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PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL ADAPTABILITY OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Demands on women in middle and senior leadership positions in higher education institutions inevitably challenge their well-being. How they manage these demands is strongly related to their sense of coherence and their spirituality, constructs that have demonstrated positive relations with general and work-related well-being. This study aims to explore the construction of sense of coherence and spirituality of women leaders in higher education institutions. It adopts a qualitative research approach, applying constructivist grounded theory. The sample comprises 13 academic and support services women working in higher education, who belong to the Higher Education Resource Services South Africa network, a non-profit organisation that promotes leadership development and representation of women in senior positions in higher education. This study contributes to knowledge on gender-specific well-being concepts by presenting qualitative findings on women leaders' life-orientation in terms of sense of coherence and spirituality in a higher education institution in South Africa. Themes from the interview data provide key insights on three subcomponents of sense of coherence: manageability, comprehensibility, and meaningfulness. Spirituality furthermore emerged as constructed in inner-connectedness, trans-personality, and a coping resource in the work context. Meaningfulness emerged as central to the life-orientation and spirituality of women leaders in higher education. Finally, a core theoretical idea is presented in proposing an integrated psycho-spiritual perspective, with meaningfulness as central, grounded in a motivational and relational orientation, and facilitating the potential well-being of women leaders in higher education institutions. Recommendations are made for future research and to inform leadership development and well-being interventions targeting women in higher education.

Keywords: Leadership, life-orientation, meaningfulness, sense of coherence, spirituality, well-being, women.

Introduction

Career-orientated women are generally confronted with unique workplace challenges and coping with these is related to their mental health and well-being and their spirituality. In this study, mental health is viewed in terms of sense of coherence (SOC), which is defined as a universal life-orientation, whilst spirituality responds to the question of how one connects to oneself and others. Women's mental health and well-being and the psychological and social implications for South Africa have been studied comprehensively in connection with violence and diseases and HIV and AIDS. These studies refer to women in rural areas and townships or to clinical contexts, with little attention being paid to the well-being of women in leadership positions in South African higher education institutions (HEIs). The value of studying the well-being of women in HEIs is clear in light of the increasing number of women with higher education (HE) and the rise of women in leadership positions. Leadership is defined as the ability to motivate and influence others to achieve the goals of an organisation. It is strongly related to the ability to build interpersonal relationships and is regarded as influential in the health and well-being of leaders and employees. These studies compare gender and race in leader behaviour and management, the construction of gender roles in leadership, and gender equity faced by women in political leadership. Only a few recent studies highlight well-being in terms of SOC in women leaders in South Africa, and the



HEI context often remains unaddressed. Few studies focus on spirituality in the workplace, particularly regarding HEIs, and faculty and administrators. It has been emphasized that a strong SOC and spirituality – both connected to the meaning of life– enhance well-being, stress management, and burnout phenomena in organisations. Both SOC and spirituality promote health and well-being in leaders, yet the concepts as well-being resources need further exploration, particularly regarding gender in the context of HEIs. This study addresses the gap in previous research by specifically exploring how women in middle and senior management positions working in the HE sector in South Africa construct SOC and spirituality as potential wellbeing resources. A theoretical framework of the study is provided, the research methodology is introduced, findings are presented and discussed, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations are provided.

Literature review

SOC generates optimal health and grounds successful coping with life. In psychological perspectives, SOC has consequently been framed as a wellness-protecting and stress resource orientation to life. SOC originates as a psychological construct from Antonovsky's salutogenic theory in which people's mental health or psychological well-being constitutes oscillation along a behavioural continuum ranging from optimal health to total ill health. Antonovsky (1979) coined the term SOC, defining the

concept broadly as a general and universal life-orientation. He proposed three conceptual SOC subcomponents: cognitive understanding (comprehensibility), confidence in personal coping resources (manageability), and belief that life's challenges are worthy of engagement. Meaningfulness – as motivational component – is often the most important component. Previous research has shown that strong meaningfulness is often related to a strong belief system or spirituality, thus affecting mental health and well-being positively. Individuals with a strong SOC are expected to display control, resourcefulness, and perseverance in difficult situations. Their well-being also seems to be influenced by a meaningful purpose in life.

