

Comparative Study

A Comparative Approach on Gender Variants in Psychological Well-Being and Balance between Life and Work across Working Professionals in Malawi

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ABSTRACT

Research suggests that improving the balance between a work-life and life outside work can bring real benefits for employers and employees. In a society filled with conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work/life balance has become a predominant issue in the workplace (Dhas, 2015). Mental health conditions (MHC) or psychological well-being are viewed as a global challenge (Mohan & Lone, 2021). The aim of this research is to compare the gender differences between psychological well-being and work-life balance among working professionals in Malawi. Malawi is among the poorest countries as of 2023. The COVID pandemic worsened socioeconomic issues, mental health, well-being challenges, and substance use issues, which is a concerning burden on Malawi's already weak mental health system (Jumbe et al., 2022). This cross-section study research was done on 100 working professionals aged 25-35 years, where 50 were males and 50 were females. The research was done by administering an online Google form. The interview questions were adapted from Ryff Psychological Well-being Scale with 18 items and Work-Life Balance Inventory with a 15-item scale adapted by Hayman. Data were analysed using Scientific Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 20. Frequencies and Data on hypotheses were tested using the independent samples t-test and Pearson product-moment correlation. There are no significant gender differences in Psychological Well-Being and Work-Life Balance among professional employees in Malawi. As per the results, this study concludes that psychological well-being and work-life balance is not dominantly and significantly affected by gender of professional workers. This indicates that both male and female employees have fair and equal opportunities to manage their personal and professional commitments, as well as fostering positive psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Work life balance, Psychological wellbeing, Working professionals, Organization*

A Person is said to have a psychological well-being state of mind if they are able to develop their full potential, work efficiently and creatively, and can deal with the normal stresses of daily life (WHO, 2021). Bakker et al. (2019) highlighted that, one of the most important factors for an organization's success and performance is its employees'

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Received: June 20, 2023; Revision Received: June 26, 2023; Accepted: June 29, 2023

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health and well-being. In order to function effectively at work and lead fulfilling personal lives, working professionals must maintain good psychological health, which is a vital component of overall well-being (Bakker et al., 2019).

Research conducted in industrial and organizational setting found that there is link between PWB and work-related issues and correlation between PWB and work-life balance (Saraswati & Lie, 2020). When the concept of PWB is applied in the occupational life, it is defined as how a person willingly develops themselves; builds positive relationships with others; and having occupational acceptance, fulfilling life and occupational needs (Saraswati & Lie, 2020).

In the past years, the issue of psychological well-being and work-life balance has received a lot of attention, completely different actors and participants in numerous industries are turning into awake to practices for leveling work and life (Wong & blow, 2009). However, there are few researches done on psychological well-being and work life balance in Malawi. The assessment of psychological well-being in Malawi is essential at this time since mental health conditions (MHC) or psychological well-being is viewed as a global challenge (Mohan & Lone, 2021).

Psychological Well Being

According to the East African Community (2019), psychosocial well-being is the development of a person's cognitive, emotional, and spiritual strengths among as well as that of families and communities which creates overall positive social relationships among them. This state of wellbeing encourages the growth of life skills that allow people, families, or communities to comprehend and engage with their environment and make healthy decisions. While Malawi nears the celebration of its fifty ninth year of gaining independence from the British rule, the people are still affected by significant stresses, including high levels of crime, poor economy, violence, suicide and unemployment. The study of psychological well-being and work life balance is of special significance given their expected concerns in this regard (Mohan & Lone, 2021).

Mental health conditions are increasing worldwide primarily because of demographic changes. In the last decade to 2017, there has been a 13% rise in mental health conditions and substance use disorders. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds (WHO, 2023). Mental health conditions can have an extensive effect on all areas of life, such as education or work performance, relationships with family and friends and participation in the community (Mental Health Atlas, 2020) hence, there is need to pay much attention to working professionals' psychological well-being.

According to Jumbe et al. (2022) the transcripts analysis revealed a vicious cycle between youth mental health issues and poverty in Malawi. They identified four key themes: poverty-related socioeconomic and health challenges; no one talks about mental health; lacking mental health support; and relationship issues. The vicious cycle created by these themes continued to have a negative impact their lives. In Malawi, 30% of young people report having depression, which is a common condition (Limaye, 2014). The corona virus pandemic worsened Malawi's already poor mental health system's burden, socioeconomic problems, health issues, and problems with substance use (Jumbe et al., 2022).

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In sub-Saharan Africa, there is a need for health care policies that address young people's mental health. According to Crabb et al. (2012), Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as a whole has a poor understanding of mental health and mental illness and mental disorders frequently not recognized as illnesses and remain largely untreated (Hugo et al., 2003). High levels of stigma, a lack of knowledge about mental health, and a lack of community-level resources make it difficult to address this health-care need in Malawi (Kutcher et al., 2019). The chronic lack of mental health services and healthcare workers in the country, amplifies the limited treatment access, lack of knowledge, and negative attitudes (Klutcher et al., 2019; Udedi, 2016).

The South Africans perceived themselves to be 67% psychologically well (12 out of a possible score of 18). As far as sex differences are concerned, both samples comprised mainly women: 83% in the South African and 59% there were no significant sex differences in the scales of either sample (Edwards et al., 2005).

