

Job Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance: Organizational Psychologists vs. Independent Practitioners

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Work-life balance and job satisfaction are critical factors influencing the well-being and effectiveness of mental health professionals, including psychologists. This study aimed to investigate and compare the levels of job satisfaction and work-life balance between organizational psychologists and independent psychologists in India, addressing a significant gap in the existing literature. A sample of 60 practicing clinical and counselling psychologists, with 30 from each group, participated in the study. Job satisfaction was measured using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), while the Work-Life Balance (WLB) Scale by J. Hayman was employed to assess work-life balance. Job satisfaction was measured on three facets, intrinsic, extrinsic and total. The results revealed no significant difference in job satisfaction levels between the two groups. However, the study found significant differences in work-life balance between the two groups. Independent psychologists reported better overall work-life balance, less work interference with personal life, less interference of personal life with work and a better work and personal life enhancement.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Work Life Balance, Psychologists

Psychologists face unique challenges despite their crucial role in mental healthcare. In India, these include low wages, lack of recognition, and mental health stigma, particularly in developing nations. While the Rehabilitation Council of India's new policies are improving work environments, questions remain about therapists' work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Psychologists work across various settings - private clinics, NGOs, corporations, hospitals, and academia - with varying experiences and satisfaction levels. Research by Kotera et al. (2021) shows COVID-19 increased burnout among psychotherapists due to high demand and long hours. Demetri et al. (2021) found clinical psychologists often feel pressured to exceed expectations, leading to work-life imbalance. While some studies by Bruck and Allen (2003) and Radeke and Mahoney (2000) suggest good job satisfaction among

psychologists, Schaufeli & Enzmann (1998) highlight higher burnout rates compared to other professions.

Job satisfaction impacts service quality, professional growth, and retention. Though research exists on job satisfaction across industries, studies specifically examining Indian psychologists' experiences are limited.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors, including meeting basic needs (Maslow, 1943), the presence of motivating and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1959), individual values and expectations (Locke, 1969), perceptions of equity (Adams, 1963), and work-life balance.

For psychologists, job satisfaction encompasses "challenging" and "rewarding" themes (Maruma, 2021). Challenges include starting a private practice, salary concerns, burnout, and scope of practice, while rewards

stem from support, autonomy, and relationship-building. Although self-employed psychologists tend to report higher satisfaction (Dolinsky & Caputo, 2003; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001), they often face isolation and lack business skills in areas like marketing and financial management. Similarly, organizational psychologists struggle with role conflicts, balancing responsibilities to both clients and the organization, contributing to dissatisfaction (Brown & Wallace, 2011). Significant skill gaps, such as business acumen for independent practitioners and managing dual relationships for organizational psychologists, highlight underlying sources of dissatisfaction. Notably, correctional psychologists report the lowest job satisfaction compared to those in psychiatric hospitals and veteran affairs (Senter et al., 2010).

Work Life Balance

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to the allocation of time, energy, and resources between work and personal life to achieve satisfaction in both domains. Fischer (2003) introduced the concept of enhancement, suggesting that enrichment in one sphere positively impacts the other. In contrast, Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) conflict theory posits that success in one domain often requires sacrifices in the other due to differing cultures and demands. Powell and Greenhaus (2003) expanded on enrichment theory, emphasizing how experiences in one role can enhance quality of life in another. Stevanovic and Rupert (2004) highlighted family time as a key career-sustaining behaviour for psychologists, supporting enrichment theory. However, psychologists face burnout from competitive training programs, financial strains, and long hours, leaving little time for leisure (Demetri et al., 2021). Kotera et al. (2021) linked emotional exhaustion and unbalanced lifestyles as major predictors of poor WLB among U.S.

psychologists. Clark's (2000) border and boundary theory emphasizes managing work and personal life through boundaries to minimize stress crossover. Adisa et al. (2017) noted that technology has blurred these boundaries, disrupting WLB. Nippert-Eng's (1996) Segmentation-Integration Continuum Theory suggests that individuals either integrate or segment work and life, depending on preference. Michel et al. (2014) found mindfulness as an effective segmentation strategy, reducing work-life strain over a two-week period.

Aim

Investigate and compare the levels of job satisfaction and work-life balance between organizational psychologists and independent psychologists.

