

Subjective Well-Being by Gender

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Abstract: International competition and globalization of business and organizations, rapid technological change and higher customer demands for products and services with increasing emphasis on environmental issues change working life. Under these pressures in order to survive and make a positive result, companies must develop both their organization and people simultaneously with their products and technologies for improving the performance, work ability, commitment and well-being of employees. Therefore study of subjective well-being among male and female employees in IT industry is of paramount importance. Such study may affect the performance and over all well-being of not only employees but also of the organization as a whole. The study is descriptive in nature whereby an attempt is made to compare the level of subjective well-being among male and female employees in IT industry with the help of two questionnaires (Satisfaction with Life Scale and Positive Affectivity and Negative Affectivity Scale) and utilizing the survey technique. Subjective well-being is statistically analyzed by means, standard deviations, and t-ratio. The study shows that gender is not a determinant of subjective well-being, and both males and females perceive subjective well-being or evaluate their lives in a similar way. The level of life satisfaction among male and female IT employees is not comparable and there existed significant gender difference in the level of life satisfaction. The level of positive affectivity and negative affectivity among male and female IT employees was comparable and there exists no significant gender difference in the level of positive affectivity.

Keywords: *Subjective well-being (SWB), positive affectivity, negative affectivity satisfaction with life, Information Technology (IT)*

1. Introduction

Few people doubt that happiness is very important. Starting at least with the Ancient Greeks, the concept continues to be subject of unremitting debate. Surely such debate would not start if people generally felt the issue did not matter. Since happiness captures and continues to capture the interest of so many people, philosophers and many others debating the concept have long yearned for a way to measure happiness. SWB is not the same as happiness although the terms are in-use synonymously. SWB is a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction. SWB consists of two distinctive components: an affective part, which refers to both the presence of positive affect (PA) and the absence of negative affect (NA) and a cognitive part. The affective part is a hedonic evaluation guided by emotions and feelings, while the cognitive part is an information-based appraisal of one's life for which people judge the extent to which their life so far measures up to their expectations and resembles their envisioned 'ideal' life. Subjective well-being is the individual's current evaluation of her happiness. Such an evaluation is often expressed in affective terms; when asked about subjective well-being, participants will often say, "I feel good" (Schwarz & Strack, 1999). Subjective well-being is a proxy for a global affective evaluation. Subjective well-being (SWB) is an individual's emotional and cognitive interpretation and evaluation of one's own life. SWB comprises of satisfaction with life events, satisfaction with external but relevant factors like work, family, friends, and presence of feelings of joy along with absence of negative affects (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Dispositional characteristics of a person determine SWB. SWB is stable over time (Diener, 1994; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998).

1.1 Components of Subjective Well-Being

SWB includes three primary components: satisfaction, pleasant affect and low levels of unpleasant affect. Positive affect denotes pleasant moods and emotions such as joy and affection. Positive or pleasant emotions are part of subjective well-being because they reflect a person's reactions to events that signify to the person that life is proceeding in a desirable way. Major categories of positive or pleasant emotions include those of low arousal (e.g., contentment), moderate arousal (e.g., pleasure) and high arousal (e.g., euphoria). They

include positive reactions to others (e.g., affection), positive reactions to activities (e.g., interest and engagement), and general positive moods (e.g., joy). Negative affect includes moods and emotions that are unpleasant and represents negative responses people experience in reaction to their lives, health, events and circumstances. Major forms of negative or unpleasant reactions include anger, sadness, anxiety and worry, stress, frustration, guilt and shame and envy. Other negative states, such as loneliness or helplessness are important indicators of ill-being. Some negative emotions are part of life and can be necessary for effective functioning, but frequent and prolonged negative emotions indicate that a person's life is proceeding badly. Life satisfaction represents how a person evaluates or appraises his or her life taken as a whole. Life satisfaction intends to represent a broad, reflective appraisal the person makes of his or her life. The term life defines all areas of a person's life at a particular point in time or as an integrative judgment about the person's life since birth.

