

**THE PSYCHIATRY OF
VULNERABILITY
REFLECTIONS ON
IDENTITY, DELUSION,
BURNOUT AND
RECOVERY**

**HOW TO PLAN AN
ELECTIVE IN THE USA**

**FINDING YOUR PLACE
AS A DOCTOR**

**STORY TELLING AND
PSYCHIATRY**

FuturePsych

**RCPsych Magazine for Medical Students
and Foundation Doctors**

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Above: Arif Riyanto via Unsplash. Cover: Joeyy Lee via Unsplash.

TRAPPED IN THE GREY ZONE: UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Priya Sharma was thriving at her dream company in Dubai when her parents asked her to relocate to India for marriage. She returned to a small town hoping for work that would satisfy her potential, but years have gone by and she still hasn't found a stable job. She tutors two or three children – far from what she had in Dubai. Her potential feels wasted, and so does her self-esteem. Priya's story is not unique—it mirrors the plight of countless women trapped in the grey area of underemployment, where unfulfilled potential takes a silent toll on mental well-being.

The term 'underemployment' was first used early in the 19th Century when economists began to distinguish between sufficient and inadequate employment. It then described a state of low-skill and low-pay, but today underemployment refers to the mismatch between the skill level of current work and potential. This problem has been found to target highly-skilled women in jobs that do not fulfil their potential from the education they have, leading to unhappiness.

Research has focused on the negative impact of unemployment on wellbeing, overlooking underemployment, especially in women. Our quantitative research involving 126 women in India found underemployment can have even more profound impact on wellbeing than unemployment. We used WEMWBS-14 to assess wellbeing and three assessments of underemployment, including the Subjective Assessment of Underemployment (SAU). As subjective underemployment increased, wellbeing decreased. The correlation value of -0.4 showed a negative moderately linear relationship. Findings across subgroups were striking. Underemployed women reported 5% poorer wellbeing compared to unemployed women and 24% poorer wellbeing compared to sufficiently employed women. Alarming, two thirds of underemployed women reported poor wellbeing.

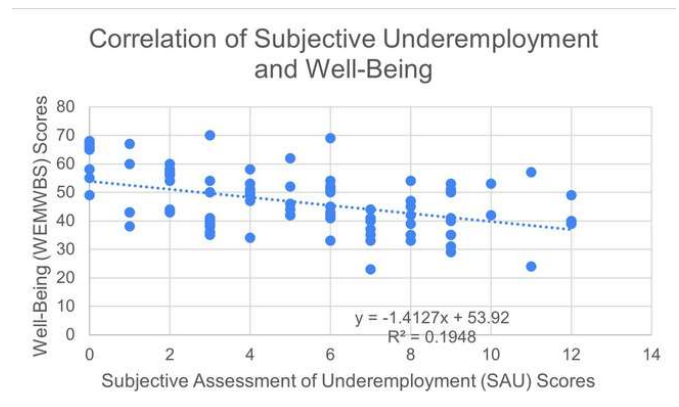
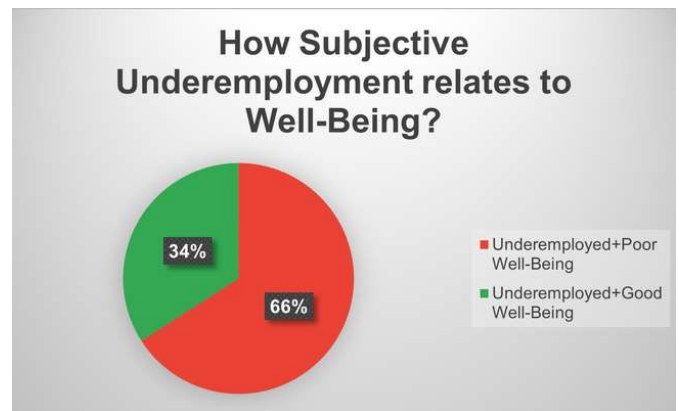
Psychiatry offers critical support in mitigating the harmful consequences of underemployment. These findings highlight the importance of assessing employment quality, not merely employment status. Mental health screening should include questions assessing job satisfaction and skill underutilization. Psychiatrists and Medical Students can advocate for workplace interventions to help develop a supportive and inclusive workplace community. By recognising underemployment as not only an economic problem but also a psychological one, we can restore a sense of purpose to countless women worldwide.

AAYUSHI DUBEY

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT
WEST BENGAL, INDIA

DR KIRAN PINDIPROLU

CONSULTANT PSYCHIATRIST
SHSC NHS TRUST



Top and centre: supplied by authors. Below: Aayushi Dubey.



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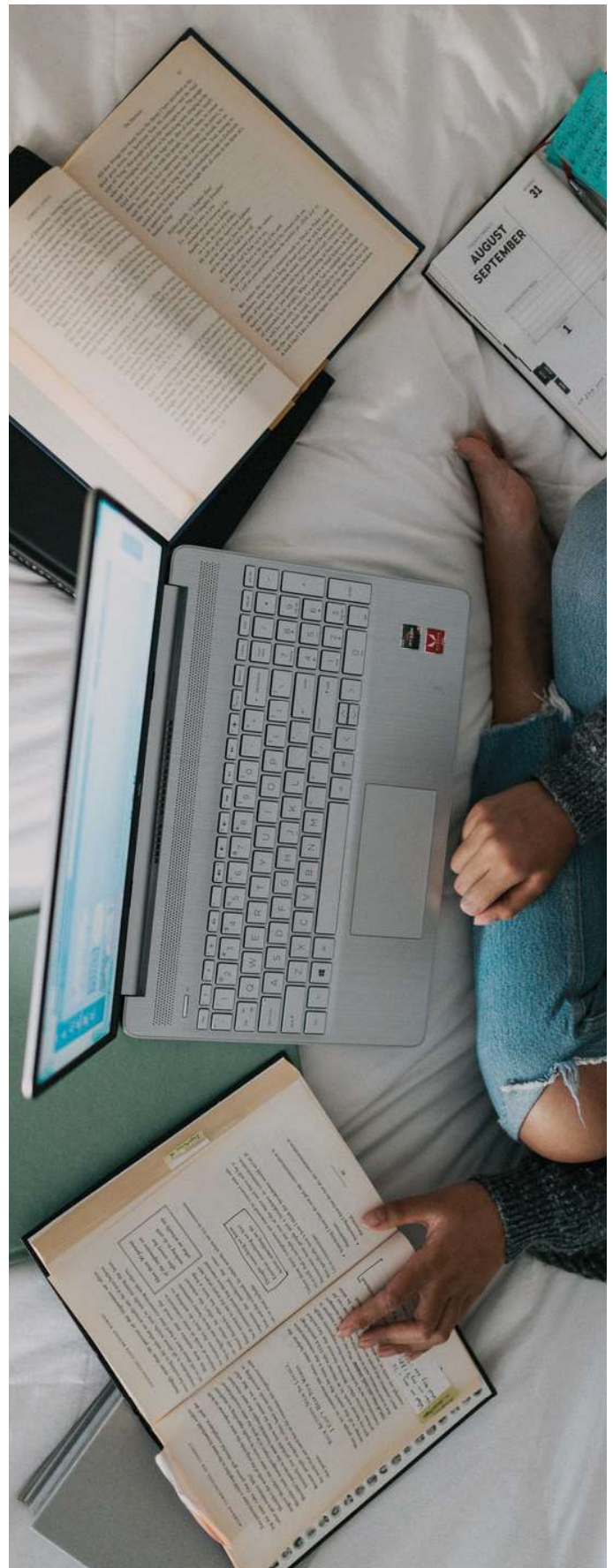
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