



Mediating role of social adjustment in the relationship between self-worth and psychological well-being among employees

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ABSTRACT

Social adjustment functions as a connecting bridge in human interactions. High self-worth, by enhancing employees' communication and interpersonal skills, provides a foundation for greater psychological well-being. In fact, a major portion of self-worth's influence on mental well-being is realized through an individual's capacity to establish constructive relationships with others in the workplace. The present study aimed to examine the mediating role of social adjustment in the relationship between self-worth and psychological well-being among employees. This research was applied in purpose and employed a descriptive-correlational design using structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population consisted of all 240 female employees of Zahedan Health Center in 2024, all of whom were included in the study through a census sampling method. Data were collected using Bell Adjustment Inventory (1961), Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale by Crocker et al. (2003), and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (1995). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 20 and LISREL software. Path analysis results revealed significant positive correlation between social adjustment and psychological well-being ($r = 0.79, p < 0.01$), between self-worth and social adjustment ($r = 0.57, p < 0.01$), and between self-worth and psychological well-being ($r = 0.48, p < 0.01$). The Sobel test yielded a Z-value of 12.45, which exceeded the critical value of 1.96. Therefore, at a 95% of confidence level, it can be concluded that social adjustment plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between self-worth and employees' psychological well-being. Accordingly, strengthening self-worth and providing training in social adjustment skills can serve as a dual-faceted and effective strategy for promoting employees' psychological well-being in organizations.

Introduction

In recent years, with the emergence of positive psychology as a modern paradigm within psychological science, organizational behavior experts have increasingly focused on employees' emotional, mental, and social well-being (Costa et al., 2021). This approach equates mental health with positive psychological functioning and conceptualizes it as psychological well-being (Afshari & Rezai, 2023).

Contemporary health models integrate physical, psychological, and social well-being, providing a more holistic picture of individual health (Meng et al., 2020). Psychological well-being comprises six key components: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, and purpose in life (Ghezel et al., 2025). These components enable individuals to maintain satisfaction with life and the ability to cope with challenges while fulfilling social roles (Ryff & Singer, 2006).

According to Self-Determination Theory, psychological well-being is influenced by environmental factors and the level of individual self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Rahimirad et al., 2022).



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Among the various determinants of psychological well-being, self-worth is particularly significant. Derived from the interaction between mind, self, and personality, self-worth is viewed as an indicator of psychological adjustment and social functioning (Demetrious, 2003; Zaki, 2012). Studies show that higher self-worth is positively associated with psychological well-being, contributing to improved general health, adaptive social behavior, and higher quality of life (Crocker et al., 2003; George, 2010).

Self-esteem is a fundamental component in promoting employees' mental health in a workplace and plays an important role in increasing their motivation, resilience, and professional performance in the face of job challenges. This characteristic has positive effects not only at the individual level, but also in organizational dimensions, interpersonal relationships, and social interactions (Gómez-Jorge & Díaz-Garrido, 2024). Self-esteem can act as an effective mechanism in reducing employees' psychosocial problems and paving the way for improving job adjustment and increasing professional satisfaction. By strengthening this trait, individuals set higher personal standards for themselves, which helps improve work relationships, reduce intra-organizational conflicts, and increase adaptability in dynamic and challenging environments (Lawrence & Wang, 2025).

Within this framework, social adjustment serves as a critical mediating factor. This adjustment is a psychosocial process which involves the acceptance of societal values and norms and the ability to interact effectively with others (Saeedzade & Rahmani, 2022; Vatandoust et al., 2024). Adaptive behaviors encompass a range of skills required for fulfilling both personal and social needs (Besharat et al. 2023; Narimani et al., 2013).

Social adjustment is one of the key and essential skills for employees in any organization. This skill strengthens the individual's ability to interact effectively, cooperate constructively, and adapt to the social conditions of the workplace. In fact, without a desirable level of social adjustment, employees will not be able to perform their duties properly in interactions with others. Weakness in this area not only affects job performance, but is also considered an important factor in the emergence of psychological problems, inability to manage emotions, and increased psychological stress in the workplace (Lundqvist et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening social adaptation skills of and training employees is an undeniable necessity for promoting mental health and organizational productivity. (Grera et al., 2024)

In occupational settings—particularly in health centers—the psychological well-being of female employees is of special importance, as they often balance professional duties with multiple family responsibilities, leading to heightened psychological strain. In the city of Zahedan, given its unique cultural, social, and economic conditions, attention to the mental and social health of female health workers is especially crucial.

Accordingly, the present study was designed to investigate the mediating role of social adjustment in the relationship between self-worth and psychological well-being among female health center employees in Zahedan. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of psychological models in the field of organizational health and provide valuable insights for managers, counselors, and researchers.

Therefore, the following central research question was developed:

Does social adjustment significantly mediate the relationship between self-worth and psychological well-being among female employees of Zahedan Health Center?

Method

This study is applied in terms of its purpose which follows a descriptive-correlational design using path analysis.

Sample and Sampling Method

The statistical population comprised all 240 female employees working in Zahedan Health Center in 2024, all of whom were selected via the census method due to the limited population size.

