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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELF- EFFICACY AND SUBJECTIVE WELL- BEING AMONG EMPLOYED WOMEN AND UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship of self-efficacy with subjective well-being among employed women working in different organizational set up. The sample consists of 325 employed women working in five different organizational sectors. They were administered Personal Efficacy scale, Affectometer, Satisfaction with Life scale and General happiness scale. The study used statistical measure of one way ANOVA and Pearson's product moment correlation. The findings revealed that there is significant difference in self efficacy and Subjective well- being among women working in different sectors. The findings also revealed that there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and Subjective well-being among unemployed women. These findings have important practical implications in an organizational set up.

KEYWORDS

Employed Women, Unemployed Women, Self Efficacy, Subjective Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of self-efficacy has received increasing empirical attention in the Organizational Behaviour literature. Variable self efficacy has been studied in more than 10,000 investigations in the past twenty-five years. In organizational research, the most focal variable to which self efficacy has been related to is work related performance. It is likely that individuals bring with them to the work situation certain characteristics that are related to self-efficacy (Judge, 2007). Self-efficacy can have impact on everything from psychological states to behaviour to motivation. An individual's self-efficacy plays a major role in how goals, tasks and challenges are approached. According to Albert Bandura (1995) self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organize and to execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations. In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura (1994) described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave and feel. It is concerned not with the skills one has, but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to successfully execute specific tasks within a given context (Luthans, 2005). Bandura (1997) suggested that those with high self-efficacy expectancies are healthier, more effective and generally more successful than those with low self-efficacy expectancies. People who think they can perform well on a task do better than those who think they will fail (Marilyn & Terence, 1992).

Most of us would hope first for a long life, one that does not end prematurely. Most people would hope for a happy and satisfying life in which good things and pleasant experiences outnumber bad ones. Defining good life in terms of personal happiness is the general thrust of the hedonic view of well-being. This view of well-being is expressed in terms of subjective well-being (Baumgartner & Crothers, 2009).

Some researchers are of the idea that what comprises a happy and good life depends on the individual's own mental or cognitive framework and perception. From this perspective, experience of happiness and satisfaction in one's life is a subjective phenomenon and it depends on an individual's subjective evaluation of one's life. This subjective perception of happiness and life satisfaction has been referred to as Subjective Well-being (SWB). Sell and Nagpal (1992) observed that all indicators of psychological well-being have both objective and subjective components. The objective components relate to concerns that are generally known by the term 'standard of living.' However, individual satisfaction or happiness with objective reality depends not only on the access to goods and services that are available to the community but also on his expectations and perceived reality. It is the subjective component which links the concept of life to subjective well-being. From this perspective, subjective well-being is considered to be a function of the degree of congruence between individual's wishes, needs and his environmental demands and opportunities. The component of subjective well-being has three distinct features. First it is subjective. According to Campbell (1976), it resides within the experience of the individual. Secondly, it includes positive measures. It is not just the absence of negative factors. Thirdly, subjective well-being measures typically include a global assessment of all aspects of a person's life. Although effect of satisfaction within a certain domain may be assessed, the emphasis is usually placed on an integrated judgment of the person's life. Diener, Eunkook and Shigehiro (1997) define subjective well-being as "how people evaluate their lives". SWB is "a judgement, an evaluation and an appraisal." (Argyle & Crossland, 1997; Diener, 2000).

SWB represents people's evaluation of their lives and includes happiness, pleasant emotions, life satisfaction and a relative absence of unpleasant moods and emotions (Diener & Diener 2000). Happiness is a state of mind or feeling such as contentment, satisfaction, pleasure or joy. A variety of philosophical, religious, psychological and biological approaches have been taken to defining happiness and identifying its sources. Positive affect is a summary term for pleasant emotions such as laughter and love. Life satisfaction is a subjective assessment of the quality of one's life and has conceptualized as a key indicator of well-being. It is a cognitively oriented subjective judgement of one's current life situation in relation to one's own expectations. Satisfaction with one's life implies contentment with or acceptance of one's life circumstances or the fulfilment of one's wants and needs for one's life as a whole (Jan & Masood, 2007).

A widely accepted view about subjective well-being is that it consists of three primary components: prevalence of positive affect, relative absence of negative affect and life satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Diener, 1984). These components are both cognitive and affective in nature. SWB is structured such that these three components form a global factor of interrelated variables. Each of these faces of SWB can in turn be broken into sub-divisions. Global satisfaction can be divided into satisfaction with various domains of life such as recreation, love, marriage, friendship and so forth. Pleasant affect can be divided into specific emotions such as joy, affection and pride. Finally unpleasant affect can be separated into specific emotions and moods such as shame, guilt, sadness, anger and anxiety. Sahoo and Bidyadhar (1998) stated that at least four dominant dimensions influence the way people evaluate their own subjective well-being: 'evaluation of positive affective experience', 'evaluation of negative affective experience', 'feeling of personal competence on handling negative experience' and 'feeling of personal competence in driving positive experience'. However, subjective well-being can be assessed at the most global level, or at progressively narrower level depending on one's purpose.

