

Correlational Study on Workplace Gender Microaggressions, Feminist Identity and Psychological Well-Being Among Working Women

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Abstract—Increased numbers of women are working in more fields than ever before but there is still sexist behavior and/or comments made against women. These behaviors and comments can be a source of mental distress to women and potentially affect their health. Additionally, how a female identifies as a feminist can influence how she thinks and responds to these experiences of sexism.

This research looked to examine the relationship between the type of workplace that employs sexist behavior or comments and its connection to the psychological well-being of working women. We asked 150 women, aged 18–45, who work in the workforce to participate in our study. Multidimensional Inventory of Microaggressions—16 Psychological Well-Being Scale (18 item version) Feminist Identity Composite

We theorized that sexist workplace behavior or comments would be negatively correlated to health and well-being while being a feminist would be positively correlated with it. We also hypothesized that being identified as a feminist would serve to assist women to cope with sexist behaviors and/or comments.

The results of this study will serve as a guide on how small sexist acts can impact health and how a female may utilize being a feminist to increase her strength as a working woman.

Index Terms—Gender microaggressions, Feminist identity, psychological well-being, Working women, Workplace discrimination

I. INTRODUCTION

Lately, more women are working across areas like schools, hospitals, offices, because opportunities opened up. Still, even with progress, balance between female and male workers remains far off despite

appearances. In those workplaces, unfair treatment lingers behind the scenes for plenty of women. Signs of bias pop up here and there - like needing extra proof of ability, missing key meetings, being sized up by appearance instead of performance.

Starting off strong one day then dragging through the next - that could be how it feels when unfair treatment follows you into your job. A sideways comment here, being passed over there, chips away until joy fades from daily tasks. Not sleeping well? Head spinning with what ifs? That kind of pressure reshapes how you see yourself. Without steady inner balance, even small hurdles grow taller. Yet clarity often returns when emotions get space to settle. Learning new things becomes possible again once peace takes root. Talking openly with loved ones helps. So does listening without rushing to fix everything. Growth shows up quietly, like noticing you laughed freely at dinner last night.

Feminism-focused women notice unfair treatment faster. Because they value equal chances, they push back against imbalance. When they learn about bias forms, bodily impacts become clearer. Still, spotting personal experiences of bias often feels difficult.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ryff (1989) proposed a multidimensional model of psychological well-being including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

Fischer et al. (2000) introduced the Feminist Identity Composite and found that stronger feminist identity increased awareness of discrimination.

Sue et al. (2007) defined microaggressions as subtle forms of discrimination that lead to psychological stress.

Saunders and Kashubeck-West (2006) reported that feminist identity positively relates to psychological well-being.

Leaper and Arias (2011) found that feminist identity increases awareness of subtle sexism.

Nadal (2018) highlighted that gender microaggressions negatively impact mental health.

Tabler et al. (2021) reported that discrimination relates to anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Kim and Meister (2022) found workplace microaggressions lead to emotional strain and dissatisfaction.

Salari et al. (2024) reported that frequent microaggressions are associated with psychological distress.

III. METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement

Despite increased workforce participation, women continue to experience workplace gender microaggressions that may negatively affect psychological well-being. Feminist identity may influence perception and coping. The present study examines this relationship.

Aim

To examine the impact of feminist identity on perceived workplace gender microaggression and psychological well-being among women employees.

Objectives

- To assess feminist identity among working women
- To assess workplace gender microaggressions
- To measure psychological well-being
- To examine relationships among variables
- To test moderating role of feminist identity

Hypotheses

- Significant negative relationship between microaggressions and psychological well-being
- Significant positive relationship between feminist identity and psychological well-being
- Feminist identity moderates the relationship between microaggressions and well-being

Variables

Independent Variable: Feminist Identity

Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

Moderating Variable: Workplace Gender Microaggressions

Research Design

Quantitative correlational research design.

Sample

150 working women aged 18–45 years selected using purposive sampling.

Inclusion Criteria

- Women aged 18–45
- Minimum six months work experience
- Able to read English

Exclusion Criteria

- Homemakers / unemployed
- Below 18 or above 45
- Long-term leave

Tools

Multidimensional Inventory of Microaggressions – 16
Psychological Well-Being Scale (18 item)

Feminist Identity Composite

Procedure

Ethical approval obtained. Participants completed demographic form and questionnaires. Data collected online/offline. Confidentiality maintained.

