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**Happiness and Satisfaction:
Subjective Well-Being in the Work Force**
Lori J. Sohns
University of Richmond

Running head: HAPPINESS AND SATISFACTION IN THE WORK FORCE

Abstract

Workers from seven southeastern companies (80 subjects) completed surveys consisting of demographic information and subjective well-being (SWB) indicators. Results indicate significantly lower life satisfaction in females than in males; income level and education do not show significant positive relationships with happiness, however, total household income does; and a statistically significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and general satisfaction were found and were strongest in males. Correlations between six of the SWB measures revealed highly significant correlations between five of the measures. A multiple regression analysis of satisfaction and happiness revealed several variables which were predictive of these constructs.

Happiness and Satisfaction:

Subjective Well-Being in the Work Force

Assuming assorted labels, the concept of subjective well-being and its components has been pondered by human beings since life began, and studied by scientists (especially psychologists) for well over 50 years (e.g., Rundquist & Sletto, 1936). Despite half a century of research and thousands of published studies, subjective well-being continues to be an elusive concept. As noted by several writers (Bryant & Veroff, 1982; Campbell, 1976; George, 1981; Sauer & Warland, 1982), the terms life satisfaction, happiness, and morale - among numerous others - are frequently used interchangeably with little regard for conceptual and operational distinctions. The effect of this "terminological variance" is two-fold: first, it is confusing and/or misleading to those reading the research; second, but more importantly, "constraint is placed on theoretical and measurement advancement" (Horley, 1984, p.126).

For this reason, it seems critically important to carefully define the terms to be used within this (or any other) paper from the outset. According to Horley (1984), subjective

well-being "should best be broadly defined as, say, a self-perceived positive feeling or state" (p. 125). Stones and Kozma (1980) have defined life satisfaction, what will be considered here as general satisfaction (which includes both life and job satisfaction), as "gratification of an appropriate proportion of the major desires of life" (p.270). It follows that life satisfaction would be defined by adding "not related to one's occupation" to the previous definition; job satisfaction would be defined by adding "related to one's occupation."

Of these terms, happiness seems to be the most difficult concept to define. Intuitively there is a difference between satisfaction and happiness, but the distinctions are difficult to verbalize. Among those who have attempted to tease apart the concepts, Campbell (1981) has stated that "there is no doubt that happiness and satisfaction have something in common [but] there is also a difference" (p. 22). He offered what may be a working definition of happiness when he described satisfaction as involving an act of judgment which lacks the "spontaneous lift-of-the-spirits" quality of happiness. Morale, another indicator of subjective well-being as mentioned earlier, will not be studied in this paper and therefore it need not be defined.

Previous attempts to understand these concepts have led to the study of a seemingly infinite number of factors to determine whether or not they impact happiness and/or satisfaction and, if so, to what extent. Verkuyten (1986), while studying adolescents in the Netherlands, found that those of ethnic minority backgrounds and females had lower scores on a generalized life satisfaction measure compared to those of ethnic majority backgrounds and males, respectively. Roborgh and Stacey (1987) surveyed New Zealanders who had made a voluntary radical career change and found that average well-being, as assessed by a standard measuring device, was significantly higher than that of the New Zealand population at large.

One particularly popular variable is that of money or income. Brickman, Coates, and Janoff-Bulman (1978) found in their study that people who were million-dollar winners in a lottery were generally not any happier than the control subjects. McKenzie and Campbell (1987) measured such variables as educational background and personal income, and did not find happiness to be significantly correlated with income and education.

The exact correlations between job satisfaction, general satisfaction and happiness (some of the components of the higher-order construct of subjective well-being) have been another popular area of study, although no conclusive results have been found. Weaver (1978) concluded from the results of four U.S. national surveys that job satisfaction and happiness may be moderated by occupation. The generalizability of his results must be questioned, however; only white and married employees were included in the analysis. Brayfield, Wells, and Strate (1957) found statistically significant, positive relationships between job satisfaction and general satisfaction in the male employee group but not among female employees.

From these findings, it was hypothesized that results would indicate lower life satisfaction in females than in males, respectively; income level and education would not show significant positive relationships with happiness; and a statistically significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and general satisfaction would be found, at least in males. It was also hypothesized that, since the constructs of happiness and satisfaction may be somewhat similar theoretically, some of the same variables in different combinations may predict the two. Consequently, an analysis of

variables which predict both constructs might reveal interesting insights into the similarities and differences between the two.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 80 workers from seven southeastern companies; three of the businesses accounted for 79% of the sample. Subjects ranged in age from 20 to 55+ years with a mean of 38.8 and were of somewhat diverse demographics (see Table 1). Most were selected from the Human Resource departments. The sample consisted of half male and half female subjects; most were married. Ethnicity provided the least diversity of any of the demographic variables; most of the sample reported being Caucasian. Exactly half of the subjects were classified as professional (i.e., chemists, engineers, accountants, etc.). Most had been with the particular company for an average of 6.6 years and in their current position for an average of 2.6 years. Most had personal levels and total household income levels over \$40,000. The vast majority were recipients of college and/or graduate degrees.

