gained more social support. Similarly, Bean et al., (2016) who carried out a qualitative study among seven stay-at-home mothers concluded that seeking support beyond the family system is one of the seven themes that was revealed in their study. Most of the women acknowledged that creating new friendships with other mothers with similar interests, values, or circumstances had provided strong emotional reservoir for them. Many of the stay-at-home mothers in that study felt pressure due to not only having to raise their children but to maintain the household as well. This stress was especially salient for those women who did not feel supported by their spouses. Therefore, in response to this stress, those women tend to search for social support outside their homes.

3. METHOD & MATERIALS

This study is a quantitative in nature. Due to Movement Control Order (MCO) during COVID 19 pandemic, the sampling techniques used were convenience sampling (recruiting through social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp) and snowball sampling by requesting respondents to forward the questionnaires to their similar contacts. The targeted population were housewives aged 20 until 60 years old in Peninsular Malaysia. Data were analyzed using Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The approach resulted in 398 valid responses within four months (June 2020 – September 2020). The survey

questionnaire was completed voluntarily, anonymously, and confidentially. The psychometric tools used for collecting the data were Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and Emirates Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) which had been translated into Malay language and were verified by expert in the field. For this current study, all items in the three instruments showed a high reliability with the Cronbach alpha values of 0.94 for both BDI and SWLS, while the value for EMSS was 0.99.

4. RESULTS

The total number of respondents was 398 housewives, with the largest group of 192 respondents (48.2%) belonging to the 31-40 years old age group. This is followed by those in the 20-30 years old age group with 135 respondents (33.9%), 41-50 years old with 49 respondents (12.3%), and 22 respondents (5.5 %) belonging to the 51-60 years old age group. The Malay ethnicity represented most respondents in this study, which consisted of 380 respondents (95.5%), followed by other ethnicities (3.8%), Indians (0.5%) and Chinese (0.3%). In terms of the educational level, 78.4% of the respondents have high level of education (other than primary and secondary education) but are not involved with the job market outside the home. The largest group of respondents are from households with monthly income of RM 3,001 – RM 10,000 (n=193, 48.5%), followed by housewives with a monthly household income of less than RM 3,000 (n=162, 40.7%) and housewives with household income RM 10,001 (n=43, 10.8%). Two hundred and eighty-two respondents (70.9%) are not participating in social activities, while the remaining 116 respondents (29.1%) do so.

In investigating the relationship between depression and life satisfaction among housewives, there was a negative correlation between these two variables, indicating a statistically significant correlation ($r = -.591, n = 398, p = .000$). It showed that when depression increases, life satisfaction will decrease and vice versa. The results show a significant relationship between depression and life satisfaction as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Correlation between Depression and Life Satisfaction

		Depression	Life Satisfaction
Depression	Pearson Correlation	1	-.591**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
Life Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.591**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	398	398

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This study also aimed to determine the correlation between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction among housewives in Malaysia. As shown in the Table 3, there was a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction, which was statistically significant ($r = .668, n = 398, p = .000$). It shows that when marital satisfaction increases, life satisfaction will also increase and vice versa. Hence, there was a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction.

Table 2: Correlations between Marital Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction

		Life Satisfaction	Marital Satisfaction
Life Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.668**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.668**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	398	398

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The third objective of this study was to determine the correlation between marital satisfaction and depression. As presented in the Table 4, there was a negative correlation between marital satisfaction and depression, which was statistically significant ($r = -.637, n = 398, p = .000$). When marital satisfaction increases, depression will decrease, and vice versa. Hence, there was a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and depression.

Table 3: Correlation between Marital Satisfaction and Depression

		Marital Satisfaction	Depression
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	-.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
Depression	Pearson Correlation	-.637**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	398	398

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The study also analyzed the differences in life satisfaction among housewives in Malaysia, based on their socioeconomic status. As shown in the Table 5, based on one-way ANOVA, there was a statistically significant difference in life satisfaction among housewives with $(F(2,395) = [14.9], p = 0.000)$.

Table 4: Differences in Life Satisfaction based on the Socioeconomic Status

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1308.823	2	654.411	14.900	.000
Within Groups	17348.738	395	43.921		
Total	18657.560	397			

Further analysis using Tukey post-hoc test revealed that there was a significant difference in life satisfaction between housewives with a household income of less than RM 3,000 ($M = 19.27, SD = 6.77$) and housewives with a household income of RM 3,001- RM 10,000 ($M = 21.74, SD = 6.70$). Housewives with a household income of less than RM 3,000 ($M = 19.27, SD = 6.77$) also showed a significantly lower life satisfaction as compared to housewives with a household income of RM 10,001 and above ($M = 25.09, SD = 5.71$). Meanwhile, the difference in life satisfaction was also significant between housewives with a household income RM 3,0001-RM 10,000 ($M = 21.74, SD = 6.70$) and housewives with household income of RM 10,001 and above ($M = 25.09, SD = 5.71$).

