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Examining Gender and Enjoyment: Do They Predict Job Satisfaction and Well-Being?

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Examining Gender and Enjoyment: Do they Predict Job Satisfaction and Well-being?

Abstract

Within organizations, happiness of employees is of key importance, and researchers have theorized that work happiness is comprised of positive well-being and job satisfaction (SgROI, 2015; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). However, women experience the workplace differently than their male counterparts (Clark, 1997). In the present study, we examine how female leaders and non-leaders (compared to male leaders and non-leaders), experience well-being and job satisfaction, as well as how work enjoyment predicts well-being and job satisfaction. Participants (286 women and 255 men) completed a demographic measure, the Subjective Vitality Scale (Ryan & Frederick, 1997), the Job Satisfaction Survey (Macdonald & McIntyre, 1997) and the ENJOY (Davidson, 2018). Results showed that being in a leadership position, not gender, determined well-being and job satisfaction with those in leadership positions experiencing higher levels of both variables. For women, number of individuals supervised and leadership experience did not predict well-being or job satisfaction. Last, for women, the work enjoyment variables of pleasure, relatedness and competence predicted well-being and job satisfaction. Results were similar for male participants. Unlike earlier research, the results of the present study found more similarities than differences between women and men. Differences in well-being and satisfaction were more influenced by whether one was in a managerial role than by gender. Future research would do well to focus on exploration and understanding of how female leaders versus non-leaders experience the workplace.

Keywords: gender, well-being, job satisfaction, enjoyment, leadership

Introduction

Arguably, the “holy grail” within the organizational context is happiness. According to a recent systematic review, happiness leads to greater career success (Walsh, Boehm, Lyubomirsky, 2018) with others suggesting that the relationship between happiness and workplace attitudes and behaviors is causal (Layous, 2018). To provide specific examples, happy employees are associated with better performance (Bellet, De Neve, & Ward, 2020), greater productivity (Mazuki et al., 2017; Sgroi, 2015), increased sales (Gil, Kim, & Koo, 2017), task accuracy (Achor, 2011), and even higher stock prices (Cooper, 2012). Additionally, having happy employees relates to improved customer satisfaction, and higher peer evaluations (Gil et al., 2017). Happy employees are also more likely to provide recommendations for other employees (Gil et al., 2017). Conversely, organizations with unhappy employees and greater stress have higher healthcare expenditures (Azagba & Sharaf, 2011) as well as higher rates of absenteeism, accidents, and errors (Seppala & Cameron, 2015). Finally, unhappy employees often seek different employment, resulting in turnover and retention, which is costly to an organization (Harter & Adkins, 2017). Given that the rate that employees are voluntarily leaving their current jobs is exceedingly high (Zimmerman, 2018) and the resources needed to replace employees is costly and time-consuming, it is of no surprise that happy employees are an invaluable asset.

Two of the key components to being a “happy” employee are to have a positive well-being (i.e., overall effectiveness of an individual’s psychological functioning) and high levels of job satisfaction (i.e., an internal state one experiences when evaluating their work; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). The extent to which one has positive well-being or high levels of job satisfaction is clearly contingent upon many job factors and individual differences (Alromaihi et al., 2017; Brown & Peterson, 1993).

One individual difference related to well-being and job satisfaction is gender. In fact, decades ago, researchers demonstrated that there are significant gender differences regarding job satisfaction with women reporting higher levels compared to their male counterparts (Bokemeier & Lacy, 1987;

Clark, 1997). Later work also found that gender had differential effects when related to job satisfaction as well as psychological distress, which is arguably the inverse to well-being (Bond, Punnett, Pyle, Cazeca, & Manuela Cooperman, 2004). Some theorize that such differences are due to varying degrees of expectations and values; that is, men and women simply have different expectations and values (Suki & Suki, 2011).

