Role of Intelligence, Creativity, and Personality Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Social Workers in Empowering Female Household Heads

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Abstract

Background and Objective: This study was conducted to investigate the role of intelligence, creativity, and personality characteristics of successful and unsuccessful social workers in empowering female household heads.

Materials and Methods: This applied research was conducted on 24 social workers that were providing services to the female heads of households under the cover of welfare organization from 2015 to 2018 in Tehran and Alborz Provinces, Iran, using a causal-comparative method. The study population was selected using the multi-stage cluster sampling method. After data collection, the participants were divided into two groups of successful and unsuccessful cases based on their success in empowerment. The research tools included the Neo Personality Inventory, Abedi Creativity Questionnaire, and Cattell Intelligence Test. The data analysis was performed using ANOVA.

Results: The results showed a significant difference between the social workers successful and unsuccessful in the empowerment of female household heads in terms of intelligence. Among the personality traits, only extraversionism was significantly different between the two groups. The result was not also significant for creativity.

Conclusions: Based on the findings, it can be argued that the identification of the characteristics of successful social workers can help empower the female heads of households who suffer from many economic, social, psychological, and cultural problems. Therefore, the findings of this study can be useful in identifying the demographic and psychological characteristics of successful social workers in adopting strategies that reduce social harm in this group and empower them.

Keywords: Creativity, Empowerment, Female-headed households, Intelligence, Personality, Social work

Background

Social work is an applied profession and academic field that facilitates social development, social cohesion, empowerment, and liberation [1]. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for differences are basic issues in social work. Social work, by relying on social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge, engages individuals and structures in confronting the challenges of life and promotes welfare and well-being. This field is a profession based on specific knowledge and skills. The purpose of social work is to help individuals, groups, or communities to gain personal and social autonomy and social empowerment in one sense [2].

One of the groups most in need of social work services is the female heads of households. The life of this group is often filled with many social and economic problems, such as loneliness, hard social relationships, low quality of life, physical and mental fatigue, children's social-behavioral problems, children's educational problems, stress, and depression [3-6]. According to the US Bureau of Statistics, about 24% of children were living in single-parent families in 2018 [7]. This phenomenon in Iran since the 2000s onwards has led observers and experts in social and psychological affairs to seek and study the associated causes and solutions to cope with its consequences.

The empowerment of female heads of household is one of the most effective ways of improving their current unpleasant conditions [8]. Social workers have a very important role to play in helping the female household heads. According to Yahyazadeh Pyrsrayy et al. (2017) and [9] Torabi Momen et al. (2017) [10], social workers have a constructive role in empowering the female heads of household.

However, there are limited studies on the identification of the features that help social workers to empower this group. One of the most important features that seems to help social workers is psychological capability. Based on the evidence, the psychological health of social workers is a key and constructive feature in their success [11, 12]. Although no significant research has been performed in this domain, it seems that such psychological features as intelligence, creativity, and personality traits can be helpful in the success of social workers in empowering the female heads of households.

Eriksen and McAuliffe (2006) demonstrated that personality traits and moral development predicted about 18% of variance in the career success of counselors [13]. In addition, Mendoza and Hontiveros (2017) [14] pointed out the role of intelligence in career success. Similarly, Sharifi et al. (2017) [15] emphasized the positive role of intelligence in the performance of the workforce. Therefore, personality traits, creativity, and intelligence seem to affect the success of social workers, especially in empowering the female heads of households [8, 16, 17]. One of the factors that greatly affects the motivation of career progress and success is creativity [18]. Creativity is a basic skill in solving problems by employees that has a significant impact on job satisfaction [19]. Creativity means the full utilization of mental abilities to generate a new thought or solution or new concept that can be effective in career success [20].

In addition to creativity, intelligence is another important variable in career success. Research shows that different kinds of intelligence, such as cognitive, emotional, and spiritual intelligence, predict career success [21-23]. According to Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon, intelligence can be understood as a general sense of reason that results in judgment. Moreover, Wechsler (1949) defines intelligence as a comprehensive ability to act purposefully, which enables a person to reasonably think and effectively deal with his/her environment [24]. Additionally, Cattell (1987) refers to intelligence as the ability or capability of achievement of new knowledge, accumulation of cognition throughout life, and use of this cognition in problem-solving. Regarding this, it can be said that this feature is likely a key factor in career success.