Despite the fact that complete US data are not yet available to allow for detailed statistical analysis, psychological well-being mean scores indicate that, while US subjects believed themselves to be 83% psychologically well (14.9 out of a possible score of 18), 59% in the US sample, respectively, there were no significant sex differences in the scales, except in the United States sample scale of Positive relations with others, where women scored higher than men (Edwards et al., 2005).

A study conducted in 2020 found that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the psychological well-being of Americans. The pandemic was linked to a high prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms in adults, but research indicates that these symptoms worsened during the pandemic, though it is unclear to what extent (Panchal, 2023). The USA was already suffering a prolonged decline in the mental well-being of its citizens even prior to announcement of the first COVID-19 case on January 21st, 2020 (Blanchflower & Bryson, 2022).

According to WHO estimates, India has 2443 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per 100,000 people with mental health issues; the age-adjusted suicide rate per 100 000 population is 21.1. The economic loss due to mental health conditions, between the years 2012 to 2030, is estimated at USD 1.03 trillion. These figures are so alerting and there is need to do more on psychological well-being, not just of working professionals. As of 2023, the latest survey by India's National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) found that nearly 150 million Indians are in need of mental health care services, but fewer than 30 million are seeking care. The population percentage of diagnosable mental health or substance use disorder is over 10%. This survey also shows that more Indians are suffering from a variety of mental health issues but psychiatrists are scarce and many people are hesitant to seek help, therefore suffer in silence (Gururaj et al., 2016).

According to Kumar (2020), the physical, economic, social, mental, emotional, cultural, and spiritual determinants of health make up psychological well-being. Psychological well-being has two important facets built from a series of personal and social factors or dimensions. The extent to which individuals experience positive emotions and feelings of happiness of psychological wellbeing is referred to as subjective wellbeing (Diener, 2000).

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Psychologist Carol Ryff is well known for her studies on psychological well-being and psychological resilience. She developed the first systematic models of psychological well-being and a questionnaire to assess each of the dimensions (Dierendonck et al., 2007). She defines psychological well-being from optimal human functioning that produces more positive emotions and satisfaction. Each dimension of the psychological well-being model is an index of well-being in itself and each dimension should be taken care of (Ryff, 2014).

The dimensions of Ryff's model of psychological well-being are related to greater subjective well-being as well as life satisfaction and affects physical health in terms of lower levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, a better sleep pattern or lower cardiovascular risks, for example (Ryff, 1989). A theoretical model of psychological well-being was proposed by Ryff (1989), which consist of six different aspects of positive functioning, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others and self-acceptance. Ryff (1989) developed this model after thorough study on how human functioning.



Figure 1: diagram of six dimensions of psychological well being given by Ryff (1989)

The six dimensions of psychological well being

Self-acceptance

High scorer: Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life.

Low scorer: Feels dissatisfied with self; is disappointed with what has occurred with past life; is troubled about certain personal qualities; wishes to be different than what he or she is.

Positive relations with others

High scorer: Has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships.

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Low scorer: Has few close, trusting relationships with others; finds it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others; is isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others.

Autonomy

High scorer: Is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards.

Low scorer: Is concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways.

Environmental mastery

High scorer: Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values.

Low scorer: Has difficulty managing everyday affairs; feels unable to change or improve surrounding context; is unaware of surrounding opportunities; lacks sense of control over external world.

Purpose in life

High scorer: Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living.

Low scorer: Lacks a sense of meaning in life; has a few goals or aims, lacks sense of direction; does not see purpose of past life; has no outlook or beliefs that give life meaning.

Personal growth

High scorer: Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expanding; is open to new experiences; has sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness.

Low scorer: Has a sense of personal stagnation; lacks sense of improvement or expansion over time; feels bored and uninterested with life; feels unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors.

Types of Psychological Well Being

According to Tang et al. (2019) core feature of mental health is psychological well-being, and they defined psychological well-being by including hedonic (enjoyment, pleasure) and eudaimonic (meaning, fulfillment and happiness), as well as resilience (coping, emotion regulation and healthy problem solving).

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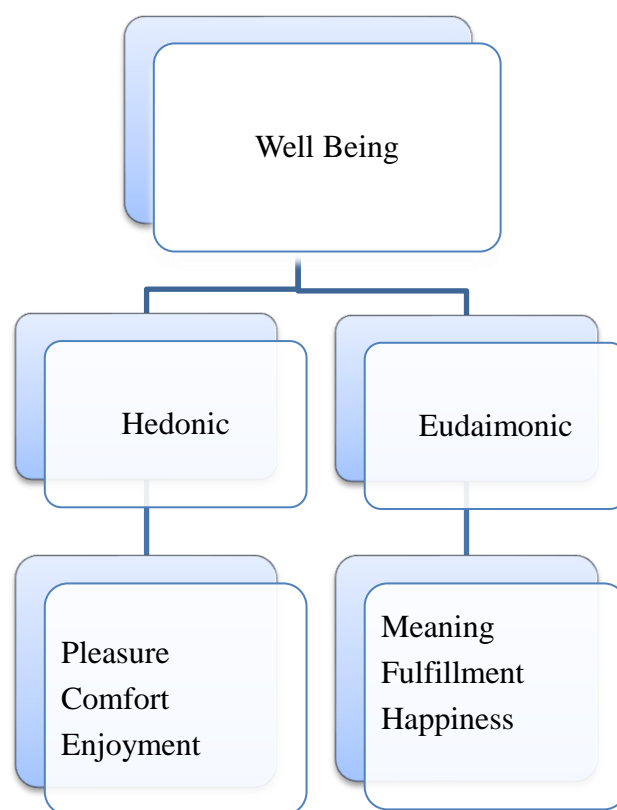


