
COMPARING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND JOB PERFORMANCE BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH: COVID-19 POST PANDEMIC STUDY

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Received date: 9 December 2022; Accepted date: 20 December 2022

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on individual's psychological well-being and job performance. This study aimed to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and job performance among male and female employees at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in the post-pandemic period. A total of 152 employees participated in an online survey that assessed psychological well-being (using Psychological Well-being Survey) and job performance (using the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire- IWPQ). Results of a t-test revealed that female employees had significantly higher levels of most psychological well-being dimensions (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, relations with others and self-acceptance). However, no significant difference was found between male and female employees in term of purpose in life dimension in psychological well-being. Meanwhile findings showed that female employees had significantly higher levels of two dimensions in job performance (task performance and conceptual performance) but not significant in counterproductive work behavior dimension in job performance. These findings suggest that male and female employees do differ in psychological well-being and job performance in the post-pandemic period. To determine strategies for promoting the psychological well-being and job performance of all employees in the post-pandemic period, further research is required to investigate potential explanations for these findings.

Keywords: Gender, Psychological Well-being, Job Performance, Employee

INTRODUCTION

There is an extensive body of research on psychological health and how it affects both male and female workers' performance on the job. The psychological state of an individual is a significant determinant of both job

performance and total job happiness. Adding to the issue is when the Covid-19 pandemic hits worldwide. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has had tremendous impacts on the organizations and psychological well-being of employees. During the pandemic period, organizations need to shut down its physical operations and forced to make rapid changes in terms of implementing remote work policy and creating new standard operating procedures (SOP) for health and safety measures. On the other hand, employees were forced to adapt to work from home or deal with anxiety and stress of working in a potential unsafe environment. Hence both parties require a great deal of adaptation and resilience in order to navigate the challenges of pandemic and the situation had a significant impact on the employees' psychological well-being and job performance.

Though organizations nowadays have open and start to operate the business physically as usual, the impact of post-pandemic is still haunting some of the employees. This can be seen in a study done by Muller, Hafstad, Himmels, Smedslund, Flottorp, Stensland, Stroobants, Van de Velde, and Vist (2020) which reported that employees were experiencing a higher level of anxiety, stress and even depression due to the pandemic. This means that the employees have a low level of psychological well-being with expected to rise in post-traumatic stress disorders syndrome, and poor sleep quality (Gualano, Lo Moro, Voglino, Bert, Siliquini, 2020). This would then beg the question on the level of psychological well-being among employees after the pandemic which should be explored.

Apart from that, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on job performance for both male and female employees. According to Feng and Savani (2020) both male and female employees faced lower level of job performance due to the pandemic in which female employees were reported to have lower job performance compared to male employees. Another example can be seen in a study done by Meyer, Zill, Dilba, Gerlach and Schumann's study (2021) which found that female employees' psychological well-being is lower than the male employees.

Therefore, there may be gender differences in the association between psychological well-being and job performance in the post pandemic period which lead to the research objective of this study.

Research Objective

The study aims to:

- To examine the differences between male and female employees in psychological well-being dimensions during post-pandemic period.
- To examine the differences between male and female employees in job performance dimensions during post-pandemic period.

Research Hypotheses

H1: There is difference between male and female employees in the psychological well-being dimensions.

H2: There is difference between male and female employees in the job performance dimensions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The aim of this study is to examine the psychological well-being and job performance between male and female employees at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). To achieve this aim, a quantitative research design is used by distributing online survey in collecting the data.

Participants

One hundred and fifty-two employees of Universiti Malaysia Sabah participated in this study. A convenient sampling method was used to recruit participants, with the online survey being distributed through email to the employees of UMS.

Instruments

The online survey included several standardized measures to assess psychological well-being and job performance. The Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being (Ryff, 1989) was used to measure six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (Koopmans et. al, 2013) was used to measure job performance with 18 items assessing three dimensions: task-performance, conceptual-

performance and counter-productive behavior. A demographical section is used to collect data such as gender, age and length of service.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the online survey were analyzed using statistical software IBM SPSS version 28.0. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) were calculated for all variables. Independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses of this study.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics can be shown in table below.