Personality traits and styles are also other factors that are likely to be effective in career success. Research shows personality traits are closely related to job performance and career success, which can facilitate the achievement of the goals [25, 26]. Holland believed that there is a relationship between personality traits and career environments. He argued that the interaction among the hereditary, cultural, and environmental factors leads to a series of habits and behaviors that make people prioritize and decide on their activities and preferences [27].

Despite the importance of the psychological features, such as creativity, intelligence, and personality trait, in the success of social workers, especially in the empowerment of the female heads of households, little research has addressed this domain. Therefore, due to the lack of sufficient research background on this subject, the present study was conducted to investigate the role of intelligence, creativity, and personality traits in social workers in the empowerment of the female household heads.

This study was based on three hypotheses as follows:

1) Intelligence is effective in the success of social workers in empowering the female heads of households.

2) Creativity is effective in the success of social workers in empowering the female heads of households.

3) Personality traits are effective in the success of social workers in empowering the female heads of households.

In order to investigate the role of intelligence, creativity, and personality traits, the researchers compared these variables among the social workers successful and unsuccessful in the empowerment of the female household heads. The methodology section presents a description of the selection process of successful and unsuccessful social workers.

Materials and Methods

This applied research was conducted using a causal-comparative method. In the causal-comparative research methods, one of the most important threats that can affect the results is the lack of researcher control on the variables. Therefore, the researchers used the control methods to reduce this risk in a causal-comparative study by matching groups, creating homogeneous groups, and interpreting results carefully. The population of this study consisted of all social workers providing services for female-headed households under the cover of welfare organization from 2015 to 2018 in Tehran and Alborz Provinces, Iran. A total of 24 social workers were selected as the participants through a multi-stage cluster sampling method.

The inclusion criteria included being a social worker, working in one of the wellness centers in Alborz and Tehran provinces from 2015 to 2018,

and giving informed consent for participation in research. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria included reluctance to complete questionnaires or withdrawal from the study for any reason. After data collection, the study population was divided into two successful and unsuccessful groups based on their success rate in empowerment. Accordingly, 27% of the social workers who obtained the highest score in the empowerment of the female household heads, and 27% of those obtaining the lowest score in this regard were selected as successful and unsuccessful social workers, respectively.

The research tools included the Neo Personality Inventory, Abedi Creativity Questionnaire, and Cattell Intelligence Test. In this study, scale 3 of the Cattell Intelligence Test was used to assess social workers' intelligence. This test includes 50 items, the scoring of which is performed by assigning a score of one to each correct answer. The total crude score of this test is calculated using the soft tables, converted to intelligence score with an average of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. The assessment of the personality traits was accomplished using the Neo Personality Test. This test assesses five personality factors, including openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The scoring of this questionnaire is based on the Likert scale (totally disagree, disagree, indifferently agree, and strongly agree).

The creativity test was developed by Abedi in 1996 based on the Torrance's theory of creativity. This test is rated on a three-point Likert scale. The instrument is composed of 60 items, including four subtests of fluidity, elaboration, ingenuity, and flexibility. In this research, after reviewing the tool, some of the questions were removed, resulting in a 49-item questionnaire. The content of this tool was also reviewed and according to the community under study, the type of written questions was simplified. The reliability coefficients of the Neo's Personality Test, Cattell Intelligence Test, and Abedi Creativity Test were obtained as 0.79, 0.84, and 0.89, respectively.

In order to observe ethical considerations, the employees were informed about the research objectives, and their informed consent was obtained. In addition, all participants were assured about the confidentiality of their information. The protocol of the study was also reviewed and approved by the Local Ethics Committee of the Islamic Azad University of Roudehen, Iran. Data analysis was performed in SPSS software (version 19) using the analysis of variance.

Results

The research findings are presented in descriptive and inferential sections. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' demographic characteristics.

Based on the descriptive statistics, most of the participants (91%) were either single or married. The maximum age range of the participants was 26-35 years (54.2%). The majority of the participants had a bachelor's degree (83.3%). With regard to the field of study, 83.3% of the participants had studied psychology and counseling.