Figure 2: Types of well-being

The term hedonic well-being is typically used to describe the subjective feelings of happiness. There are two components of hedonic well-being, the first one is an affective component characterized by the prevalence of positive emotions rather than negative emotions and the last one is a cognitive component which refers to satisfaction with life (Tang, 2019). An individual feels happy when their levels of positive affect and life satisfaction are both high (Carruthers & Hood, 2004).

Eudaimonic well-being (EWB) is a type of contentment or happiness achieved through self-actualization and having meaningful purpose in one's own life. A good example of EWB can be volunteering or giving back to the community through charity work. Ryff developed a clear model that breaks down Eudaimonic wellbeing into six key types of psychological wellbeing; autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others and self-acceptance (Ryff, 2014).

Work Life Balance

Voydanoff (2005), define Work life balance (WLB) as the ability to manage resources to meet work and family demands so that individuals can show effective participation in both domains of life. A good WLB entails satisfaction and worthy functioning at work as well as home with a minimum role conflict (Clark, 2000). As family and work are the two most important aspects of everyone's lives, work-life balance is a central issue that affects wellbeing (Gautam & Jain, 2018). Employees' productivity and job performance is harmed by work-family conflict and decreases the job satisfaction of employees (Johnson et al., 2005). For employers, the consequences of poor work-life balance will be poor

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performance, absenteeism, sick leave and higher staff turnover, recruitment, and training costs (Mendis & Weerakkody, 2017).

In the recent years, WLB has become a predominant issue in the workplace due to the conflicting responsibilities and commitments filled in the society. It is the responsibility of organizations to provide scope for workers to balance what they are doing at work with the responsibilities and interests they need outside work (Armstrong, 2006). Failure of achieving balance between the work and family, definitely lead to negative consequences to the employees as well as whole organization (Preena, 2021). According to Dhas (2015), there are three major factors that contribute to the interest in, and the importance of, serious consideration of WLB: Global competition; renewed interest in personal lives family values; and an aging workforce.

Clarke et al. (2004) describe WLB as an equilibrium between the amount of time and effort somebody dedicate to work and personal activities to maintain an overall sense of harmony in life. WLB is about effectively managing between paid work and other activities that are important in life outside work for instance, spending time with family or friends, pursuing further studies, taking part in sports recreation, and volunteering. Improving the balance between a working life and life outside work can bring real benefits for both employers and employees; it can help build strong communities and productive businesses (Dhas, 2015).

Work life balance was measured by the Work Life Balance Inventory with a 15 item scale adapted by Hayman (2005), originally developed by Fisher (2001). The 15 items are designed to assess three dimensions of work life balance: work interference with personal life; personal life interference with work; and work or personal life enhancement. It is useful for organizations to assess the non-work domain of employees, as family may not be relevant to all employees. Additionally, this scale also measures positive spill over or enhancement (Hayman, 2005). Higher levels of work or personal life enhancement are considered to be associated with higher levels of work life balance while lower levels are associated with lower levels of work life balance.

Dimensions of Work Life Balance

Work interference with personal life (WIPL)

The first dimension, WIPL includes items that reveal the extent to which work interferes with personal life.

Personal life interference with work (PLIW)

The second-dimension items indicate the opposite direction of work personal life interference. They demonstrate the extent to which ones personal life interferes with work.

Work/personal life enhancement (WPLE)

The items of the third dimension, WPLE involves positive effects of one's work on personal life or vice versa, the extent to which ones personal life increases work.

Importance of Work Life Balance

Employees with a healthier WLB tend to be happier when they come to work. This prevents the chances of burn out and stress in the workplace. Continuous stress leads to mental health issues like anxiety and depression, as well as physical health issues such as hypertension,

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heart diseases, headaches and back aches. A steady work life balance may lead to much happiness at work. This leads to greater delivery of quality work and increases productivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work life balance

The literature reviews by Rebecca (2000) explored the imbalance of work and family of a working mother and the available support system that are enhancing balance of work and family of the working women. Work-life balance is a key factor to the success of both employees and organizations however; they discovered that men and women have a different perception of work-life balance. Working women find it challenging to balance both profession life and family due to the pressure in family and work life.

According to a major Canadian study by Lowe (2005), based on work-to-family interference and caregiver strain, 1 in 4 employees experience high levels of conflict between work and family. If role overload is taken into account, then work-family conflict affects almost 60% of the employees surveyed. The study's findings indicate that work-family conflict has a negative effect on psychological safety and psychological well-being.

In a study of 485 employees from various Indian companies, Baral (2010) discovered that work-family enrichment outweighs conflict for both working men and women in India. Additionally, no differences in perception of work-family enrichment among employees were found to be related to gender.