In addition to gender, another consideration is leadership position characteristics (i.e., leadership position, number of years of experience within leadership, and number of individuals managed). In general, leaders' attitudes are shaped by factors related to the job and position (Jin et al., 2016). To be more specific, previous research has demonstrated that the number of subordinates is negatively related to job satisfaction (Hagerman et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2015). Similarly, evidence has indicated that years of experience correlate with satisfaction (Wong et al., 2015).

As a final individual difference, enjoyment also relates to well-being and job satisfaction is enjoyment. Isen & Reeve (2005) found that enjoyment is related to motivation and even work behavior; meanwhile, Graves et al (2012) results showed that enjoyment was related to well-being for a managerial sample. Although there is evidence that enjoyment is associated with well-being and job satisfaction, most work studies view enjoyment as a unidimensional construct. Indeed, Davidson (2018) posits that enjoyment is conceptualized with five dimensions: pleasure, relatedness, competence, challenge-improvement, and engagement. Consequently, there is a need to understand how the specific dimensions within enjoyment impact well-being and job satisfaction. Further, there is a need to ascertain the relationships between gender, enjoyment, well-being, and job satisfaction.

Understanding the multifaceted nature of enjoyment as well as gender differences and characteristics of the leadership position can assist practitioners in developing customized interventions to foster well-being and job satisfaction (Hagerman et al., 2016). With this foundation in mind, we revisit well-being and job satisfaction in a general sample of working women and men. More specifically, we

will compare variables of interest across women and men, as well as between women leaders and non-leaders to answer the following research questions.

- 1) Are there differences in job satisfaction and well-being between female leaders, male leaders, female non-leaders and male non-leaders?
- 2) For women in leadership positions, do the number of years in management and the number of people supervised predict job satisfaction and well-being?
- 3) Which dimensions within work enjoyment predict female and male job satisfaction and well-being?

Method

Participants

Participants were 286 women, ranging in age from 19 to 69 with a mean age of 33 years, and 255 men, ranging in age from 18 to 71 with a mean age of 32 years. One hundred fifty-eight women reported that they supervised others, and 122 were not supervisors. Of the female participants, 8.5% reported they had a high school education or less, 20.3% reported some college, 69.9% had an Associate's degree or higher degree, and 1.4% did not report their educational attainment. Female supervisors reported that they had been in a leadership position for an average of 9.72 years and supervised an average of 9.49 individuals. One hundred seventy-five men reported that they supervised others, and 77 were not supervisors (3 did not report). Of the male participants, 9.8% reported they had a high school education or less, 17.3% reported some college, 72.3% had an Associate's degree or higher degree, and .8% did not report their educational attainment. Male supervisors reported that they had been in a leadership position for an average of 2.39 years and supervised an average of 8.83 individuals.

Measures

Demographics. Participants completed a short demographic survey asking them to report their current age, gender, education level, whether they were a supervisor or not, how many years they had been a supervisor, and how many people they supervised.

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS: Macdonald and McIntyre, 1997). The JSS is a 10 item measure of overall job satisfaction. Items are responded to on a 5 point Likert scale, and all 10 items are summed to create a total job satisfaction score.

Subjective Vitality Scale (SVS: Ryan & Frederick, 1997). The SVS is 7 item measure of feelings of well-being and energy. All items on the SVS are averaged to create an overall well-being score. The SVS exhibits strong inter-item reliability and validity, as reported by Ryan & Frederick (1997). The SVS has been used as an outcome measure across domains including sports, exercise, and work.

The ENJOY Scale (Davidson, 2018). The ENJOY Scale is a general measure of enjoyment that can be used across domains, including work. The Scale has 25 items measuring 5 dimensions of enjoyment including: pleasure, relatedness, competence, challenge-improvement, and engagement. Items are responded to using a 7 point Likert scale with 1= and 7=. Each subscale is comprised of 5 items that are average to produce an overall score for each subscale. Davidson (2018) developed and validated the 25 item ENJOY and reported internal reliability estimates for all five subscales ranging from .87 to .94.

