

# Positive Psychology-Based Intervention for Enhancing Happiness and Well-being in Working Mothers: A Randomized Controlled Trial

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**Abstract:** *With the changing social environment, working mothers have become the role of more and more women, but the dual pressure of professional and family roles has brought them a balance dilemma. This study takes married female teachers in a vocational college in Harbin as the respondents and explores their job satisfaction, family satisfaction and emotional experience through empirical analysis, with a view to providing useful curriculum design and development for improving the subjective well-being of working mothers. At the same time, this study also shows that improving the subjective well-being of working mothers requires the joint efforts of all parties, including the support and assistance of family members, workplace units and society as a whole. Therefore, in order to achieve a win-win situation for both working mothers and family happiness, a favorable social environment needs to be established so that women can receive adequate support and recognition in the workplace and at home.*

**Keywords:** *Working mothers, Dual pressures, Subjective well-being, Social support, Course design*

## 1. Introduction

Working mothers are different from ordinary women in that they have to take care of their families and children as well as complete their work content, so they have to balance the relationship between family and work in a comprehensive way [1]. As working mothers, they have to gain independence through work and realize their life value on the one hand. At the same time, they have to take care of their families and children and play the role of mothers. With the increase of competition in the market, working mothers have to sacrifice part of their spare time in order to win in the workplace, which inevitably affects their family roles. Through a survey of working mothers, it is found that they have great contradictions in making work-life decisions, which puts them under great pressure and leads to tension and anxiety and reduces their sense of well-being [2]. In this paper, "working mothers" are defined as women who continue to work after marriage and childbirth.

The theoretical exploration of happiness is early and mature, and most of it is concentrated in the field of psychology. Even though people live in an objective material world, they still rely on their subjective feelings to evaluate the quality of life, and therefore, subjective well-being is an important criterion for people to evaluate their lives. Subjective well-being is the result of a balance of positive and negative emotions, which are independent of each other and cannot be predicted from each other. Happiness is the comparison of positive emotions with negative emotions, and more of the former than the latter is happiness. Happiness is divided into emotional specificity, domain specificity, and temporality from the perspective of individual subjective feelings. Happiness is a hedonic experience that contains both positive and negative aspects. Subjective well-being is an individual's evaluation of the quality of life in the present according to his or her own criteria, and possesses the characteristics of subjectivity, relative stability, and wholeness, including both an affective component (containing both positive and negative emotions) and a cognitive component (i.e., life satisfaction) [3].

There are many different opinions about the definition of subjective well-being among domestic and foreign scholars. In this paper, we believe that subjective well-being is an evaluation of individuals' quality of life at the present time according to their own criteria, which has the characteristics of subjectivity, relative stability and wholeness, and includes both affective components (including positive and negative emotions) and cognitive components (i.e., life satisfaction). Since this paper studies working mothers, with reference to the study by Jian Mi and Shouwei Yuan, et al. the measurement dimensions

of life satisfaction are divided into job satisfaction and family satisfaction [4]. Therefore, the measurement of subjective well-being includes: emotional experience, job satisfaction and family satisfaction. Among the studies on subjective well-being of working women that have been conducted in China, some are specific to individual regions and some are specific to a particular occupational field. Most of the research results concluded that working women have a high level of subjective well-being.