The study by Padma, & Reddy (2013) highlighted the role of family support in balancing personal and work life and discovered that the results of this study demonstrate the importance of family support in balancing personal and professional lives. They aimed to find the impact of family Support on Work life Balance. They found that women who are responsible for elder parents' health need to be support to balance their personal and professional work.

According to Madipelli et al. (2013), a study on factors causing a work-life imbalance among school teachers, the results of majority of teachers experience stress due to excessive workloads, unfavorable working conditions, and long working hours. Marriage, attitudes, husbands' cooperation, and support from family members are all significant contributing factors to the imbalance of working women.

Santhana et al. (2013) highlighted that work life balance is affected by four factors; marital status, working hours, requirement of flexibility, and additional working hours and over time. Married women are in a unique situation because any additional hours they put in at work prevent them from taking care of their children and other dependents.

Mendis & Weerakkody (2017) conducted a research in Sri Lanka that aimed study telecommunication industry and recognize the impact of work life balance on the employee performance. Their research found that the consequences of poor work-life balance for employers are poor performance, absenteeism, sick leave and higher staff turnover, recruitment, and training costs. According to research findings, there is a significant relationship between work-life balance and employee performance, as well as between job satisfaction and performance and between work-life balance and job satisfaction.

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A study by Meharunisa(2019) on Work-Life Balance and JobStress among female faculties in India's Higher Education Institutions to find out the reasons for job stress and also the impact of stress in maintaining work life balance among female . The results indicate a positive relationship between stress and work life. It was also found that the main causes of stress in the workplace were improper pay structure and hectic work schedules. Further findings revealed that the stresses caused a decrease in female faculties' productivity and also financial problem which affects their work life.

Psychological well-being

Despite studies on the differences between women and men's psychological wellbeing have not produced definitive results, research has consistently reported gender differences in mental health. According to research, psychological well-being has been demonstrated to be influenced by emotional regulation; personality traits, identity, and life experience (Helson& Srivastava, 2001).

Keyes et al. (2002) found out that psychological well-being rises with age, education, extraversion, and conscientiousness, and declines with neuroticism. Results reveal the probability of optimal well-being (high Subjective Well Being and Psychological Well Being) increased as age, education, extraversion, and conscientiousness increased and as neuroticism decreased. Adults with higher Subjective Well Being than Psychological Well Being were younger, had more education, and showed more openness to experience.

Armenta et al. (2005) research on positive affect engenders success used three classes of evidence – cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental to test their model. Relevant studies were described and their effect sizes combined meta-analytically. The results revealed that happiness is associated with and precedes numerous successful outcomes, as well as behaviors paralleling success and high level of psychological well-being is strongly associated with a wide range of positive aspects of both one's personal life and career.

A study conducted by Sadiq & Zehra Ali (2014) Married working women significantly reported more social dysfunction and depression, according to research done by on the psychological well-being of married working women who had dual responsibilities. Dual responsibility at home and at workplace is very stressful and can lead to psychological issues in married working women.

According to Mayordomo et al. (2016), age and psychological well-being were found to positively correlate, which may be the result of successful social environment adaptation. These authors specify that adaptability is the capacity to decide how to control one's own behaviour in this regard.

A study conducted in Malawi by Lohman et al. (2019) shows that, among health workers indicated that twenty-five percent of respondents had WHO-5 scores indicative of poor psychological wellbeing. The coefficients for sex, cadre, having children or other dependents, supervision, perceived coworker support and teamwork, satisfaction with the physical work environment, satisfaction with remuneration, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were consistently not statistically significant, in contrast to what Lohman et al. (2019) had anticipated.

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Matud et al. (2019) conducted a study with an aim to examine the relevance of gender to the psychological well-being of adult individuals. A cross-sectional study with a sample of 1700 men and 1700 women aged 21 to 64 years from the general Spanish population was conducted. They were assessed with Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales and the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Findings reveal that men scored higher than women in self-acceptance and autonomy, and women scored higher than men in personal growth and positive relations with others.

Obrenovic et al. (2020) highlighted that employees with higher well-being usually display resilience, are more optimistic, and have a greater ability to cope with issues or stress. An empirical study was conducted on a sample of 277 company employees in Bahrain to explore the association between work-family conflict and job performance and measure the effects on psychological safety and psychological well-being. They administered online questionnaires of five-point Likert-scales to measure the variables of the research model. Relationships between work-family conflict, psychological well-being, psychological safety, and job performance were tested. The findings of the study reveal a negative impact of work-family conflict on psychological safety and psychological well-being.

Pervaiz & Malik (2021) conducted with the aim to investigate the generational changes in gender roles and the association of gender roles and psychological wellbeing in adults. They used Cross sectional research design and purposefully selected 300 participants men (n= 150) and women (n= 150). They observed significant difference in the gender roles on the basis of age which show groups of young adult participants having modern roles compared to groups of middle and old adult participants. Results further revealed significant positive relationship between gender roles, psychological wellbeing, and its subscales of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self- acceptance.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The aim of this study is to compare the gender differences in psychological well-being and work life balance of professional workers in Malawi.

Objectives

- To compare psychological well-being of male and female working professionals.
- To compare work life balance of male and working professionals.

Hypothesis

H0: It is expected that the difference of psychological well-being among male and female working professionals exist.

H1: It is not expected that the difference of psychological well-being among male and female working professionals exist.

H0: It is expected that the difference of work life balance among male and female working professionals exist.

