

Psychological Well being of Employed Women across Different Organisations

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The present study examines the level of psychological well being among working women in different professions. A total of 325 women working in different organizations – industries, hospitals, banks, educational institutions and in call centers/BPOs were randomly selected. They were administered Carol Ryff's Medium Form of Psychological Well Being Scale. Results revealed that women employees working in industries had least psychological well being in all the sub factors and total psychological well being scores, followed by women working in health organizations. Women employees working in banks had medium level of psychological well being scores. Women teachers had highest total Psychological Well Being scores and also in the entire sub factors of Psychological Well Being. Each subscale of PWB is correlated significantly and positively with rest of the sub scales.

Keywords: Psychological well being, working women, organizations

Current research on well being has been derived from two general perspectives: the hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and defines well being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance; and the eudaimonic approach which focus on meaning and self actualization and defines well being in terms of the degree to which person is fully functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Diener (1984) has used the phrase "subjective well-being" to refer to the experience of well being associated with hedonic approach. Subjective well being refers to a person's evaluative reactions to his or her life either in terms of cognitive evaluations (satisfaction) and emotional reactions (affect). The concept of "psychological well being" acquired more importance in the field of Psychology over the last decade and in recent years psychological well being is the focus of intense research attention (Diener and Diener, 1995). Psychological Well Being is described as the quality of life of a person. It includes what lay people call "Happiness", "peace", "fulfillment"

and "life satisfaction". Ryff (1991) states that convergence of similar features of positive psychological functioning constitutes the core dimensions of psychological well being. Kumar (2006) observes that conceptions of well being are integrally related to how one views the nature of man and what perspective is valued.

Increase in women's participation in labor force over the past few decades have led to increased interest in the effects of employment on women's well being. Women employment has been investigated as either beneficial (role enhancement hypothesis) or detrimental (role strain hypothesis) to women's psychological well being. Women employment may be associated with better psychological functioning. This effect may be mediated by the over absorption of one's time and resources within a particular identity role (Elgar & Chester, 2007).

Erlandson (2006) hypothesized that women who work in the paid work force, those with low complex patterns of occupations

would rate their health and well being higher than women having medium complex patterns. Further, those with medium complex pattern would rate their health and well being better than women with high complex patterns. With respect to socio demographic factors, the women in the three sub groups differed in terms of level of education. Among full time employed mothers, those with positive attitude about employment had better Psychological Well Being. For mothers who worked part time, maternal attitude did not predict their psychological well being. Better Psychological Well Being predicted fewer problem behaviors and greater social competence. A balanced pattern of daily occupations and lifestyle factors contribute to working women's psychological well being. Various reasons for employment whether for monetary gains or personal satisfaction affects the well being of employed women. Among African-American professional women it was found that attainment of multiple degrees, the establishment of professional careers, achieving financial independence and the obtainment of coping resources may be major factors that may increase psychological well being (Williams 2006). Junko Sagara et al (2006) suggested that a husband's attitude towards their wife's approach to having a job may have an influence on the husband's psychological well being.

Varma and Dhawan (2006) in their study on 195 young urban educated married women with age range from 25-35 years (M=31.01 years) used socialization and personal control scale developed by themselves. They used Behavioral Attributes of Psycho social Competence (BAPC) developed by Tyler et.al (1984) and Subjective Well Being Index (SUBI) developed by Sell and Nagpal (1992). Using correlation and multiple regression analysis the study indicated that Indian women exhibited high level of Well Being. The dimension of family group support contributed more to well being. Correlation analysis

showed that personal control and Psycho Social competence are significantly positively related to subjective well being. This implies that more the women are able to control their major domains of lives and use active coping strategies better their sense of well being.

From the preceding paragraphs it is clear that working women will have more problems since they have to play multiple roles. The previous studies conducted earlier focused on psychological well being of employed women in general and used concepts like psychological well being, subjective well being, quality of life, satisfaction of life, happiness, mental health in an inter changeable way. The present study views psychological well being as distinct from these other concepts on various levels: type of measure, type of evaluation and temporary/stable. The study focuses on well being from the perspective of eudaimonic approach which emphasize meaning and self actualization and defines well being in terms of the degree to which person is fully functioning. Ryff (1989) extensively explored the meaning of psychological well being and thought that well being could be made sense by breaking it down into six dimensions each of which contributing to people's experience of well being. They are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self acceptance. Each dimension of psychological well being articulates different challenges as they strive to function positively. The study is an attempt to explore how employed women from different occupations (industries, hospitals, banks, educational institutions and call centers/BPO's) try to approach these different challenges. It is hypothesized that working women in different professions differ significantly in their psychological well being due to the nature of job and job conditions. An ex post facto research with quasi experimental design (Broota 1992) formed the methodology of the study.

