

How Gender Roles Influence the Professional Quality of Life and Wellbeing at Work of Child Protection Workers*

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Summary

The present study examines the ways in which gender roles influence professional quality of life and wellbeing at work in child protection workers.

1. Relevance

The exposure to violence and potentially traumatic events that child protection workers experience daily put them at a particular risk for adverse psychological outcomes, which can impact both their life and the quality of the services they provide. Potential protection and risk factors have been previously investigated, but little is known on the influence of gender roles in this particular work setting.

2. Aims and objectives

Relying on a representative sample of 301 Canadian child protection workers, the influence of gender roles on professional quality of life and wellbeing at work is assessed.

3. Methods

Participants completed the French versions of the Bem Sex Role Index 2.0 (BSRI 2.0) and Professional Quality of Life 5 (ProQOL 5). Wellbeing at work was further assessed using the Measurement Scale of Psychological Well-being Events (EMMBEP) and the Measurement Scale of Psychological Distress Events (EMMDPB), both in French and adapted for the workplace. Pearson R was used to assess correlations and post-hoc analyses using Z values were performed to compare masculinity and femininity scores.

4. Results

Femininity and masculinity scores were positively associated with compassion satisfaction, peace of mind, affective engagement and social harmony at work. Inversely, they were both negatively associated with burnout and emotional disengagement. Masculinity alone was negatively related to anxiety and depressive mood at work, while femininity alone was negatively associated to hostility at work. Post-hoc analysis revealed that these associations differ only in terms of affective engagement, social harmony and hostility at work; masculinity contributed practically twice as much to affective engagement at work as femininity, while femininity contributed practically twice as much to social harmony and was the only role associated with hostility at work.

6. Conclusions

These results show how gender-based analysis can provide additional insight into the dynamics surrounding professional quality of life and wellbeing at work. They also highlight the potential advantages that androgyny can provide to child protection workers. Gender roles should thus be considered when assessing professional quality of life and wellbeing at work.

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