Rationale

During an internship at a hospital, there was an opportunity to observe psychologists working within an organizational setting, which prompted an inquiry into their experiences in

balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Additionally, having interned with an independent psychologist, significant differences were observed between the two professional environments. This led to an interest in understanding the levels of job satisfaction among psychologists in both settings and the challenges they face in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. A review of existing literature revealed a substantial gap in research, particularly a comparative study focusing on the job satisfaction of Indian psychologists in organizational versus independent settings

Research question

Is there a difference in job satisfaction and work life balance between psychologists practising independently and those with/ under organisations?

Objectives

1. To assess the levels of job satisfaction between psychologists working in organizations and independently.
2. To assess the levels of work life balance between psychologists working in organizations and independently.
3. To conduct a comparative analysis of job satisfaction between psychologists working in organizations and independently.
4. To conduct a comparative analysis work life balance levels between psychologists working in organizations and independently.

Hypothesis:

- H1: There will be a significant difference in job satisfaction between the two groups.
- H2: There will be a significant difference in work life balance between the two groups.

Method

Sample

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for the study, practicing psychologists with more than 6 months of experience were included. A sample of 60 practicing clinical and counselling psychologists was collected, amongst them, 30 psychologists were private practitioners, while remaining 30 worked in organizational settings, that included NGOs, corporate sector, schools, universities, hospitals etc. The private practitioners, on average, had 3.1 years of working experience, whereas psychologists associated with organizations had an average of 4.2 years of experience, the overall average experience was 3.7 years. The average age stood at 30.7 years (private practitioners) and 32.6 years

respectively (psychologists associated with organizations).

Measures

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (David J. Weiss et.al, 1960) The MSQ (Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire), developed in the late 1960s by David J. Weiss and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota is specifically made and tailored to assess employees' job satisfaction, the questionnaire takes intrinsic, extrinsic and general satisfaction into consideration. In this study short form of the questionnaire has been used, the short form takes five minutes and there are twenty questions in total.

Work Life Balance Scale (Hayman, J.,2005) Work life balance scale has 15 questions and was developed by J. Hayman in (2005), it is the revised version from the 19-item scale developed by Fisher-McAuley et al. (2003). The scale has 15 items and three dimensions, work life interference with personal life (WIPL), Personal life interference with work life (PLIW) and WPE (work-personal life enhancement).

Procedure

After defining the research objective, clinical and counselling psychologists with at least six months of experience were selected as participants. They were approached through LinkedIn, Instagram, and visits to government and private hospitals. Participants were informed about the study, and questions were addressed. A secure Google Form was created for data collection, consisting of two sections: the first gathered demographic details (age, gender, years of experience, and practice setting), ensuring anonymity, and participants provided informed consent. The second section included validated questionnaires, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) and the Work-Life Balance (WLB) scale. Data was collected, organized, and analyzed using

IBM SPSS Statistics, employing independent sample t-tests and descriptive statistics. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the process.

Research design

This study used a “between-subjects quasi experimental design”, between group indicates that there exists a comparison between the two different groups, while quasi-experimental design is a research method used to investigate cause-and-effect relationships, but participant belongs only in one of the existing groups i.e., either a psychologist worked in an organisation or worked independently. The researcher compares the outcomes or behaviours of the different groups to determine the effects of the independent variable.

Results

After carefully organizing and scoring the data according to the established guidelines, we employed IBM’s SPSS Statistics software to analyse the results. The results have been presented in tabular form for easy understanding. The result chapter is divided into three sections, the first section presents the demographic details, the second section presents Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) of the variables, while the third section presents Inferential Statistics (t value, p value, degree of freedom and mean difference).

Section 1

This section presents the demographic details of the participants.

Table 1.1 Gender Distribution in the Sample

Gender	N
Male	5
Female	55
Total	60

Table 1.2 Age distribution in the sample

Age range	N
20-29	32
30-39	19
40-49	10
50-59	1

Table 1.3 Proportion of Psychologists and Their Work Experience

Work experience in months/years	N
6 months- <1 year	10
1 year- <5 years	32
5 years- <10 years	12
10 years- <15 years	8

Section 2

This section presents descriptive statistics for both the groups (Psychologists with organisations and independent Psychologists). Section 2.1 shows job satisfaction (Intrinsic, Extrinsic and Total) while section 2.2 shows work life balance (Work Interference with Personal Life, Personal Life Interference with Work and Work and Personal Life Enhancement and Total Work and Life Balance).