H2: It is not expected that the difference of work life balance among male and female working professionals exist.

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Study design

This current research is a Cross sectional study. Quantitative methods were used to understand the relationship between psychological well-being and work life balance among working professionals.

Sample and sampling procedure

Working professionals in Malawi aged 25 to 35 years (n=100), males (n=50) and female (n=50) were recruited through online posting of WhatsApp and Facebook (due to the reason that the study was carried out in India).

Description of tools

The following tools were administered to respondents:

Psychological Well-being- The 18-item version of the Scales of Psychological Well-being by Ryff (1989) was used to assess psychological well-being of working professionals. Even though not as statistically powerful as the longer versions of the instrument (42 Item), the short 18-item Psychological Well-being Scale was considered suitable for the present research for various reasons: it has been carefully compiled, standardized, found to confirm the proposed theoretical structure of psychological well-being, is currently in use in various large-scale US and international surveys, and is a short and convenient instrument for research purposes (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, Shmotkin&Ryff, 2002). The respondents were asked to rate how each item applies to themselves using a 7-point Likert scale, 1 = strongly agree; 2 = somewhat agree; 3 = a little agree; 4 = neither agree or disagree; 5 = a little disagree; 6 = somewhat disagree; 7 = strongly disagree

The scale is a self-report instrument measuring well-being on six dimensions: autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and self –acceptance. It includes three items from each six dimensions of well-being. The Autonomy subscale items are question 15, 17, and 18. The Environmental Mastery subscale items are question 4, 8, and 9. The Personal Growth subscale items are question 11, 12, and 14. The Positive Relations with Others subscale items are question 6, 13, and 16. The Purpose in Life subscale items are question 3, 7, and 10. The Self-Acceptance subscale items are question 1, 2, and 5. Question 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17, and 18 were reverse-scored. Reverse-scored items are worded in the opposite direction of what the scale is measuring. To calculate subscale scores for each participant, respondents' answers were summed to each subscale's items. Higher scores mean higher levels of psychological well-being.

Work Life Balance- Work life balance was measured using a 15 item scale adapted by Hayman (2005), originally developed by Fisher (2001). The 15 items are designed to assess three dimensions of work life balance: work interference with personal life (WIPL-7 items); personal life interference with work (PLIW-4 items); and work or personal life enhancement (WPLE-4 items). The scale is 5 point (Strongly Disagree -1, Disagree - 2, Neither Agree nor Disagree- 3, Agree -4, Strongly Agree -5), the scoring was done as 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for the dimensions of WIPL (except item 7, which was reverse scored PLIW, since the items were negatively worded. High score indicated lower interference and, lower levels of interference were interpreted as higher levels of work life balance. For the dimension of WPLE, scoring was 1,2,3,4,5 (Strongly Disagree -1, Disagree -2, Neither Agree nor Disagree- 3, Agree -4, Strongly Agree - 5) since the items were positively worded. High score indicates high work/personal life enhancement.

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Results of higher order factor analysis provided empirical evidence that the three dimensions of work life balance were indicators of a single latent construct (Fisher-McAuley, et al., 2003). Reliability for the scale, estimated using Cronbach alpha coefficient was .91 for WIPL, 0.82 for PLIW and 0.67 for WPLE. The scale was tested for reliability under the Indian conditions and Cronbach alpha was found to be .87.

Procedure

Online Google form link was sent to participants to collect data through online posting (WhatsApp and Facebook). There was a description on the link that explained the purpose of the study and the inclusion criteria. Each section had clear instructions of how to respond each statement in the questionnaire. The respondents were also assured that the information to be collected will be securely and confidentially handled. It was also stated that participation is voluntary.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done based on data collected through the administration of the online Google forms. The results from this quantitative survey were analyzed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) Version 21. Descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis) and inferential statistics (Independent Sample t-test, Pearson's Product Moment Correlations) were run. The independent samples t-test was run to test hypotheses one and two. All the statistical tests in this current research were conducted at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULT

The aim of the present research was to compare the gender differences in psychological well-being and work life balance among working professionals in Malawi.

Frequency Distribution

The sample consisted of 100 respondents, (50%) male and (50%) female. The participants were working professionals in Malawi ranged from the age of 25-35 years. Table 5.1 shows the mean, and standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis for the psychological well-being variable. Table 5.2 indicates the frequency distribution of the means, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis for the work life balance variable and shows total sample of males and females. These two tables indicate that the skewness was minimal in the maximum cases.

