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The role of the happiness philosophy and core self-evaluations in defining job satisfaction as seen by the self and the significant other

Abstract

Our paper analyses sources of job satisfaction. A cross-sectional study in two variants: an online questionnaire ($n=642$) and its paper version ($n=635$), were used to measure the impact of core self-evaluations, hedonism and eudaimonism on job satisfaction. To strengthen the dependent variable (job satisfaction) measurement, two sources for this data were used: the target person's self-assessment and his or her significant other's evaluation. The results show that the significant other's assessment can be a valuable source of information on the target person's job satisfaction. On top of that, hierarchical regression has shown that both happiness philosophies: eudaimonism and hedonism have predictive power over the assessment of job satisfaction based on core self-evaluations.

Keywords

job satisfaction, core self-evaluations, hedonism, eudaimonism, single source bias

Streszczenie

Bieżący artykuł bada źródła satysfakcji z pracy. Wieloźródłowe badanie zostało przeprowadzone w dwóch formach: jako kwestionariusz online ($n=642$) i jako kwestionariusz papierowy ($n=635$). Żeby ujednoznaczyć pomiar zmiennej zależnej (zadowolenie z pracy), wykorzystano dwa źródła jej pomiaru: samoocena badanej osoby oraz ocena przez ważną inną osobę. Wyniki pokazują, iż ocena przez bliską osobę może być wartościowym źródłem informacji o samoocenie badanej osoby. Dodatkowo w ramach hierarchicznej analizy regresji wykazano, iż obie formy filozofii szczęścia: eudaimonizm i hedonizm pozwalają na przewidywanie satysfakcji z pracy ponad przewidywanie oparte o podstawowe samowartościowanie.

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Słowa kluczowe

zadowolenie z pracy, podstawowe samowartościowanie, hedonizm, eudajmonizm, problem jednoźródłowości danych.

Introduction

Looking at the positive side of human behavior becomes increasingly important among psychologists (Ryff, 1989; Czapiński, 2004; Lyubomirsky, 2014). The same tendency can be observed in applied aspects of psychology, namely in work psychology (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000; Srivastava, Locke, Judge, & Adams, 2010). Our paper is in line with this tendency, focusing on the positive side of work. Although one might argue that focusing on job satisfaction is not new (see for example Locke, 1976; Spector, 1997) it has been drawing less attention until recently. Our main focus lies in the positive side as captured by job satisfaction. This construct describes the general evaluation a person has about his or her job (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951). There are many ways in which job satisfaction can be viewed. Zalewska (2003) indicates two major distinctions in satisfaction measurement: component-based and holistic job evaluations. The first type consists of evaluations of different specific work areas (like coworkers, workplace, wages etc.). Satisfaction for such domains is measured separately. It is afterwards added up to receive a general score. The problem with such an approach, according to Zalewska (2003), is that the average satisfaction with specific areas may not give the same result as the general, or holistic, evaluation (see also Scarpello & Campbell, 1983). Therefore, we rely on a holistic approach to job satisfaction.

It can be argued that the only source for data on satisfaction can be the self-report. Since the pioneering Wundt studies, psychology has relied on introspection, especially for the measurement of internal states and processes. Besides this method's many positive aspects, like direct access to a subject's thoughts and feelings, it also has some drawbacks. The biggest one is its dependence on many ostensibly unimportant factors, like weather for example (see Schwarz & Clore, 1983). To resolve this issue, we proposed a compensatory measurement approach to job satisfaction. Relying on the assumption that the job situation is strongly related to the home situation (Kinnunen, Feldt, Mauno, & Rantanen, 2010; Allen et al., 2012), which in turn usually involves communication about one's work (Green, Bull Schaefer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2011; Wayne, Casper, Matthews, & Allen, 2013; Hahn & Dormann, 2013), we adapted a measure of individual job satisfaction. The idea is that the same set of questions is answered by both the target person and his or her significant other. In this way we wanted to see to what extent the

self-reports on job satisfaction can be confirmed by an interpersonally close, yet external source. The comparison of both sources of job satisfaction measurement will be presented in the results section.

