SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELLBEING, MENTAL HEALTH, AND EMPLOYMENT PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN THE APPAREL INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

The study makes an effort to look at how economic and social well-being affects mental health and the performance of women employees in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. This study employs a quantitative method and the primary data were collected from 275 women employees in the apparel industry in Seethawaka Industrial Zone, Sri Lanka. The data were analyzed employing a partial least square structural equation model through SmartPLS. The study revealed that social and economic well-being have a positive effect on the mental health of women employees and their performance. The mental health of women employees has been associated negatively with their employee performance. The study further revealed that mental health has no mediator role in the relationship between the socioeconomic well-being of employees and performance. Thus, the study provides important empirical evidence that socioeconomic well-being affects the mental health of women employees and their employee performance.

Keywords: *Apparel Industry, Economic Wellbeing, Employment Performance, Mental Health, Social Wellbeing.*

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Introduction

Due to a variety of factors and possibilities, women's participation in the workforce has significantly expanded nowadays and thousands of low-income women, their families, and communities are impacted. In Sri Lankan context, women's social circles appear to be ignorant of the impact that their hardworking and determined hands have made-parents, siblings, husbands, and significant others (Lankeshwara, 2016). The economic and social well-being of women is crucial for their ability to perform effectively at work, since it both provides guidance and, most importantly, rewards them for doing so (Suresha, 2020). Financial stability, therefore, ensures both present and future financial security. Most female apparel employees must deal with this strain between work and home; as a result, they lose out on some of their most important family time. Additionally, female apparel employees must deal with pressure at work, finish their jobs within the allotted time frames, follow objectives, work overtime, and take precautions to minimize mistakes and damages. These are the conditions that they must adhere to, they work under pressure, which causes issues with their mental health including stress, anxiety, or even depression. As a result, it affects both their job performance and their well-being (Motowidlo, 2003). Therefore, the study attempts to investigate the impact of economic and social well-being on women's mental health and the employment performance of women employed in the apparel industries in Sri Lanka.

Material and Methods

The study's population is female apparel workers at the Seethawaka Export Processing Zone (EPZ). Utilizing a questionnaire survey as a key data collection tool, the study strategy is quantitative. The researchers used multistage cluster sampling in their research to collect the data. The sample size was 275 which was determined using the sample size determination formula. Multi-stage cluster sampling method was used for the sample selection. There are 11 garment industries located in the Seethawaka EPZ. Each of the eleven clusters that make up these 11 factories has both male and female employees. The lottery method is used in the first phase to select five apparel factories at random from among the 11 clusters. The second step is to choose females from that five clusters. Then took 55 females as an equal sample size from each cluster because equal sample size allows to reduce the bias in data collection and analysis. The collected data were imported into the smartPLS and analyzed with the support of Partial Least Squire Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using two steps. First, the measurement of variables was evaluated using reliability and validity tests and then, the structural model was measured.

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Results and Discussion

The study first evaluated the reliability and validity of reflective variables of the outer model and it came out that all the indicators have indicators reliable since outer loadings values are above 0.7. Composite reliability of reflective variables is established since Cronbach alpha is higher than 0.7. The convergent validity of all the variables is up to the standard level (AVE value is above 0.5). Also based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion Analysis results showed that discriminant validity is established in the variables. After that inner model was evaluated using VIF, path coefficient, and their significance. Table 1 shows the significance of the structural model.

Table 1:

The significance of the structural model

Hypotheses	Relationship	Path Coefficient	P Values	Decision
H1	EW -> EP	0.233*	0.050	Accepted
H2	EW -> MH	-0.222***	0.001	Accepted
H3	MH -> EP	-0.114*	0.042	Accepted
H4	SW -> EP	0.473***	0.000	Accepted
H5	SW -> MH	-0.392***	0.000	Accepted
H5	SW -> MH -> EP	0.045*	0.043	Accepted
H6	EW -> MH -> EP	0.025	0.115	Not Accepted

Source: survey data, 2022.

PLS-SEM results show that economic well-being has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.233$ and p-value = 0.05) (see table 1). Thus, the hypothetical relationship of H1 is supported by the empirical results. Further economic well-being shows a significant negative direct impact on mental health ($\beta = -0.222$ and p-value = 0.01) confirming that there is a significant negative relationship between economic well-being and mental health. Thus, the hypothetical relationship of H2 is supported by the empirical results. The regression results shown in table 1, indicate that mental health has an influence on employee performance. Mental health has a significant negative path coefficient ($\beta = -0.114$ and p-value = 0.04). The results have

answered hypothesis H3. Social well-being has a powerful impact on mental health and employee performance. Table 1 further shows that social well-being and employee performance have a strong relationship (β = 0.473 and p-value = 0.00) and the result accepted hypothesis H4. Similarly, social well-being has a significant negative relationship with mental health confirming the hypothesis H5 (β = -0.392 and p-value = 0.00). The results displayed in table 1, indicate that mental health has a lesser mediator impact on the relationship between socioeconomic well-being and employee performance of women employees in apparel industries in Sri Lanka. Based on the results this study is similar with the previous researchers (Harshitha & Arul, 2021), (Mahlagha & Faizan, 2020) and (Randolph, 1992).

Conclusions and Recommendation

The results confirmed that socioeconomic well-being has a positive effect on the mental health of women employees and the performance of women employees in apparel industries in Sri Lanka. Thus, the study provides empirical evidence to the literature by testing the model developed by combining three theoretical concepts empirically. To integrate work and family life without experiencing significant challenges or high levels of stress, it is advised that employees be provided flexible shift schedules and additional hours. Here it found that social wellbeing has a relationship between employment performance, to build social sustainability of female workers it suggests flexible shift timetables on work and extra hours in order to balance work and family life without severe difficulties and stress levels which is implemented in the working hour policy. And study found that mental health has significance with social wellbeing to the performance, so to imply punitive measures against guilty supervisors for their misbehavior at work in order to improve the work environment. Skills development is essential to prepare women for the future apparel industry. This involves technical and vocational education and training. Need to implement, holiday compensation policy and importantly anti-discrimination policy to secure the work life of female workers.

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