For working mothers, their well-being includes three components: family satisfaction, job satisfaction and emotional experience [5]. Family satisfaction refers to working mothers' satisfaction with their family life situation. For working mothers, their time is limited and they do not have enough time to take care of their family and children compared to full-time mothers, so they need the joint help and understanding of their family members. If other family members can give some time and energy to work with working mothers to complete household chores and children's education, etc., then the family happiness of working mothers will be very high with it [6]. Job satisfaction refers to the satisfaction of working mothers with their existing jobs. The workplace is a stage for working mothers to play their personal charm and show their talents, and it is another battlefield for working mothers to realize their self-worth. Therefore, working mothers should continuously improve their culture and skills through learning, so as to better express themselves in the workplace and gain a higher sense of happiness. Emotional experience refers to the level of emotional satisfaction of working mothers in the process of work and life, that is, the overall psychological perception of job satisfaction and family satisfaction as well as the degree of happiness. Working mothers can experience happiness and the sense of accomplishment of constantly approaching their goals through continuous self-improvement and self-improvement, on the road to self-development and self-worth. Only when people taste happiness can they feel happiness, i.e., the level of people's subjective happiness is influenced by their emotional experience, and more positive emotions lead to higher happiness. Therefore, in order to achieve an increase in their subjective well-being it is necessary to take measures to enhance their positive emotions and reduce their negative emotions [7].

The following paper will study practical courses that meet the needs of working mothers based on empirical surveys, so as to improve the subjective well-being of working mothers.

## **2. Survey Process and Results**

### **2.1. Purpose of the survey**

The development of this course is based on the real situation of subjective well-being of working mothers in a vocational college. Therefore, in order to collect knowledgeable and reliable information, this study will use a questionnaire to analyze the current situation of subjective well-being and learning needs of working mothers in this vocational college, and make suggestions for the development of a course to improve the well-being of working mothers based on the survey results.

### **2.2. Survey Subjects and Survey Methodology**

In this paper, 57 working mothers, including full-time teachers, classroom teachers and administrators, were selected from a vocational college in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province. In order to better understand the well-being of working mothers in this school, this paper used a questionnaire to investigate the current situation of the well-being of working mothers in this school. At the same time, the age, teaching experience, and titles of the female teachers who have had children were taken into account. The questionnaire was prepared and determined with reference to Dr. Yuanjiang Miao's Comprehensive Happiness Questionnaire [8], and was adapted to the specific situation of the school. The entire questionnaire can be divided into 2 parts, the first of which is to investigate the basic information of the respondents, and the second part is about the family satisfaction, job satisfaction and emotional experience of working mothers, which mainly adopts a five-point Likert scale [9]. Each item contains five options: "strongly disagree, disagree, agree, agree, and strongly agree", which correspond to scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. A total of 57 questionnaires were distributed, 57 questionnaires were collected, and 55 valid questionnaires were obtained by excluding 2 invalid questionnaires. In this survey, the return rate of questionnaires reached 96.5%. Table 1 below gives the basic statistical results of the research subjects.

Table 1: Statistical results of the basic conditions of the research subjects

Name	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	31-50 years old	33	60.00
	Above 50 years old	22	40.00
Education	Technical school	1	1.82
	Specialized school	7	12.73
	Bachelor's degree	43	78.18
	Postgraduate and above	4	7.27
Fertility status	One child	52	94.55
	Second child	3	5.45
Elderly people help to take care of children	Yes	35	63.64
	None	20	36.36
Children	Kindergarten	1	1.82
	Elementary school	10	18.18
	Middle school	1	1.82
	High school	3	5.45
Years of work	University	40	72.73
	10-15 years	5	9.09
	More than 15 years	50	90.91
Hours of work	Less than 6 hours	1	1.82
	6-10 hours	47	85.45
	More than 10 hours	7	12.73
Title	Primary	11	20.00
	Intermediate	19	34.55
	Senior	25	45.45
Total		55	100.0

### 2.3. Survey results and analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis of the subjective well-being status of working mothers shows that job satisfaction is shown in Table 2, family satisfaction is shown in Table 3, emotional experience is shown in Table 4, and the overall subjective well-being of working mothers and the mean values of each factor are shown in Table 5.

