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Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Well-being among Working Women

By Rema M.K¹, Ritu Gupta²

Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being among working women. 104 working women were selected from various levels of employment including higher, middle, and lower using purposive sampling method. Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Well-being scales were used to collect data. The 5 sub-scales of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social skills. The Subjective Well-being scale is divided into four aspects: satisfaction with life in general and in different areas of life, satisfaction with work and job performance, satisfaction with the economic situation in the last year, and moods/emotions during the previous week. Pearson's Product-Moment correlation and Descriptive analysis were done to find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being. The impact of emotional intelligence and subjective well-being was obtained through a linear regression analysis. Results showed that there is a significant positive correlation (0.5) between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being, signifying the importance of the need to work on developing emotional intelligence in working women.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Subjective Well-being, Working Women

Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional Intelligence (EI) was a term first used by Mayer and Salovey (1997) who described it as “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotions; the ability to access and or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer et al., 2001). Reuben (2003) coined the term EQ for ‘Emotional Quotient’ hence the acronym of EQ for Emotional Intelligence as opposed to Emotional Intelligence. At the heart of EQ is the awareness of one’s own behavior to self-regulate and to understand other people’s behavior. It is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle

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interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. It refers to the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others.

Subjective Well-being (SWB)

Subjective well-being (SWB) is one measure of the quality of life of an individual and of societies. Diener *et al.* (1998) suggested that subjective well-being is one of three ways to assess the quality of life of societies along with economic and social indicators. Subjective wellbeing is increasingly important in a democratic world in which we want people to live fulfilling lives as evaluated by themselves not simply as judged by policy makers or autocrats. As people in the world come to meet their basic needs they become increasingly concerned with happiness and fulfilment.

Review of Literature

Many researchers have found a relationship between high emotional intelligence and subjective well-being. The subjective assessment of quality of life or, in other words, the way people evaluate their lives is referred to as 'subjective well-being'. These evaluations can be both cognitive and affective and refer to life as a whole and/or to specific domains of it such as work or social life (Diener *et al.*, 1999). Subjective well-being involves several distinct components, such as general satisfaction with life as a whole or with significant life domains (example, satisfaction with social or work life), positive effect and smaller levels of negative effect (Diener, 2000).

Several factors have been hypothesized to account for the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and subjective well-being (SWB). First, under the assumptions that highly emotionally intelligent individuals are more aware of their emotions and are better able to regulate them, they should experience lower levels of distress and stress related emotions and, thus, experience high level of well-being (Salovey *et al.*, 1999). Second, highly emotionally intelligent individuals display an enhanced sense of subjective well-being due to the assumption that they have an advantage in terms of higher social competence, enriched social networks, and more effective coping strategies (Salovey *et al.*, 1999). Third, because emotions are a rich source of information about one's relationship to the environment and others in the environment, interpreting and responding to that information can direct action and thought in ways that enhance and maintain well-being (Parrott, 2004). Finally, emotional intelligence has been found to be associated with a lower propensity to experience negative emotions and a higher propensity to experience positive emotions, thus contributing to a richer sense of subjective well-being (Nelis *et al.*, 2009). Hence, emotional intelligence has been commonly hypothesized to predict one's subjective sense of well-being and mental health.

The field of subjective well-being comprises the scientific analysis of how people evaluate their lives both currently and over longer periods of time such as over the past year. These evaluations include people's emotional reactions to events, their mood and judgment they form about their life satisfaction, fulfilment, and satisfaction with domains such as marriage and work (Diener *et al.*, 2003). Mayer and Salovey (1997) conducted a study on emotional intelligence, affect, and attitudes. The result of the study was that, despite important exceptions, people are usually motivated to seek pleasant feelings and avoid unpleasant ones. The ability to manage emotions can help people nurture positive affect, avoid being overwhelmed by negative affect, and cope with stress. Other emotional abilities, such as perceiving and understanding emotions, also contribute indirectly to the quality of one's emotional experiences by helping people to identify

and interpret cues that inform self-regulatory action. Therefore, emotional intelligence should contribute to positive affects and attitudes at work.