Table 1: Demographic Statistics of Respondents

Demographic	N	Percentage
Age		
21-30 years old	35	23.0%
31-40 years old	67	44.1%
41-50 years old	42	27.6%
51 years old and above	8	5.3%
Gender		
female	81	53.3%
male	66	43.4%
not stated	5	3.3%
Length of Service		
1-5 years	54	35.5%
6-10 years	39	25.7%
11-15 years	29	19.1%
16-20 years	22	14.5%
21-25 years	7	4.6%
26 years and above	1	0.7%

Among the 152 respondents, 81 are females (53.3%) and 66 are males (43.4%). 5.3% of respondents prefer not to state their gender. The majority of respondents are between the age of 31-40 (44.1%) while minority is coming from the category under 51 and older (5.3%). 54 respondents (35.5%) have 1-5 years of work experience, followed by 39 (25.7%) with 6-10 years of working experience. Only one respondent has 26 years and above of length of service.

Inferential Statistics

Table 2 shows the comparison of gender in terms of six dimensional of psychological well-being by analyzing using independent sample t-test.

Table 2: Independent t-test for six subscales of psychological well-being between male and female

Dimension/ Gender	N	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Autonomy				
Female	81	15.765	3.311	0.001
Male	66	13.833		
Environmental Mastery				
Female	81	15.506	2.907	0.004
Male	66	13.681		
Personal Growth				
Female	81	16.518	2.486	0.014
Male	66	14.772		
Positive Relations				
Female	81	14.802	2.667	0.009
Male	66	13.181		
Purpose in Life				
Female	81	13.370	0.832	0.407
Male	66	12.954		
Self-Acceptance				
Female	81	15.827	2.853	0.005
Male	66	13.848		

Table 2 shows a significant difference between female and male’s autonomy dimension in psychological well-being $t(145) = 3.311, p < .05$, environmental mastery dimension $t(145) = 2.907, p < .05$, personal growth dimension $t(145) = 2.486, p < .05$, positive relation dimension $t(145) = 2.667, p < .05$, and self-acceptance dimension $t(145) = 2.853, p < .05$. Only purpose in life dimension in psychological well-being shows no significant difference between male and female $t(145) = 0.832, p > .05$. Five of the dimensions/ subscales in psychological well-being show significance

differences between male and female while one dimension/ subscale shows the opposite result. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Table 3 shows the comparison of gender in terms of three dimensional of individual work performance by analyzing using independent sample t-test.

Table 3: Independent t-test for three subscales of individual work performance between male and female

Dimension/ Gender	N	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Task Performance				
Female	81	4.069	2.574	0.011
Male	66	3.715		
Conceptual Performance				
Female	81	3.888	2.643	0.009
Male	66	3.551		
Counterproductive Work Behavior				
Female	81	2.153	-1.018	0.310
Male	66	2.303		

Table 3 shows significant findings on gender differences in task performance dimension $t(145) = 2.574, p < .05$, and conceptual performance $t(145) = 2.643, p < .05$. However, for counterproductive work behavior dimension, the finding yields insignificant result $t(145) = -1.018, p > .05$. Two of the dimensions/ subscales in job performance show significance differences between male and female while one dimension/ subscale shows the opposite result. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

DISCUSSION

According to the previous chapter's first hypothesis, there is a gender gap in psychological wellness. This conclusion is comparable with research by Karasawa et al. (2011), Gómez- Baya et al. (2018), and Matud et al. (2019), which demonstrated statistically significant gender differences in various measures of psychological wellbeing, despite their small impact sizes. In addition, ladies scored higher on each subscale than males. Males score

higher than females on the test assessing autonomy and self-acceptance, according to one study (Karasawa et al., 2011). Women score lower than men on self-acceptance and autonomy, according to another study (Matud et al, 2019). Females scored higher in self-acceptance and autonomy in this study. Higher-educated women are 5.5 times more likely to enjoy decision-making autonomy than less-educated women. Lower-educated women have more self-acceptance and autonomy (Sougou et al., 2020). According to this study, professors and lecturers from a variety of backgrounds agreed that females with diverse degrees of education score lower than males on the autonomy sub-scale.