Method

Sample:

The sample consisted of 325 employed women working in five different organizational sectors – industries (67), hospitals (63), banks(67), educational institutions(68) and in call centers/BPOs (60). Age range of this sample was 25-50 years. The mean age and SD of the sample is 34.06 and 8.06 respectively.

Tools:

Carol Ryff's Psychological Well Being Scale (1989)-Medium form: It consists of a series of 54 statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self acceptance. Respondents rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement. Internal consistency values (coefficient alpha) for each dimension varied between 0.86 and 0.91 indicating high reliability of the scale. Correlation coefficients with 20-item parent scale for each varies between 0.83 and 0.99 indicate higher level of validity for the scale.

The number of responses made by the subject on each question depends whether the question is positive or negative. If it is a positive question responses are rated from 1 to 6, where a score of 6 indicates strong agreement. If it is a negative question scoring done is in reverse order which is from 6 to 1,

where 6 indicated strong disagreement. For each category, a high score indicates that a respondent has a mastery of that area in her life. Conversely a low score shows that the respondent struggles to feel comfortable with that particular concept.

Results

Table 1 is evident that all the subscales of PWB scales correlated positively and significantly with other subscales as all the obtained correlation coefficients were found to be highly significant. The correlation coefficients ranged from .338 to .572 which are all found to be significant. In other words there were significant mutual relationships between subscales of PWB scales, where those who scored high in one subscale also scored high in rest of the scales and vice-versa. In total psychological well being scores, One-Way ANOVA indicates significant differences between employed women in different professions ($F=19.366;P=.000$). Further Scheffe's post hoc test revealed that the mean scores of women in teaching and women in call centers/BPOs significantly differed from mean scores of women working in industry and health organizations. Women teachers ($M=231.51$, $SD=39.26$) expressed significantly higher psychological well being scores compared to women working in industry and health organizations ($M=193.73$ and 200.32 , $SD=24.56$, 28.36 respectively). However women working in banking sector had mean score of 217.48 and $SD=29.87$.

Table 1: Correlation coefficients between subscales of Psychological wellbeing scale

Subscales	Environmental mastery	Personal relations	Personal growth	Self acceptance	Purpose in life
Autonomy	.507	.443	.385	.388	.338
Environmental mastery -		.501	.473	.462	.350
Personal relations -			.572	.404	.370
Personal growth -				.545	.386
Self acceptance -					.448

df=323

a. Autonomy

In autonomy factor, significant differences were observed between women in different professions ($F=17.877$; $P=.000$). Women in teaching profession have highest autonomy scores ($M=38.83$) followed by women in call centers/BPOs ($M=37.85$) and women working in industry had least autonomy ($M=30.64$) which is further confirmed by Scheffe's post hoc test, where women employees working in industrial health organizations had significantly lesser scores and women employees in call centers/BPO's and in teaching had higher scores.

b. Environmental mastery

In environmental mastery significant differences were observed between women in different professions ($F=20.859$; $P=.000$). Women in teaching profession have highest environmental mastery score ($M=39.13$; $SD=6.635$) followed by women in banks ($M=38.54$; $SD=7.602$) which is further confirmed by Scheffe's post hoc test. The test revealed no difference between mean scores of women employees in industry and health organizations who had less scores compared to women employees working in other professions-call centers/BPO's, banks and teaching.

c. Personal growth

In personal growth significant differences were observed between women in different professions ($F=6.773$; $P=.000$). Women in teaching and in call centers/BPO's have highest personal growth scores ($M=37.59$, 38.49 ; $SD=7.123$, 5.537 respectively) followed by women in banks ($M=36.02$; $SD=6.999$). Women working in industry had least personal growth ($M=33.73$; $SD=5.501$) which is further confirmed by Scheffe's post hoc test. The test revealed that women employees working in industry and health organization did not differ significantly among themselves and women employees working in teaching and call centers/BPO's had higher scores. However

no significant differences was observed in mean scores of bank employees with any other professions.

d. Positive relations with others

In positive relations with others significant differences were observed between women in different professions ($F=13.50$; $P=.000$). Women teachers have highest positive relation scores ($M=39.89$; $SD=7.072$) followed by women in call centers/BPOs ($M=39.10$; $SD=6.997$). Women working in industry had least positive relation score ($M=32.72$; $SD=5.202$) which is further confirmed by Scheffe's post hoc test. In positive relation with others the test revealed that women employees working in industry, health organization and in banks had lesser scores and did not differ significantly among themselves and women employees working in teaching, call centers/BPO's and in banks had higher scores.

e. Purpose in life

In the area of purpose in life significant differences were observed between women in different professions ($F=11.03$; $P=.000$). Women teachers have highest scores in the area of purpose in life ($M=39.28$; $SD=6.808$) followed by women in call centers/BPO's ($M=37.79$; $SD=6.086$). Women working in industry had least purpose in life ($M=32.83$; $SD=6.132$) which is further confirmed by Scheffe's post hoc test. In this factor the test revealed no differences between mean scores of women employees in industry and health organizations who had less scores compared to women employees working in other professions-call centers/BPO's, banks and in teaching.

