



Happiness Among First-Time Mothers in Bangalore

Ms. Varsha Deshpande & Bhumi Bakshi

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities M.S Ramaiah College of Arts, Science & Commerce- Autonomous, Bangalore, Email: varsha_ba@mscasc.edu.in
2. Student, Department of Humanities, M.S Ramaiah College of Arts, Science & Commerce- Autonomous, Bangalore, Email: bhumibakshi06@gmail.com

Abstract: *The present study assesses the level of happiness in first time mothers living in Bangalore either in a joint family or nuclear family. A total sample of 60 women (30 from a joint family and 30 from nuclear family) were taken. The data was collected by administering the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills (2002). The results showed that women in nuclear families are happier than those in joint families. In urban Indian contexts like Bangalore, nuclear families often provide greater autonomy, privacy, and simplified decision-making, which many new mothers find supportive during the significant life transition of becoming a parent.*

Keywords: *First Time Mothers, Happiness, Nuclear Family, Joint Family.*

Introduction and Background: Happiness is a state of emotional well-being that encompasses living a good life with a sense of meaning and good contentment. It includes having more positive emotions like joy, love and gratitude than negative emotions like sadness and anger. Happiness plays a vital role in overall well-being, serving as a foundation for both mental and physical health. When individuals experience happiness, they tend to have lower levels of stress, stronger immune function, and a reduced risk of chronic illnesses. When a new mother feels happy and supported, she is more likely to bond effectively with her baby, respond sensitively to her infant's needs, and adjust positively to her new role. Postpartum or postnatal refers to a period immediately after childbirth that generally lasts six to eight weeks or until the mother's body returns to its pre pregnant state. It is a period when maternal lactation starts. In this, a mother's body goes through many physical and emotional changes. It can vary from positive emotional changes like happiness, enhancing bonding and strong sense of identity to negative changes like baby blues, postpartum depression and anxiety. Some of the physical changes include breast engorgement and vaginal bleeding.

Importance of happiness in Postpartum Women: Happiness during the Postpartum period plays a crucial role in the well-being of a mother and their baby's life. A positive emotional state helps buffer against the hormonal shifts and stress that can be a reason enough to trigger postpartum depression and anxiety. Women who are happy can easily adapt to motherhood with less complications. Positive emotions can also promote healthier sleep, appetite and emotional bonding with their baby and other family members. Happiness balances the hormonal fluctuations and increases emotional stability. Experiencing "baby blues" is very commonly heard by everyone but there is also a term called "baby pinks" which can be referred to as

postpartum euphoria or postpartum hypomania too. It can cause bursts of happiness, high productivity and boundless energy which usually occurs in the first couple weeks after giving birth. Some people can experience both baby blues and baby pinks intermittently while others may experience just one or neither. This euphoria can have a positive effect on babies such as better bonding due to high endorphin levels but in rare instances, intense postpartum euphoria can be an early indication of postpartum bipolar disorder. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, is a theory of motivation that emphasizes the importance of fulfilling three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs are essential for psychological growth, well-being, and intrinsic motivation. When new mothers feel autonomous, competent and connected, they tend to thrive emotionally, parent their child more effectively and create a healthy bond. Similarly, The Maternal Role Attainment Theory, developed by Ramona T. Mercer, is a mid-range nursing theory that explains how a woman learns, adjusts to, and internalizes the maternal role over time. This theory is especially relevant in understanding the transition to motherhood, including the emotional, psychological, and social changes that occur as a woman becomes a mother.

Cause of Unhappy Postpartum: Postpartum depression is a type of depression that a mother faces after having a baby. It involves emotional highs and lows, guilt, crying and fatigue. Having a baby is a life changing experience that can be exciting but tiring too for parents especially for new mothers. Unhappiness in new mothers can be caused by hormonal changes which can cause mood swings. Women also experience physical discomfort or complications after childbirth. Mothers experience melancholy usually when there is a lack of support from others and they are isolated to take care of their babies on their own. Already existing mental conditions like depression or anxiety can be exacerbated during the postpartum period. A stressful life event, anxiety and unplanned pregnancy can increase the risks of unhappiness in new mothers. Social expectations around motherhood creates an undue stress and pressure for the mothers. Women can feel lonely due to lack of connection and communication with their partners. Previous traumatic experiences such as abuse can add to the unhappiness as they can resurface during this period. Physical changes occur in women after childbirth such as weight gain, changes in the bowel movements and swelling or soreness in the vagina which leads to them being under confident.

