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Multiple Roles as Predictors of Subjective Well-Being in African American Women

Sha-Rhonda M. Green, PhD

Abstract

Through multiple regression analysis of the NSAL archival data, this study examined how the subjective well-being (SWB) of African American women ages 18-44 ($n = 1,877$) can be predicted by their age, years of education, household income, number of children, and marital, parental, and employment statuses.

Problem

Multiple studies have examined the impact of stress on health outcomes and the correlates of multiple roles.

African American women have higher occurrences of diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease in comparison to other racial and cultural groups.

African American women experience unique layered stressors given their socio-cultural history. However, there is limited recent research on the within-group examination of African American women and well-being. This study will examine the impact of multiple roles on the subjective well-being (SWB) of African American women.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to bridge the gap in the literature and assess the predictive impact of the multiple roles of marital status, employment status, parental status and age, household income, years of education and number of children on the SWB of African American women ages 18-44.

Understanding potential within-group dynamics of this population may help to educate and empower African American women on the implications of work-life balance and total wellness. This study may help to promote wellness initiatives to improve emotional health.

Relevant Literature

Theoretical Framework

- Role strain theory (Goode, 1960)
- Role demands require specific location and time to occur.
- How does one allocate resources to fulfill the demands?
- What are the role relationship and the norms associated with each relationship?
- Role relationships and expectations and then the demand on the role network.
- Role expectations can be incompatible with a person's belief system and society's standards.

Relevant Research

- Increased role responsibilities inside and outside the home (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).
- Higher occurrence of depression among African American women (Dingfelder, 2013; Martin, Boadi, Fernandes, Watt, Robinson-Wood, 2013; National Center for Health Statistics, 2013).
- Higher incidence of chronic disease, depression and mortality rates among African American women (National Center for Health Statistics, 2013; Terrill, Garofalo, Soliday, & Craft, 2012).
- Multiple roles are linked to stress, and stress is linked to adverse health outcomes (Kasimatis & Guastell, 2012).
- Levels of SWB can be particularly exacerbated given the unique historical racial and gender context of African American women (Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

Research Questions

RQ1: To what degree do the multiple roles of marital status, employment status, and parental status predict the subjective well-being of African American women?

RQ2: To what degree does age, household income, years of education and number of children predict the subjective well-being of African American women?

Procedures

Secondary analysis using The National Survey of American Life: Coping with Stress in the 21st Century (Jackson, et al., 2007) which was:

- A four-stage probability sampling method
- 6,082 face-to-face interviews
- Male and female respondents aged 18 and older who lived in 48 different urban and rural states of the United States w/ African American, Afro-Caribbean, Non-Hispanic Whites respondents

Data Analysis

Multiple regression analysis using SPSS
Cronbach's *alpha* (Subjective Well-Being)

Findings

Demographics

- Age: $M = 31.69$, $SD = 7.54$
- HHIN: $M = \$31,447.31$, $SD = \$27,777.989$
- Married: 32.8 %, $n = 1,262$
- Employed: 74.6, $n = 1,400$
- Parents: 77.1 %, $n = 1,447$
- No Child: 45.9%, $n = 861$
- One Child: 26.7 %, $n = 501$
- 12 Years of Education: 36.3%, $n = 682$
- 3-item SWB scale ($\alpha = 0.0589$)

RQ1: Model 1 statistically significantly predicted SWB (Marital, Parental, Employment Statuses)
 $F(3, 1873) = 12.271$, $p < .0005$, adjusted $R^2 = 1.8$

RQ2: Model 2 statistically significantly predicted SWB (7 IVs)
 $F(7, 1869) = 8.358$, $p < .0005$, adjusted $R^2 = 2.7$

Limitations

- The limitations to this study may have included:
- The lack of other racial and ethnic groups
- The NSAL data were over a decade old.
- The 3-item SWB Index ($\alpha = .06$) low alpha and low correlation

Conclusions

Model 1

- Married, employed parents had increases in SWB
- Multiple demands of roles influence efforts to negotiate human energy, time, and resources (Goode, 1960)

Model 2

- Collective impact of roles and demographic variables on levels of SWB
- Socioeconomic status (SES) may help to explain the collective influence
- Multiple roles are impacted by the multiple responsibilities associated within each role (Goode, 1960)

Future Research

- Research on emotional health/wellness
- Ethnographic or phenomenological studies
- Mixed methods research

Social Change Implications

Encourage African American women to use coping and stress management strategies. Education on work-life balance and self-care practices.