f. Self acceptance

In the area of self acceptance significant differences were observed between women in different professions ($F=17.346$; $P=.000$). Women teachers have highest scores in self acceptance ($M=40.59$; $SD=7.600$) followed by

women working in call centers/BPO's (M=38.62; SD=6.372). Women working in industry had least score in self acceptance (M=32.84; SD=6.147) which is further confirmed by Scheffe's post hoc test. The test revealed no difference between mean scores of women employees in industry, health organizations and in banks who had less scores compared to women employees working in other professions-call centers/BPO's and in teaching.

Discussion

On the whole it was found that women working in industries had lowest psychological well being scores and women in the teaching profession had the highest psychological well being scores. In industry women work for considerably longer hours (8 to 10 hours) compared to other sectors. In addition such women are involved in risky and stress prone jobs. An informal discussion with working women in industries revealed that they had restricted number of holidays and works in an unhygienic environment and also not satisfied with their salary.

A teacher is one who helps student often in a school, religious or community settings. Women teachers derive intrinsic satisfaction in the process of teaching students. They also perceive themselves as suitable mentors to provide advice and guidance to students. An informal interview with the women teachers also revealed that they are satisfied with all the facilities provided and express the view that there is opportunity for their all round development. In modern educational setting the teacher is defined as a specialized professional on the same level as many other professions.

The results of the present study are in agreement with the findings of Pandey and Srivastava (2003) who examined the role of work stress and coping in the prediction of physical and psychological health of career women. Results of the study revealed that

different groups of females varied on work stress, coping and illness. Work stress caused by interpersonal and physical condition, and job interest was greater among railway clerks than bank clerks and teachers respectively. Railway clerks expressed maximum health problems among all the groups. Minimum levels of stress and illness were reported by teachers. They also scored better on active and adaptive coping than other counterparts. The study by Sharma et.al (2001) assessed the impact of job stress on the mental health of 120 women aged 25-35 years and 50 years and above, with low (non working), moderate (job requiring approximately 4 hours per day) and high job stress (job requiring 8 hours or more per day). There were 40 subjects in each group. The general health questionnaire and mental health inventory were administered to all subjects individually. Age and interaction of age and job stress had no significant effect on general health questionnaire and mental health inventory scores. The moderate job stress group was less prone to psychological depression, exhibited the least symptom of neurotic disorders and had better mental health as compared with the low or high job stress group. A Korean study Sunkyung, Kim, and Barbaradaly (2004) on nurses reported moderate levels of life satisfaction, low levels of work satisfaction and high levels of burnout.

Sahu and Rath (2003) examined efficacy-wellness linkage among working and non working women from urban areas of Orissa and found positive and significant correlation between self efficacy and well being in all cases. The study also explored that strong involvement in work enhances women's well being. In general, employment, marriage and parenthood are associated with good mental and physical health among both men and women. So, most women today look forward to change of status, since they have high financial and emotional security provided by their work experience. A fifteen years review of stress among women revealed that in

addition to pressures acting on all physicians women physicians face specific stressors related to discrimination, lack of role models and support, role strain and over load. Though the depression rate does not vary from the general public the rates of suicide and divorce are much higher. They often lack mentors to provide advice and guidance. They must cope with pressures of choosing when to have a child and conflicts between being wife and mother and having a career (Robinson, 2003).

Fava, Ruini, and Ottolini (2003) analysed the concept of psychological well being and its relationship to distress and personality traits. The exploratory factor analysis showed a factor structure where well being, distress and personality remained separated. Psychological well being scales (Ryff scale, 1989) were negatively and significantly correlated with all symptom scales. Mean level difference by gender showed that in general women significantly presented with lower levels of well being except in positive relations and higher levels of distress and personality disturbances. The results suggest that the relationship of well being to distress and personality is complex. Psychological well being could not be equated with the absence of symptoms or with personality traits.

It may be noted from the above studies that employment of women provides opportunity to become self reliant and hence it was expected that working women would be higher on well being but no significant difference in the psychological well being was found. The studies also revealed that since working women have to carry out dual role, they are more likely to face conflicting situations and stressful life events. These conflicting and stressful situations that a working woman faces due to her employment may result in experiencing poorer psychological well being. So the employment of women as such does not emerge as a factor contributing to their psychological well being. It may also be noted that these investigators

failed to find any effects of paid employment on the psychological well being of women. The present study underlines the fact that it is not the career opportunities and employment of the women that affects psychological well being: rather it is the job nature and working conditions of women contribute to their experience of psychological well being. However, promoting psychological well being of employed women requires co-operation of people at individual, community, government and at the societal level at large.

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