Demographic Variables as Predictors of Self-concepts in the Workforce of the University of Abuja

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study used non-teaching staff of the University of Abuja for the study. The main thrust of this work was to determine the predictors of self-concepts among staff on the basis of two demographic variables – gender and marital status. A sample size of one hundred and fifty participants was drawn for the study through stratified random sampling procedure. The sample size consisted of 74 males and 76 females. A modified version of workers/self-concept scale (WSCS) was adapted to generate data for the study. The 35-item instrument sought responses on various aspects of self-concepts involving moral self, family self, self-satisfaction, self-criticism. Two null hypotheses were formulated to determine the predictors of self-concepts on the basis of gender and marital status. The results revealed that there was no significant difference in self-concepts among staff on the basis of gender and marital status. This implies that the two demographic variables, do not predict self-concepts among the generality of the university workforce. The t-values were not significant at .393 and .495 for gender and marital status respectively. The authors recommended among other measures a more elaborate and in-depts. study involving a heterogeneous sample to ascertain a more reliable influence of the two variables on self-concepts.

Keywords: Demographic variables, Predictors, Self-concepts and Workforce.
Introduction

Gender and marital status may be two demographic variables that impact self-concepts at the workplace. These demographic factors may be significant predictors that influence people’s worldview in psychological terms and inevitably their interpersonal relationships. Gender differences in subjective well-being (SWB) and self-concepts are a recurrent field of research in social gerontology. According to Pinquart and Sorensen (2001), previous research has focused on three research questions. The first question addresses whether older men and women differ with regard to SWB and aspects of self-concept (e.g., self-esteem, subjective age). Previous studies have revealed a wealth of evidence of gender typed self-descriptions. For example, men are more likely to describe themselves as independent, achievement oriented, financially oriented and competitive than are women (e.g., Angeleitner, 1978; Mutran, 1987). Women on the other hand, describe themselves as sociable, moral, dependent and less assertive (e.g. Mutran, 1987, Siegler, George and Okun, 1979). In contrast as we show, gender differences in global dimensions of self-descriptions and self-evaluation (e.g., life satisfaction) are equivocal. The second question deals with whether differences in SWB and self-concept depend on gender-based disadvantages such as higher rate of being widowed, having poor physical health and low socio-economic status (SES). The third question, which has not been resolved in the literature to date, is whether gender differences in SWB and self-concept vary with the ages of participants and whether they are influenced by cohort differences. The authors deliberately introduced the concept of subjective well-being (SWB) in the literature review because of its close association with self-concepts. Nevertheless, the former has no direct bearing on the study, but to enrich the theoretical framework for the key concept of critical empirical importance.

SWB can be defined as positive evaluation of one’s life associated with positive feelings. General subjective well-being (SWB) has most often been assessed with measures of life satisfaction, happiness and self-esteem, whereas self-esteem and life satisfaction measure cognitive evaluation of one’s self and one’s life, happiness generally represents the emotional component (Rosenberg, 1979, Kozma, Stones and McNeil, 1991). Although all three aspects of SWB are positively correlated (Pinquart, 1998) they tend to measure different aspects of well-being.

According to Pinquart and Sorensen (2000), there are five reasons why older women’s SWB might be lower and their self-concept more negative compared with men. The first three reasons focus on women’s disadvantages with respect to different sources of SWB. According to them, previous research has shown that social integration, good health, competence and a high socio-economic status (SES) are important predictors of SWB and self-concept in old age. First, women’s disadvantages with regard to health resources occurs because their morbidity rates are higher (Jetter, 1996) and because women tend to require more care in later life than men (Hobbs and Damon, 1996). Despite the striking gender difference in longevity, a large part of women’s additional years are spent with illness and disabilities.

Second, older women are more likely to be widowed than older men. For example, among women 65 years and older, about 50% are widowed; this percentage is about three times as high as for men (Hobbs and Damon, 1996). In the United States, nearly four times as many older women than men live alone (Arber and Ginn, 1994). Third, older women have on average, lower material resources due to inequality experienced at an early age. As a result of gender segregation in the labour market and women’s less stable employment histories, women are less likely to be covered by pensions (Golomboke and Fivush, 1994). Their pensions are on average lower than men’s and they are
more likely to live in poverty than older men especially in very old age. In the Nigerian cultural setting, due to the patriarchal nature of the society, women, especially widows are denied of rights to family property. Also, marriage in security renders many women prone to deprivations as many of them in the lower socio-economic status become vulnerable to poverty and sexual exploitation in the event of separation or divorce. In the United States for example, older women are almost twice as likely as older men to have an income below the poverty threshold (Arber and Ginn, 1991, Arber and Ginn, 1994).

Fourth, gender-specific response sets may contribute to older women’s lower SWB. Some authors have argued that women may report lower SWB than men because they are more likely to disclose negative feelings (Phillips and Segal, 1969). With regard to old age, however, there is almost no research on gender differences in self-disclosure that could test this assumption.