Table 2.1. Descriptive Statistics of Job Satisfaction for Psychologists

Division	Satisfaction Variables	Mean	SD
Psychologists in Organisation	Intrinsic	47.1333	8.79158
	Extrinsic	28.2333	6.84651
	Total	75.3667	14.26228
Independent Psychologists	Intrinsic	49.8000	5.06782
	Extrinsic	29.5333	9.00089
	Total	79.00089	9.00089

Note: - n=30 for each group

Table 2.2. Descriptive Statistics of Work and Life Balance for Psychologists

WLB variables		Mean	SD
Psychologists in Organisations	WIPL	18.1000	6.28819
	PLIW	8.0667	2.27328
	WPE	12.3667	2.82212
	Total WLB	38.3000	7.01304
Independent Psychologists	WIPL	15.1333	9.00089
	PLIW	6.8000	4.98780
	WPE	9.9000	2.32527
	Total WLB	31.8333	7.53879

Note: - n=30 for each group, (lower score = better work life balance), WLB- work life balance, (WIPL- Work Interference with personal life, PLIW- Personal life interference with work, WPE- work and personal life enhancement.)

Section 3

This section presents Tables 3.1 and 3.2. Table 3.1 shows inferential statistics for job satisfaction (intrinsic, extrinsic, and total) between organisational and independent psychologists. Table 3.2 shows inferential statistics for work-life balance, including WIPL, PLIW, WPE, and total WLB for both groups.

Table 3.1 Independent sample t test between Psychologists in Organisations and Independent Psychologists on Job Satisfaction

Measure	Group	Mean	N	t	df	p	Mean Difference
Intrinsic Satisfaction	Psychologists in Organisations	47.1333	30	-1.439	58	0.155	-2.66667
	Independent Psychologists	49.8000	30				
Extrinsic Satisfaction	Psychologists in Organisations	28.2333	30	-0.849	58	0.399	-1.30000
	Independent Psychologists	29.5333	30				
Total Satisfaction	Psychologists in Organisations	75.3667	30	-1.332	58	0.188	-4.10000
	Independent Psychologists	79.4667	30				

Note: - * p < 0.05, n=60, No significant differences were found for intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, or total satisfaction (p > .05).

Table 3.2. Independent sample t test between psychologists in Organisations and Independent psychologists on Work and Life Balance

Measure	Group	Mean	N	t	df	p	Mean Difference
WIPL	Psychologists in Organisations	17.8667	30	2.025	58	0.048*	2.96667
	Independent Psychologists	15.1333	30				
PLIW	Psychologists in Organisations	8.0667	30	2.133	58	0.037*	1.26667
	Independent Psychologists	6.8000	30				
WPE	Psychologists in Organisations	12.3667	30	3.794	58	<.001*	2.46667
	Independent Psychologists	9.9000	30				
Total WLB	Psychologists in Organisations	38.3000	30	3.440	58	0.001*	6.46667
	Independent Psychologists	31.8333	30				

Note: - * $p < 0.05$, $n=60$, Significant differences were found for all WLB measures. (WIPL- work interference with personal life, PLIW- personal life interference with work, WPE- work and personal life enhancement, WLB- Work and life balance, lower mean= better WLB.)

Discussion

All psychologists in the world are united by a common theme of understanding human beings better, to be a psychologist is to have a lifelong commitment to give back to the community. They have a crucial job of addressing emotional and behavioural issues of a client with utmost empathy, regards and patience while making sure they adhere to professional boundaries and since all human beings are diverse, they have to discover new techniques and skills to accommodate the needs of every client, their work requires a delicate balance between empathy and objectivity.

The present study employed following objectives: to measure job satisfaction amongst psychologists working in private practice and organizational settings, to evaluate work-life balance levels of psychologists in both private practice and organizational settings, to compare job satisfaction and work and life balance between psychologists in private practice and those in organizational settings. The study predicted that psychologists in private practice and organizational settings would experience significant differences in both job satisfaction and work-life balance. Job satisfaction was measured with the help of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al, 1967), short form, it has three facets, intrinsic, extrinsic and general satisfaction.