The role of SOC in maintaining health and work-related well-being has been well researched in the general population in South Africa, yet little quantitative or qualitative research focuses on HE women leaders' SOC. While some studies found that men display higher SOC than women, more recent research shows little to no significant evidence in this regard. Context-specific gender-based research on SOC may enhance understanding of how it serves as a well-being resource to enable women to deal with stress that is unique to their gender-specific work–life roles.

Spirituality in the workplace

Spirituality can be defined as a subjective experience of being connected with oneself, others, and the entire universe. Individual



interest in spirituality reflects an attempt to understand the connectedness between work, relationships with others, and life beyond oneself. Spirituality influences mental health and well-being in diverse social contexts and is a potential health resource in work and organisational settings. The concept is seen as moderating the relationship between stress and well-being and the levels of negative life experiences, depression, and anxiety, however, highlight that the relationship between psychological well-being and spirituality is modest, but differs across groups and contexts. The authors therefore emphasize that spirituality and psychological well-being need to be understood contextually as spiritual beliefs and practices varying across cultures, situations, gender, and race. Spirituality can be attained through mindfulness as a non-judgmental experience of life. Studies have shown that mindfulness training, as a spiritual practice, strengthens SOC in various samples of women, helping women to cope with stress enhancing meaningfulness and wellness. Recent research in South Africa highlighted an increasing need in organisations to promote meaning at work and so enhance mental health and well-being.

Labuschagne's (2013) model of South African workplace spirituality highlights a trend from 'having' to 'being', in which spirituality is expressed through creativity, laughter, humour, and freedom to enhance productivity and effectiveness in work–life contexts. The employee understands of workplace spirituality, however, remains

vaguely understood and needs further exploration meta-analysis of workplace spirituality points to increased emphasis on researching its importance in the workplace. Although workplace spirituality has been defined in multiple ways, agree that it may contribute positively to the development and implementation of a spirituality-based organisational culture. Although workplace spirituality is not the focus of this article, we focus on spirituality as a resource in women leaders in HE, particularly since spirituality has been emphasized as an important resource in leadership in South African organisations.

Black Consideration

The Suppression of Black Feminist Thought the overwhelming majority of African yank ladies were delivered to United States. to figure as slaves during a scenario of oppression. Oppression describes any unjust scenario wherever, consistently and over a protracted amount of your time, one cluster denies another cluster access to the resources of society. Race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, age and quality among others represent major varieties of oppression within United States. However, the convergence of race, class and gender oppression characteristic of United States. slavery formed all succeeding relationships that girls of African descent had at intervals African-American families and communities, with employers, and among each other. It conjointly created the political context for Black women's intellectual work. African-American women's oppression has



encompassed 3 interdependent dimensions. First, the exploitation of Black women's labor essential to U.S. capitalism—the "iron pots and kettles" symbolizing Black women's long-standing ghettoization in commission occupations—represents the economic dimension of oppression Survival for many African-American ladies have been such AN all-consuming activity that almost all have had few opportunities to try to to intellectual work because it has been historically outlined. The plodding of enthralled African-American ladies' work and also the grinding poorness of "free" wage labor within the rural South tellingly illustrate the high prices Black women have bought survival. The numerous impoverished African-American ladies ghettoized in urban center, Birmingham, Oakland, Detroit, and alternative U.S. inner cities demonstrate the continuation of those earlier varieties of Black women's economic exploitation .Black Feminist Thought as essential Social Theory Even if they seem to be otherwise, things like the suppression of Black women's concepts at intervals ancient scholarship and also the struggles at intervals the critiques of that established information square measure inherently unstable. Conditions within the wider economic science at the same time for Black women's subordination and foster policy. On some level, people that square measure burdened sometimes comprehend it. For African-American ladies, the information gained at decussate oppressions of race, class, and gender provides the stimulus for crafting and spending. As an associate traditionally laden cluster, U.S. Black ladies

