



Breaking the Stress Cycle: Unveiling the Impact of Workplace Stress on Women's Well-Being and Quality of Life

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Abstract

Workplace stress has become a pervasive issue affecting women across various professions, often compromising their mental health, well-being, and overall quality of life. This study aimed to examine the relationship between workplace stress, subjective well-being, and quality of life among working women. A correlational research design with purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from working women (N=200) aged 27-35 years old. To measure these constructs, General Subjective Wellbeing Inventory (Dalbert, 1992), World Health Organization Quality of Life Scale (WHOQOL, 1998), and Workplace Stress Scale (American Institute of Stress, 1998) were used. In this study, correlation analysis revealed that workplace stress was significantly negatively correlated with subjective well-being and quality of life. Linear regression analysis revealed that workplace stress negatively predicted subjective well-being and quality of life among working women. Results also revealed that married working women face higher level of workplace stress and lower level of quality of life as compared to unmarried working women. The study concluded that workplace stress significantly reduces subjective well-being and quality of life for working women, especially for those who are married. The results suggest a need for targeted strategies to alleviate stress, particularly among married women, to improve their overall well-being and life satisfaction.

Keywords: Workplace Stress, Subjective Well-being, Quality of Life, Working Women

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) defines occupational or work-related stress as the response individuals may have when faced with work demands and pressures that exceed their knowledge, skills, and ability to cope. Stress occurs when professionals encounter specific challenges and must evaluate their workload and expectations in environments where information is poorly coordinated, potentially compromising their performance (Jaramillo et al., 2011). This situation can create a sense of struggle within the workplace. The resulting stress affects workplace safety and can manifest as stress, anger, anxiety, and instability (Addison & Yankyera, 2015). Research indicates that workplace stress negatively impacts the subjective well-being of working women (Ryu et al., 2020). Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to an individual's cognitive and emotional evaluations of their life (Diener et al., 2003). The concept of quality of life broadly encompasses how a person assesses the 'goodness' of various aspects of their life, including emotional responses to life events, attitudes, overall life satisfaction, job fulfillment, and personal relationships (Felce & Perry, 1995; Diener et al., 2008).

Women's economic well-being is often enhanced when they have independent sources of income, which can increase self-esteem and improve both household conditions and the overall development of their communities (Andal, 2002). The literature emphasizes the impact of workplace stress on the quality of life for working women (Javaid et al., 2023; Iqbal & Bashir, 2021). Work-life balance has long been a concern for those interested in how working life affects overall quality of life. Work-family conflict is a significant source of stress for working women (Iqbal et al., 2023). A high level of quality of life within an organization is positively linked to better work-life balance, particularly for women in the service industry, which leads to improved overall quality of life and work-life balance (Bhola & Nigade, 2016).

Giannouli et al. (2012) found that higher quality of life in women was predicted by factors such as regular physical exercise and a stable financial status. In their study, women with better quality of life were more likely to be mindful and to utilize preventive health resources. Harshana (2018) described stress as a response of professionals when they face demands, pressures, and expectations in a workplace that lacks coordination and clear communication. This situation can pose a threat to their ability to perform, creating a struggle for survival. Ahmad and Khan (2018) identified strong negative relationships between life stress and positive self-assessment, as well as between life stress and character integration, in both working and non-working women.

Conducting this study in Pakistan is important due to several key reasons. Firstly, there has been a notable increase in female workforce participation, making it essential to understand how workplace stress affects women's well-being and quality of life in this context. Secondly, the unique cultural and societal norms in Pakistan often place dual burdens on working women, requiring them to balance professional responsibilities with traditional domestic roles. This dual role can exacerbate stress and negatively impact their overall quality of life, highlighting the need for targeted research. Lastly, there is a lack of comprehensive local research on the specific challenges faced by

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working women in Pakistan, particularly concerning workplace stress and its effects on their well-being. This study aims to fill that gap, providing valuable insights that can inform policies and interventions to support working women in Pakistan.

1.1. Aim of the Study

- To find the relationship among workplace stress, subjective well-being, and quality of life among working women.

1.2. Hypotheses of the Study

- There would likely to be a negative relationship between workplace stress and subjective well-being among working women.
- Subjective well-being would likely to be positively correlated with quality of life among working women.
- Workplace stress would likely to be a negative predictor of subjective well-being and quality of life among working women.

2. Method

A correlational research design was employed to examine the relationships among the study variables. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample, which consisted of 200 working women aged between 27 and 35 years.

To measure workplace stress, the American Institute of Stress (1998) developed a 5-point Likert scale with 8 items, where items 6, 7, and 8 are reverse-scored. The scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .65. For assessing subjective well-being, the Subjective Well-Being Inventory (Dalbert, 1992) was used, which includes 13 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .83. To evaluate quality of life, the WHOQOL (1998) scale was utilized, comprising 26 items divided into four sub-scales: physical health, psychological health, social relations, and environmental health. The scale is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .66 to .84 across the sub-scales, indicating good internal consistency.

Permission to use the scales was obtained from the respective authors. A letter requesting data collection was also secured from the head of the department to facilitate the process. Data collection involved personally approaching respondents at their locations. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and given instructions on how to complete the scales. Written consent was obtained from all participants. The scales, administered in English, were accompanied by a demographic sheet to collect essential information. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the study.