1.2 Factors Affecting Subjective Well-being

One of the main factors contributing to subjective well-being is personality. Emotional experience ties extroversion and neuroticism. Genes influence personality traits such as extroversion and neuroticism. These traits remain somewhat stable over time. Studies of twins who exhibit similar emotional patterns even when they have been raised apart support the idea that happiness hinges on heredity. This does not mean that happiness is solely the result of a genetic blueprint. Just as cholesterol levels have a genetic basis but can still be altered by diet, happiness levels can change according to life circumstances, activities, and patterns of thinking. Adaptation is another factor influencing subjective well-being. Humans have a remarkable ability to adapt to both positive and negative life circumstances. Although adaptation can offer hope to people who experience tragedy, there are some events to which people are slow or unable to adapt completely. Unemployment, for example, appears to take a long-lasting emotional toll. People frequently show lower levels of life satisfaction even after they procure a new job. The average widow takes many years after her spouse's death to regain her former level of life satisfaction. Labor market events such as unemployment affect men more than women and family events such as the birth of a child and divorce affect women more than men. Although people have a tremendous capacity to adapt over time, they do not adapt completely to all conditions. Social relationships are another crucial factor in subjective well-being is. Having intimate, trusting social relationships appears to be necessary for happiness. Comparison of the happiest and least happy people shows that the dimension in which the happiest people are similar is having high-quality friendships, family support, or romantic relationships. The happiest folks have strong social attachments. While personality, adaptation, and high-quality social relations are probably universal factors underlying levels of happiness, recent research shows that subjective well-being vary from culture to culture and from person to person.

Discussing societies in terms of individualism and collectivism is one of the most common ways psychologists conceptualize culture. Individualists are people who emphasize the value of personal freedom and tend to put personal goals above group goals when the two are in conflict. Western industrialized countries tend to be individualistic with the United States anchoring the extreme end of the spectrum. Collectivists emphasize social harmony and tend to sacrifice personal goals to group goals when the two are in conflict. India and Ghana are examples of collectivist nations. The two types of cultures prescribe different routes for achieving subjective well-being. Collectivist cultures emphasize fitting in and fulfilling the duties associated with one's social roles, whereas individualist cultures promote enjoyment and personal experience. Collectivists achieve subjective well-being through activities that promote mastery and group harmony whereas individualists receive a larger emotional paycheck from activities that are pleasant and showcase their individual talents. A good society is one that allows people to succeed in various endeavors congruent with their individual and collective values.

1.3 Importance of Subjective Well-being

SWB is important (high levels of positive affect) as it produces good outcomes in many areas. For example, consider the following points:

1. Happy people on average have stronger immune systems and they live longer.
2. Happy people are more creative.
3. Happy people are better citizens at work. They tend to help others more and skip work less.

4. Happy people are more successful. They earn more income, have better marriages and get more job interviews.
5. Happy people do better in social relationships. They are more sociable to begin with and other people like them more. They seem to be more successful in leadership work positions.
6. Happy people are better able to cope with difficult situations.
7. Happy people like themselves and other people more and others like them in return.
8. They are better and quicker in making judgments and decision making.

Gerontol and Penning (1994) focus on gender differences in functional disability and subjective feelings of well-being. The analyses employ data from interviews conducted with 1,406 community-dwelling elders living in Manitoba, Canada. The results of the study reveal (a) greater disability and somewhat greater use of personal assistance among women, and (b) differences between men and women in relationships between both personal and technical resources and subjective feelings of well-being across levels of functional disability. Inglehart (2002) finds that in almost every society, men have higher incomes, more prestigious jobs and more authority than women--all links with relatively high levels of subjective well-being. So women show low level of happiness than men. Research supports that men and women have similar levels of happiness and overall life satisfaction. Panaccio and Vandenberghe (2009) examine the contribution of perceived organizational support and four mindsets of organizational commitment to employee psychological well-being, controlling the effects of role stressors. Affective commitment mediates a positive relationship between support and wellbeing and support negatively relates to perceived lack of employment alternatives, which negatively relates to well-being. Garg and Rastogi (2009) examine the effect of wellbeing on the commitment of employees. The sample consisted of 100 respondents working in different organizations. The results from stepwise regression analysis indicate a significant effect of psychological well-being on organizational commitment. The study evaluates wellbeing from the perspective of happiness and finds that well-being has a spillover effect from one domain of life to another. The objective of the study to compare the level of subjective well-being among male and female employees in IT industry

2. Research Design and Method

The study is descriptive in nature whereby an attempt is made to highlight the subjective well-being in both males and females employees in IT Industry belonging to the Tricity of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. A sample of 196 employees from various organizations is selected by following the non- probabilistic convenience sampling. Out of them 180 responses are selected with a purpose based on the judgment of the researcher's. Information is collected through inventory developed by Seligman (2002). This consists of 2 scales:

1. Positive Affectivity and Negative Affectivity Scale Momentary (PANAS)
2. Satisfaction with Life Scale

An individual's subjective well-being score is obtained with the help of following formula: Subjective well-being = Scores on Life satisfaction scale + Positive affect Scores – Negative affect scores. Higher the score more the subjective well-being or happier an individual is.