Procedure

Data were collected via an online survey that was posted on Amazon's MTurk data collection platform. Criteria were set requiring participants to be 18 years of age or older and currently working. Participants were paid for completing the survey.

Results

Examining differences in job satisfaction and well-being between female leaders, male leaders, female non-leaders and male non-leaders (Research Question 1)

A 2x2 ANOVA was performed to examine whether gender (male/female) and leadership position (yes/no) predicted well-being. The overall model predicting well-being was significant ($F(4, 535)=3.25$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.04$, observed power=.93). However, when the main and interaction effects of the independent variables were then examined, only the main effect of leadership position was significant, ($F(1,535)=13.10$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.02$, observed power=.95). Specifically, individuals in leadership positions had significantly higher well-being scores than those not in leadership positions.

A second 2x2 ANOVA was performed to examine the effect of gender and leadership role on overall job satisfaction. The overall model was significant ($F(4,535)=4.95$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.05$, observed power=.99). Subsequent review of main and interaction effects revealed that only the main effect of leadership position was significant, ($F(1,535)=26.72$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.05$, observed power=.99). Those in leadership positions had higher job satisfaction scores than those not in leadership positions. The mean scores for well-being and job satisfaction broken out by gender and leadership position are presented in Table 1.

Table 1:

Means and Standard Deviations for Wellbeing and Job Satisfaction Presented by Gender and Leadership Position

	Well-being	Job Satisfaction	Sign. Difference
Female	4.48 (1.50)	34.13 (12.05)	
Male	4.65 (1.31)	33.81 (11.31)	
In leadership position	4.75 (1.26) *	36.09 (10.49)**	* $p<.05$
Not in leadership position	4.27 (1.57)	30.80 (12.28)	** $p<.01$
a. Female-In Leadership	4.72 (1.30)	36.75 (10.36)	a > c, d
b. Male-In Leadership	4.79 (1.22)	35.45 (10.67)	b > c, d
c. Female-Not in Leadership	4.18 (1.68)	30.76 (13.05)	
d. Male-Not in Leadership	4.42 (1.38)	30.87 (11.03)	

For female leaders, do the number of years in management and the number of people supervised predict job satisfaction and well-being? (Research Question 2)

Two linear, multiple regression analyses were performed regressing years of supervisory experience and number of employees managed onto well-being (regression 1) and job satisfaction (regression 2) for female leaders. Neither regression model reached significance, indicating that neither years in a leadership position or the number of people supervised predicts well-being ($F(2,285)=.75$, ns) or job satisfaction ($F(2,285)=.24$, ns) in female leaders. Table 2 contains correlations among variables in these analyses. Tables 3 and 4 contain the regression models pertaining to the analyses.

Table 2:

Female Leaders: Correlations between job satisfaction, well-being, years of supervisory experience and number of employees supervised

	Job Satisfaction	Well-being	Years in Management	Number of People Supervised
Job Satisfaction	1.00			
Well-being	.66**	1.00		
Years of Supervisory Experience		-.03	1.00	
Number of Employees Supervised		-.07	-.01	1.00

** $p < .01$

Table 3:

Female Leaders: Years of supervisory experience and number of employees supervised regressed onto job satisfaction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	34.075	.741		46.01	.000
Yrs of Exp.	.004	.006	.041	.692	.49
Num. Supervised	.001	.019	.004	.073	.94

Table 4:

Female Leaders: Years of supervisory experience and number of employees supervised regressed onto well-being

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	4.511	.092		49.12	.000
Yrs of Exp.	.000	.001	-.030	-.51	.61
Num. Supervised	-.003	.002	-.066	-1.12	.27

Predicting female and male job satisfaction and well-being based on dimensions of enjoyment

(Research Question 3)

This analysis examined dimensions of enjoyment as predictors of job satisfaction and well-being. The sample was split into 4 groups: female leaders, female non-leaders, male leaders and male non-leaders, and two linear, multiple regressions were performed for each sub-group with the 5 enjoyment types entered as independent variables predicting well-being (regression 1) and job satisfaction (regression 2). Regression tables for each group are presented below in Tables 5-8.

