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Optimism in Indian Women: The Role of Employment Status and Emotional Intelligence

Dr. Suchitra Barik

ABSTRACT

Optimism is a core construct within the framework of women empowerment. The present study was designed to investigate the role of employment status and emotional intelligence (EI) in optimism of Indian women. It was expected that the delineation of the predictive role of these two variables for optimism would be helpful for future intervention programs. The study adopted a 2 (employed versus unemployed) x 2 (low EI versus high EI) factorial design where employed and unemployed women were separately divided into low EI and high EI subgroups on the basis of median split of EI scores. Apart from the test of EI, all the participants were individually administered a standardised test of optimism/pessimism scale. The analysis of variance supported both the hypotheses. Employed women exhibited higher optimism than unemployed women. Women with high EI showed greater optimism than women with low EI. The findings were explained in terms of the contemporary theories of optimism and interventions were suggested for women empowerment.

Keywords: Optimism, emotional intelligence, successful coping, positiveness, enriched social gathering, positive intellectual and physical health outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

Optimism can be defined as a positive conviction about oneself about the future outcomes. Optimism states a sense of bright future, an inclination to get optimistic meaning in experiences, and confidence in one's capability to influence positively on one's environment and situation. Optimism plays a significant role in every individual's life as it has many benefits. Optimism naturally stimulates a more positive temperament, which supports defending against depression and apprehension that result in more happiness. Optimism also

boosts higher persistence at the time of difficulties which leads to greater success and happiness. Optimistic individuals are determined to work hard; and they are more contented with their lives and have high self-esteem; and high ambition. They stretch goals in the face of problems and difficulties, and analyze personal failures and obstructions as momentary.

Segerstrom and Sephton (2010) defined that optimism is associated with increased positive affect, and optimists are mostly happier as compared to pessimists. Barak (2006) viewed that optimists are happier

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individuals because they think more positively than their pessimistic counterparts. Goleman (1999) viewed optimism is linked with self-efficacy and happiness, which encourages an individual to have faith that he can effectively complete tasks and fulfill the goals. Lipkus et al., (1993) revealed optimistic people are confident that negative events are less likely to happen soon, they always prefer to involve themselves in different activities, which will enhance the likelihoods of feeling positive consequences. Mc Kenna (1993) stated a positive attitude towards actions leads to greater effort and persistence which causes greater success and happiness among people.

Optimism is found to be the most important predictor for women's well-being. It influences personal development, gives a purpose in work, helps to maintain better interpersonal relationship, pride in our achievements, and overall happiness at work setting. These outlooks denote a satisfaction with life, physical fitness, and work fulfillment. Scheier and Carver (1985) revealed that optimists put more effort into their work because they expect positive outcomes in their work. Seligman (1998) stated there is a significant impact of optimism on employment status. Because employed women who holds optimistic attitude disposed to be more goal focused and have faith that they can accomplish their goals despite complications on the job. They also don't feel helpless irrespective of so many difficulties.

Evidences have proved that optimistic explanatory style substantiality relates with and expects efficacious job performance (Seligman & Schulman, 1986). Tombaugh (2005) revealed optimistic women perceive

difficulties as challenges, apply more effort for extensive periods to achieve their goals, and look for and admire the positive aspects of problematic situations. On personal level, optimism undoubtedly affects work performance. Employed women who hold optimistic attitude has progressive and desired valuation of the future growth of the organization and could expand operational productivity, respond to modifications and eventually reach high success in the organization.

According to Gielan (2016) optimism empowers women at ambiguous period and motivates them to take progressive actions. Klinoff (2016) quoted optimism is linked with elated mood, successful coping, positiveness, enriched social gathering, positive intellectual and physical health outcomes. A positive attitude regarding job itself and the organisation can motivate improved working relations, assist women to experience more entertainment at work, be more innovative, malleable as well as manage change in a superior way (ACME, 2013). Optimistic women are likely to show more goal expectancy, they also perceive progress toward goals which lead them to experience progressive emotional states like contentment, bliss, satisfaction and better well-being (Monzani et al., 2015). Optimism, and positive affect builds an attitude orientation that women feel endowed to work toward their relationship and career goals instead of feeling a need to take out or escape harm (Carver, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schulz, & Carver, 2003). Specially, they consider that having an optimistic attitude will expand performance when working toward a goal,

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which leads to more accomplishment in their lives.

Phelps and Waskel (1994) found that women within the age bracket of 40-45 years had a more positive explanatory style, more dynamic at work, enjoyed being at their work, and were more resourceful with their competency. Optimism is a precise characteristic of the employed people. Flowers and Oswald (1998) stated that optimism brings up a sense of possession or right to work. So, they are likely to have a greater sense of obligation for attainment of organizational goals, which, endorses enlarged production.