2.1 Positive Affectivity and Negative Affectivity Scale – Momentary (Panas)

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. The test taker reads each item and marks the appropriate answer in the space next to the word in the record sheet. The responses indicate to what extent one feels this way right now (that is, at the present moment). The test includes 20 items or words 10 each for positive and negative affect and answered on a five point scale that is: 1 – very slightly or not at all, 2 - a little, 3 - moderately, 4 - quite a bit, 5 – extremely. Items 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 19 are positive affect items and the rest are negative affect items. For scoring the test ten positive affects (PA) scores and ten negative affect (NA) scores are added separately. Two scores ranging from 10 to 50 are obtained. The test can be completed and scored in less than 5 minutes. The scale has a high test-retest reliability coefficients ranging between .40 to .60 and show high construct and discriminant validity. Some people have a lot of positive affect, which stays quite fixed over a lifetime. High positive affect people feel

great a lot of the time; good things bring them pleasure and joy in abundance. Many people don't feel great or even good, most of the time; when success occurs, they don't jump for joy.

2.2 The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

SWLS is a short, 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's lives. The scale usually requires only about one minute of respondent time. The scale takes about one minute to complete, and is in the public domain. The scale is a 7-point strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1) one. More versus less satisfaction relates to a high versus low score. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed to assess satisfaction with the respondent's life as a whole. The scale does not assess satisfaction with life domains such as health or finances but allows subjects to integrate and weight these domains in whatever way they choose. Normative data are presented for the scale, which shows good convergent validity with other scales and with other types of assessments of subjective well-being (e.g., 54 for 4 years), yet the SWLS shows sufficient sensitivity to be potentially valuable to detect change in life satisfaction during the course of clinical intervention. The scale shows discriminant validity from emotional well-being measures. The SWLS is recommended as a complement to scale that focus on psychopathology or emotional well-being because it assesses an individual's conscious evaluative judgment of his or her life by using the person's own criteria.

3. Analysis and Discussion of Results

The study aims at comparing the levels of subjective well-being among male and female employees in IT Industry belonging to the Tricity of Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula with the help of two questionnaires (Satisfaction with Life Scale and Positive Affectivity and Negative Affectivity Scale) and utilizing the survey technique. The scoring is done for the two scales after the administration of the same. The scales are scored according to the response options chosen by the participants and grand totals on each are obtained. Subjective well-being is further statistically analyzed and means, standard deviations, t-ratio are calculated.

Table 1: Statistical Parameters of Subjective well-being (SWB) Index as perceived by Male and Female IT employees

	Males	Females
Average	402.560	378.623
St dev	79.883	72.612
median	417.000	408.000
max	541.000	532.000
min	153.000	140.000
skewness	-1.526	-1.829
kurtosis	2.839	3.659

Table 1 summarizes various statistical parameters on the Subjective Well-Being index as computed for the Female and male employees. The findings reveal that the males perceive their SWB to be much better than the perception of the female employees. Thus, male employees rate organizational culture and work environment to be much more conducive than the female employees who do not express higher scores on the SWB index.

Table 2: Test of Significance (t-test) on the Difference between Male and Female IT employees' perceptions on Subjective well-being (SWB) Index

	Male (95)	Female (85)	Total (180)
Mean	76.9783	79.2193	77.9809
Std. Deviation	9.102	11.196	10.333
t value -2.5633	Tabulated Value 2.576		Not Significant

No significant gender difference occurs in the level of subjective well-being of the male and female IT employees and their results are comparable, i.e. male and female employees' perception about their well-being is similar. The reasons behind this could be many, such as small/limited sample size, lack of randomization, non-serious (biased) attitude of test takers or some other statistical errors. The tumultuous economic conditions (i.e.) recession and fear generated because of mass retrenchment and downsizing has affected the subjective well-being of both male and female employees. The study shows that gender is not a determinant of subjective well-being, and both males and females perceive subjective well-being or evaluate their lives in a similar way. Diener (1984) gives similar findings from review of 13 studies that compare the level of subjective well-being among men and women and find that there is no difference in reported mean levels of positive well-being. The three components of subjective well-being; viz, satisfaction with life (life satisfaction); positive affectivity and negative affectivity scores are also analyzed with the help of t- test' for a more comprehensive picture.

Table 3: Test of Significance (t-test) on Satisfaction with Life (life satisfaction) Scores for Male and Female IT employees.

	Male (95)	Female (85)	Total (180)
Mean	26.00	29.9058	25.2810
Std. Deviation	9.8891	3.9313	9.3535
t value -3.595	Tabulated Value 2.576		Significant

The level of life satisfaction among male and female IT employees is not comparable and there existed significant gender difference in the level of life satisfaction. The male and female IT employees perceive the satisfaction they have from their lives differently i.e. the female employees are more satisfied with their lives than male employees (table 3). Gender differences do exist because of biological and psychological differences. The level of satisfaction with life among males and females can differ. When these differences interact with organizational environment or situations they can lead to different outcomes. The differences could be because of comfortable and better personal/family life, good interpersonal relationships (both in workplace and outside), effective communications skills and also certain other factors like more leniency towards female employees, better facilities, lower expectations and ambitions than the male employees.

