

**OVERCOMING THE ODDS:
EXPLORING RESILIENCE AMONG EMPLOYED
MARRIED WOMEN IN THREE STAGES
OF THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE***

Amapola Lustre-Baes

ABSTRACT

This study attempted to describe the resiliency process as experienced by employed married women (EMW) in three stages of the family life cycle (FLC) who have adapted competently to the multiple role demands of being an employed married woman while situated in specially difficult circumstances. To do this, 12 employed married women, equally represented in three family life cycle stages—who were identified to manifest resilience with a selection criteria—participated in the study. Guided by the phenomenological approach, the life story interview method has been used to bring out the voices in carving out narratives of resiliency experiences of employed married women. The study also tried to describe what characterize these women as reflected from what they tell of themselves and their lives in general.

A cross-case analysis and identification of predominant themes from the narratives generated the following results. The findings showed that the employed married women in this sample

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encountered different demands and stressors relating to the family (both immediate and external), their work in both domestic and public spheres, and their health. The study also tried to capture the women's nuanced accounts of the different problems that confront them, how they are experiencing these difficulties, including their perception, emotional reaction in all its gamut, and the processes they go through to resist, overcome or adjust to the difficulties. It also attempts to show the transformation that their experience has effected in them, and the meaning and significance that this experience has for them. These women were found to be equipped with different resources (within and outside her) and competencies, which appear to mostly address the characteristic situation,—that is, the hurried life, confronted by work overload and role conflict,—of these women. Hence, they are mostly time-saving or work efficiently enhancing processes and competencies that facilitate the combining of work and family roles. However, their competence manifested from their strength to endure and adapt successfully becomes more pronounced in their experience of specially difficult or crisis circumstances pertaining to finances, health, relationship with family and work. The different ways by which employed married women across the three stages of the family life cycle adapt to such difficulties have been delineated. Comparison of three family life cycle groups' vulnerability and competence yield commonalities, but there are more distinct characteristics, as differentiated by the nature of the problem frequently/normally encountered in each stage, hence, different adaptive responses. These varied and interacting adaptive responses, resources and competencies are found in the different processes that involve themselves, the strength drawn from their personal attributes and motivations, as with the resources present in their external environment.

That resiliency as a process is characterized to be dynamic and on-going in unstable or varied adaptive outcomes was found to be particularly true to these women. Different manifestations of adaptation are reflected in the women in different context of time or stages and/or area of their EMW life and life in general. While some women have shown differing extent of resiliency, as well as incompetence, across different situations, those who do at a specific context in those situations that foster resiliency are described by characteristic manifestations. That is, resiliency at its best is present when the problems and difficulties are viewed to have constructive and positive use/s, as well as in how problems and difficulties have been catalyst of their self-growth in terms of endurance, stronger faith and in specific and concrete positive outcomes.