Emotional Intelligence is the skill to become conscious of alterations in one's and others' emotional qualities and to consolidate them, to initiate, to keep calm in the middle of pressure and sustain strong interactions with others, and to uphold an optimistic attitude towards life. Researchers have evinced that higher emotional intelligence brings higher psychological well-being (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Salovey, et al., 1995). Researchers have revealed that emotional intelligence causes fewer depressions (Martinez-Pons, 1997; Schutte, et al., 1998), high level of optimism (Schutte, et al., 1998) as well as brings satisfaction with life (Ciarrochi, et al., 2000; Martinez-Pons, 1997).

Cassidy (2000) evinced optimism can assist people to deal with phases of life that could cause undesirable consequences of stress. According to Hasan and Power (2002) optimism anticipates progressive consequences, like handling most important life stresses, accommodating to big life changes and reactions to more insignificant stresses. Carver and Scheier (2002)

described optimism is a primary quality of temperament which impacts women's attitude to certain live events, their personal practices concerning the encounter of difficulties and the efforts taken when handling with these difficulties. So optimism can be described as a vital dispositional quality which may moderate subjective well-being and emotional intelligence. Optimism stimulates women's motivation and coping behaviour (Carver & Scheier, 2002).

Extremera et al, (2006) did a review on 498 women to observe the associations between emotional intelligence, optimism and life satisfaction. Data was analysed by using hierarchical regression analysis and it has been found that emotional clarity and mood restoration remained significant in envisaging life satisfaction after the effect of optimism was controlled. Data recommended that women with better perceptions of emotional capabilities mostly displayed higher level of life satisfaction and minor level of stress and are more optimistic.

Hatice et.al, (2011) found that there is a positive relation between optimism and emotional intelligence. Optimism also leads to better emotional intelligence pertinently. Emotionally intelligent women are satisfied, well-organized, optimistic, sincere, prosperous and participate in others emotions (Salaski and Gartwright 2002).

METHODOLOGY

Objective

In view of the importance of women's optimism in the context of their empowerment an empirical study was planned to examine the role of two possible predictors of self-concept: employment and emotional intelligence.

Hypotheses

1. Optimism is higher among employed women as compared to unemployed women.
2. Optimism is higher among women with high emotional intelligence as compared to women with low emotional intelligence.

Participants

The sample consists of 240 women (120 employed women and 120 unemployed women) within the age group of 45 to 55 years. Care was taken to sample groups equated with respect to education and age range. They were all married and had children. The participants were purposively selected from Govt. colleges, banks and hospitals. They belong to the same socio-economic level. They were college lecturers, bankers and doctors. Out of 240 women participants, 120 women were from the employed category and 120 women were from the unemployed category. Each of the groups of the employed and unemployed women was divided into two sub groups- women with high emotional intelligence and women with low emotional intelligence on the basis of median split of their scores on emotional intelligence. The participants of all four groups (employed women with high emotional intelligence, employed women with low emotional intelligence, unemployed women with high emotional intelligence and unemployed women with low emotional intelligence) were individually administered optimism/pessimism scale.

Research Desi

The study involved a 2 (employed women versus unemployed women) x 2 (women with high emotional intelligence versus

women with low emotional intelligence) factorial design. Employment status and emotional intelligence are the independent variables and optimism is the dependent variable.

Instruments

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS): The emotional intelligence scale was developed by Hyde and Pathé and Dhar in the year 1971. This questionnaire consists of 34 items and the highest score is 170 and lowest score is 34. The inventory measured 10 factors dimensions, such as self-awareness, empathy, self-motivation, emotional stability, managing relation, integrity, self-development, value orientation, commitment and altruistic behaviour. The split-half reliability of the scale was 0.88 and the content validity of the scale was 0.93. Respondents are requested to indicate their agreements / disagreements on a five- point scale where '1' indicates strong disagreement and '5' indicates strong agreement.

Optimism and Pessimism Scale: The optimism and pessimism scale was developed by Mohan, Jain, and Noorjan. Optimism pessimism scale has been developed for the use with adults. It consists of 50 items with four alternatives in each, i.e. (a) often, (b) sometimes, (c) rarely, and (d) never (for first 10 items). Then from item 11 to 50, the four alternatives are (a) strongly agree, (b) agree, (c) disagree, and (d) strongly disagree. The scoring system for all the items will remain the same i.e. 4 points for often/strongly agree, 3 points for sometimes/agree, 2 points for rarely/disagree, 1 point for never/strongly disagree. The summated score of all the 50 items provides the total optimism score of an individual. Thus, the maximum score of it

can be 200 and the minimum can be 50. Higher the scores obtained, higher would be the optimism level of an individual and vice-versa. The categories made for interpretation of raw scores are: raw scores 180 & above will be interpreted as very high optimistic, 160 to 179 interpreted as high optimistic, 140 to 159 interpreted as average optimistic, 120 to 139 interpreted as below average, 100 to 119 interpreted as very low optimistic, and below 100-interpreted as pessimistic. The reliability of the scale was calculated by the split half method and the obtained reliability coefficient was .58. The content validity of this scale was .29.