Even if we are able to measure job satisfaction correctly, we are not sure yet what the source of it is. Some researchers claim that work environment design is the key factor (Herzberg, 1973; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Although those theories have gathered support over the years (see for example Fried & Ferris, 1987; Oldham & Hackman, 2010), they do not take into account individual differences. To put it simply, such environmental theories, called *situational theories*, state that no matter who you are any job can be improved to suit you. Although this promise sounds nice, it relies on the notion that every person desires a perfect job in which he or she can excel, which is called *high growth need* (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). It means that each person should want to grow from their work, to actually benefit from an enriched work environment. But then the question appears to which extent it is applicable to any given person. An interesting approach to solve this problem can be found within the interpersonal differences paradigm. For example, Judge and his colleagues (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998) suggest that the four core psychological variables, namely self-esteem, (internal) locus of control, positive emotionality and generalized self-efficacy, can be the individual variables which are prerequisites for job satisfaction. People with high levels of those traits are supposed to be able to better utilize their assets within their work environments, thus being able to grow. Such a group of traits (called *Core Self-Evaluations*; Judge & Bono, 2001) seems to be a good predictor of job satisfaction, being to a great extent independent of environmental work-related factors (but see Srivastava et al., 2010; McNall, Masuda, Shanock, & Nicklin, 2011; Wu & Griffin, 2012).

If we rely on the notion that core self-evaluations do allow for job satisfaction prediction (Srivastava et al., 2010; Walczak, 2014), an important question arises: What could be the sources of different levels of this meta-trait among individuals? A promising explanation lies within the recently reappearing discussion on two distinct happiness sources – hedonistic and eudaimonic (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Huta & Ryan, 2010). The first one relates to happiness derived from pleasurable activities, whereas the second one is more concentrated on happiness derived from realizing ambitious goals. Despite the fact that both areas can be interlinked (Dolan, 2014), they offer different paths to job satisfaction. A person preferring pursuit of pleasure – that is, of a more hedonistic inclination, will rather minimize the amount of time and effort spent on work, decreasing work related dissatisfaction, and maximizing pleasures from off-work activity. On the other hand, a person preferring the eudaimonic path to happiness will maximize the effort and time spent at work (as it is a purposeful activity) to be able to reach more ambi-

tious goals (also at work). Such activities will increase the general happiness eudaemonists derive from work. Of course there can be some contradictory examples to the aforementioned situations. Some people may simply enjoy their work (in a purely pleasurable way – pro golfers for example), which would allow them to spend more time at work while following the hedonist's path. On the other hand, some eudaemonists may not see their work as meaningful enough, forcing them to search for ambitious goals outside of work. Such cases may be rare, however, and would probably not undermine the general assumption that a greater belief in the Eudaimonic philosophy jointly with higher core self-evaluations would be positively related to job satisfaction. In the same way, people considering themselves hedonists would probably not derive satisfaction from work and would also not be so high in core self-evaluation, which translates to a negative relation – the more a person seeks pleasures in life, the less he or she would be happy with a typical job.

To summarize, we propose the following set of assumptions.

H₁: The job satisfaction reports provided by significant others will be highly consistent with self-reported job satisfaction.

H₂: People with higher levels of Core Self-Evaluations will be more satisfied with their job.

H₃: The higher the level of purpose seeking (understood as a preference for Eudaimonism), the greater the satisfaction with one's job.

H₄: The higher the level of pleasure seeking (understood as a preference for Hedonism), the lower the satisfaction with one's job.

H₅: Core Self-Evaluations as a higher-order variable will have greater predictive power for Job Satisfaction, compared to Happiness Philosophy.

Materials and Methods

To measure the mutual impact of the happiness philosophy and core self-evaluations on job satisfaction, both judged individually and by a significant other, we designed a multi-source cross-sectional study.