Table 4: Test of Significance (t-test) on Positive Affectivity Scores for Male and Female IT employees.

	Male (95)	Female (85)	Total (180)
Mean	29.3571	29.9599	29.2810
Std. Deviation	3.1290	3.5980	3.3535
t value 0.1822	Tabulated Value 2.576		Not Significant

The level of positive affectivity among male and female IT employees was comparable and there exists no significant gender difference in the level of positive affectivity. The satisfaction of having a job in the times of recession goes a long way to make the employees positive towards their job. The study shows that gender is not an antecedent of positive affectivity (table 4).

Table 5: Test of Significance (t-test) on Negative Affectivity Scores for Male and Female IT employees.

	Male (95)	Female (85)	Total (180)
Mean	23.571	23.059	23.2810
Std. Deviation	5.990	5.307	5.3535
t value 0.5607	Tabulated Value 2.576		Not Significant

The level of negative affectivity among male and female IT employees is comparable and there exists no significant gender difference in the level of negative affectivity. Both males and females perceive the negative or unpleasant emotions like anger, sadness, anxiety and worry, stress, frustration, guilt, shame and envy in a similar way in general and no psychological differences exists between the two. The study shows that gender is not a determinant of negative affectivity (table 5).

4. Conclusion

Subjective well-being is the scientific name for how people evaluate their lives. People can evaluate their lives in terms of a global judgment (such as life satisfaction or feelings of fulfillment), in terms of evaluating the domains of their lives (such as marriage or work) or in terms of their ongoing emotional feelings about what is happening to them. Companies must develop both their organization and people simultaneously with their products and technologies for improving the performance, work ability, commitment, and well-being of employees. However gender is not a determinant of subjective well-being, and both males and females perceive subjective well-being or evaluate their lives in a similar way. The level of life satisfaction among male and female IT employees is not comparable and there existed significant gender difference in the level of life satisfaction. The level of positive affectivity and negative affectivity among male and female IT employees is comparable.

Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to how people evaluate their lives, and includes variables such as life satisfaction and marital satisfaction, lack of depression and anxiety, and positive moods and emotions. The idea of SWB or happiness has intrigued thinkers for millennia, although it is only in recent years that it has been measured and studied in a systematic way. A person's evaluation of his or her life may be in the form of cognitions (e.g., when a person gives conscious evaluative judgments about his or her satisfaction with life as a whole, or evaluative judgments about specific aspects of his or her life such as recreation). However, an evaluation of one's life also may be in the form of affect (people experiencing unpleasant or pleasant moods and emotions in reaction to their lives). Thus, a person is said to have high SWB if she or he experiences life satisfaction and frequent joy, and only infrequently experience unpleasant emotions such as sadness and anger. On the other hand, a person is said to have low SWB if he or she is dissatisfied with life, experiences little joy and affection, and frequently feels negative emotions such as anger or anxiety. The cognitive and affective components of SWB are highly interrelated, and only recently are we beginning to understand the relations between various types of SWB.

5. Recommendations/ Implications

Subjective well-being is synonymous to happiness and satisfaction. A happy and a satisfied employee are not only more productive, constructive, creative, better performer but also physically and mentally fit. Recognition of the level of subjective well-being enhances efficiency, performance and well-being of the employees by taking appropriate steps for developing positive affect(feelings) and reducing negative affect(feelings), thereby making an individual high on life satisfaction. Happy and satisfied employees are more responsible, disciplined, flexible and less destructive. Low level of well-being of the employees is indicator of underlying problems in job roles, reward system, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions. People are the most important assets or the source of competitive advantage. Employee subjective well-being results in lower labor turnover, extra role behavior, and better product quality and employee flexibility leading to the firms' competitive advantage. Keeping a highly productive and trained employee should be a high priority to the organization. Organizations can secure employee subjective well-being by engaging in fair HR practices such as procedural justice, good communication, increased participation, more supportive management and reasonable rewards.

6. Suggestions for Further Research

Based upon the findings of the present study, consider the following suggestions for conducting further research in this field. Predicted variables other than in the present study that is subjective well-being, may offer insight into healthy development of the employees. The study can be conducted on a larger sample belonging to different companies both public and private for a better picture of the same. This study is limited to a very small stratum of population of IT Industry belonging to Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula only; it can be conducted in different states and regions for making cross cultural comparisons. Many related variables such as personality, socio economic status can be studied for a global picture.

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