Procedure

As indicated earlier, data are collected from 240 women participants within the age range of 45 to 55 years. Prior to data collection, the investigator contacted participants in academic institutions, banks, and hospitals. The investigator explained to them that the participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous, and can be withdrawn at any time and it would not affect the person adversely. Rapport was established between the investigator and respondents/participants. All the participants were individually administered measures of emotional intelligence, and Optimism and Pessimism Scale. The instructions for each part of the questionnaire were adequately explained and care was taken to ensure that they understood the questionnaire. Investigator requested participants to respond to each item in the questionnaire freely and frankly without any hesitation. Investigator had ensured strict confidentiality and the study was conducted in compliance with ethical standards.

The participants were debriefed after the study was completed.

Results

The summary of the analysis of variance on the optimism scores of the participants is presented in Table 1. The mean and standard

deviations on the optimism scores of participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 1 Analysis of Variance Performed on Optimism Scores of Participants

Sources	SS	df	MS	F
Employment status	1344.27	1	1344.27	93.62**
EI level	522.15	1	522.15	36.36**
Employment x EI level	0.41	1	0.41	0.03
Error	3388.77	236	14.36	

** $p < .01$

* $p < .05$

Table 2 Mean Ratings on Optimism Scores of Participants

Groups	Employed	Unemployed	Combined		
	M	SD	M	SD	M
High EI	138.98	2.38	134.16	5.67	136.57
Low EI	135.95	1.96	131.30	3.97	133.62
Combined	137.46		132.73		

Discussion

The present study is directed to examine the role of employment and emotional Intelligence in optimism of women. The findings clearly indicate that employed women have greater optimism compared to that of the unemployed women.

The findings clearly show that employed women have higher optimism compared to their unemployed counterparts. Employed women have high financial and emotional stability and employment provides more opportunities to become self-reliant. Employment is linked to good physical and mental health, low depression, less mood disturbances and less negative interpersonal communication which generates better social functioning. As a result, they become more optimistic in their orientation. So, it was expected that employed women are more optimistic due to their social involvement and due to adaptive life experiences.

It has been shown that the results are consistent with those obtained by previous researchers Arabsheibani et al., (2000) who evidenced that business persons do really have greater optimism, both in assessing their economic prospects along with being optimistic over other spheres including life span. The findings are further supported by Dawson et al., (2014) using longitudinal data from the British Household Panel Survey; found that women who enter into self-employment are extremely optimistic prior to making the observed change into self-employment, supporting the notion that the self-employed women exhibit more optimism.

Researchers have defined that source of optimism serve as a pool of motivational energy to resist work pressure in a competitive environment (e.g., carver & Scheier, 2014; (Luthans et al., 2007). Seligman and Schulman (1986) found that those life insurance women agents who scored high on optimism reported higher sales performance than those with a low optimism score. Further studies conducted by several investigators (Chemers, Watson, & May. 2000; Schulman, 1999; Wundley, Reddy, & Dember, 1998) observed higher performance in sales is connected with greater optimism. Empirical research has shown that a positive relation between employment status and optimism. (Luthans et al., 2008; Seligaman, 1998).

Another interesting feature in the present finding shows high emotionally intelligent women exhibit greater optimism in contrary low emotionally intelligent women. High emotionally intelligent women possess different types of positive attributes such as: empathy, social obligation, stress tolerance, problem solving skills, impulse

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control and they are more optimistic in nature. This study is consistent with studies of Salaski and Gartwright (2002) who affirmed that women with high emotional intelligence shows better life satisfaction, well-ordered, optimistic, sincere and understand other's emotions.

The present research findings are further supported by Augusto et al. (2007) who inspected the connection between perceived emotional intelligence and dispositional optimism and reported positive relationship between emotional regulation and dispositional optimism and negative relationship between pessimism and emotional intelligence and aspects of psychological well-being.

Implications

Optimism is a predisposition to anticipate good things in the future. Optimism is a psychological attitude which deeply affects physical and psychological well-being, besides dealing with everyday social and working life. Through an adaptive management of personal goals and development and by using active coping tactics, optimists are ominously more prosperous than pessimists in negative events and when important life-goals are impaired.

It can be suggested that optimism training can be arranged in the mental health clinic in order to reduce stress. Optimism can be helpful in the treatment and prevention programs respectively in mental and physical health, to improve well-being or happiness among women.

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