Participants

Working people were invited to fill in an online questionnaire ($n=642$) or were handed a paper version of that questionnaire ($n=635$) by multiple confederates, for a total sample of $N=1277$. There were $n=718$ women in the study, $n=549$ men, and $n=10$ people did not indicate their gender. A large portion (57%) of respondents had a higher education diploma. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 70 years ($M = 33.3$, $Sd = 10.2$), and the

average length of employment was $M = 11.4$ years ($Sd = 10.23$). Average length of employment in the current organization was $M = 7.0$; $Sd = 7.8$ years.

Measures

Job satisfaction in the project is understood as the cognitive measure of general positive job evaluation. It was measured by a short scale proposed by Judge and others (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003), which is, in turn, an adaptation of Brayfield & Rothe's scale (1951). The measure comprises five items, similar to *I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job*. The scale was adapted to Polish for two purposes: a direct adaptation was the primary measure for the dependent variable. An additional modification was made to use the scale with the target persons' significant others. Questions were adjusted for this purpose – specific phrasing is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Items phrasing in the adaptations of Brief Job Satisfaction Scale (Judge et al., 2003). (R) indicates reverse-coded questions.

Original	Polish version	Questions for important other
I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job.	Czuję się dość zadowolony/a z mojej obecnej pracy.	Czy czuje się dość zadowolony/a z obecnej pracy?
Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.	Przez większość dni jestem entuzjastycznie nastawiony/a do mojej pracy.	Czy przez większość dni jest entuzjastycznie nastawiony/a do pracy?
Each day of work seems like it will never end. (R)	Każdy dzień w pracy wydaje się nie mieć końca. (R)	Czy wszystkie dni w pracy wydają się z jego/jej relacji strasznie dłużyć? (R)
I find real enjoyment in my work.	Moja praca sprawia mi prawdziwą przyjemność.	Czy jego/jej praca sprawia mu/jej prawdziwą przyjemność?
I consider my job rather unpleasant. (R)	Uważam, że moja praca jest raczej nieprzyjemna. (R)	Czy uważa, że jego/jej praca jest raczej nieprzyjemna? (R)

Each item was scored using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scales have a high level of internal consistency, both in the direct phrasing (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$), and in the significant other version (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$).

Happiness Philosophy was measured with the HEMA scale (Huta & Ryan, 2010), in the Polish adaptation by Bujacz et al. (Bujacz, Vittersø, Huta, & Kaczmarek, 2014).

The Core Self-Evaluations scale was measured using CSE-scale (Judge et al., 2003), in the Polish adaptation by Walczak (2014).

Procedure

Participants received a link, either from the author, or from the author's confederate, by means of e-mail or a social network portal. After clicking on the link they were directed to a webpage (on Google Docs platform) where they responded to the survey questions.

A subset of participants (particularly those with limited Internet access) received a paper questionnaire at work to be filled in at their convenience, and returned it to the person from whom they had received it. Afterwards, all data was input to statistical software and analyzed.

Results

In the first step both versions (pen & paper and online) were compared. For both versions of the dependent variable and for the CSE-scale, there were no significant differences (Mann-Whitney’s U-Test; $p>0.05$). There appeared, however, differences in the HEMA measure, where both Hedonism and Eudaimonism were evaluated higher in the Internet sample (Mann-Whitney’s U-Test; $p<0.01$). This required using the questionnaire form as a controlled variable in the subsequent analyses.

A major problem in organizational research is the reliance on single source data – mostly self-reports. We presented a partial solution to this problem. To see to which extent the self-evaluation of job satisfaction can be evaluated by a significant other (H_1), a correlation analysis of self and other satisfaction measure was conducted. Results are presented in the Table below.

Table 2

Correlations between self-assessed job satisfaction and job-satisfaction assessed by significant other

Significant other	Sample(n)	Correlation with one’s own job satisfaction evaluation (R)
Partner	645	0.7828
Sibling	95	0.6836
Parent	105	0.7512
Friend	320	0.7668

The above results show high coherence between the self and the significant other’s job satisfaction evaluation, which confirms H_1 .