have created social thought designed to oppose oppression. Not solely will the shape assumed by this thought diverge from customary educational theory—it will take the shape of poetry. Music, essays, and, therefore, the like—but the aim of Black women's collective thought is clearly completely different. Social theories arising from and/or on behalf of U.S. Black ladies and different traditionally laden teams aim to seek out ways those to flee from, survive in, and/or oppose prevailing social and economic injustice. Within us, for instance, African-American social and political thought analyzes institutionalized racism, to not facilitate its work additional expeditions, however, to resist it. Feminism advocates women's release and direction, Marxist social thought aims for an additional evenhanded society, whereas queer theory opposes hetero-sexism. Beyond U.S. borders, many ladies from laden teams conjointly struggle to know new kinds of injustice. In an exceedingly multinational, postcolonial context, the ladies inside new and sometimes Black-run nation-states within the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia struggle with new meanings connected to quality, citizenship standing, and faith. In more and more European nation-states, ladies migrants from former colonies encounter new kinds of subjugation. Social theories expressed by ladies rising from these numerous teams typically don't arise from the rarefied atmosphere of their imaginations. Instead, social theories mirror women's efforts to come back to terms with life's experiences inside across oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity,



nation, and faith. Historically, two factors aroused U.S. Black women's crucial social theory. For one, before war II, separatism in urban housing became thus entrenched that the bulk of African American girls lived in self-contained Black neighborhoods wherever their kids attended overpoweringly Black faculties, and wherever they themselves belonged to all-Black churches and similar community organizations. Despite the actual fact that ghettoization was designed to foster the political management and economic exploitation of Black Americans. As mothers, other mothers, teachers, and churchwomen in primarily all-Black rural communities and concrete neighborhoods, U.S. Black girls participated in constructing and reconstructing this oppositional knowledge. Through the lived experiences gained among their extended families and communities, individual African-American girls designed their own ideas concerning the meaning of Black womanhood. Once these ideas found collective expression, Black women's self-definitions enabled them to redo African-influenced conceptions of self and community. These self-definitions of Black womanhood were designed to resist the negative dominant pictures of Black womanhood advanced by Whites still because the discriminatory social practices that these dominant pictures supported. In all, Black women's participation in crafting a perpetually ever-changing African-American culture fostered distinctively Black and women-centered worldviews. Black women's participation in constructing African-American culture altogether Black

settings and therefore the distinctive views gained from their outsider-within placement in domestic work give the fabric scenery for a novel Black women's position. Once armed with cultural beliefs honed in Black civil society, several Black girls who found they doing domestic work typically developed distinct views of the contradictions between the dominant group's actions and ideologies. Moreover, they typically shared their ideas with different AfricanAmerican girls.

Domestic Violence: Home violence is a sample of abusive behavior wherein a man or woman uses coercion, deception, harassment, humiliation, manipulation, and/or force to establish or keep vigor and control over his or her intimate companion. Fiscal, emotional, psycho- logical, physical, sexual, and verbal procedures are used by perpetrators to control and obtain vigor over their companions. Domestic violence crosses ethnic, racial, age, country wide origin, sexual orientation, religious, and socio-financial lines. Nearly all of victims of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships are women. One out of every three adult ladies experiences at least one physical assault by means of an intimate partner in the course of maturity. In recent years; the definition of home violence has elevated to comprise different forms of violence, such because the abuse of elders, children, and siblings. The Centers for disorder manipulate and Prevention (CDC) has redefined the time period —domestic violencell and makes use of the optimum, more particular —intimate associate



violencell (IPV), which includes violence between identical sex companions and male victims of violence. On this paper, the time period domestic violence will be used interchangeably with the term intimate associate violence. African Americans experience domestic violence at a high rate in evaluation to their numerical representation in the populace. Even though domestic and sexual violence happens in all socio-fiscal classes, socio-economic negative aspects do increase the chance of the incidence of violent crimes. In intimate partner violence instances of espousal assault, vigor steadiness is a primary risk element. Amongst home violence circumstances, husbands who have (or suppose that they have got) much less power than their wives are more physically abusive toward them, given that of the perceived lack of vigor in other areas of their lives. This paper will center of attention on disorders of intimate associate violence for African American women in heterosexual relationships.