3. Results

All results are presented in both tabular and descriptive formats below.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of the Scales

Variables	No. of items	α
Workplace Stress Scale	8	.65
Subjective Well-Being Inventory	13	.83
Quality of Life Scale	28	.84

Note. α = Cronbach's alpha reliability

Table 1 presents the Cronbach's alpha reliability for the scales. The workplace stress scale has acceptable reliability, while the Subjective Well-Being Inventory and the quality-of-life scale demonstrate good to high reliability.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation among Workplace Stress, Subjective Well-Being and Quality of Life among Working Women

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Workplace Stress	200	17.39	9.20	--	-.24**	-.22**
2. Subjective Wellbeing	200	50.06	23.63	--	--	.63***
3. Quality of Life	200	48.56	24.78	--	--	--

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, $p < .01$ **, $p < .001$ ***

Table 2 presents the correlations among workplace stress, subjective well-being, and quality of life. The results indicate a significant negative correlation between workplace stress and both subjective well-being and quality of life. Additionally, subjective well-being is positively correlated with quality of life.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Showing the Effect of Work Place Stress on Subjective Well-Being and Quality of Life among Working Women (n=200)

Predictor	Outcome	β	SEB	t	p	95% CL
Workplace Stress	Subjective Well-Being	-.29	.17	3.30	.001***	[-.22-.88]
	Quality of Life	-.32	.17	4.80	.001***	[-.42-1.18]

Note. $p < .001$ ***, β = Standardized Coefficient of Beta, CL = Confidence Interval

Table 3 displays the impact of workplace stress on subjective well-being and quality of life among working women. The R^2 value of .17 indicates that workplace stress explains 17% of the variance in subjective well-being, with a significant F-value. The R^2 value of .09 shows that workplace stress accounts for 9% of the variance in quality of life. These findings demonstrate that workplace stress negatively predicts both subjective well-being and quality of life among working women.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-values for Married and Unmarried Working Women on Workplace Stress, Subjective Well-Being and Quality of Life (n = 200)

Variables	Married (n = 101)		Unmarried (n = 99)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
	WPS	19.72	7.79	15.01			9.93	3.72	
SWB	53.08	22.01	46.98	24.92	1.83	0.065	-0.45	12.65	0.05
QOL	44.52	26.1	52.51	22.85	2.3	0.02**	1.14	14.84	0.32

Note. WPS = Workplace Stress, SWB = Subjective well-being, QOL = Quality of life.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$

Table 4 illustrates the mean and standard deviation of workplace stress, subjective well-being, and quality of life among working women based on marital status. Results indicate significant mean differences in workplace stress, with married working women scoring significantly higher than unmarried working women. Similarly, significant mean differences were found in quality of life, with unmarried working women scoring higher compared to married working women.

4. Discussion

The study investigates the relationship between workplace stress, subjective well-being, and quality of life among working women. The results show that workplace stress negatively predicts both subjective well-being and quality of life, aligning with previous research. Zarbova (2018) found a similar negative relationship between workplace stress and subjective well-being, while Blumberga (2016) reported that high levels of work stress reduce both subjective well-being and life satisfaction among employees. Similarly, Mensah and Tawiah (2014) observed a negative relationship between workplace stress and quality of life. These findings confirm that increasing workplace stress is associated with a decline in quality of life and well-being.

The results indicate that workplace stress negatively predicts subjective well-being in working women. Subjective well-being involves the assessment of happiness based on joyful and painful experiences, which significantly influences an individual's attitude toward life's positive and negative aspects (Fernandes et al., 2010). Research shows that high levels of stress, particularly work-related stress, lower subjective well-being (Keyes et al., 2002). Additionally, the study finds that workplace stress also negatively affects the quality of life for working women. Stress, exacerbated by the dual responsibilities of family and work, reduces life satisfaction and overall quality of life (Mensah & Tawiah, 2014).

The study also observed mean differences in workplace stress, subjective well-being, and quality of life based on marital status. Results indicated that married working women experienced higher levels of workplace stress compared to their unmarried counterparts, and their quality of life was lower. This aligns with findings from Parveen (2009) and Akhouri et al. (2019), which support the current study's results. The increased stress levels among married women can be attributed to the challenge of balancing work and household responsibilities, which ultimately diminishes their overall quality of life.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study reveals the complex relationship between workplace stress, subjective well-being, and quality of life among working women. It finds that increased workplace stress correlates with lower levels of subjective well-being and quality of life, highlighting the negative effects of stress in the workplace. Additionally, significant differences based on marital status were observed, with marital status affecting both stress levels and quality of life. This underscores the need to consider personal circumstances when addressing workplace stress and promoting well-being among working women.

5.1. Suggestions and Implications

Future research should use a larger sample size to enhance the external validity and generalizability of the findings. Incorporating qualitative methods alongside quantitative analysis could provide more comprehensive insights. Given that working women face numerous psychological challenges impacting their daily lives, awareness campaigns could help mitigate these issues. This study offers valuable contributions to the literature, particularly in Pakistan, where research on these key variables is limited, and will advance the understanding of women's health and psychological well-being.

5.2. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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