To assess the happiness philosophy’s predictive power over core self-evaluation on job satisfaction (H_2 - H_5), after taking into account a significant other’s evaluation, we performed a hierarchical regression analysis. As a consequence of possible differences between the questionnaire forms, the sample was divided into two groups, according to the filling-in way (online and pen & paper). Then, as the first step, the Significant Other measure of job satisfaction was put into the model, then Core Self-Evaluations (CSES), and lastly, the Eudaimonism and the Hedonism measures (Hema_e and Hema_h). Results are presented in the Tables below.

Table 3

Hierarchical regression models

Form	Model	R	R ²	Corr. R ²	Std. error	Change statistics				
						R ² change	F	df1	df2	F sig.
Pen & Paper	1 ^a	.765	.585	.585	2.16	.585	848.189	1	601	.000
	2 ^b	.790	.625	.623	2.06	.039	62.829	1	600	.000
	3 ^c	.793	.629	.627	2.05	.004	7.184	1	599	.008
	4 ^d	.793	.629	.627	2.05	.000	.584	1	598	.445
Online	1 ^a	.792	.627	.627	2.62	.627	1076.838	1	640	.000
	2 ^b	.797	.635	.634	2.60	.008	13.772	1	639	.000
	3 ^c	.799	.638	.636	2.59	.003	4.548	1	638	.033
	4 ^d	.800	.640	.638	2.58	.003	4.726	1	637	.030

a. Predictors: Job Satisfaction by Significant Other

b. Predictors: Job Satisfaction by Significant Other, CSES

c. Predictors: Job Satisfaction by Significant Other, CSES, HEMA_e

d. Predictors: Job Satisfaction by Significant Other, CSES, HEMA_e, HEMA_h

It is to be noted from the regression analysis that Core Self-Evaluations and Eudaimonism significantly increase the model's predictive capabilities over job satisfaction as perceived by a significant other. On top of that, in the online sample Hedonism also additionally affects job satisfaction prediction.

Table 4

Regression coefficients

Dependent variable	Non std		Std	t	Sign.	Correlations			
	β	Std. error	β			Zero-order	Partial	Semi-partial	
Pen & Paper	(Constant)	1.733	.650		2.665	.008			
	JobSatisf.-Other	.608	.028	.639	21.883	.000	.765	.667	.545
	CSES	.097	.015	.195	6.391	.000	.538	.253	.159
	HEMA_e	.117	.043	.089	2.737	.006	.418	.111	.068
	HEMA_h	-.019	.025	-.022	-.764	.445	.081	-.031	-.019
Online	(Constant)	1.839	.724		2.541	.011			
	JobSatisf.-Other	.742	.029	.724	25.549	.000	.792	.711	.607
	CSES	.049	.017	.081	2.781	.006	.486	.110	.066
	HEMA_e	.138	.047	.093	2.951	.003	.372	.116	.070
	HEMA_h	-.060	.027	-.061	-2.174	.030	.118	-.086	-.052

The above Table suggests that all parameters (with the exception of the Hedonism measure) are significant and positive. Hedonism has a negative relation to Job Satisfaction, but only in the online sample is this relation significant. The result is even more impor-

tant in that the analysis was made for self-assessed job satisfaction on top of satisfaction as assessed by a significant other.

To better capture the explanatory power of individual variables, we performed a second regression analysis, without subtracting the other-assessed satisfaction.

Table 5

Unadjusted regression models

Form	Model	R	R ²	Corr. R ²	Std. error	Change statistics				
						R ² chng	F	df1	df2	F sig.
Pen & Paper	1 ^a	.535	.286	.285	2.83	.286	245.514	1	613	.000
	2 ^b	.562	.316	.314	2.77	.030	27.087	1	612	.000
	3 ^c	.571	.325	.322	2.76	.009	8.371	1	611	.004
Online	1 ^a	.486	.236	.235	3.76	.236	197.532	1	640	.000
	2 ^b	.516	.267	.264	3.68	.031	26.777	1	639	.000
	3 ^c	.521	.272	.268	3.67	.005	4.560	1	638	.033

a. Predictors: CSES

b. Predictors: CSES, HEMA_e

c. Predictors: CSES, HEMA_e, HEMA_h

The second regression analysis shows that Core Self-Evaluations can explain between 24 and 29 percent of Job Satisfaction. Additionally, the Happiness Philosophy – Eudaimonism, as measured by HEMA_e, can explain an additional 3% of variance. Hedonism (HEMA_h) adds between 0.5 and one percent of explanatory power on top.