As observed in Table 2.1 on intrinsic satisfaction the mean score for psychologists working with organizations was (47.1333) and S.D of (8.79158) indicative of high

intrinsic satisfaction. Table 2.1 highlights the mean for independent psychologists was (49.8000) and S.D of (5.06782), again indicating a high intrinsic satisfaction. These findings match a study by Maruma, B. (2021) that aimed to explore “The lived experiences of job satisfaction amongst practicing psychologists in private practice in South Africa” where the findings revealed that being able to give support and by being someone’s confidant, their life feels fulfilling and forming a relationship with client in itself is a “reward”. Kernis, Goldman, & Bartholomew (2000) found that psychologists feel a high desire to help individually naturally leading to intrinsic satisfaction. Dutton, Dik, & Choi (2013) reported that psychologists who find meaning in their work tend to be more satisfied with their jobs.

According to Table 3.1 the difference in Intrinsic Satisfaction scores between the two groups is (-1.30000), t value is (-.849), p value is (.399), this difference is not significant at 0.05. the reason for an insignificant difference seems to be rooted in the fact that all psychologists, working in any workplace or setting are united by one common motive of helping clients to do better.

In reference to Table 2.1 for extrinsic satisfaction the mean scores were found to be (28.23) and SD of (6.84651) for psychologists working with organizations- indicating low job satisfaction. According to Table 2.1 a mean of (29.53) and SD of (5.06782) for psychologists working independently indicating, average job satisfaction. A study by Brown, A. Wallace. D (2011) talks about “Predicting burnout and job satisfaction in workplace counsellors’, the study revealed that workplace psychologists always have the pressure to maintain dual relationships, one with the client and one with organization, similarly they also feel challenged by inept organizational and business knowledge when working especially with corporate. For independent

psychologists, the external satisfaction is low as well, as the mean difference amongst the group appear to be only (-1.30000), in reference to Table 3.1, several reasons could be attributed to this, according to Maruma, B. (2021), psychologists working independently also face some issues that could contribute to lesser external satisfaction, reasons like, lack of social interactions, marketing their practice and handling all the business aspects of their practice with almost no training and education given on business. The lower score on extrinsic satisfaction asks for a reform in the system, be it giving practical business knowledge to psychologists in graduate schools that teaches them skills like finance, business and marketing or providing them with better career and growth opportunities.

According to Table 3.1 t-value is (-.849). However, the difference is not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, this finding exists in contrast with previously done research, as according to research there exists a stark difference in job satisfaction in psychologists according to various specialisations. (Vyhmeister, W. R. 2001). psychologists in independent practice tend to report higher job satisfaction compared to those working in managed care settings.

According to Table 2.1, for total/general job satisfaction, the mean obtained for psychologists in organizations was (75.3667) and SD was (14.26228) indicative of high job satisfaction, whereas mean for independent psychologists was (79.4667) noted to and SD was (9.00089) indicating a high job satisfaction, through the reference of Table 3.1, we can see that the difference in mean is (-4.10000), indicating that independent psychologists are more satisfied with their jobs as compared to the organisational psychologists. These findings are consistent with various research (Cunningham, L, 2010 and Wallace. D, 2011). The t-value was found to be (-1.332) and

the p-value was 0.188, indicating the difference is not significant at $p < 0.05$., thus the hypothesis is disproven. It is contrasting result in respect to previous studies (Vyhmeister, W. R. 2001) psychologists in independent practice tend to report higher job satisfaction. Both the groups reported high job satisfaction, relating to previous literature VanVoorhis, R. W., & Levinson, E. M. (2006), out that 85% of the psychologists were very satisfied with their jobs.

The second part of this study involved, exploring work life balance amongst the two groups. Work and life balance can be defined as the ability to thrive in both work and personal setting without compromising one's needs in either of the places. It is found to be positively related to life satisfaction, overall well-being and quality of life (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Gragnano et al., 2020).

In this study revised version of WLB scale was used which had 15 items (Hayman J, 2005), that measured scores on three facets work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, work and personal life enhancement and a combined scored was taken into account to find out total work and life balance, as items were negatively worded, lower score indicated a higher work life balance. The dimension of "Work Interference with Personal Life" (WIPL) measures the extent to which an individual's work responsibilities interfere with their personal or family life. As shown in Table 2.2, the mean score for psychologists working in organizations on the WIPL dimension was (18.1000) with SD of (6.28819) and according to Table 2.2 the mean score for independent psychologists on the WIPL dimension was (15.1333) with a standard deviation of (9.00089).

The higher mean score for psychologists working in organizations (18.1000) compared to independent psychologists (15.1333) suggests that psychologists employed in

organizational settings tend to experience greater interference of work in their personal life. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that employees in traditional organizational settings often face challenges in maintaining a healthy work-life balance due to factors such as rigid schedules, longer work hours, and organizational demands (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), also a study by Ferreira, S. and Zaia, V. (2023), 79% of psychologists reported feeling emotionally burnt out because of long working hours.