DETERMINANTS OF SWB

People experience subjective well-being when they feel many pleasant and few unpleasant emotions, when they are engaged in interesting activities, when they experience many pleasures and few pains and when they are satisfied with their lives. People who are successful at attaining frequent positive affect will be happy (Diener et al 1989). A number of demographic variables such as income (Diener & Oishi 2000), age (Diener & Suh 1997), marriage (Diener et.al 1999) and religion (Myers & Diener 1995) influence the subjective well-being. A strong sense of self efficacy enhances SWB in many ways. High level of self efficacy contributes to high levels of engagement and life satisfaction (Levi 1987). Gender and Religion also influence SWB (Singh & Udania 1999). Culture influences SWB in two ways. First, culture has direct effects on SWB. People living in individualistic, rich and democratic cultures have higher levels of SWB than do those living in collectivistic poor and totalitarian culture (Diener & Suh, 1999; Veenhoven, 1993). Second, culture moderates the relation between hedonic balance and

life satisfaction (Suh et.al.1998). Personality research on SWB suggests that neuroticism and extraversion influence life satisfaction indirectly through their influence on hedonic balance (Lucas, Diener & Suh, 1996). Clearly, interventions to increase subjective well-being are important not only because it feels good to be happy but also because happy people tend to have more positive work behaviour and exhibit other desirable characteristics.

EMPLOYED WOMEN/WORKING WOMEN

Employment is viewed by policy makers as both a human right and as a means of changing the marginalized status of people. "Employed woman is a woman who is gainfully employed often specifically as distinct from a housewife-a woman who specifically works for wages in organized sectors" (<http://www.yourdictionary.com/workingwoman>). Working woman is a woman who has a job or a woman who is in job-a woman who is employed (hired, job holding, retained, working). A woman involved in activity or work (busy, engaged, and occupied) is an employed woman. A woman who works and labours is also an employed woman. Women employed means having women services engaged for or having a job especially one that pays wages or salary. Employed woman is having woman services engaged for or utilized. Women employees normally receive holidays and pay. A Woman employee while she is employed, for the period of such employment is protected by 'Women and Women rights.'

The present study uses the terms Employed women, Working women interchangeably.

Women entered the labour force in the organized sector in the late nineteenth century (Reddy 1985). Women constitute a growing proportion of labour force in India. Women employment has been investigated as either beneficial (role enhancement hypothesis) or detrimental (role strain hypothesis) to women's psychological well-being. Due to longer life span of women and the tendency of men to marry younger women it is likely that women would encounter retirement and widowhood within a relatively short span of time, which may affect their psychological and physical well-being. This effect may be mediated by the over-absorption of one's time and resources within a particular identity role (Elgar, Karen, Chester Andra, 2007).

In this period of economic liberalization and globalization, the quality of women's employment will depend upon several factors. The foremost among these are access to education and opportunities for skill development. Employed women, though encounter role conflict, have learnt to become firm and assertive. They know the pressures of balancing work and family, the difficulties or making ends meet and the challenges of getting ahead. Employment, in addition to their roles and changes in their life experiences, does lead to increased perceptions of control among women (Thakar & Mishra, 1999). Gainful employment is likely to bring a change in the quality of life and is characterized by the following eight benefits: 1. Varieties in duties performed. 2. A safe working environment. 3. Income for the family and oneself. 4. A purpose derived from providing a product or service. 5. Happiness and satisfaction. 6. Positive engagement and involvement. 7. A sense of performing well and meeting goals. 8. The companionship of/and loyalty to co-workers, bosses and organizations. However, in general, women employment may be associated with better psychological functioning.

Women's access to employment is to a significant extent related to their education and skill upgradation. Increase in women's labour force participation rates, over the past few decades; have led to increased interest in the effect of employment on women's work efficiency and their well-being. The present study is an attempt to nurture this interest.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the present study is to understand the relationship between self efficacy and Subjective well-being among employed women across different organizations. This investigation is a gender-based study. The research adopts constructs from different disciplines like Positive Psychology, Organizational Psychology, Career Psychology and Women Psychology. The study was carried out to test the hypotheses A) that there will be a significant difference in self efficacy and in subjective well being among employed women. B) There will be a significant relationship between aspects of subjective well-being and self efficacy among employed women.