Predicting well-being. For female leaders, the regression model was significant ($F(5,157)=21.44$, $p<.01$, $r\text{-square}=.41$) with the independent variable of pleasure ($t=3.59$, $p<.01$) reaching significance as an individual predictor. For male leaders, the regression model was significant ($F(5,169)=60.14$, $p<.01$, $r\text{-square}=.64$) with the independent variables of pleasure ($t=5.39$, $p<.01$) and competence ($t=3.71$, $p<.01$) reaching significance as positive individual predictors of well-being. For the male leaders group, engagement ($t=-2.32$, $p=.02$) was also a significant predictor of well-being, however it was a negative predictor. For female non-leaders, the regression model was significant ($F(5,121)=17.07$, $p<.01$, $r\text{-square}=.42$) with the independent variables of pleasure ($t=2.79$, $p<.01$) and relatedness ($t=2.94$, $p<.01$) reaching significance as individual predictors. For male non-leaders, the regression model was significant ($F(5,76)=10.43$, $p<.01$, $r\text{-square}=.42$) with only the independent variable of pleasure ($t=2.27$, $p<.01$) reaching significance as an individual predictor.

Predicting job satisfaction. For female leaders, the regression model was significant ($F(5,157)=47.76$, $p<.01$, $r\text{-square}=.61$) with the independent variables of pleasure ($t=6.49$, $p<.01$) and relatedness ($t=2.31$, $p<.05$) reaching significance as individual predictors. For male leaders, the regression model was significant ($F(5,169)=34.54$, $p<.01$, $r\text{-square}=.51$) with only the independent variable of pleasure ($t=6.42$, $p<.01$) reaching significance as an individual predictor. For female non-leaders, the regression model was significant ($F(5,121)=41.23$, $p<.01$, $r\text{-square}=.64$) with the

independent variables of relatedness ($t=4.39$, $p<.01$) and competence ($t=2.88$, $p<.01$) reaching significance as individual predictors. For male non-leaders, the regression model was significant ($F(5,76)=9.22$, $p<.01$, $r\text{-square}=.39$) with only the independent variable of relatedness ($t=2.23$, $p<.05$) reaching significance as an individual predictor.

Table 5:

Female Leaders: Enjoyment variables regressed onto well-being and job satisfaction

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
<u>DV: Well-Being</u>					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	1.96	.32		6.08	.000
Pleasure	.37	.10	.45	3.59	.001**
Relatedness	.17	.09	.21	1.84	.07
Competence	-.04	.10	-.04	-.39	.69
Challenge-Improvement	.027	.13	.03	.21	.83
Engagement	.04	.07	.05	.60	.55
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
<u>DV: Job Satisfaction</u>					

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	10.56	2.10		5.04	.000
Pleasure	4.36	.67	.66	6.49	.001**
Relatedness	1.39	.60	.21	2.31	.02*
Competence	-.55	.66	-.08	-.84	.40
Challenge-Improvement	-.54	.85	-.08	-.63	.53
Engagement	.79	.45	.12	1.76	.08

**p<.01 *p<.05

Table 6:

Male Leaders: Enjoyment variables regressed onto well-being and job satisfaction

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients			
<u>DV: Well-Being</u>					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	1.49	.23		6.50	.000
Pleasure	.34	.06	.43	5.39	.001**
Relatedness	.10	.07	.12	1.37	.17
Competence	.28	.07	.33	3.71	.001**
Challenge-Improvement	.04	.08	.05	.58	.56

Engagement	-.11	.05	-.12	-2.32	.02*
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
<u>DV: Job Satisfaction</u>					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	10.05	2.33		4.31	.000
Pleasure	4.18	.65	.59	6.42	.001**
Relatedness	.45	.72	.06	.62	.53
Competence	.38	.76	.05	.50	.62
Challenge-Improvement	.36	.77	.05	.46	.64
Engagement	-.13	.47	-.02	-.27	.79