Table 2 Results of job satisfaction survey of working mothers

Job satisfaction	Sample size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
9. overall, I have a good relationship with my colleagues	55	3.000	5.000	4.273	0.706
10. -In general, I am satisfied with my current job	55	2.000	5.000	4.236	0.744
11. I am generally satisfied with the type of work I do at my current job	55	2.000	5.000	4.182	0.819
12. I am mostly enthusiastic about my job	55	1.000	5.000	4.164	0.856
13. I experience real enjoyment and fun at work	55	2.000	5.000	4.109	0.854

Table 3 Results of family satisfaction survey of working mothers

Family satisfaction	Sample size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
14. I am generally satisfied with my role in the family	55	1.000	5.000	4.127	0.982
15. my family life is harmonious	55	3.000	5.000	4.255	0.844
16. I find my family life enjoyable and relaxing	55	1.000	5.000	4.164	0.996
17. generally speaking, I am satisfied with my family situation	55	2.000	5.000	4.218	0.896
18. I prefer to spend time with my family than with my colleagues' gatherings	55	2.000	5.000	4.145	0.826

*Table 4: Results of working mothers' emotional experience survey*

Emotional experience	Sample size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
19. I have gotten, so far, the important things I want in life	55	2.000	5.000	3.909	0.888
20. compared to my life goals I am very satisfied with my current achievements	55	2.000	5.000	3.782	0.994
21. in terms of income goals I am very satisfied with my current achievements	55	1.000	5.000	3.509	1.153
22. in terms of personal development and progress I am very satisfied with my current situation	55	2.000	5.000	3.727	1.044
23. In terms of improvement in ability, I am very satisfied with my current level	55	2.000	5.000	3.600	1.011

*Table 5: Results of the survey on the overall happiness of working mothers*

	Mean	Average	M/Item
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	20.964	3.909	4.193
<b>Family satisfaction</b>	20.909	3.782	4.182
<b>Emotional experience</b>	18.527	3.509	3.705

Note: M/Item = total score of each factor / number of questions for that factor

Table 5 shows the subjective well-being subscales of working mothers and the mean and standard deviation of each factor. The scores of the questionnaire were set from 1 to 5, and the corresponding options were "totally disagree", "relatively disagree", "neutral", "relatively the higher the score, the higher the level of subjective well-being of the respondents. From Table 5, we can see that the respondents' scores are between 3.705 and 4.193, which indicates that the subjective well-being of working mothers in this vocational college is at a medium to high level; the overall results of subjective well-being show that the average size of each dimension is: job satisfaction>family satisfaction>emotional experience; among them, working mothers have the highest job satisfaction.

Working mothers need to be taught in this course to realize that self-worth is not determined by others, but by themselves, and that shining in their own field and making indispensable contributions to their families, to society, and even to the country is the true value of life. Finally, self-efficacy affects how much effort one is willing to put in and how long one persists in the face of difficulties, and having a higher sense of self-efficacy can directly lead to a higher emotional experience for working mothers [10-11]. Therefore, teachers need to teach participants the definition of self-efficacy, ways to increase self-efficacy such as remembering and reinforcing their own successes, observing and learning from others' successes, and engaging in positive self-talk, etc., and have mothers share relevant experiences to motivate each other.

### 3. Course Design

#### 3.1. Situation Analysis

The learners in this course are working mothers who are married and have children and need to balance work and family. The analysis of the learners revealed that most of the working mothers had a moderate to high level of subjective well-being, but the conflict between family and work and other external and internal pressures made it difficult for working mothers to cope with their lives and their emotional experience scores were relatively low [12]. The willingness to participate in courses is more positive and they are willing to improve their well-being through courses in various areas. Since working mothers have less spare time than other groups, the design of the course needs to be efficient and practical, based on the real needs of the survey results, combined with the characteristics of working mothers' strong learning ability and high receptiveness, and choose appropriate and diverse teaching methods to design appropriate course contents.

#### 3.2. Course Objectives

The course objectives are the starting point for the development of the course. The course objectives established through the curriculum are the basis for the development of the course content. Only when the objectives of the course are established, the course can be used as a yardstick to select the corresponding teaching content, constitute a certain structure, and arrange it into a certain order, without

clarifying the objectives of the course, it is impossible to develop the specific content of the course. The specific teaching objectives in this study are divided into basic knowledge level (cognitive level), emotional-attitudinal level and behavioral skills level by referring to Bloom's classification of teaching objectives, as shown in Table 6.