The difference in mean scores between the two groups was (2.96667), as shown in Table 3.2 The t-value of (2.025) and the p-value of (0.048) indicate that this difference is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. This suggests that the higher level of work interference with personal life experienced by psychologists in organizational settings, organizational cultures and expectations may place greater emphasis on work commitments, leading to a potential spillover effect into personal life (Bakker et al., 2011). Independent psychologists, on the other hand have higher and better flexibility when it comes to working, also helping them in managing their schedules (Dolinsky & Caputo, 2003).

The second dimension of the scale was personal life interference with work it examines the potential conflict arising from personal domain demands making one's work life inefficient (Frone et al., 1992).

As shown in Table 2.2 the mean score for psychologists working in organizations on the PLIW dimension was 8.0667 with a SD of (2.27328). For independent psychologists, according to the mean score on the PLIW dimension was 6.8000 with a S.D of (4.98780). While the score for independent psychologists falls under the category of low interference, organisational psychologists tend to experience average to high interference this could be because

employees in traditional organizational settings may face challenges in balancing personal and work demands due to factors such as inflexible schedules and limited control over work arrangements (Geurts et al., 2005). a recent study by Wiens et al. (2023) stated that social support especially like childcare plays a very crucial role in moderating the effects of work life balance.

The difference in mean scores between the two groups was 1.26667, as shown in Table 3.2 The t-value of (2.133) and the p-value of (0.037) indicate that this difference is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. Factors like psychologists having less flexibility in managing their personal responsibilities, because of strict working environment (Batt & Valcour, 2003). Independent psychologists, on the other hand, may have greater control over their schedules and work arrangements, allowing them to better accommodate personal demands without compromising their work obligations (Dolinsky & Caputo, 2003).

The "Work-Personal Life Enhancement" (WPE) dimension explores the extent to which an individual's work and personal life domains positively influence each other, leading to enrichment and growth in both domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). As shown in Table 2.2, the mean score for psychologists working in organizations on the WPE dimension was (12.3667) with a SD of (2.82212), while for independent psychologists, the mean score was (9.9000) with a SD of 2.32527), indicating that independent psychologists experience better personal and work life enrichment. The difference in mean scores between the two groups was (2.46667), as shown in Table 3.2 the t-value of (3.794) and the p-value of (< 0.001) indicate that this difference is significant at $p < 0.05$. Parasuraman & Simmers (2001) found out that working in an independent or private setting can felicitate better personal and work life enrichment.

The overall “Work-Life Balance” (WLB) dimension, encompasses both the positive and negative interactions between work and personal life domains, as well the enhancement and enrichment of personal and work domains Table 2.2 shows that the mean score for psychologists in organizations was (38.3000) with a SD of (7.01304), while for independent psychologists, the mean score was (31.8333) with a standard deviation of (7.53879) The lower mean score for independent psychologists suggests that they tend to experience better overall work-life balance. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the potential benefits of autonomy and flexibility in managing work and personal responsibilities for self-employed individuals (Dolinsky & Caputo, 2003; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). The difference in mean scores between the two groups was 6.46667, as shown in Table 3.2, The t-value of (3.440) and the p-value of (0.001) indicate that this difference is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$, thus hypothesis is proven. Key factors like organisational psychologists having to maintain dual relationships leads to lower satisfaction and worse work life balance (Brown, A. Wallace. D 2011). However, for the both the groups, the work and life balance levels appear to be satisfactory.

Conclusion

This study examined job satisfaction and work-life balance among organizational and independent psychologists (N = 60). While both groups reported high intrinsic job satisfaction and lower extrinsic satisfaction, no significant differences emerged in overall job satisfaction between groups. However, independent psychologists demonstrated significantly better work-life balance ($p < 0.05$), reporting lower work-life interference and higher work-personal life enhancement. Despite limitations including small sample size and limited gender diversity, these findings have important implications for

organizations and practitioners. The results suggest that organizational flexibility and autonomy contribute to better work-life integration, highlighting the need for institutions to implement flexible work arrangements and competitive compensation packages. This research addresses a crucial literature gap, particularly within the Indian context, and provides valuable insights for aspiring psychologists considering career paths in different professional settings. Future studies could benefit from larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal approaches to examine career trajectory changes over time.

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