** p<.01 * p<.05

Table 7:

Female Non-Leaders: Enjoyment variables regressed onto well-being and job satisfaction

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
<u>DV: Well-Being</u>					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	1.41	.37		3.78	.000

Pleasure	.37	.13	.42	2.79	.006**
Relatedness	.28	.10	.32	2.94	.004**
Competence	.17	.10	.18	1.65	.10
Challenge-Improvement	-.18	.14	-.20	-1.27	.21
Engagement	-.02	.09	-.02	-.20	.84
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
<u>DV: Job Satisfaction</u>					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	2.25	2.30		.98	.33
Pleasure	.66	.81	.10	.81	.42
Relatedness	2.56	.58	.38	4.39	.001**
Competence	1.81	.63	.25	2.88	.005**
Challenge-Improvement	1.58	.88	.22	1.80	.07
Engagement	-.40	.57	-.06	-.70	.48

**p<.01 *p<.05

Table 8:

Male Non-Leaders: Enjoyment variables regressed onto well-being and job satisfaction

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
<u>DV: Well-Being</u>					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	1.63	.44		3.75	.000
Pleasure	.29	.13	.34	2.27	.03*
Relatedness	.22	.12	.23	1.83	.07
Competence	.21	.14	.24	1.47	.15
Challenge-Improvement	.03	.15	.03	.20	.85
Engagement	-.15	.10	-.17	-1.43	.16
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
<u>DV: Job Satisfaction</u>					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	8.56	3.56		2.41	.02
Pleasure	1.61	1.04	.24	1.55	.13
Relatedness	2.18	.98	.29	2.23	.03*
Competence	.82	1.17	.12	.70	.48

Challenge-Improvement	.69	1.22	.10	.56	.58
Engagement	-.22	.84	-.03	-.27	.79

** p<.01 * p<.05

Discussion

In this project, we re-examined well-being and job satisfaction in a general sample of working women and men with particular importance and interest placed on how women in today's workforce experience well-being and satisfaction related to their employment situation. Even more specifically, we wished to examine how being in a leadership versus a non-leadership role might influence well-being and job satisfaction and whether or not years of experience and number of people supervised might impact work perceptions. Last, the project used a modern, multi-dimensional measure of enjoyment to see how elements of enjoyment predict perceptions of work outcomes and whether those might differ by gender.

Compared to earlier studies (Clark, 1997; Bond, Punnett, Pyle, Cazeca, & Manuela Cooperman, 2004; Suki & Suki, 2011) outcomes of the present study found that there were few overall gender differences in perceptions of well-being and job satisfaction. The most important determinant of well-being and job satisfaction for both genders was whether or not one was in a leadership role. It also did not seem to matter how long one had been a leader or the number of individuals supervised. What the results indicated was that being in a leadership role at work was associated with higher self-reported well-being and greater job satisfaction. This finding appears to be in partial contrast to findings reported by Nyberg, Leineweber & Hanson (2015) in a study of Swedish workers where they found that while managers seemed to have higher levels of job satisfaction, the personal well-being of female managers suffered. The present study's results may vary from Nyberg et al. due to cultural differences or it may be

that the present study is more reflective of a general population rather than a single organization. On the other hand, a Pew Research Center study on American workers done in 2014 did find that managers were more satisfied at home and at work, as well as being happier in general when compared to employees not in management or leadership positions (Morin, 2014). Why might this be so? Morin alludes to the answer being that managers have higher job commitment, higher self-efficacy about their work, believe they are treated fairly and are in a more positive, personal financial situation than non-management employees. This rosy view of work spills into managers' personal lives leading to higher general well-being.