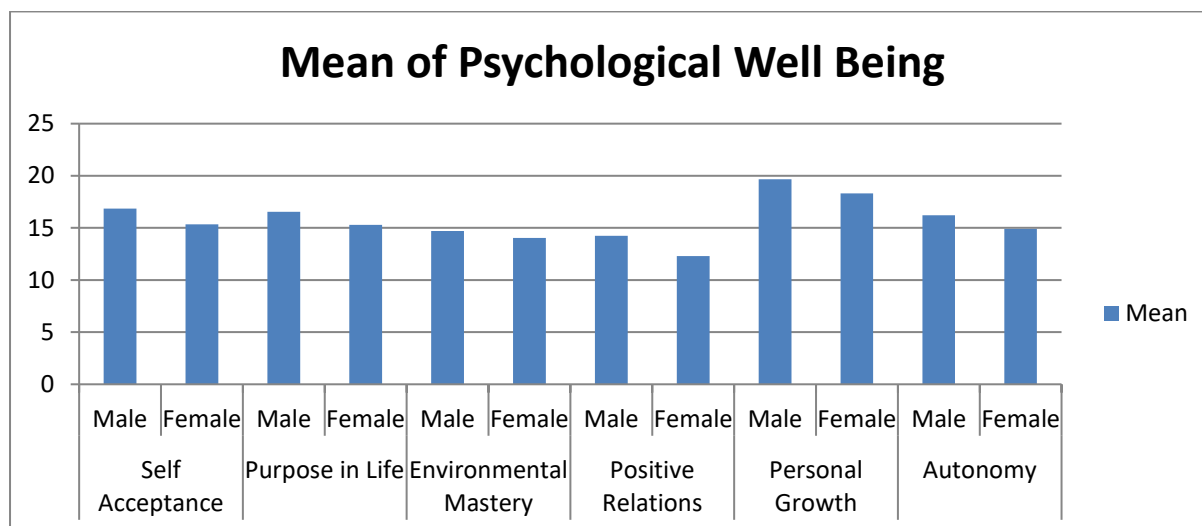
Table 5.1: Means, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis of the variables psychological well-being

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self Acceptance	Male	50	16.84	3.126	-.238	-.711
	Female	50	15.35	4.080	-.305	-.919
Purpose in Life	Male	50	16.54	3.743	-1.080	1.402
	Female	50	15.28	3.704	-.276	-.586
Environmental Mastery	Male	50	14.70	3.716	-.445	.968
	Female	50	14.04	3.585	-.241	-.094
Positive Relations	Male	50	14.24	3.993	.207	-1.108
	Female	50	12.30	4.027	.147	-.687

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Personal Growth	Male	50	19.66	2.246	-1.964	3.790
	Female	50	18.30	3.448	-1.765	4.597
Autonomy	Male	50	16.22	3.845	-.789	.225
	Female	50	14.90	7.797	-.707	.776

Significant at $p < 0.05$

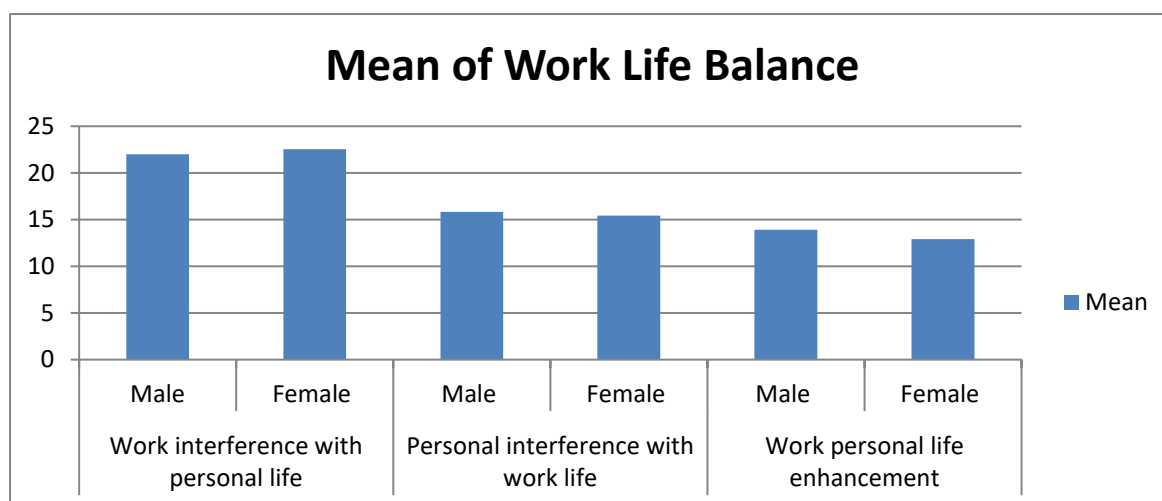


Graph 5.1 shows the gender comparisons of mean scores of psychological well being

Table 5.2: Means, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis of the variables of work life balance

Work life balance	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work interference with personal life	Male	50	22.00	5.237	-.054	-1.143
	Female	50	22.54	4.604	-.128	-.799
Personal interference with work life	Male	50	15.84	2.566	-.283	.093
	Female	50	15.44	2.779	-.947	2.940
Work personal life enhancement	Male	50	13.90	3.448	-1.403	1.776
	Female	50	12.90	2.742	.059	-.301

Significant at $p < 0.05$



Graph 5.2 shows the gender comparison of mean scores of Work Life Balance

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The main objective of the research study was to investigate the gender differences in psychological well-being and work life balance among professional workers. The mean scores of males (n=50) were compared with females (n=50) by conducting an Independent samples t-test to study the significant gender differences and fulfill the objective. Tables 5.3 and 5.4 present the findings of the comparison of means and standard deviations.

Hypothesis One

H0: It is not expected that the difference of psychological well-being among male and female working professionals exist.

H1: It is expected that the difference of psychological well-being among male and female working professionals exist.