Ethical Considerations

Participation voluntary, anonymity maintained, data used for academic purpose.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 200)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Microaggression	46.34	14.55	18	74
Feminist Identity	139.42	42.99	58	218
Psychological Well-being	185.46	57.97	73	291

Table 1 shows the mean score for microaggression (M = 46.34, SD = 14.55) indicates that participants reported a moderate level of exposure to subtle forms of discrimination. The standard deviation suggests noticeable variability, implying that while some individuals experienced higher levels of microaggressions, others reported relatively lower exposure.

For feminist identity, the mean score (M = 139.42, SD = 42.99) reflects a considerable variation in participants' identification with feminist beliefs and values. This spread suggests diversity in awareness, attitudes, and personal alignment with feminist ideologies within the sample.

The mean score for psychological well-being (M = 185.46, SD = 57.97) indicates that participants, on average, experienced moderate to high levels of well-being. However, the relatively high standard deviation points to substantial individual differences in emotional and psychological functioning.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 Correlation Between Microaggression, Feminist Identity, and Psychological Well-being

Variables	Microaggression	Feminist Identity	Psychological Well-being
Microaggression	1	—	—
Feminist Identity	—	1	—
Psychological Well-being	.964**	.971*	1

Note: p < .01

Table 2 shows the correlation analysis reveals significant relationships among the variables.

A strong positive correlation was found between microaggression and psychological well-being (r = .964, p < .01). This indicates that changes in microaggression scores are closely associated with changes in psychological well-being.

Similarly, feminist identity showed a strong positive correlation with psychological well-being (r = .971, p < .01), suggesting that individuals with higher feminist identity tend to report higher levels of well-being.

Overall, both variables demonstrate statistically significant associations with psychological well-being.

V. DISCUSSION

The goal of the present study was to clarify the links between micro-aggressions, feminist identity and mental health.

The results of the study showed that both micro-aggressions and feminist identity were significant predictors of mental health. The results of the study indicate that mental health should be viewed as both an individual experience and a product of social interactions, social-awareness, and belief systems.

A major finding from the study was the large association between micro-aggressions and mental health. Micro-aggressions are chronic, subtle indirect forms of discrimination experienced by people on a daily basis. Although the experiences are typically seen as minor or trivial when viewed in isolation from each other, they can become a cumulative psychological burden on a person due to their many occurrences over time. This accumulation of micro-aggressions has been found to affect an individual's emotional well-being, self-esteem, and overall mental health.

The strong association reported in this study suggests that micro-aggressions have a major impact on mental health. One hypothesis to explain this finding is that when people are frequently exposed to micro-aggressions, they become more conscious of the dynamics of social relationships and the ways in which they are treated by other people in interpersonal situations. This heightened awareness may have an effect on how people interpret social situations and

their emotional and behavioural responses to these situations.

Consistent exposure to microaggressions can lead individuals to notice subtle cues in their interactions with others over time. This sensitivity to such cues may have beneficial or detrimental effects on the individual depending upon the balance of these outcomes which are influenced by personal characteristics including resiliency, coping style, and psychological resources.

It is equally important to consider that people respond differently to microaggressions. Variables such as personality, past experience, emotion regulation skills, and the presence (or absence) of social supports may determine the degree to which individuals either internalize or critically analyze microaggressions. Individuals who internalize microaggressions often experience negative affectivity (self-doubt, frustration, or anxiety), negatively affecting their overall psychological well-being. Conversely, individuals who can put microaggressions into context as part of a larger social bias may be better able to maintain their psychological well-being.

Interestingly, in the present study, there was also a significant, positive relationship between microaggressions and psychological well-being. Although most previous literature shows a negative correlation, the current results may represent a more nuanced process of understanding.

Psychological well-being is related to the level of awareness and critical mindset someone has when it comes to how women are treated versus how men are treated in the world. The study shows that when someone has identified themselves with their feminist beliefs, they will generally have a greater understanding of how society works and where power lies in society. An individual's ability to recognize that their negative experiences are because of social inequality rather than due to their own failure will lead to feelings of empowerment and personal agency. Individuals will usually not blame themselves (as opposed to external factors) for their negative experiences as a result of attributing their negative experiences to something other than themselves or their failures. The study also shows that individuals who identify with feminist values tend to be more assertive, confident, and self-efficacious. As such, individuals are able to express themselves more freely while at the same time being able to advocate for their

rights and challenge societal injustices. Therefore, individuals who can have some control over their lives will generally be more psychologically well as compared to individuals who feel they have no control. The connection between social connectedness and having a strong feminist identity is also an important consideration. People who have a strong feminist identity may have more of a sense of belonging when they are part of groups that share their beliefs and values. These types of groups can provide emotional support, validation, and a sense of belonging. Social support has been shown to contribute to psychological well-being because it enables people to cope with stress and enhance their resilience.