*Table 6: Teaching objectives of the course on enhancing the well-being of working mothers*

Classification of teaching objectives	Specific teaching objectives
Cognitive objectives	understand the components of subjective well-being and the meaning of job satisfaction, family satisfaction and emotional experience of working mothers
	Understand that the root of subjective happiness comes from achieving personal values and goals, and describe the experience of achieving happiness through achieving goals or creating self-worth
Emotional goals	To be able to share their negative feelings in their work life, to improve themselves in communication, and to achieve positive feelings
	To be able to think about the causes of reduced happiness, review and analyze them, identify the problems, and improve self-worth
	Be able to correctly recognize the stress in family and work, and improve your ability to adapt to the environment, and set milestones for the future of family and work respectively
Behavioral goals	Be able to understand the basic knowledge of financial and economic management, and make reasonable plans according to the actual situation of your family
	Make family activity plans and career development plans, so that different roles can be focused in different periods
	Improve their business level and professional quality, get a smoother working experience, and experience the subjective sense of happiness will also be improved
	Exchange and share your parenting experience, listen to and learn from other mothers' parenting experiences, learn to communicate with your own children, and gain a higher sense of well-being in parenting education
	Learn to communicate with your spouse, respect and love each other, get a higher sense of support from your marriage, and let your husband become your solid support
	Master flexible communication skills, including with other family members and various groups at work, and use different communication styles to build harmonious relationships
	Be able to realize one's personal value and goals and create value, describe experiences of happiness through achieving goals or creating self-worth, and increase self-efficacy
	Be able to judge one's own emotional level and learn to use various methods to adjust negative psychology and detoxify negative emotions, so as to maintain a positive and healthy state of mind
	Develop your own hobbies, improve your taste in life, enjoy life, share your hobbies and resources, explore your own potential, and reflect your self-worth in life

### 3.3. Course content analysis and design

Table 7: Course outline for working mothers to improve their subjective well-being

Course Category	Module Topics Specific	Specific Course Topics	Teaching Methods	Course Objectives
Basic knowledge	Exploring the root of happiness and unveiling the veil of happiness	What is happiness? --The busy life of working mothers	Lecture method, group discussion	Understanding the components of subjective well-being and understanding the meaning of job satisfaction, family satisfaction and emotional experience of working mothers
		Catalyst for Happiness - Self-worth and Goals	Lecture method, group discussion	Understanding that the root of subjective happiness comes from achieving one's personal values and goals, describing the experience of achieving happiness through achieving goals or creating self-worth.
Emotional attitude class	Happiness is not luck but a pursuit	Negative emotion cleaning - sharing and exchange session	Group discussion method	Being able to share their negative emotions in work life, achieving self-improvement and positive emotions in the exchange
		To achieve happiness, you need to reflect and take action	Life review method, case study method, and experiential activities	To be able to think about the causes of reduced happiness, review and analyze, find out where the problems lie, and improve your self-worth
		Break out of the stress circle - the rules of adaptation for working mothers	Life review method, case study method, and experiential activities	Be able to correctly understand the stress in family and work, and improve your ability to adapt to the environment, and set milestones for your future family and work respectively
Behavioral skills	Planning for happiness is a must in life	Working mothers become financial experts	Lecture method, group discussion	Ability to understand the basic knowledge of financial and economic management, and make reasonable planning according to the actual situation of their families
		Development planning in the workplace and at home	Lecture method, group discussion	Develop a family activity plan and a career development plan, so that different roles can be focused at different times
		Lifelong happiness comes from lifelong	Lecture method, group discussion	Improve your business level and professional quality, get a smoother working experience, and the experience of subjective happiness will also be improved
	The foundation of happiness - good and harmonious relationship with others	The real parenting skills of working mothers	Lecture method, case method, group discussion	Exchange and share your own parenting experience, listen and learn from other mothers' parenting experience, learn to communicate with your own children, and gain a higher sense of happiness in parenting education
		An important identity of working mothers - wife	Lecture method, case method, group discussion	Learn to communicate with your spouse, respect and love each other, get a high sense of support from your marriage, and let your husband become your solid backing.
		Essential skills for working mothers - communication skills	Lecture method, case method, group discussion	Master flexible communication skills, including building harmonious relationships with other family members and various groups in the workplace using different communication methods
	Happy and positive life of working mothers	Life values and self-efficacy of working mothers	Life review method, lecture method	Able to realize their personal values and goals and continuously create values, describe the experience of happiness through achieving goals or creating self-worth, and improve self-efficacy
		Guarantee of happiness - a positive and healthy state of mind	Lecture method, case method, group discussion	Ability to judge one's own emotional level, and learn to use various methods to adjust to negative psychology and resolve negative emotions, so as to maintain a positive and healthy state of mind
		Working mothers' journey to find themselves	Lecture method, group discussion, experiential activities	Cultivate their own hobbies, improve their taste in life, enjoy life, share their hobbies and resources, explore their own potential, and reflect their self-worth in life