This hypothesis sought to find out whether significant difference existed between male and female workers in their psychological well-being. The independent samples t-test was conducted at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Means of scores and t-value for Psychological Well-being

Variable	Male(N=50)		Female(N=50)		t-value	Sig(2-tailed)
Psychological Well-being	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	3.070	0.003
	98.20	11.925	90.20	14.044		

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Gender Differences in Psychological Well-Being

Table 5.3 shows that the mean score for the males was 98.20 while that of the females was 90.20. The standard deviation (SD) for males was 11.925 while the standard deviation (SD) for females was 14.044. Males have higher mean scores than females which indicate a better psychological well-being than female. However, the Independent Samples t-test of the significance differences in the mean of table 5.3 revealed that there is no significant difference between males (n=50) and females (n=50) psychological well-being since t-value = 3.070 and Sig (2 tailed) = 0.003, significant at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, based on the result as shown in table 5.3 the alternative Hypothesis One which states that “It is expected that the difference of psychological well-being among male and female working professionals exist” was rejected; $t(98) = 3.070, p < 0.05$.

The null Hypothesis which stated “It is not expected that the difference of psychological well-being among male and female working professionals exist” was accepted. However, males reported significantly higher on the dimension of Personal Growth (significant=0.006) (t-value=1.753) as shown in table 5.4. Additionally, the values of mean scores make this difference more clear that males are more concerned with personal growth than female according the this current research.

Table 5.4: Mean, t- value and significance of the Psychological Well-Being dimensions (Self-Acceptance, Purpose in Life, Environmental Mastery, Positive Relations, Personal Growth and Autonomy) for males and females

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	t-value	Significance
Self Acceptance	Male	50	16.84	2.009	0.63
	Female	50	15.35		
Purpose in Life	Male	50	16.54	1.692	.861
	Female	50	15.28		

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Environmental Mastery	Male	50	14.70	.904	.980
	Female	50	14.04		
Positive Relations	Male	50	14.24	2.419	.841
	Female	50	12.30		
Personal Growth	Male	50	19.66	2.337	.006
	Female	50	18.30		
Autonomy	Male	50	16.22	1.727	.567
	Female	50	14.90		

Significant at $p < 0.05$

The results of table 5.4 indicate the differences of means scores. The alternative Hypothesis One was rejected indicating that there are no gender differences in psychological well-being. However, on the dimension of Personal Growth of Psychological Well-being, men (n=50) reported higher significance (significance=0.006) (t-value=1.753), which indicate that there is a significant difference between males and females. Males (n=50), have higher mean scores in all the six dimensions than females (n=50) as shown in table 5.4. These higher scores of Self Acceptance, Purpose in Life, Environmental Mastery, Positive Relations and Autonomy have no significant differences.

Hypothesis Two

H0: It is expected that the difference of work life balance among male and female working professionals exist.

H2: It is not expected that the difference of work life balance among male and female working professionals exist.

Table 5.5: Means of scores and t-value for Work Life Balance

Variable	Male(N=50)		Female(N=50)		t-value	Sig(2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Work Life Balance	51.74	7.822	50.88	7.230	.571	.569

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Gender Differences in Work Life Balance

Table 5.5 shows that the mean score for the males was 51.74 while that of the females was 50.88. The standard deviation (SD) for males was 7.822 while the standard deviation (SD) for females was 7.230. This current research mean scores show that males have a better work life balance than females, but the Independent Samples t-test of the significance differences in the mean of table 5.3 revealed that there is no significant difference between males (N=50) and females (N=50) psychological well-being since t-value = .571 and Sig (2 tailed) = .569, significant at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, based on the result as shown in table 5.4 the null Hypothesis Two which states that “It is expected that the difference of work life balance among male and female working professionals exist” was rejected.

The alternative Hypothesis which stated “It is not expected that the difference of work life balance male and female working professionals exist” was accepted. There were differences in the mean scores between male (mean= 51.74) and female (mean=50.88) but these differences were not significant according to table 5.5.

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Table 5.6: Mean, t- value and significance of the variables of work life balance dimensions (Work Interference with Personal Life, Personal Interference with Work Life and Work Personal Life Enhancement) for males and females

Dimensions of Work Life Balance	Gender	N	Mean	t-value	Significance
Work interference with personal life	Male	50	22.00	-.548	2.188
	Female	50	22.54		
Personal interference with work life	Male	50	15.84	.748	.167
	Female	50	15.44		
Work personal life enhancement	Male	50	13.90	1.605	.483
	Female	50	12.90		

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Results of table 5.6 indicate the differences of means scores. There are no significant differences in the mean scores even though males reported having higher mean scores than females in the dimensions of Personal interference with work life and Work personal life enhancement. The t-value of each dimension is not significant in all the three dimensions of work life balance.

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation

Pearson's correlation (r) is a statistical measure that quantifies the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient, denoted by the symbol "r," ranges between -1 and +1. A value of +1 indicates a perfect positive linear relationship, while a value of -1 indicates a perfect negative linear relationship.