1. Effectiveness of intelligence in the success of social workers in empowering female household heads
2. Effectiveness of creativity in the success of social workers in empowering female household heads

The results of descriptive information in the two groups indicated that the mean intelligence and creativity scores were higher in the successful group than in the unsuccessful group (Table 2). Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of variance test for the comparison of intelligence and creativity

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the demographic information of participants

Demographics	Status	F (successful SW)	F (Unsuccessful SW)	F (Total)	Percentage
Marital status	Single	9	7	16	66.6%
	Married	2	4	6	25%
	Divorced	0	1	1	4.2%
	Widow	1	0	1	4.2%
	Total	12	12	24	100%
Age	<25	0	4	4	16.6%
	26-35	8	5	13	54.2%
	36-45	3	3	6	25%
	>45	1	0	1	4.2%
	Total	12	12	24	100%
Academic degree	Undergraduate	10	10	20	83.3%
	Postgraduate	2	2	4	16.7%
	Total	12	12	24	100%
Field of study	Social work	7	4	11	45.8%
	Psychology/Counseling	5	4	9	37.5%
	Social Science	0	3	3	12.5%
	Others	0	1	1	4.2%
	Total	12	12	24	100%

Table 2. Descriptive results of intelligence and creativity in two groups of successful and unsuccessful social workers

Variables	Successful SW (n=12)				Unsuccessful SW (n=12)			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Intelligence	17.33	2.640	14	22	13.42	3.988	7	19
Creativity	114.83	7.234	98	126	114	9.234	98	126

Table 3. Analysis of variance for comparing intelligence and creativity between successful and unsuccessful social workers

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig	η^2
Intelligence	90.42	1	90.042	8.049	0.010	0.268
Error	251.583	22	11.436			
Total	343.625	23				
Intelligence	4.167	1	4.167	0.061	0.808	0.003
Error	1513.667	22	68.803			
Total	1517.833	23				

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of personality traits in two groups of successful and unsuccessful social workers

Variable	Successful SW (n=12)				Unsuccessful SW (n=12)			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Openness	35.08	5.664	26	44	33.25	4.901	26	41
Conscientiousness	38.75	5.429	28	47	37.25	4.751	31	45
Extraversion	33.58	6.007	25	46	25.75	7.375	13	35
Agreeableness	30.08	2.875	26	36	28.83	3.762	24	38
Neuroticism	15.67	7.177	8	29	19.17	9.013	7	37

SW: social worker

Table 5. Analysis of variance for comparing personality traits of successful and unsuccessful social workers

	Dimensions	SS	df	MS	F	Sig	η^2
Personality traits	Openness	20.167	1	20.167	0.719	0.406	0.032
	Conscientiousness	13.500	1	13.500	0.519	0.479	0.023
	Extraversion	368.167	1	368.167	8.139	0.009	0.270
	Agreeableness	9.375	1	9.375	0.836	0.370	0.037
	Neuroticism	73.500	1	73.500	1.107	0.304	0.048
Error	Openness	617.167	22	28.053			
	Conscientiousness	572.500	22	26.023			
	Extraversion	995.167	22	42.235			
	Agreeableness	246.583	22	11.208			
	Neuroticism	1460.333	22	66.379			
Total	Openness	637.333	23				
	Conscientiousness	586	23				
	Extraversion	1363.333	23				
	Agreeableness	255.9958	23				
	Neuroticism	1533.833	23				

between successful and unsuccessful social workers. The results of the analysis of variance revealed a significant difference between the two groups in terms of intelligence (F=8.049, P<0.01; Table 3). In this regard, successful social workers had higher intelligence and creativity scores than the unsuccessful social workers. However, the difference in creativity (F=0.061, P=0.808) was not statistically significant between the two groups.

3. Effectiveness of personality traits in the success of social workers in empowering female household heads

Based on the descriptive information of the two groups, the mean extraversion and conscientiousness scores were higher than those of other personality dimensions in both groups. The comparison of the personality traits between successful and unsuccessful social workers by the

analysis of variance is shown in Table 5.

The results showed a significant difference between the two groups of social workers in terms of the extraversion factor (F=8.139, P<0.01). In this respect, the successful social workers were found to be more extrovert than unsuccessful social workers.

Discussion

The results of the data analysis for the first hypothesis showed that intelligence was effective in the success of social workers in empowering female household heads. This finding is in line with those obtained by Di Fabio and Kenny (2015) [21], Le et al. (2018) [23], Mendoza and Hontiveros (2017) [14], and Altamony et al. (2016) [22]. In this regard, high intelligence can help individuals in different ways. According to Seif, people with high intelligence have the ability to deal with abstract matters; they are capable of solving problems and

have the ability to learn more [28]. Therefore, social workers who are smart are expected to perform better in solving the problems of the female heads of households. Abstract abilities and the ability to learn can also help social workers learn new skills facilitating the empowerment of female household heads.