Treatments to have a happy postpartum period: With proper help and support from the family, most women make a full recovery but it still takes time.

1. Self-help - Looking after your baby without any help can be tough and stressful for young mothers as they are not experienced at all. Talking to your family or friends and making them understand how you feel will help a new mother. Making time for yourself and doing activities like going for a walk, listening to music or having a relaxing bath will help mothers have a calm mind.
2. Therapy – Talking therapies are usually the first treatment recommended for women with postpartum depression. Other psychological therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy, interpersonal therapy, psychodynamic therapy, couple therapy, family therapy, mother infant therapy groups, etc are also recommended for new mothers that can help them to emotionally bond with themselves and eliminate negative thoughts from their mind.
3. Antidepressants- Antidepressants are prescribed medications used to treat depression, anxiety and other mental health issues by stress control chemicals. For a new mother, they can help ease symptoms such as low mood, irritability, lack of concentration and sleeplessness and help you to cope better with your new baby.

Review of literature: Ifcher, John, and Homa Zarghamee (2014) conducted a study on the trends of happiness of single mothers. The study was conducted on single mothers from 1972 to 2008 using data from the General Social Survey at Santa Clara University, California, United States. The results indicate that

single mothers report being significantly less happy than non-single mothers, and this “happiness gap” shrank between 1972 and 2008.

Laura Bradfield (2021) conducted a study on motherhood brings joy and happiness. This research draws on 12 interviews with first-time mothers in low-income areas in Cape Town, exploring first-time mothers’ experiences of motherhood. Mothers reported feeling very stressed, ashamed, and financially struggling. The imbalance of power, where men have more control, along with the lack of helpful social and economic policies for mothers, often led to their oppression, reliance on grants, and poverty.

Dr. Üyesi Sebahat Altundağ, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nazan ÇakırerÇalbayram (2020) conducted a study to determine the level of happiness and job satisfaction of mothers working in different occupational groups in an institution. The study involved mothers who had children aged between 3 and 6 working in the educational institutions. It was found that there was a low positive linear correlation between happiness scores and job satisfaction scores. It has also been found that job satisfaction and happiness are factors that affect each other positively.

Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers (2009) conducted a study on Declining Female Happiness of lives of Women in United States of America that has improved over the past 35 years from 2009, yet it is shown that the measures of the subject’s wellbeing indicated that women’s happiness had declined both absolutely and relatively to men.

David. G. Blanchflower and Alex Bryson (2024) conducted a study on Female Happiness paradox. Using data across the countries, the study shows that women have worse mental health than men in the negative effect equation and has more days with bad mental health and restless sleep. The study also provided more evidence of men having more happiness and life satisfaction compared to women before and also after pandemic. An analysis of several data files, with various metrics, for the UK confirms that men now are happier than women and the size of the effect is not trivial.

Matteucci, Nicola Vieira Lima and Sabrina (2014) conducted a study called Women and Happiness. In this study they have reviewed the field of happiness and economics to understand the gender gap in happiness. This review also includes the insights from Psychology and Medical sciences. The research also tells that women’s happiness tends to declines more with age compared to men. Finally, studies from different fields have found that women tend to experience worsening conditions as they age compared to men.

Khalane Shashikant Hari (2020) conducted a study on the “Subjective happiness and Psychological well-being among urban and rural women”. The study was conducted in Khadesh Division in Maharashtra. A simple random sampling technique was used for this study. 410 women (225 urban and 185 rural, N= 410) whose age group ranged from 21 to 50 years was selected for this study. The tools used in this research were the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) by Lyubomirsky and Lepper and PWBS inventory by Ryff and Keyes. The result shows that urban women feel more negative affect than rural women.

Renier Steyn (2024) conducted a study on “Gender Emancipation and its Impact on Happiness: An Examination of the Happy Wife, Happy Life Formula”. The study examines the relationship between gender emancipation and happiness, aiming to determine whether gender emancipation genuinely enhances the happiness of both women and men, and whether the focus on women’s well-being might negatively impact men. However, this research did not demonstrate any significant link between emancipation and happiness showing that increase in emancipation is not a direct predictor of men’s happiness. This result reveals that happiness is a subjective phenomenon, shaped by a myriad of factors encompassing cultural, social, economic, and individual variables.