Discussion

Our study's most important notion is that there is a close significant relation between self-reported and a significant other-reported job satisfaction. Regardless of the person reporting about his or her close one, we find a high match between those two parallel indicators. It can therefore be helpful for some studies, especially for those with single source data, to use the other-reported job satisfaction evaluation as a replacement for the self-reported indicator. It seems especially helpful when a study has multiple self-reported measures, because the risk of single-source bias is the highest then. Using the Other-reported Job Satisfaction measure would help to mitigate this risk.

Additionally, the results show clearly that both the Core Self-Evaluations and Happiness Philosophy – Eudaimonia are important Job Satisfaction predictors.. This seems especially meaningful when considering that both indicators provide explanatory power above that of Other-reported Job Satisfaction. This additional explanatory power can be

understood as directly accessing the internal satisfaction sources, namely those that are not reflected in daily direct person-to-person communication.

Having this in mind, it is important to note the relatively greater predictive power of Core Self-Evaluations as compared with Happiness Philosophy. The main reason for this may be the broader CSE scope. By design they encompass Self-Esteem, Locus of Control, Positive Affectivity, and Generalized Self-Efficacy. As such, this construct is bound to relate to both job and life satisfaction, as many studies show (Judge et al., 1998; Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005). Life philosophy is a different type of construct. Especially in the form proposed by Huta & Ryan (2010), where it relates more to preferred activities types, rather than to essential personal traits. It may be based on the same roots, but from a different side. Therefore, although less powerful, it remains a significant predictor of job satisfaction.

An interesting finding is the difference in observed explanatory power of different happiness philosophies between Internet-based and offline samples. When analysed as an on-top impact, the Hedonist Philosophy seems to have the hypothesized impact in the online sample only. One possible reason for this may be the difference of age between the samples (Mann-Whitney's U-test; $Z=10.8$; $p<0.01$). The Internet sample is generally younger ($M=30.6$ year versus $M=36.2$ in the offline sample) and therefore may be pleasure seeking to a greater extent than their older colleagues. This appears to be in fact the case – an ad hoc regression analysis with the dependent variable *hedonism* (as measured with the HEMA-h subscale) and predictor variable *age* yields a significant result. $F(1/1235)=28.6$; $p<0.01$; Corrected $R^2=0.022$; Standardized $\beta=-0.15$. For the whole sample it means that the higher the age, the less people seek pleasures in their life. All in all, the Eudaimonist Philosophy relates stronger to the perceived job satisfaction, despite the fact that it is not about pleasure per se.

To sum up – Our study proved all the assumed hypotheses. Job satisfaction can be successfully assessed by significant others, which may be helpful in future single-source studies. On top of that both Core Self-Evaluations and Happiness Philosophy (especially Eudaimonist) allow for the prediction of Job Satisfaction.

Limitations

Our study's biggest limitation is its cross-sectional design. As the main aim of the study was to find the individual differences' relation to job satisfaction, the company type and position in hierarchy effects were not controlled. This resulted with greater variance of variables on one hand, but may also have covered the impact of company policies.

An additional bias is the relatively young population studied. As it was shown in the discussion, age plays a role at least in the hedonism philosophy endorsement. A more representative sample could still diminish this variable's impact.

The last important limitation, which is only partially addressed, is the single-source measurement of most variables in the study (with the sole exception being the dependent variable). It might have led to an inflated correlation between the variables, related to the common method bias. Although the Harman's Single Factor test proved to be negative, one must not exclude that the results might have been inflated.

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