Tools Used

Bell Adjustment Inventory (1961)

This instrument, developed by Bell (1961), consists of 35 items across five dimensions: home adjustment, health adjustment, social adjustment, emotional adjustment, and occupational adjustment. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater social adjustment. Bell (1962) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.88, while Mokhberi et al. (2010) found a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94 in Iran. In the present study, the reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS; Crocker et al., 2003)

This 29-item instrument measures self-worth across six dimensions: competition, others' approval, others' opinions, piety, God's love, and academic competence. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater self-worth. Crocker et al. (2003) reported an internal consistency of 0.96. In a recent study by Nadi et al. (2025), Cronbach's alpha was 0.83, and in the present study, reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90.

Ryff's Short Form of the Psychological Well-Being Scale (RSPWB; Ryff, 1995)

This 18-item instrument includes six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Items are rated on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting greater psychological well-being. Vahidi & Jafari Harandi (2017) reported an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.72. In the current study, reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.886.

All data were analyzed using SPSS version 20 and LISREL software.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that the largest age group comprised individuals over 36 years old (37.1%), while the smallest group consisted of those under 25 years old (4.6%). In terms of educational level, the majority of participants held a bachelor's degree (46.3%), whereas only 4.6% had a high school diploma. Regarding work experience, most employees had between 5 and 10 years of work experience (35%), and a small number had less than 5 years of work experience (12.9%).

Table 1- Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Research Variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Psychological Well-being	64.42	5.81	1		
2. Social Adjustment	118.95	19.31	0.79**	1	
3. Self-Worth	135.27	19.91	0.48**	0.57**	1

Note: p < 0.05; p < 0.01

As shown in Table 1, there is a significant positive correlations among the variables. Social adjustment was strongly correlated with psychological well-being ($r = 0.79$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, self-worth was positively and significantly correlated with both social adjustment ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$) and psychological well-being ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that increases in self-worth and social adjustment are associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. The theoretical model of the study was tested using the maximum likelihood estimation method through LISREL software.

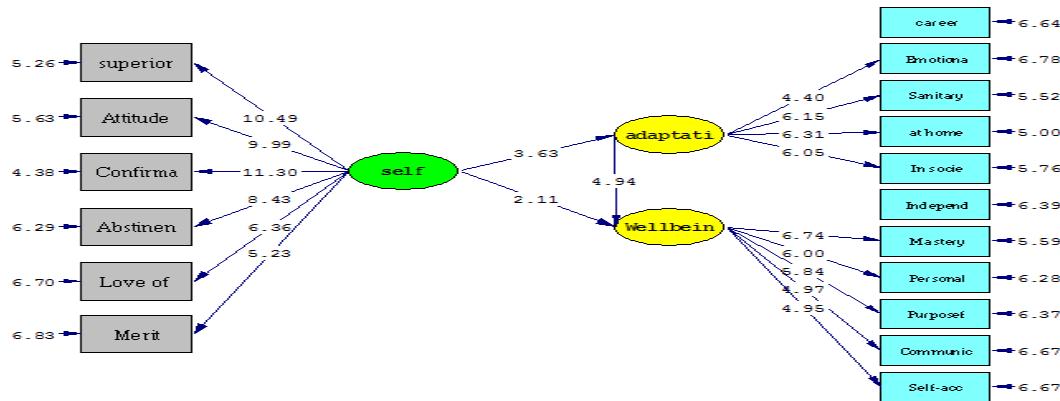


Figure 1- t-values for the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Path Analysis.

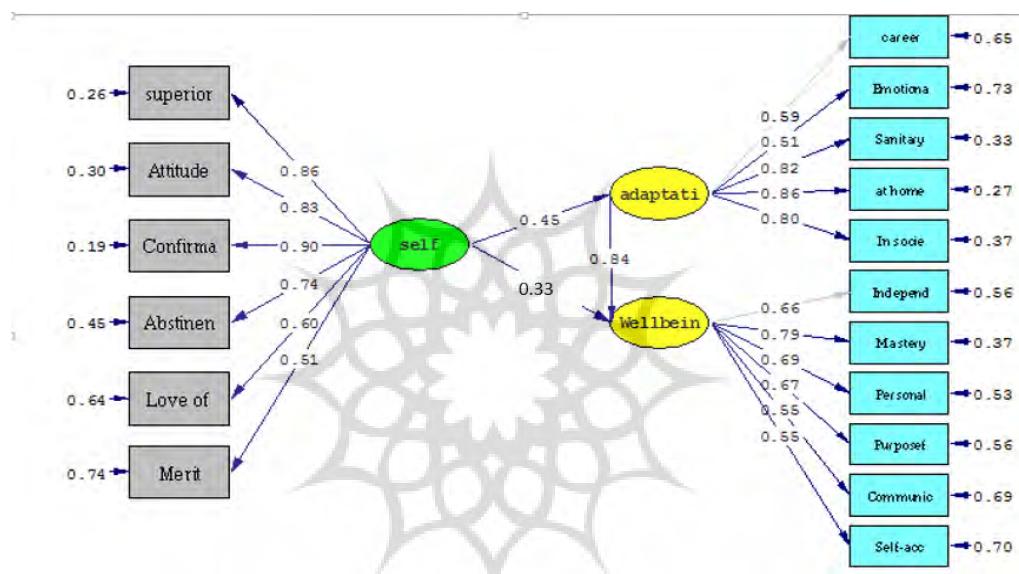


Figure 2- Standardized Path Coefficients for the SEM Model.