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 325 employed women who comprised the subjects of this study. These 325 employed women were working in five different organizational sectors of Bangalore city - Industries (N=64), Hospitals (N=68), Banks (N=61), Educational institutions (N=71) and in Call Centres / BPO (N=61). Age range of the sample was 25-52 years. The mean age and SD of the sample is 34.06 and 8.06 respectively.

Distribution of the sample selected sector-wise and age-wise is given in the table.

TOOLS

The following tools were used in the study:

1. Self Efficacy Scale by Singh and Kumar (1997)

The questionnaire on personal efficacy was developed by Singh and Kumar in the year 1997. (Appendix) The questionnaire consists of 28 items followed by a five point rating scale. There are two types of items in this scale positively worded items and negatively worded items. Negatively worded items are reverse scored. Positively worded items are 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24, 26, and 28. Negatively worded items are 1, 6, 8, 9, 10, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25 and 27. The total of both positive and negative worded items is the score of the subject on self efficacy scale.

2. Affectometer

This scale was developed by Kammann and Flett (1983) to measure quality of life as experienced on an affective level. This inventory consists of 20 items which measure the positive and negative affect in relation to different life aspects.

3. Satisfaction with Life Scale

This scale developed by Diener et.al (1985) is a measure of cognitive evaluation of one's well-being. The scale consists of 5 items which measure person's well-being according to his/her own criteria. This is a seven-point scale measured on a cognitive judgement level.

4. General Happiness scale by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999):

This scale measures the subjective happiness. It is 4-item scale out of which two items ask respondents to characterize themselves using both absolute ratings and ratings relative to peers, while other two items offer brief description of happy and unhappy individuals, ask respondents as to how they characterized themselves.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

TABLE 1: MEAN SELF EFFICACY SCORES OF EMPLOYEES WORKING IN DIFFERENT SECTORS AND RESULTS OF ONE-WAY ANOVA.

Sectors	Mean	S.D	F value	P value
Teachers	105.97	10.04	82.063	0.000
Banking employees	114.20	16.16		
Health organizations	85.60	12.32		
Industry	82.98	12.12		
Call centers/BPOs	120.61	21.87		

Employees working in different sectors differed significantly in their mean scores on self efficacy ($F=82.063$; $P=.000$). Further, Scheffe's post hoc test revealed that employees working in industry and health sectors had least self efficacy (means 82.98 and 85.60 respectively) and employees working in CC/BPOs sector had higher scores (mean score 120.61) and others in between (teachers 105.97; banking 114.20).

TABLE 2: MEAN TOTAL SWB SCORES OF EMPLOYEES WORKING IN DIFFERENT SECTORS AND RESULTS OF ONE-WAY ANOVA

Professions	Mean	S.D	F value	P value
Teachers	103.75	24.14	23.022	.000
Banking employees	107.30	11.72		
Health organizations	102.91	12.56		
Industry	92.89	13.90		
Call centers/BPOs	120.44	15.19		

As far as total subjective well-being scores are considered, women working in CC/BPO sector had highest SWB scores (mean 120.44) followed by banking employees (mean 107.29) teachers (mean 103.75), health organizations (mean 102.91) and employees working in industries had least SWB scores (mean 92.89). Further, Scheffe's post hoc test revealed that the mean SWB scores of employees working in health organizations, teachers, and banking were statistically same, employees in industrial sector had least SWB and employees in CC/BPO had highest SWB scores.

TABLE 3: CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN DIMENSIONS OF SWB AND SELF EFFICACY SCORES FOR THE ENTIRE SAMPLE

Variable 1 (Aspects of SWB)	Variable 2	Correlation coefficient	Significance
Life satisfaction	Self efficacy	.291	.000
Happiness	Self efficacy	.450	.000
Positive affect	Self efficacy	.428	.000
Negative affect	Self efficacy	.017	.761

Between various aspects of SWB and self efficacy, highly significant correlations were observed, where all the obtained correlations were found to be significant at .000 level except for negative affect. Dispositional happiness as measured by Lumomirsky's scale and positive affect correlated highly than life satisfaction with self efficacy. In other words, negative affect and self efficacy were independent of each other and self efficacy has a significant relation with positive affect state.