Linden Hills

Gloria Naylor's novel Linden Hills is an expression of the creator's largely-held (amongst African Americans) considerations regarding the ethical and religious sacrifice the African American group has made in its wrestle to overcome economic adversity and the legacy of desegregation. So deeply do these considerations run in Naylor's prose, that she went thus far with Linden Hills as to adapt Dante's Seven Circles of Hell from his Divine Comedy as a metaphor for the moral

descent of middle-category blacks along with her fictitious neighborhood valuable to the unconventional? In constructing a thesis on Naylor's book, for this reason, one could logically focus on the theme of repression as one of ethical decline. Racism obviously performs a prominent position in Linden Hills. Certainly, the neighborhood grew out of the frustrations persisted by means of blacks attempting to carve out there a part of the American Dream, as passed off in actual lifestyles in towns across the South. These communities grew to be the breeding floor for the development of more prosperous black communities as African Americans succeeded in hiking the socio monetary ladder. In Naylor's story, however, the regressive structure of the neighborhood in which her characters live reflects the aforementioned moral and religious sacrifices made in the title of material progress. At one point in her novel, Naylor has the Reverend Michael Hollis, whose own descent into alcoholism and spiritual ambivalence is a reflection of his transition from Baptism to Episcopalian makes the next comments to his parishioners.

Magic Realism in Mama Day

The first to use the expression magic realism was the German art critic Franz Roh in 1925. Roh applied this term to a group of painters working in Germany in the 1920s who rejected Expressionism and advocated a return to the representation of reality from a new perspective: through a sharp focus on ordinary objects, the painter uncovers the mystery hidden in them, making them

appear more real. This double-realization, although reward in different ethnic groups in the United States, is enormously distinguished of the African American trauma of dislocation and cultural transference. For the Africans transported to the new World as slaves, the double vision grew to be a technique of survival, of adapting to Western cultural systems while trying to preserve some of their African heritage. African American citizens had to create a hybrid reality, one which would accommodate their own experience inside mainstream the United States. Morrison and Naylor rent magic realist techniques in two Novels that handle the challenge of slavery in different approaches. Morrison's track of Solomon (1977) specializes in a Northern black neighborhood in the Nineteen Sixties which has been uprooted from the South and acculturated. The loss of cultural heritage has implied a near-erasure of the memory of the slavery prior; only by using journeying back to the South, going through that earlier and eventually searching for cultural origins in the African continent, can the protagonist, and with the aid of extension the whole group, recuperate a subculture and construct a future. Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988) also units in contrast an city Northern metropolis and a Southern rural community, however its innovative in that such rural community is an island populated with the aid of descendants of a freed African slave, who've saved their common African tradition and remained just about untouched through the Western American civilization. For this reason, fascinating comparative analyses may also be situated between the novels. In

keeping with Michael Awkward; the African American lady's literary lifestyle implies a revision of prior canonical texts as an act of authorial self definition in a historically overwhelmingly male expressive way of life. 2 African American female writers furnish remigrations of precursorial texts by black women (Zora Neale Hurston, for instance) and while undertake revisionary adaptations of Western genres to reflect black cultural imperatives. In Morrison's and Naylor's novels, there is a deliberate effort to rework Western common genres and canonical texts with each a literary and ethnical subversive goal. From a literary point of view, they interact in a revisionary project of Western narratives that undermines dominant myths, deconstructs assumptions about African Americans, and foregrounds oral way of life and distinctive African American literary practices. At the identical time, their presentation of substitute dimensions of truth conveys a prioritisation of ethnic specificity. On this context, the mode of magic realism, where multiple views are possible, is especially potent in growing hybrid texts and enabling a bigger fact than the one implicit in Western realistic narratives. For Bernard Bell, the Afro-American novel shouldn't be in basic terms a branch of the Euro-American novel but additionally a development of the Afro-American oral lifestyle.