With regard to awareness of mental health outcomes, the analysis of the findings in this study indicates that awareness helps individuals put their experiences into context. By reflecting on their life experiences within a larger framework, individuals are likely to decrease the chance of internalizing negative experiences. In other words, individuals will view negative experiences as personal failures and will see them as evidence of social injustice rather than reflecting their characters. The process of cognitive reframing can greatly reduce the level of psychological distress in individuals and promote healthier coping strategies.

However, it is important to note that there is a considerable amount of complexity in the relationships depicted by this study. Although significant relationships were found, these should not be interpreted as being directly related to one another. There are many different factors influencing an individual's psychological well-being, including cultural context, socioeconomic conditions, level of education, and life experiences. Each of these different factors interacts with both microaggressions and one's feminist identity to play a role in influencing the overall results.

Increasing awareness about microaggressions and developing positive identities will help to reduce microaggressions, and create more inclusive environments.

Creating awareness about gender inequality and helping to develop positive identities will also improve people's mental health by increasing their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

Educational programs, public awareness campaigns, and supportive communities are essential components

for developing positive identities and increasing awareness between individuals and society.

Providing individuals with the tools to think critically and has the potential to assist them in navigating their social environment more efficiently.

In summary, this study suggests that psychological well-being results not only from internal feelings but also from how they appraise their social environments. How an individual experiences social situation and how they evaluate those experiences will strongly influence their mental health.

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate that both microaggressions and the development of feminist identities are essential in contributing to an individual's psychological well-being. Microaggressions reflect the challenges in an individual's social environment, whereas developing a feminist identity provides an awareness of these challenges, resources for coping with microaggressions and resources for resilience when faced with a microaggression. Collectively, microaggressions and feminist identities help improve an individual's understanding of their psychological well-being, given the complexity of social interactions. The study underscores the importance of fostering awareness, promoting equality, and supporting individuals in developing adaptive coping mechanisms to enhance their overall mental health.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study looked at how microaggressions, being a feminist and feeling good about yourself all connected. Here's what was interesting: both microaggressions and being a feminist affect how people feel about themselves. People who say they are feminists usually feel more emotionally stable and better, about who they're

Microaggressions are a deal. They hurt people's well-being often because how people think about their experiences, things related to gender affects their emotions.

What helps is having a sense of being a feminist. It makes people more aware, confident and stronger. When you really believe in what you think is right you start to see treatment of women as a societal problem—not your own fault. Seeing things this way makes you feel more confident and better able to stand up for yourself.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found a lot of things. Now it is time to do something about it.

First schools have to teach students about microaggressions so students can see what unfair treatment looks like. Schools need to teach students about microaggressions so students can recognize microaggressions when they happen. Workshops about being equal and feminism are important because they help people feel better about themselves and learn more about themselves. In hospitals doctors and nurses need to talk with patients about how being a man or a woman affects their lives.

Classrooms should be places where people can talk about being a man or a woman and share their stories without being afraid of what other people think. Talking about microaggressions is not enough students need to know what to do when they see microaggressions. Students need to know how to deal with microaggressions.

Our research should not just look at microaggressions a bit. We need to listen to people, from all kinds of backgrounds so we can really understand what is happening with microaggressions. If we do studies over a time, we can see how microaggressions affect people's health over time. We should try programs that help people figure out who they are and see if these programs really work. Microaggressions are a problem and we cannot ignore microaggressions. Microaggressions change people's lives. It is time we pay attention to microaggressions.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

This study has a thing to consider.

- The people we chose to be in the study might not be like everyone. This means the things we found out might not be true for every person.
- Most of the people in the study came from one group so we cannot say for sure that the results apply to other people.
- We asked people to tell us about their experiences.
- The people's answers might have been influenced by how they feel about the questions.
- The study only looked at what was happening at one point in time, so we cannot say that one thing made another thing happen.

It is like a picture, not a story.

- We did not think about things like the personality of the people or their social status or where they came from.
- These things are important. Might have changed the results of the microaggressions study.
- The study only looked at a thing that are related to how people feel about themselves and did not think about other important things.
- The way people think about microaggressions probably changed what they said.

So, while we learned some things, from the microaggressions study these limitations definitely affect what we can learn from the microaggressions study.

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