Although researchers now know a great deal more about the correlates of Subjective well-being, they are less interested in simply describing the demographic characteristics that correlate with it. Instead, they focus their effort on understanding the processes that underlie happiness. This trend represents a greater recognition of the central role played by people's goals, coping efforts, and dispositions (Diener *et al.*, 1999). Growth in the field of subjective well-being reflects larger societal trends concerning the value of the individual, the importance of subjective views in evaluating life, and the recognition that well-being includes positive elements that transcend economic prosperity. The scientific study of subjective well-being developed in part as a reaction to the overwhelming emphasis in psychology on negative states. Several other methods for assessing subjective well-being besides global self-reports are now available. Kahneman and Tversky (2000) argued that experience sampling measures of happiness ought to be the primary method for measuring subjective well-being. By sampling moods, emotions, and other feelings at random moments in respondents' everyday lives, this method reduces the memory biases that affect retrospective reports of experiences. Despite some limitations, experience sampling may sometimes provide more accurate values than global reports (Shiffman and Stone, 1998). Other methods such as scoring qualitative descriptions of people's lives (Thomas and Chambers, 1989), measuring reactions to emotionally ambiguous stimuli (Rusting & Larsen, 1997), and recording people's memories for good and bad events (Pavot *et al.*, 1991) can also be used to assess subjective well-being. Finally, physiological measures such as salivary cortisol levels (Dinan, 1994) might also be used to indicate levels of well-being and ill-being.

Ed Diener developed a tripartite model of subjective well-being in 1984, which describes how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments. It posits "three distinct but often related components of wellbeing: frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and cognitive evaluations such as life satisfaction." Subjective well-being, therefore, encompasses moods and emotions as well as evaluations of one's satisfaction with general and specific areas of one's life. Happiness is an important concept that is encompassed by subjective well-being. Subjective well-being tends to be stable over time and is strongly related to personality traits. There is evidence that health and subjective well-being may mutually influence each other, as good health tends to be associated with greater happiness, and several studies have found that positive emotions and optimism can have a beneficial influence on health.

Rationale of the Study

As the country moves to embrace women in all spheres of life, there is a need to look at attributes that can enable women to enjoy and relish this journey toward equality. India is a predominantly patriarchal society, which means there are some unique challenges that working women in this country face in addition to the normal challenges of work like stress and pressure to perform. Major challenges include maternity and family pressure, wage gaps, role biases, gender stereotypes, lack of sensitivity towards women, and mental and sexual harassment. Although several steps have been taken to introduce a legal framework to enable women's right to gender equality, like the POSH Act, 2013 (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) and Maternity (Amendment) Bill 2017 aligned to the provisions of our constitution, it will take significant time to bring about

societal changes. To address this situation, it is very important to work on attributes that can improve the overall well-being of working women.

The present study examines two variables—emotional intelligence and subjective well-being—to find a relationship between them to improve the well-being of working women. Research proves that there is a direct relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being. Happiness and self-esteem positively affect the health of working women. Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between self-esteem and happiness for working women. Subjective well-being is an indicator of quality of life and is very crucial for physical functioning and mental health. Job satisfaction is often considered as a valid indicator of subjective well-being at work. Satisfaction with work and with work performance, economic situation, moods, and emotions are some of the dimensions that define subjective well-being. The idea that the traits associated with high emotional intelligence are necessary for working women to possess has a certain amount of *prima facie* validity. Studies have demonstrated that professionals who report higher levels of emotional intelligence also report higher levels of attending to health and appearance and more positive interactions with others. Similarly, Gardner and Stough (2002) found significantly positive relationships between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. It is necessary to measure well-being to rescue the human part of professional life, to identify those aspects of work life that limit or increase well-being in order to maximize positive conditions, to have a positive impact on the work environment in general. Hence, an attempt has been made to assess the level of emotional intelligence and subjective well-being of working women and examine the relationship among both.

Methodology

Research Problem

The present study aims to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being amongst working women.

Objectives

To examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Well-Being among Working women.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being among working women

Alternate Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being among working women.

Sample

Non-probability sampling method was used in this study. Purposive sampling was used. The sample consisted of working women primarily from India and metropolitan areas. A sample of 103 working women was taken. Data collection was done through google forms because of the social distancing protocols in place due the Covid-19 pandemic. Inclusion criteria included

working women from metro cities in India and exclusion criteria included working women with any ailments or under medical treatment.

Research Design

In the present study, an attempt is made to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being, and the study follows a non-experimental correlational research design.

Tools

The following tools have been used to assess emotional intelligence and subjective well-being of working women.

Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

The study used the Emotional intelligence scale recommended by National Health Services (2019) with five subscales that adopt a five-point scale to collect data. The scale is meant for finding differences between individuals. The 5 sub-scales are self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social skills.

Subjective Well-being Questionnaire

This is a self-reported measure of well-being. The questionnaire used in this study to collect the data on subjective well-being was taken from “Measuring the Subjective Well-being of Teachers” designed by Rosa *et al.* (2017).

The instrument has three parts, with a total of 95 questions. The first part integrates the sub-dimensions or sub-scales to measure subjective well-being. The second section incorporates a set of questions that allow us to know the pleasant or unpleasant situations or events that the teacher experienced during the previous 12 months. The last section includes social and work context data of the teachers.

This study uses only the first part of this questionnaire which is concerned with subjective well-being, with a total of 45 questions, subdivided into four dimensions: satisfaction with life in general and in different areas of life, satisfaction with work and with work performance, satisfaction with the economic situation in the last year, and moods/emotions during the previous week. The questionnaire was modified to be used for working women rather than teachers only.

Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis was done by calculating mean and S.D to understand the overall characteristics of the data. Correlation was calculated by Pearson product correlation to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being.

Results and Discussion

Results

Table 1: Sample of the Study

Sample	Range	N	%age
Age (years)	< 25	5	4.9
	25 - 30	9	8.7
	30 - 35	9	8.7
	35 - 40	24	23.3
	40 - 45	26	25.2
	45 - 50	20	19.4
	> 50	10	9.7
Working Exp (Number of years)	< 5	33	32
	5 - 10	25	24.3
	10 - 15	19	18.4
	15 - 20	10	9.7
	20 - 25	10	9.7
	> 25	6	5.8
Profession	Corporate Professional	12	11.7
	Psychologist/Counselor	11	10.7
	Self Employed	3	2.9
	Doctor	4	3.9
	Teacher / Lecturer	67	65
	Scientist	3	2.9
	Social Worker	3	2.9

Table 1 shows the distribution by age, working experience, and the professions of working women. Out of 103 working women, more than 50% were in the age group of 35 to 45 years, with work experience of less than 10 years. The data clearly indicates a trend of either late career starts or breaks in career. The data shows 65% of women working in the teaching profession. Even though there was an effort made to collect random data, the sample is skewed towards the teaching profession which is a profession that allows for a work/home balance.

Summary and Conclusion

Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion

The data analysis of one hundred and three working women in various organizations was done to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being among working women, and the following null hypothesis was formulated.

During the test hypothesis, mean and standard deviation of the emotional intelligence scores of the working women were calculated with respect to the above hypothesis.

Table 2: Mean Values of the Five Variables of Emotional Intelligence

	Self-Awareness	Managing emotions	Motivating oneself	Empathy	Social Skills	Total
Mean	3.8	3.3	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6
SD	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5

Table 2 displays the five variables of emotional intelligence of the sample which shows that the mean of Self-Awareness is 3.8; Empathy is 3.7, Social Skills is 3.6, Motivating Oneself is 3.7. These are strengths of the sample, but the SD values are significantly higher, indicating that the spread of these variable is high in the sample. It can be clearly interpreted from the values of “Managing Emotions” that this is a challenging area for working women. This could be attributed to the challenges arising from handling emotions at work and at home.

Interpretation of EI Scores:

EI Score	Interpretation of EI variable
3.5-5.0	Area of strength
1.8-3.4	Area of Attention
1.0-1.7	Development priority

Mean and standard deviation of the subjective well-being scores of the working women were calculated with respect to the above hypothesis.