In terms of the difference in life satisfaction among housewives based on their educational level, this study found that, there was no statistically significant difference in life satisfaction among housewives based on their level of education with $F(4,393) = [1.741], p = 0.140$.

Table 5: Differences in Life Satisfaction based on the Education Level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	324.905	4	81.226	1.741	.140
Within Groups	18332.655	393	46.648		
Total	18657.560	397			

When comparing life satisfaction among housewives based on their involvement in social activities, a t-test analysis was performed. The analysis showed a significant difference in the mean of life satisfaction between involvement and non-involvement of housewives in social activities [$t(231) = 3.67, p < 0.01$]. Housewives who were involved in social activities ($M = 22.97, SD = 6.37$) scored a higher life satisfaction than those who were not involved in any social activities ($M = 20.32, SD = 6.91$) as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Independent Samples Test Output for Life Satisfaction based on the Involvement in Social Activity

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Life Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	4.262	0.040	3.546	396	.000	2.64282	.74539	1.17741	4.10823
	Equal variances not assumed			3.667	230.938	.000	2.64282	.72074	1.22276	4.06289

5. DISCUSSION

The findings in this research revealed that there was a negative correlation between depression and life satisfaction among housewives in Malaysia. Unemployment contributed to housewives' depression as compared to married working women (Mavric et al., 2016; Tammanefar & Leis, 2019). Most of the mental health problems among women is said to be related with their social status which includes vocational or employment issue (Mavric et al., 2016). Employment outside home provides temporary relief from demands of childcare and marital conflict and by being outside home decreases the stress faced by married women and improves their mental health (Mavric et al., 2016). In addition, housewives are usually limited in having social contact outside home, therefore they were deprived of getting social support from others (Başçılar, M., & Uslu Ak, B., 2022, Mavric, B., Alp, Z.E., & Kunt, A.S., 2016, & Dibaji et al., 2017). Social support plays an important role across various cultures in determining better mental health among working and non-working women as they feel better with social security and life prosperity (Abbasa et al., 2019). Having to live in Malaysia, establishing good relationship with community is considered a norms. Evidently, respondents who received social support especially from non-family member did well in their psychological well-being (Yahaya et al., 2013). Being financially dependent to spouse (Mavric et al., 2016), and having lower financial standing (Hassan et al., 2020; Shakya et al., 2021) also another factor that contributed to poor mental health among housewives. A study made by Hassan al., (2020) and Shakya et al., (2021) confirmed that housewives whose have a good family financial standing showed less depressive symptoms as compared to housewives who have lower family financial standing. In conclusion, depression correlates with life satisfaction. In the context of this study, the combination of housewives' unemployment, lack of opportunity in having social contact outside of family members as well as having difficulties in term of financial power affect their mental health and thus, reducing their life satisfaction.

Results shown from this current study revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction improved when an individual experiences satisfaction with his or her marriage (Kasapoğlu & Yabanigül, 2018; Manju, 2016). Studies showed that housewives are often faced with marital dissatisfaction because of lower financial independence as compared to married employed women (Rafiee & Babaei, 2016; Arman et al., 2015). This argument is also strengthened by studies in our country where Malaysian women with higher job status and higher income experience high satisfaction of marriage (Angusamy et al., 2017), while struggle in socio-economic status such as financial difficulties, produces negative influence on marital dynamic, resulted poor parenting quality (Omar, 2008). Other than that, factors such as spirituality (Kasapoğlu & Yabanigül, 2018), communication (Manju, 2016), and unemployment (Rafiee & Babaei, 2016) also contributed to marital dissatisfaction among housewives that lead to dissatisfaction of life. It can be concluded that marital satisfaction is always correlate positively with life satisfaction as proven by previous and current studies. Although there are various factors contributing to women's marital satisfaction, financial issue is the main factor that associate with housewives' marital satisfaction which subsequently influence their level of life satisfaction.

In this current study, the results showed that there is significant negative correlation between depression and marital satisfaction among respondents. This finding concurred with other studies stating that marital distress could affect individual's psychological distress (Taufiq et al., 2018; Khan & Aftab, 2013; Kalhor & Olyaie, 2017; Mavric, et al., 2016; Monjezi & Iravani, 2013). Al-Damarki (2014) also stressed that one's individual life satisfaction, self-esteem, physical health as well as psychological health are affected by their marital satisfaction. Having a good social support from spouse helps housewives to experience higher marital adjustment or marital satisfaction and less stress, anxiety, and depression (Abbasa et al., 2019, Khan & Aftab, 2013, Al-Damarki, 2014). It is important to have an open and effective communication within marital relationship as to help individuals to feel satisfied with their marriage (Maulina & Atika, 2020; Kalhor & Olyaie, 2017; Mavric, et al., 2016; Monjezi & Iravani, 2013 Askari et al., 2013). Similarly in this current study, it may be assumed that housewives who are facing lower marital satisfaction may be due to lack of intimacy and social support from their husbands.