The content of this study was determined from three aspects: the current situation and problems of subjective well-being of working mothers, the needs of working mothers for courses to improve their well-being, and literature review. In designing the content of the course for working mothers to improve their subjective well-being, the specific content, teaching methods, and teaching materials of each course

need to be determined based on the survey results and the actual needs of working mothers, and specific course topics need to be designed according to the specific teaching objectives of the course. Therefore, I divided the course content into three categories, which belong to the basic knowledge category, emotional attitude category and behavior skills category. Each unit sets the corresponding course content according to the objectives of the unit course, with a total of 14 sessions, taking two weeks, and the participants choose to participate in all or some of the units according to their needs. The specific course content design is shown in the course outline in Table 7.

#### 4. Course evaluation

Course evaluation generally includes the evaluation of the course itself and the evaluation of the learning effect of the learners. For the evaluation of the course itself, since there is no unified evaluation scheme for the course design of the course on improving the subjective well-being of working mothers, the course can be evaluated by inviting all the participants of the course to participate in the evaluation process of the course, combining the course outline and asking the working mothers who participated in the course, the professional teachers of the course, the curriculum development experts and other course stakeholders to rate the course. The evaluation of learners' learning effectiveness needs to be divided into two parts: formative evaluation and summative evaluation, and the results of these two types of evaluation can be combined to test the effectiveness of the course more objectively. The formative evaluation is designed to record whether the participants are active in the classroom, whether they can complete the teacher's tasks, and so on. The summative evaluation is also different from the traditional summative evaluation, because it is a reflective course with practical meaning, and the self-evaluation report or self-reflection report submitted by the mothers can be used to assess the effectiveness of the course. The two evaluation methods and multiple evaluation methods can make the evaluation results more diversified, thus reflecting the teaching effectiveness of the course as comprehensively as possible.

#### 5. Conclusions

With the development of the times, more and more mothers are coming out from the simple family life and participating in the workplace competition. This transformation has realized the diversified development of mothers' roles and improved the social recognition of working mothers. With the increasing participation of working mothers in the workplace, the issue of working mothers' well-being has gradually attracted widespread attention from families, work units and society. For working mothers they face the dual pressure of family and work [13], and although their overall happiness is at a moderate to high level, further investigation of their needs for subjective well-being enhancement courses reveals that the needs of working mothers for different aspects do exist, and at the same time indirectly proves that the subjective well-being of working mothers has more room for improvement. Accordingly, the author conducts a curriculum design to enhance the subjective well-being of working mothers based on the literature review and the analysis of the survey results, aiming to make a modest contribution to the group of working mothers.

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