The hypotheses that there will be a significant difference in self efficacy are accepted. Analysis of table 1 revealed that employees working in different sectors differ significantly in their mean scores on self efficacy. Further analysis revealed that employees working in industry had least self efficacy (mean score=82.98) and employees in CC/BPO sectors had highest scores (mean score=120.61). Women employees in industries are involved in risky and highly stress prone jobs. This may lead to lowering their self efficacy. It may be speculated that the variability of call centre work and job satisfaction arising from interaction with customers may result in increased self efficacy. The attractive perks and available infrastructure facilities in CC/BPOs may help to boost self efficacy of its employees. The employees in CC/BPOs will have high cognitive skills and aptitudes even before the entry level. Further, this has to be maintained throughout due to the fear of job threat. Susan (1993) explored a study on ninety-six women in non traditional occupations and hundred women in traditional occupations. These women completed self efficacy measure. The results showed that employed women do have higher self efficacy for working with people than with things. Among the difference between the two groups, women in traditional occupations scored higher on self efficacy in comparison with women in non traditional occupations. This finding partially confirms the results of the present study.

A study by Zeldin and Pajarel (2000) explored the personal stories of women who selected and continued to excel in career in areas of Mathematics, Science and technology to better understand the ways in which their self efficacy beliefs influence their academic and career choices. Analysis of fifteen narratives revealed that verbal persuasion and vicarious experiences were critical sources of women's self efficacy beliefs. These findings also suggest that the perceived importance of these sources of self efficacy beliefs is stronger for women in male oriented domains than in traditional settings.

The hypothesis that there will be significant difference in subjective well-being is accepted since women differed significantly in terms of well-being scores. One-Way ANOVA revealed that women employees working in different sectors differ significantly in their mean scores on subjective well being. Analysis also revealed that on SWB employees in Call centers/BPOs scored highest (mean score= 120.44) and employees working in industry scored least (mean score=92.89). This finding can be explained in the light of the nature of activities associated with the job settings. Teachers derive intrinsic satisfaction in their noble profession and employees in call centres/BPOs are happy due to the attractive perks and facilities they get in their settings. Call Centre/BPO employees get quick promotions with multiple increments. Frenkel et.al (1998) points to a greater diversity in call centre work revealing environments where jobs provide challenge and where the skills of the workers are valued. Employees in industry work for longer duration (8-12 hours) with heavy work load and role demands resulting in least satisfaction.

The findings of the present investigation are in consistence with the study by Sahu and Mohapatra (2009). The purpose of their study was to examine the role of professional settings on PWB. Subjects were chosen from five different professions: executives, teachers, administrators, doctors and engineers. The dependent variables in the study were overall satisfaction, satisfaction with general area of life functioning, positive affect experience and negative affect experience. All these variables were measured using Life Orientation Questionnaire. Findings indicated that doctors and teachers experience maximum happiness whereas administrators experience the least. Engineers and executives were placed in the intermediate positions. The findings of the study were explained in the light of professional specific role demands and expectations.

Occupational setting may be considered as a 'mini-culture'. Each occupation has its own norms, expectations and corresponding value systems. Accordingly, the happiness and satisfaction in different occupational sectors may be expressed differently. It is suggested that different professional groups undergo different forms of work socialization. Their work settings, reward systems, colleagues and higher authorities place different kinds of demands on their response systems. For instance, the nature of experience encountered by teachers is qualitatively different from the experience faced by administrators. Teachers get too many holidays with salary. On the other hand employees in industries get limited holidays and also have the disadvantage of economic affluence and power positions. Such possibilities of difference in experience may induce varied type of cognitive and affective states in employees working in different sectors. Accordingly, the comparison of groups with respect to satisfaction and happiness in several domains of life may result in significant difference.

The hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between aspects of Subjective Well-Being and self efficacy is accepted. Analysis (table no 3) reveals that there is a significant relationship between aspects of subjective well-being and self efficacy except for negative affect ($r=0.291$; $P=0.000$, $r=0.450$; $P=0.000$, $r=0.428$; $P=0.000$). Negative affect and self efficacy were independent of each other.

A recent study (Yuchua & Schangui 2004) examined the characteristics of general self efficacy and subjective well-being and their relation in college students of low socio-economic status in China. Individuals with stronger general self efficacy reported higher levels of SWB. General self efficacy was positively related to subjective well being

IMPLICATIONS

The study contains several policy implications. The results of the study have implication in organizational setting. The fact that self efficacy is related to subjective well-being, demands that organizations should begin to develop programmes to foster self efficacy among employed women. Management consultants, counsellors and psychologists should also develop self efficacy programmes and use them to enhance SWB of employees. This may be incorporated as a part of the organizational training programme. The study also promotes awareness among working women to develop and utilize their full potential as resource for organizational development. The findings of the study may help in developing appropriate personnel policies for women employees. Thus the findings may have numerical implications for research and practice in organizational setup.

In terms of practical implications, the findings of the study suggest that training programmes aimed at changing employees' efficacy beliefs should be conducted which in turn will enhance their subjective well-being and performance at the work place. Meanwhile organization should focus on both employees' self efficacy and subjective well being in order to achieve productive and healthy work lives in the long term.

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