In addition, this study revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in life satisfaction among housewives in Malaysia based on their socio-economic status. Life satisfaction among housewives with higher household income is greater compared to housewives with lower household income. It is often shown that there is a positive correlation between higher income and life satisfaction (Gere & Shimmack, 2017). In line with a recent local study by Bahari & Zaman (2019), it was found that economic difficulties negatively correlate with happiness ($r = -.384, k < .05$) while the regression analysis unfolds that the economic variable significantly predicts happiness of the respondents ($\beta = -2.77, k < .05$). Other study by Cranney and Miles (2016), showed that SAHMs from middle or upper- middle-class families experience the largest gains in satisfaction, and have been predicted to have levels of satisfaction that are higher than those of the employed. Having enough income is important because people need to fulfill their basic needs (Bahari & Zaman, 2019). Those with lower income tend to make social comparison with those who gain higher income, hence will negatively affect their well-being (Yu et al., 2019). This current study also proved the same result as previous studies whereby respondents who have higher household income gained higher life satisfaction.

The result of this study showed that there is no significant difference in life satisfaction among housewives in Malaysia based on their educational level. Educational level plays an important role in influencing life satisfaction among people in Asia (Ngoo et al., 2015). The educational level has significant and positive correlation with life satisfaction (Aini & Puspikawati, 2020). Cognizant to the current findings, a study made by Luh et al., (2017) in investigating the level of psychological well-being among 100 working married women and 100 housewives in Kabupaten Gianyar, Indonesia, found that the difference in educational level did not influence level of psychological well-being among those women. Reasons such as personal choice to be housewives, sufficient facilities and infrastructure; effective communication as well as cultural differences are believed to contribute to the current finding for this study.

This study also found that housewives who participated in social activities have higher life satisfaction compared to housewives who did not involve in any social activities. Getting into social relationship allows one to have good physical and mental health condition (Amati et al., 2018), reduce psychological stress (Bakar et al., 2020) and improve cognitive abilities (Kelly et al., 2017). Consistent with the current finding, a study among 450 medical students had found that being involved in volunteering activities could be a source of life satisfaction among respondents (Emad et al. 2021). Individual participation in society can also nurture happiness as the activity enables individuals to discover inner strength and potential (Bahari & Zaman, 2019). Furthermore, Sari et al., (2016) in their study among 200 educated housewives in Indonesia found that higher social support as well as higher self-efficacy could reduce stress among housewives. It is important for housewives to have social support either from spouse, family, or their social surroundings to help them reduce stress in managing daily house chores and motherhood roles. This could help them to avoid feeling of loneliness and instill positive feeling by being appreciated and supported from people around them. Hence, this current study also provides evidences that housewives who were involved with social activities gain higher level of life satisfaction as opposed to housewives who do not participate with any social activities, whom were found to be less satisfied with their life. This is because they have more opportunities to build social relationship as well as social support which then ultimately contributes to their life satisfaction being directed in a positive way.

6. CONCLUSION

In sum, the study found that there was significant correlation between depression and life satisfaction, as well as marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. There was also significant correlation between marital satisfaction and depression. Besides, there was significant difference in life satisfaction based on socio-economic status and participation in social activity. The study, however, found no significant differences in life satisfaction based on educational level. This study implicates the status of wellbeing among housewives who need to be continually become the focus of the relevant ministries and agencies. Empowerment program for intervention should become the highlights to enhance their psychological, emotional, and overall wellbeing so that they are able to contribute to their family effectively and satisfactorily, and community.

There are several groups might be benefited from this study especially for counselors by having some background information in relating to psychological wellbeing among housewives. Therefore, counselors might develop effective interventions and strategies to boost self-esteem of housewives. Secondly, it is benefiting housewives themselves as to help housewives in practicing self-care and to find out social support by knowing the fact that lack of social interaction with people outside home contributed to their psychological distress. Thirdly, spouses of housewives might be benefited from this study by practising an open communication, respect and appreciate the role of stay-at-home mothers. Fourthly, the policy maker may enhance any initiatives related to housewives other than giving financial assistance, upgrading skills and business opportunity. On top of that, wellbeing of housewives may also need to be considered, for instance, by encouraging local communities to establish social support group for housewives.

Although this study provided useful and beneficial information regarding housewives' satisfaction in their life and marriage and mental health condition (i.e depression), there were some limitations that should be noted. Firstly, this study involves only housewives in Peninsular Malaysia which could not be generalized for housewives throughout Malaysia. Secondly, there are other demographic characteristics in this study which was not analyzed in relation to the life satisfaction, such as age, living place/type of residential areas and races. Therefore, these variables may be necessary to be studied in future studies in examining their influences on wellbeing or life satisfaction among housewives. Finally, the questionnaires were self-administered through online means. Thus, online approach might cause some difficulties or misunderstanding among respondents in answering the instruments compared to other more direct method such as face-to-face interview which may allow two-way communication.

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