Another possible way to think about the results of the present study is to think about sex-role orientation rather than gender as relating to differences in job satisfaction and well-being. An interesting study by Lipińska-Grobelny & Wasiak (2010) found that if female managers had a masculine sex-role orientation they reported greater levels of job satisfaction with the lowest levels of job satisfaction reported by women non-managers with a feminine sex-role orientation. It is possible that sex role orientation (feminine, masculine, androgynous or undifferentiated) is a mediating factor in perception of work outcomes. Since this was not measured in the current study, future research would be needed to explore this intriguing finding.

The present study also sought to understand the role enjoyment plays in predicting well-being and job satisfaction. In order to do so, we used a multi-dimensional conceptualization of enjoyment. In this perspective (Davidson, 2018), enjoyment is comprised of five components: pleasure, relatedness, competence, challenge-improvement and engagement. Theoretically, these subscales are linked closely with Self-Determination Theory and the basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2002, 1991, 1985; Deci, Ryan & Vansteenkiste, 2008) in which satisfaction of basic needs results in enhanced personal well-being. Again, the present research found that, although, there were nominal differences in the predictors of well-being between female managers and non-

managers and between men and women, pleasure, relatedness, and competence were the three most important predictors of work outcomes. Thus, when one experiences pleasure at work, is connected to co-workers and feels competent in a work role, then well-being and satisfaction are higher.

There are certainly implications derived from the results of this study that may be valuable to organizations. Diversity, inclusion and equity are important factors to address in today's workplaces. This study however emphasizes that in terms of gender-diversity, the personal factors associated with job satisfaction and wellbeing are more similar across genders than they are different. Both women and men who reported higher levels of pleasure, relatedness and competence in their work environments, also reported higher levels of well-being and job satisfaction. Organizations, in the future, may wish to focus on how they can enhance those three important dimensions of enjoyment in all of their employees, in order to increase job satisfaction and well-being, and potentially decrease employee turnover and the costs associated with it (Harter & Adkins, 2017).

We argue that our study provides worthwhile insights pertaining to well-being and satisfaction; however, as with any study, there are limitations. The first limitation is that we relied solely on perceptions as opposed to objective metrics of well-being. Clearly, well-being extends beyond the psychological manifestation to also impact one physiologically. Therefore, measuring well-being physiologically could prove fruitful and provide a more robust assessment of the relationship between the study variables. Another limitation is the study population is based on an MTurk sample. However, recent research actually suggests that MTurk samples attend to experimental materials and have better recall than other online samples (Owens & Hawkins, 2019); meanwhile, other research has demonstrated that MTurk samples can provide valid inferences (Boas et al., 2018). Future research should examine individuals outside of the MTurk platform. A final consideration is the breadth of our sample. In other words, the breadth of our sample in terms of age and experience could be viewed as both a limitation and a strength. Our sample generalizes to women across age and years of experience,

however, is not specific to a single occupation or work domain as a result. To delve further into the experience of women leaders, future researchers may want to focus on specific work domains, such as government, private industry, or education.

Conclusion

While the results of the present study may initially seem unsurprising, they are illuminating in several ways. First, contrary to work done several decades ago (Bokemeier & Lacy, 1987), gender may no longer be the personal variable that most defines well-being and satisfaction at work. In today's workplace, whether or not one is in a leadership role may now be more important. This finding may speak to progress made by women in the workplace across the past 30 years, or it may be, as Lipińska-Grobelny & Wasiak (2010) posit, that it is the combination of gender, sex-role orientation and leadership role that best predicts workplace well-being and satisfaction. Second, type of enjoyment experienced does predict well-being and job satisfaction for women and men. In particular, it is the pleasure, competence and relatedness experienced at work that leads to feeling positive about oneself and about one's job. Challenge-improvement and engagement do not seem to predict workplace perceptions. Last, the results of the present study present future researchers with an avenue to explore. It is suggested that future researchers focus on gender orientation, along with sex-role orientation, in order to study how the workplace is experienced, rather than focusing on the traditional variable of gender.

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