The fifth reason why women’s SWB might be lower has been suggested by Sontag (1972). With increasing age, women are considered less attractive and are therefore less valued, whereas men may gain social prestige with age. This, in turn, may lead to lower SWB in older women. However, although empirical studies have revealed that older women are rated as less attractive than younger women, there is not much evidence that older women are evaluated more negatively than older men. In some dimensions, women were even rated more positively compared with their male age peers.

However, there are two reasons why women may not have lower SWB and more negative self-concept than men. First, research on the protection of a positive self-concept in older adults has shown a considerable resilience of the aging self (Brandtstader, Wentura and Greve, 1993). Wills (1992) for example, suggested that social comparisons mediate between objective circumstances of life and SWB. When older adults are compared with persons of the same sex, gender difference in health problems, disability, SES and widowhood are irrelevant for the psychological outcome of social comparisons.

A second reason why men and women may not differ in SWB and self-concept is that they may have different sources of SWB and self-concept. Women’s identities may tend to be more strongly tied to social ne-t work events, whereas men’s identities may be more strongly tied to their careers (Golombok and Fivush, 1994; Whitbourne and Powers, 1994). One might infer from this that lower previous career success, educational attainment and income and other disadvantages of older women may not result in lower SWB and a more negative self-concept in older women than men because women’s SWB is primarily based on other sources for example, having close relations.

Gender differences in SWB and self-concept have been assessed in numerous studies. However, both differences in measurement as well as inconsistencies in the results make it very difficult to draw conclusion from these studies.

As for the influence of marital status, the higher SWB of older men may, in part, result from the fact that a higher percentage of men are married, which provides them access to an important source of support as well as personal validation (Pinquart and Sorensen, 2001). We infer from this that gender differences in self-concept and SWB should be greater in those samples that are heterogeneous with regard to marital status. In widowed samples, however, self-concept differences in favour of men should be less pronounced because (a) men may not be prepared for bereavement, based on their lower risk of widowhood (Barey 1994). (b) Men are less likely to report their children and friends as being sources of support (Kahn, 1994; Okun and Keith, 1998) and (c) men have less intimate same sex friendships (Reis, Senchak and Solomon, 1985) and receive less support than women. Thus compared with women, men are more likely to suffer from the loss of their spouses and to benefit from being married.
(Moen, 1996). Consistent with these considerations, a meta-analysis by Haring-Hidore, Stock, Okun and Witter, 1985) showed in age-heterogeneous sample that being married has a significantly higher association with SWB for men than for women. In contrast, wood and colleagues (1989) found in another meta-analysis that in studies with higher percentage of married respondents, women tended to have higher SWB than men.

On the basis of theoretical considerations elaborated above, men will report higher SWB and a more positive self-concept than women, whereas in non-married samples, women also report higher SWB and a more positive self-concept than men (Pinguard and Sorensen, 2001).

The present study draws theoretical framework from gender differences in SWB and self-concept in the elderly using marital status, socio-economic status (SES), widowhood, etc. However, the main thrust of the present work is to determine the differences in self-concept using gender and marital status as it concerns work place in Abuja university community.

Statement of the Problem

Self-concepts and subjective well-being to a large extent determines people’s world view or their general philosophy of life. Pessimism and optimism are polar opposites associated with an individual’s self-concepts. This psychological construct is being driven by certain demographic variables. Generally, women, at least on the average, are believed to be more assertive than men. They are more conscious of their looks and self-worth in comparison with their male counterparts. Women are very much interested in and very sensitive to the opinions others hold about them. Older women’s subjective well-being might be lower and their self-concept more negative compared with men. This stem from women’s disadvantages with respect to different sources of SWB. Previous research has shown that social integration, good health, competence and a high social economic status (SES) are important predictors of self-concepts in old age (Pinguard and Sorensen, 2000). Women are more emotionally battered in failed relationships and other adverse circumstances such as divorce, bereavement, joblessness, childlessness, spinsterhood, etc than men. Men on the other hand, appear to be relatively casual in their opinions and that of others about themselves. Gender difference in self-concept and subjective well-being had been a subject of tremendous interest in social and indtrial psychology over the years, although with inconclusive and inconsistent results. Racial, religious and socio-cultural differences account for such multilateral results. However, findings in a highly civilized setting such as a university community have not been established yet. So also in the influence of marital status. While marriage shapes or at least influences people’s self-concept and psychological well-being, there is little or no empirical evidence to support this. Gender factor and marital status may be significant variables in self-concept prevalent among the workforce of the university of Abuja and hence their job performance. This notion needs to be investigated hence the impetus for this study.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to:

(a) Determine the influence of gender as a predictor of self-concepts among the workforce of the University of Abuja.

(b) Ascertain the influence of marital status as a predictor of self-concepts among the workforce of the University of Abuja.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses shall be tested at 0.05% level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between male and female staff of the University of Abuja with regard to self-concepts.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between married and unmarried staff
of the University of Abuja with regards to self-concepts.