Table 5.7: Pearson Product Correlation of Work Life Balance and Psychological Well-Being Dimensions

Dimensions	Self-Acceptance	Purpose in Life	Environmental Mastery	Positive Relations	Personal Growth	Autonomy
Work Interference with Personal Life	.152	.115	.246*	.024	.116	-.018
Personal Interference with Work Life	.307**	.351**	.303**	.261**	.269**	.222*
Work Personal Life Enhancement	.127	.335**	.005	.109	.209*	.166

*p-value significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**p-value significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The Table-5.7 shows the correlation analysis between work life balance (WLB) dimensions (Work Interference with Personal Life, Personal Interference with Work Life and Work Personal Life Enhancement) impact on Psychological Well-Being (Self-Acceptance, Purpose in Life, Environmental Mastery, Positive Relations, Personal Growth and Autonomy). The analysis illustrates a very low positive correlation between balance Work interference with personal life and Environmental Mastery ($r=.246$). It depicts the extent to

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which one's personal life interferes with work of employees impacts a positive impact on a sense of mastery and competence in managing one's environment.

Results also demonstrate that there is low and positive correlation between work personal life enhancement and purpose in life ($r=.335$). This indicates how positive effects of one's work on personal life or goals in life impacts a sense of directedness. Work personal life enhancement and personal growth $r=.209$. It demonstrates positive effects of the extent to which one's personal life increases work in a person's growth and feelings of continued development. Lastly, the dimension of personal interference with work life has positive correlation with all the dimensions of psychological well-being as shown in Table- 5.7 above.

DISCUSSION

The aim of current research is to compare the gender differences between psychological well-being and work life balance among working professionals in Malawi. There are no significant gender differences in PWB and WLB among professional employees in Malawi. As the results, this study concludes that psychological well-being and work life balance is not dominantly and significantly affected by gender of professional workers. This can be due the dedication that the government of Malawi has shown in advancing gender equality. This equality was achieved by ratifying international and regional agreements like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development (Kelechi et al., 25 Apr 2023).

A study conducted in Malawi by Lohman et al. (2019) supports the current research that gender is not statistically significant when it comes to psychological well-being. The results of their research on health workers found that, twenty-five percent of respondents had WHO-5 scores indicative of poor psychological wellbeing. They also found that coefficients for sex, cadre, having children or other dependents, supervision, satisfaction with the physical work environment, satisfaction with remuneration, perceived coworker support and teamwork, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were consistently not statistically significant.

Numerous countries and contexts have conducted research on gender differences in PWB and WLB, and the results varied according to different factors. While some studies find no gender differences or show that the impact of WLB on PWB may not be primarily influenced by gender, others do find gender differences in PWB and WLB. The results show that there is a significant gender difference on the dimension of Personal Growth of Psychological Well-being, men reported higher significance than women. However, this is contrary to the results found by Matud et al. (2019), their results show that men scored higher than women in the dimensions self-acceptance and autonomy, and women scored higher than men in personal growth and positive relations with others.

Table 5.4 shows a higher mean score than females on the dimension of Personal Growth of Psychological Well-being. Men reported higher significance (significance=0.006) (t -value=1.753), which indicate that there is a significant difference between males and females. People who report higher on personal growth are characterized by having higher levels of feeling of continued development; being more open to new experiences; sees self

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as growing and expanding; having sense of realizing their potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; and changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness. Although gender equality is increasingly promoted in the workplace and throughout society, and women have now fully entered the workforce, the debate over how gender differences in career advancement still appear to be unresolved (Pace & Sciotto, 2022). More research can provide insights into the factors affecting personal growth of women in order to offer recommendations for promoting gender equality in all the dimensions.

Limitation

The self-report measures on PWB and WLB in which participants assess their own experiences are susceptible to biases that could affect the accuracy of the information reported, such as social desirability bias. Organizational policies, support systems, and cultural norms can have an impact on PWB and WLB. Failure to take into account these factors could restrict the study's ability to offer a thorough understanding of gender differences in various contexts. Small sample sizes can reduce statistical power (the ability of a study to detect true effects). Smaller sample size (n=100), fails to detect significant differences between genders accurately. This can lead to failing to identify significant patterns or trends that might exist in the data or missing important relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study, despite its limitations tested the hypotheses among women and men and made it possible to compare that gender differences in the workplace. Individual experiences and perceptions of PWB and WLB can differ greatly, and important factors like culture, socioeconomic status, and personal circumstances can also play a big part. As of the year 2022, 66% of Malawians report that women do have the same opportunities as men to get a paying job (Kelechi et al., 2023). Recently, there are a number of gender interventions at the workplaces and women empowerment programs in Malawi. This can be a better explanation why there are no significant gender differences among working professionals. Both male and female employees have fair and equal opportunities to manage their personal and professional commitments, as well as fostering positive psychological well-being regardless of their gender.

Studies in different countries have repeatedly found that there are gender differences in work-life balance, with women frequently finding it more difficult to balance between their obligations at home and at work. The specific causes of these disparities, such as variations in care giving responsibilities, societal expectations, and workplace policies, can be identified through more research on WLB. Therefore, more research gender differences in WLB and PWB can help in the development and implementation of organizational policies and practices that address the needs of men, women and those of other gender. The implication of this research is for families, professional workers, organizations and future researchers to be aware of factors affecting work life balance and psychological well being, especially gender.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Phiri, M.T. & Priyanka (2023). A Comparative Approach on Gender Variants in Psychological Well-Being and Balance between Life and Work across Working Professionals in Malawi. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(2), 2682-2702. DIP:18.01.260.20231102, DOI:10.25215/1102.260