Mama Day thematic perception

Magic realist procedures help Naylor create a global that lures the reader into its depths



forcing him/her to impeach authorized methods of perceiving truth. An urban, sensible discourse set in the big apple enters into conflict with an archetypal, legendary discourse that grants the cosmology of Willow Springs, unfolding a dialogical stumble upon between two cultures, American and African. A combination of genres and narrative conventions characteristic of special literary traditions produces a mosaic that features as a revision of traditional narratives. Storytelling, oral lifestyle and folklore practices occupy a predominant function, conforming to anthropological magic realism as it has been outlined on this thesis. The slippage between two codes of fact, the typical and the supernatural, implies the crossing of more than one boundaries, between the non-secular and the material, animate and inanimate, existence and dying, nature and science and eventually between reality and fable.

Bailey café

Gloria Naylor has this writing variety that is particularly vocal. It is as if she's not an writer telling you these out of the ordinary studies, it is the very characters themselves who prolong themselves by means of time, web page and reality to face earlier than you and share the history of their lives. And these people had ruff, real, difficult, struggling, rough lives. Bailey's Cafe will not be stated to exist on "skid row" per se however I want to say it is. It's the usual focal point for the whole novel. It can be the place where every person you are going to

meet visits and this is the place they inform their reports. The studies are so connected. They all work collectively so good for the great of the entire novel. There's a narrator of varieties who publications us by means of the introductions of the buyers of Bailey's Cafe. Each person is from somewhere and has some private event that has brought them to this situation. I would not say it's a location of cure but a location where they can think free to be themselves something that interpretation could also be. It's very pleasing meeting all these folks and studying of what brought them to this position so far from dwelling. Each and every story is exceptional within the telling, the voice and even within the form. Oftentimes Ms Naylor becomes very poetic and even symbolist. Repeatedly, the writing is philosophical, regularly lyrical and generally simply simple just right story told right. This booklet has it all. Stirrings of the guts, sympathy, disappointment, anger, resignation and numerous humour. Though full of photograph memories of prostitutes, drug addicts, and criminals this book used to be really well written. The café acts as a kind of emotional limbo, possibly even a Christ-like situation of redemption. The thought is interesting, and the reviews heartbreaking rather than horrifying.

Although an ornate and symbolic plot structure can also be normal to Bailey's Café, most critics have agreed that on this novel Naylor has effectually integrated type and content material. Both the ingenious live performance framework and the richly symbolic atmosphere were judged to be



successful; a long way from getting into the best way of her characters, the devices permit them to reveal themselves in all of their complexity. Most reviewers therefore recollect Bailey's Café to be each a showcase for the author's powers of invention and a triumph of Magical Realism. Furthermore, within the conclusion of the novel, many critics have discovered a transformation in tone from Naylor's earlier works, which supplied little hope to African American citizens (who were visible as victims of the white establishment) and even less to black women (who had been proven bound with the aid of sexism as good as by way of racism). In Bailey's Café, in distinction, Naylor uses the sufferings of her characters as a foundation for an affirmation of life and the possibility of spiritual transcendence.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore how women leaders in HE construct SOC and spirituality as resources in the workplace. Bearing in mind its limitations, the study incorporates a small context-specific sample, restricting any generalisation claims, yet provides a rich emic perspective on the subject matter. Findings are presented from a specific theoretical stance incorporating SOC and spirituality as a hermeneutic framework for working with the data, leaving open the possibility of different interpretations from different perspectives. This study provides an emerging psycho-spiritual perspective to well-being highlighting the centrality of

meaningfulness as a motivational and relational construct. Well-being interventions should promote the value of workplace spirituality by enabling women to develop meaningful self, other, task, and trans-personal relations in the work setting, which would enhance women leaders' resourcefulness and ability to address stressful HE challenges, enriching their leadership capacity to the benefit of others. This would contribute to the discourse on 'what comprises strong leadership characteristics and practice in HE' for women leaders who currently lack critical mass in senior occupational levels. Sensitising women to meaningfulness in their work and personal lives will similarly enhance both their SOC and spirituality. In terms of future research, this SOC – meaningfulness – spirituality relationship and its direction may benefit from further exploration. More gender-based research is also needed to establish whether the relational and motivational components of meaningfulness resemble the experiences of women leaders based outside the HE sector.

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