In addition, a study that was conducted by Rathore and Mertia (2021) suggests that there is a correlation between the higher levels of self-acceptance that working females have and their performance in the job. It is also possible to draw inferences on the connection between self-acceptance and optimism, in addition to psychological well-being. In addition, research conducted by O'Kelly (2013) shows that women who have a high level of self-acceptance are better able to handle the tough multiple tasks that come with being employed while also being responsible for the upkeep of their households. This would thus provide an explanation as to why, in the current study, females scored higher on all of the different sub-scales of psychological well-being, producing a significant result on the differences between the levels of psychological well-being experienced by males and females. In spite of the fact that research suggests that men and women share the vast majority of psychological characteristics, it is important to point out that (Hyde, 2014). Despite the fact that women reported experiencing both positive and negative emotions with greater frequency and intensity than males, Diener and Ryan (2009) discovered that there were negligible gender differences in psychological well-being.

The findings of the study indicated that there is a difference between the ways in which males and females fulfil their work responsibilities. This finding, on the other hand, contradicts the findings of earlier research. In fact, Robb and Watson (2012) found that when it comes to work-related outcomes such as job performance and job satisfaction, there is very little to no difference between men and women. The findings of another study, this one conducted by Feng and Savani (2020), lend support to the assertion that was just made, as it was discovered that, prior to the outbreak,

50 women and men reported having equivalent levels of work productivity and job contentment. However, following the pandemic, the same study revealed that women had lower levels of both work productivity and job satisfaction than men. As was just stated, this finding contradicts the findings of the current research because it was discovered that the mean levels of work performance and contextual performance for females are significantly greater than those for males.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Roman et al. (2021) found that there were statistically significant differences in the levels of job engagement, work satisfaction, and work efficiency between male and female employees who work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also suggested that women are less likely than men to report feeling engaged in their work while the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing, despite the fact that prior studies contradict the findings of the present study. It is important to note that the trials are carried out under typical conditions, outside the context of post-pandemic COVID-19 and its aftereffects.

As stated before, after the pandemic of Covid-19, the findings of the current study reveal that females have a better work performance sub-scale compared to males. It's possible that this is due to the fact that females are more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic than males have been. As a result, they may feel pressured to improve their work performance in order to keep their jobs. The ILO brief is in agreement with the previous statement because it shows that while male employment in Asia and the Pacific is expected to rise to levels not seen since before the crisis by 2021, female employment is predicted to remain below the levels seen in 2019. This shows that the ILO brief is in agreement with the previous statement. In addition, the 51 ILO report notes that the severity of the pandemic resulted in a decrease of female employment of 3.8% throughout Asia and the Pacific, in comparison to a decrease of male employment of 2.9% during the same time period. This decline could result in a rise in female workers' productivity in order for them to maintain their existing work position in compared to male workers.

Although females have a significantly higher mean than males on contextual performance and work performance, the data are in line with the previous statement by Robb and Watson (2012) that there is little to no

difference between males and females as the difference between their mean, although the data is significant, is not huge. This is because the females' mean is significantly higher than the males' mean, which means that females have a significantly higher mean. This would imply that findings similar to those obtained in the current study might not be possible to collect in further studies.

On the other hand, if we compare the performance of male and female UMS employees, we can say that the female employees have been more successful. In addition, the significant gender discrepancy between respondents would have an impact on the score of the mean, which is another reason why it would portray a different conclusion compared to earlier research.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the association between psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and job performance following the covid-19 epidemic was explored. Covid-19's global epidemic has affected several organizations and their workers. Before, during, and after the covid-19 epidemic, psychological well-being differed significantly. The statistics show that females had higher psychological well-being than males, demonstrating a gender discrepancy in this facet of well-being. Autonomy, environmental mastery, personal advancement, pleasant contact with others, the purpose in life, and self-acceptance are sub-scales used to measure psychological well-being. Current research shows females dominated all sub-scales with a significantly higher mean score, compared to past studies which showed some sub-scales were controlled by males and where males scored higher. As expected, male and female psychological well-being differed after the covid-19 outbreak.

Informed Consent Statement

All participants had granted their consent to this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

The study was done compliance with the ethical guidelines approved by the Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

Author's Contribution

Conceptualization, Resources, Muhammad Ghazalie bin Mohamad Sabri, & Razima Hanim binti Osman; Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing, Muhammad Ghazalie bin Mohamad Sabri; Project administration Supervision, Visualization, editing, Razima Hanim binti Osman.

Funding

No Funding.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Universiti Malaysia Sabah for providing the search database for this scoping review and for facilitating the submission of this scoping review to SAPJ.

Data Availability Statement

All data is available upon request.

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