Binet and Simon (1905) pointed out that correct judgment, perfect understanding, and right reasoning are among the fundamental features of intelligence. Therefore, intelligent social workers have the power of reasoning, judgment, and understanding. Such capabilities can assist them to judge and understand the barriers and problems faced by female heads, thereby affecting their job success. Therefore, it can generally be said that a high level of intelligence in social workers is an advantage that plays a significant role in empowering the female heads of households.

The results of data analysis for the second hypothesis revealed that the creativity of social workers did not have a significant effect on their role in the empowerment of female household heads. Accordingly, there was no significant difference between successful and unsuccessful social workers in this regard. This finding is inconsistent with the results obtained by Carmeli et al. (2010) [19], Kuncel et al. (2004) [18], Monfared et al. (2015) [16], and Sadeghi Malamiri (2016) [20]. This discrepancy may be due to the difference in research populations. In this study, all social workers were female, while in other studies, such as the one performed by Kuncel et al. (2004), the study population consisted of both female and male social workers. In addition, the use of different measurement tools can be another reason for the inconsistency of findings.

In this study, the modified version of Abedi Creativity Test (by reducing the 60-item test to a 49-item test) was employed; however, in the research by Carmeli et al. (2010) [19], the Torrance Creativity Test was utilized. Another reason for this inconsistency can be the interference of intervening factors. In the present research, the causal-comparative method was used. One of the weaknesses of the causal-comparative methods is the lack of the control of the researcher on the research variables. Although there are ways to improve the research methodology, such as matching research groups, the role of interfering factors may affect research findings.

In addition, the theoretical foundations do not support the findings of the second hypothesis. This means that creative people have a searcher, creators, and explorer spirit [29]. They can re-open the existing reality in a unique way [28]. They can create

something new and have the power of initiative, flexibility, and productive thinking [30]. It seems that having a creative mind can be effective in one's occupational success. Accordingly, Sadeghpour and Fathi Chaharrah (2016) reported a positive and meaningful relationship between creativity and job success [31]. One of the reasons for the lack of a meaningful relationship between creativity and the success of social workers in empowering female household heads is that essentially, the problems faced by the female heads of households do not require innovative solutions, rather they are mostly cultural and social barriers that can be solved with empathy, cooperation, and promotion of public culture.

In relation to the third hypothesis, the results of the research showed that among the personality traits, only extroversion was effective in the success of social workers in empowering the female household heads. This finding is in line with those obtained by Monfared et al. (2015) [16], Seibert and Kraimer (2001) [26], Turban et al. (2017) [27], and Zacher (2014) [25]. Social work profession is one of the professions that is based on effective and constructive communication and identification of resources and facilities and their application. Accordingly, the mentioned finding corresponds to the aims and nature of the discipline. In addition, Nasri et al. (2017) studied the role of personality traits, irrational beliefs, and communication skills as the predictors of job performance among school counselors [32]. The results of the mentioned study showed that the personality traits of conscientiousness, extroversion, and communication skills were positive and irrational beliefs that negatively predicted job performance in counselors. The findings of Erdogan and Bauer (2005) [33], Fang et al. (2015) [34], Turban et al. (2017) [27], and Zacher (2014) [25] are also in line with the mentioned result.

Based on the findings, intelligence was one of the factors influencing the career success of social workers. Given that higher intelligence is likely to be more helpful in identifying and utilizing capabilities, this result seems plausible. Accordingly, this factor should be considered by planners. As another result of this study, extroversion was found to result in the achievement of higher career success in social works and similar fields. Consequently, this personality trait should be taken in to account when selecting and employing social workers. The limitations of this research can be mentioned above. One of the limitations of the current study was the use of a self-report tool. Considering that this study was conducted on the social workers of Tehran and Alborz Provinces, it is necessary to take caution in

generalizing the results to other social workers.

Conclusions

The results of the present study revealed a significant difference between social workers who were successful and unsuccessful in the empowerment of female household heads in terms of intelligence. Among the personality traits, only extraversionism was significantly different between the two groups. However, the result was not significant for creativity. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the identification of the characteristics of successful social workers can help empower female household heads who suffer from many economic, social, psychological, and cultural problems. Therefore, the outcome of this study can be useful in identifying the demographic and psychological characteristics of successful social workers in adopting strategies that reduce social harm in the female heads of households and empower them.

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