**Methodology**

The study used descriptive survey research design for a population of non-teaching staff of the university of Abuja estimated to be one thousand, five hundred (1,500) (Source: Establishment Unit, Registry Department, University of Abuja, 2018). Stratified random sampling procedure was adopted to select a sample size of one hundred and fifty respondents comprising 74 males and 76 females. The participants for the study were drawn from Registry, Students’ Affairs, Security unit, staff school, works and services, medical centre, Institute of Education and Bursary unit. The authors used a modified version of an instrument titled worker’s self-concept scale (WSCS) developed by Marsh, Parker and Smith (1983) to generate data for the study. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section ‘A’ sought information on the demographic data of respondents concerning gender, marital status and department. Section B featured a 35-item inventory on various aspects of self-concepts. Respondents were required to tick among a 4-point Likert scale consisting of completely true, mostly true, mostly false and completely false. The instrument was personally administered by the researcher in their respective departments or units. However some staff magnanimously volunteered to assist in the administration of the instrument in their departments or units to fast track the process. The data generated was analysed using mean scores and t-test statistics to test the hypotheses formulated for the study.

**Results**

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between male and female staff of the university of Abuja with regard to self-concept.

The result is presented in the table below:

**Table 1: t-test analysis of Gender Difference in self-concept among university of staff (N=150)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>val</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3.2150</td>
<td>.28811</td>
<td>-.700</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.2497</td>
<td>.31821</td>
<td>-.701</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

t-test analysis in the table above showed that the t-values of -.700 and -.701 are not significant at .393 significant level (P>0.05) we therefore accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female staff of the university of Abuja with regard to self-concept and subjective wellbeing (SWB)

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between married and unmarried staff of the University of Abuja with regard to self-concept.

**Table 2: t-test analysis of marital status difference in self-concept among university staff (N=150).**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-val</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3.2372</td>
<td>.29888</td>
<td>.541</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.1938</td>
<td>.34560</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>17.783</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table above, the t-values of .541 and .482 are not significant at .495 which is more than 0.05% level of significance (P>0.05). The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between married and unmarried staff of the University of Abuja with regard to self-concept is therefore accepted.

**Discussion of Findings**

The two hypotheses revealed that there is no significant difference in self-concept among university of Abuja staff on the basis of gender and marital status respectively. On the gender perspective of self-concept, Pinquart and Sorensen, (2001) observed that because of women’s higher risk of being widowed, having health problems and needing care, one might expect them to have a more negative self-concept and lower subjective well-being (SWB). However, women may also have greater access to sources of subjective well-being (e.g., relations and adult children and may engage in processes to protect the self (e.g., lowered aspirations). Although this study involved heterogeneous age groups, such opinion holds true due to the universality of human behavior. Pinquart and Sorensen (2001) also asserted that gender differences in favour of men are expected not only in general dimensions of self-evaluation, but also in domain-specific dimensions such as loneliness, self-evaluation of one’s health (subjective health) and subjective age. They however added that even though women experience several disadvantages as compared with men and although prevailing stereotypes suggest lower subjective well-being in older women, gender differences in SWB and self-concept are inconsequential.

The study found no significant difference in self-concept among staff on the basis of marital status. Commenting on the relationship between self-concept and marital status, Pinquart and Sorensen, (2001) states that the tendency of women to feel lonelier than men was strongest in samples with heterogeneous marital status. According to them, in studies with no married (and mostly widowed) participants, gender differences in loneliness were insignificant. In contrast to the suggestion that men may suffer more from widowhood than women (Barer, 1994; Moen, 1996), we did not find more loneliness, in non-married (mostly widowed) men than women. Nevertheless in spite of these inconsistent results, it is normal that marriage, regardless of gender and age bracket provides economic and psychological support to partners hence we expect a significant difference in self-concept in favour of the married. What can be deduced from the findings of this study is that in a civilized setting of this nature, people are well informed and exposed to the wider society, hence discrepancies in gender, marital status or any other demographic characteristic may not significantly differ in terms of psychological measures.

**Recommendations**

1. The findings of the study revealed that gender factor and marital status have no bearing on self-concept. A heterogeneous sample comprising various demographic attributes (such as
age, religion, socio-economic status and family background) is recommended to access the influence of the two variables on self-concept on the basis of these extraneous data. A longitudinal study is also recommended to evaluate the influence of these demographic factors on self-concept over time for more objective results.

2. Workers who manifest positive self-concepts tend to develop healthy relationships and thereby establish a harmonious work environment which enhances productivity. To this end, university management and employers of labour in general should engage career counsellors who will boost workers’ subjective well-being and self-concept.

3. University management should understand that employees differ in their needs and should therefore be treated on the basis of these differences, taking cognizance of gender and marital peculiarities. Job design and job content should be made conducive, challenging and interesting through constant job appraisal and job analysis to accommodate emerging trends in industrial psychology.

Conclusion

Self-concepts among university staff appeared seemingly impressive. The non-significant influence of the two demographic variables on self-concepts among staff calls for a more elaborate and indepth study to ascertain their empirical bearing on self-concepts.

Reference