Reeya Agarwal (2022) conducted a study on “Happiness And Marital Satisfaction Among Women”. This study is exploratory in nature intending to study the role of the age of getting married on women’s happiness

and marital satisfaction. Using the snowball sampling method, a sample of 176 women was selected. The participants were assessed on happiness and marital satisfaction measures using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The study revealed that there is no association between the age of getting married and a woman's happiness and marital satisfaction as women above 35 who got married before or after 25 years of age are equally happily and maritally satisfied. Happiness and satisfaction are positively correlated. The study also reveals that there is no significant difference between unmarried and married women in the age group of 18-25 on the scale of happiness

S., Yang, L., & Yan, M. (2022) conducted a study called the presence of meaning in parenthood, perceived social support, and happiness of mothers living in Hong Kong: a comparative study on younger and older mothers. A total of 1292 Chinese mothers were recruited from different Hong Kong communities. The results show that older mothers were happier than younger mothers and indicate that parental meaning and perceived social support had a positive effect on the happiness of both younger and older mothers.

Afiatin, T., Istianda, I. P., & Wintoro, A. Y. (2016) conducted a study on Happiness of working mothers through family life stages. Participants were 526 working mothers with children and a working husband. Working mothers with the first child at preschool age had the highest level of happiness, whilst those with the married first child had the lowest level of happiness. The results show that the levels of working mothers' happiness were mostly influenced by the level of work-family balance rather than family life cycle.

Ratha, S. N. (1994) conducted a study on Educated working mothers Adjustment between profession and motherhood A study of working mothers in Orissa. 250 employed mothers form the sample of this study. The results show that employed mothers with young children face more role conflicts.

Aquinas, P. G. (2021) conducted a study on factors influencing quality of life among single mothers in Karnataka state. The present research attempts to understand the challenges faced by single mothers in the overall life situation and upbringing of their children. The study revealed that single mothers' experience with quality of life are closely affected by poor social status of single mothers in the family and neighbourhood, poor psychological condition and economic hardship was the main stressor for the majority of the single mothers.

Tarman, İ., & Eminanc, C. (2023) conducted a study on Examining the Relationship between Life Satisfaction and the Happiness-increasing Strategies used by Mothers for their Children. The sample group for this study consisted of 298 mothers with children aged 3-5 years. It was concluded that the level of life satisfaction increased as the education level and economic status of the mothers increased, and the levels of happiness-increasing strategies showed a significant difference according to the economic status.

Islam, M. M. (2025) conducted a research on Association between mothers' life satisfaction, happiness and child discipline practices: evidence from a nationally representative survey. The survey was conducted on women aged 15 to 49 years. The results revealed that higher the happiness or life satisfaction, the smaller the odds for children experiencing disciplinary measures from all three violent domains.

Yeom, M., & Yang, S. (2019) conducted a study on Structural Equation Model for Happiness in Mothers with Young Children. A self-report questionnaire was used to collect data from 210 mothers with children under 5 years of age living in Seoul, Gyeonggi, and Gangwon provinces. The study concluded that to help mothers with young children feel happier, simple positive psychology methods that lower problems like depression and build strengths like optimism can be useful ways to handle stress and adjust to challenges.

Cronin, C. (2003) conducted a study on first-time mothers – identifying their needs, perceptions and experiences. The data were collected through focus groups and in-depth interviews from a sample of 13 women, 61% were aged 20 years or less, from an urban city area in Southern Ireland. The research

concluded that mothers liked the focus groups and suggested using a similar format to support self-development, ongoing learning, and having a support system while adapting to motherhood.

Baranowska-Rataj, A., Matysiak, A., & Mynarska, M. (2013). Does Lone Motherhood Decrease Women's Happiness? Evidence from Qualitative and Quantitative Research. The study was conducted in several locations in Poland; in large cities as well as in small towns on women with different social backgrounds and with different educational level. They claimed that single mothers are at a disadvantage, but gave no evidence to show that it is the arrival of a child that causes a drop in their happiness.