Table 2 presents the model fit indices from the structural equation modeling analysis. As shown, all indices met the acceptable thresholds, indicating a satisfactory model fit.

Table 2- Model Fit Indices for the Structural Equation Model.

Index	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	IFI
Calculated Value	2.19	0.006	0.93	0.91	0.96	0.92	0.93
Acceptable Threshold	< 5	< 0.08	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90
Result	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

The obtained χ^2/df value (2.19) was below 5, confirming acceptable model fit. The RMSEA value (0.006) indicated excellent fit. Other indices—including GFI (0.93), IFI (0.93), CFI (0.96), NFI (0.92), and AGFI (0.91)—were all above the recommended cutoff of 0.90, which further support the model's adequacy.

To assess the significance level of the mediating effect, Sobel's test was conducted. A Z-value greater than 1.96 indicates a significant mediation effect at 95% confidence level (Hanafizadeh & Zare-Ravassan, 2012).

Table 3- Sobel Test Results for the Mediating Role of Social Adjustment.

Path	Test Statistic (Z)	SE	Sig.
Self-Worth → Social Adjustment → Psychological Well-being	12.45	0.04	0.001

Based on the Z-value of 12.45 (greater than 1.96), social adjustment was confirmed as a significant mediator in the relationship between self-worth and psychological well-being among employees at 95% confidence level.

Table 4- Standardized Path Coefficients and t-values.

Path	Standardized Coefficient	t-value	Result
Self-Worth → Psychological Well-being	0.33	2.11	Supported
Self-Worth → Social Adjustment	0.46	3.63	Supported
Social Adjustment → Psychological Well-being	0.84	4.94	Supported

As shown in Table 4, the direct effect of self-worth on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.33$, $t = 2.11$) was statistically significant. Likewise, self-worth significantly predicted social adjustment ($\beta = 0.46$, $t = 3.63$). The strongest effect was observed for the path from social adjustment to psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.84$, $t = 4.94$), indicating that social adjustment plays a major role in enhancing psychological well-being. These findings suggest that self-worth affects psychological well-being both directly and indirectly through social adjustment.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the mediating role of social adjustment in the relationship between self-worth and psychological well-being among female employees in Zahedan Health Center. The findings confirmed that social adjustment significantly mediates this relationship at 95% confidence level.

Individuals with higher self-worth tend to possess greater self-confidence, perform better in social contexts, and respond more flexibly and rationally to interpersonal challenges. These characteristics enable them to build more positive workplace relationships and receive greater social support. Such supportive and constructive interactions enhance satisfaction, psychological security, and ultimately, overall psychological well-being.

The findings of this study are also consistent with some previous studies. For example, [Zhang et al. \(2025\)](#) showed that internal resources such as self-esteem play an important role in promoting social adjustment. [Kao \(2024\)](#) also found that people who have adequate social support experience higher levels of self-esteem. These findings emphasize that positive social interactions and environmental supports can help boost self-esteem and feelings of worth among employees in workplaces. In this regard, [Yu et al. \(2024\)](#) also showed that mental well-being and psychological resilience play a mediating role in the effect of social support on social adjustment, which is indirectly related to psychological well-being. These results indicate that social adjustment is not only a communication skill, but also an effective psychological mechanism in promoting individuals' mental health. Also, the study by [Van Ottmanwey et al. \(2024\)](#) showed that working women with high levels of social adjustment experience greater psychological well-being; this also highlights the importance of paying attention to gender differences in the analysis of social adjustment.

The findings of the present study are also supported by other similar studies. For instance, [Zhang et al. \(2025\)](#) found that internal resources such as self-worth play a key role in improving social adjustment. Likewise, [Cao \(2024\)](#) reported that individuals who receive adequate social support experience higher levels of self-worth. [Yu et al. \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that subjective well-being and psychological resilience mediate the relationship between social support and social adjustment, which in turn influences psychological well-being. [Van Outenwy et al. \(2024\)](#) also found that employed women with higher levels of social adjustment experience greater psychological well-being.

Overall, these findings underscore the importance of social adjustment as a mediating variable that strengthens the impact of self-worth on psychological well-being. This mediating role highlights the need

to promote social skills training, interpersonal relationship enhancement, and self-esteem development in both organizational and educational settings. By focusing on these factors, organizations and institutions can contribute to improving the psychological health of employees and students alike.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study is limited in generalizability due to its focus on female employees in Zahedan using a census sampling approach. Future research is recommended to replicate the study in other cities and among male employees using diverse sampling methods. Moreover, health center managers are encouraged to implement psychological interventions that foster self-worth and social adjustment skills among their staff.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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