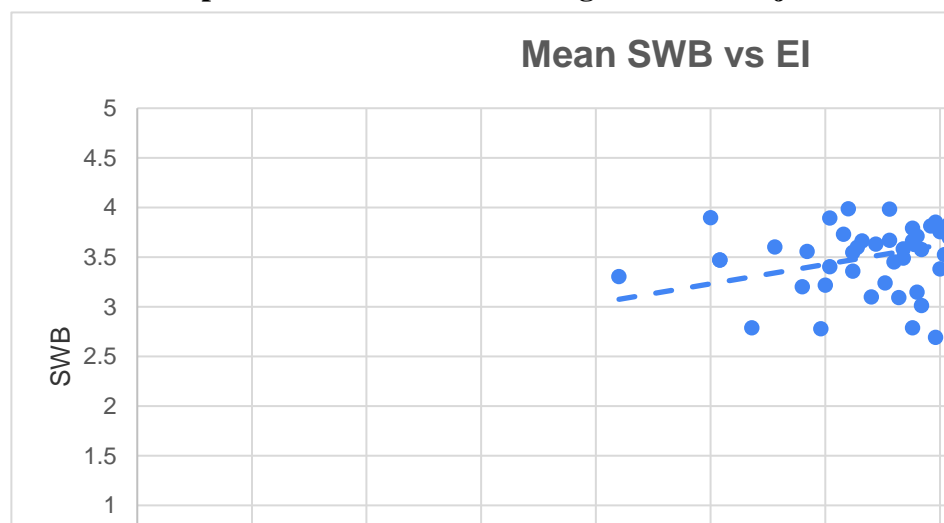
Table 3: Mean Values of the Four Variables of Subjective Well-being

	Satisfaction with life in general and with different areas of life	Satisfaction with work and job performance	Satisfaction with economic situation in the last year	States of mind/emotions during the past week	Total
Mean	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.2	3.7
SD	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.4

Table 3 shows the four variables of subjective well-being of the sample. The mean of “Satisfaction with life in general and with different areas of life” is 3.8; “Satisfaction with work and job performance” is 3.8; “Satisfaction with economic situation in the last year” is 3.9; “States of mind/emotions during the past week” is 3.2, and the overall mean is 3.7.

Interpretation of SWB Scores:

SWB Score	Interpretation of SWB variable
4 - 5	Satisfactory
3 - 4	Average
< 3	Unsatisfactory

Diagram 1: The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Well-Being**Correlation Coefficient**

	R ²	R
Subjective Well-being and Emotional Intelligence	0.2497	0.5

Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.5 was obtained between subjective well-being and emotional intelligence of the sample, indicating a significant correlation. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that “There is no relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Well-Being among working women” is rejected and the alternate hypothesis which states that “There is a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Well-Being among working women” is accepted.

Conclusion

The study has found a significant correlation between overall emotional intelligence score and subjective well-being. This correlation emphasizes how improving emotional intelligence could improve the subjective well-being of working women. There is a high need to help women in managing emotions which could have significant impact on overall emotional intelligence scores.

Implications and Recommendations

The present study indicates that the working women with high emotional intelligence have a better subjective well-being. Despite advancements in technology, availability of legal framework, and educational reforms, the hardships mentioned in the rationale for this study are a major challenge in improving the subjective well-being of working women. Such issues make it difficult for working women to cope with performance pressures and societal demands of the family. Social pressure on working women could result in emotional disturbance and challenges which have a direct impact on their subjective well-being. This is very apparent with the scores of emotional well-being in the study. Improving emotional intelligence could help working women to deal with this important quality. Emotional intelligence is helpful for working women's

performance as it would guide them to communicate clearly and lead others in a proper way which creates productive interactions at work and in personal life.

Naqvi *et al.* (2016) has asserted that one of the basic reasons why emotionally intelligent leaders and coaches are able to perform well is that they are not only able to identify their own areas of strength but are also capable of actively seeking strengths in other individuals. Working women in a similar manner can facilitate the overall development of team members through observing their strengths and using them as a means of gaining leverage against limitations. This will greatly help women command respect and gain inclusion which will ultimately improve their subjective well-being.

Future Suggestions

Based on conclusions and discussions, the following suggestions are put forth:

- Since the concept of emotional intelligence is relatively new in developing countries like India, several programs, seminars, workshops, and conferences for the purpose of awareness and importance of emotional intelligence should be planned at all levels.
- For the purpose of comparison, similar research studies should be conducted to gain information about emotional intelligence of working women in private sector in all cities of the country with a larger sample size. This will help reinforce the findings and lead to more awareness around emotional intelligence.
- To help women gain a better understanding of emotional intelligence, several training programs specially designed for working women should be organized on a regular basis.

Limitations

Although efforts were made to increase the sample size, due to the Covid-19 situation and lockdown, the study could not be conducted with a larger set of working women spread across the cities. There was also a limitation to collect the data for economic well-being in the sample, as most of the working women were not the major bread winner of the family. This hampers the conclusion when it comes to economic well-being which is also visible in the variation in the data collected. In next study, the questionnaire should be modified to address this limitation even though it might be difficult for working women to share this data because of confidentiality.

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