Berger, E. M. (2012). Happy Working Mothers? Investigating the Effect of Maternal employment on life satisfaction. This paper analyses the effect of non-participation and part-time employment compared to full-time employment on life satisfaction of mothers in Germany. They attribute the negative effects to the institutional and social conditions in Germany, which make it difficult for many mothers to balance full-time work with motherhood.

To summarize, while childbirth is often culturally framed as a joyous occasion, previous research has established that young mothers' happiness tends to decline without support and a helping hand. Moreover, working mothers with young kids face role conflicts. Few studies indicated that work-family balance and job satisfaction directly affect the happiness of a working mother. Most prefer social support and focus groups for a better lifestyle and happiness level. It was also interpreted that single mothers are less happy than a married mothers. The study suggested that young mothers mostly prefer social support and focus groups for a better lifestyle and happiness level.

Objectives:

1. To assess the level of happiness among first time mothers living in Bangalore
- 2- To assess the differences in level of happiness among first time mothers living in Bangalore based on family type. Rationale of the research on happiness in postpartum women

Need and Significance of the study: By researching more about happiness in postpartum, we not only validate the emotional complexity of motherhood but also promote healthier relationships and supporting communities. There is a growing need to research happiness in postpartum women living in Bangalore due to the living dynamics and changing family structures. Although previous studies have explored maternal mental health, limited research has specifically focused on the happiness levels of first-time mothers in this regional context. Unlike traditional joint families, nuclear households lack support, nourishment, and an emotional support system which is crucial for new mothers in the postpartum period. While much research is focused on postpartum depression, attention should also be given to positive emotional states like happiness as it is equally important for mothers' well-being and nurturing the child.

Methodology:

Aim: To assess happiness among first time mothers living in Bangalore.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant differences in level of happiness among first time mothers living in Bangalore based on family type.

Operational definition: Happiness- it can be defined as stable state of mind characterised by self- esteem, satisfaction with life and optimism.

New mothers- women who have given birth for the first time in the past six months belonging to the age group of 25-35.

Joint family- family consisting of three generations living together in a same house.

Nuclear family- family consisting of two partners with new born living together in a same house.

Variables:

Independent variable- family type

Dependent variable- happiness

Research design: Quasi ex-post facto- since there is no control over the manipulation of independent Variable, this research design is used.

Sample: Sample included 60 first time mothers living in Bengaluru, among which 30 women belonged to joint family and 30 belonged to nuclear family.

Inclusion criteria

1. Mothers who have given birth in past six months

Exclusion criteria

1. Mothers outside Bangalore
2. Second time mothers
3. Single mothers

Tools : Oxford happiness questionnaire given by Michael argyle and peter hills, having the reliability of Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.87. The questionnaire consists of 29 statements with 6 options ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’.

Procedure: Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was administered to 60 first-time mothers belonging to the age group of 25-35 living in Bangalore. Purposive sampling method was used for data collection through both google forms and direct administrations.

Analysis Of Results:

Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation of joint and nuclear family in Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

	Family type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Happiness Score	Joint	30	3.727	.6186	.1129
	Nuclear	30	4.079	.4104	.0776

Table 2 shows t score of the group on Oxford Happiness Questionnaire.

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
-2.568	50.690	.013	-.3519	.1370

Since $p < 0.05$, the difference between the two groups (joint family and nuclear family) is statistically significant.

This means that there is a significant difference in happiness scores between women in joint and nuclear families. Women in nuclear families are happier than those in joint families.

Discussion And Conclusion: Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was administered on 60 first time mothers belonging to the age group of 25-35 years, among which 30 were from a joint family and 30 from nuclear family. Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation of joint and nuclear family in the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, the study found a statistically significant difference between the two variables.

Table 2 shows the t scores of the group in Oxford Happiness Questionnaire; the study showed a significant difference in mean which suggested that women in nuclear families are happier than those in joint families.

This could have occurred because nuclear families often provide greater autonomy, privacy, and simplified decision-making, which many new mothers find supportive during the significant life transition of becoming a parent. This suggests that family structure plays an important role in influencing the emotional well-being of first-time mothers. Privacy and strong emotional bond with the husband and fewer work load also contribute to a woman's well-being while joint family offers practical support, different parenting style and society expectations that can stress the new mother. Further, the studies will include mothers outside Bangalore to understand better and gain higher knowledge.

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