Insert Table 1 about here

Materials

A survey was used (see Appendix), which consisted of the following information: gender, age, race (which was not included on some of the surveys at the request of particular companies), personal income level, total household income, marital status, job description, years with the company, years in the current position, and formal education. A series of subjective well-being (SWB) indicators were also used and included the following: a general question regarding happiness; a life satisfaction index which utilized the 7-point rating bar from the Delighted-Terrible (D-T) Scale (Andrews & Withey, 1976) with items similar to those employed by Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin (1961) and Costa & McCrae (1984), requiring subjects to report their satisfaction with each of 12 areas of life (family, job, health, etc.); the Bradburn (1969) Affect Balance (A-B) Scales, which consist of a 5-item Positive Affect Scale (PAS), a 5-item Negative Affect Scale (NAS), and an adaptation of their difference, the Affect Balance Scale (ABS); the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969), which measures satisfaction with 5 aspects of the job: promotions, co-workers, supervisors, pay, and the

work; and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1980) as adapted by Golembiewski (1982).

Procedure

Each subject was given a packet containing a cover letter with instructions and the survey. Subjects were instructed to choose the responses that best fit their situations. They were informed that the entire procedure would take approximately 15-20 minutes.

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed between several variables to determine the strength and direction of these relationships. Subjects were divided into groups on the basis of race, income level, marital status, and other demographics, and relevant comparisons were made through t-tests and previously mentioned statistical means. Multiple regression analysis was also employed to determine which variables best predicted life satisfaction, general satisfaction, and happiness.

Results

Personal income and education did not show a significant positive relationship with happiness; however, there was a significant positive correlation between total household income and happiness, $r = .2974$, $p \leq .01$. Job satisfaction and

general satisfaction showed a strong positive correlation for females, $r = .4011$, $p \leq .05$, as well as males, $r = .5208$, $p = \leq .01$. All of the correlations between the life satisfaction index, general satisfaction index, the JDI, the MBI, and happiness were highly significant at $p \leq .01$; none of those involving the ABS were significant (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 about here

Results of a t-test comparing life satisfaction between genders was as predicted: men reported significantly greater life satisfaction ($M = 45.8$) than did women ($M = 42.2$), $t(78) = 2.01$, $p = .048$. Multiple regression equations were constructed for life satisfaction, general satisfaction, and happiness using the following descriptors: gender, marital status, age, education, total household income, burnout phase, and the work, pay, promotion, supervision, and people subscales of the Job Descriptive Index (JDI). A stepwise multiple regression analysis (Norusis, 1990) revealed (see Table 3) that only burnout phase and the the JDI work subscale significantly predicted general satisfaction, which accounted for 36% of the variability. For life satisfaction, burnout phase, the JDI work subscale, the JDI

supervision subscale, and total household income were the strongest predictors. It should be noted that burnout phase was not statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ (it marginally predicted life satisfaction at the $p \leq .07$ level). These four variables combined accounted for almost 40% of the variability in life satisfaction. For happiness, these four predictors plus education accounted for more than 50% of the variability in the model. It is interesting to note that education carried a negative b in the equation, a finding which will be discussed later.

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion

Many of the results of the experiment are as anticipated and support previous research which found lower life satisfaction among females than males (Verkuyten, 1986). In addition, they allow some generalization of the results from Verkuyten's adolescent population to that of adults in the work force. As expected from previous research (McKenzie and Campbell, 1987; Brickman, Coates, and Janoff-Bulman, 1978), there was not a significant positive relationship between happiness and income when considering personal income, although the

relationship became positive when total household income was evaluated. This finding has considerable intuitive appeal, as the general purchasing power of the household may be more likely to impact on one's level of happiness since many households today rely on dual incomes. Neither was there a significant positive relationship between happiness and education level, which provides further support for the findings of McKenzie and Campbell (1987).

Current results indicate statistically significant positive relationships between job and general satisfaction for both males and females, which is in contrast to the findings of Brayfield, Wells, and Strate (1957), who found this to be true only for males. In the 34 years that have passed since their study, more women are involved in careers that comprise an integral part of their lives, as opposed to merely "jobs." It is therefore highly possible that their satisfaction on the job is of vital importance in the determinance of their general satisfaction.

The results of the multiple regression analysis support Campbell's (1981) belief that happiness and satisfaction have something in common and yet are different. The work subscale of the JDI held significant positive correlations with happiness, general satisfaction, and life satisfaction, and burnout was

significantly correlated negatively with general satisfaction and happiness. Burnout most strongly predicted general satisfaction, whereas the JDI work subscale most strongly predicted happiness. Total household income and supervision predicted both life satisfaction and happiness, but not general satisfaction.

The finding that education was correlated negatively in the multiple regression equation is difficult to explain, but not totally unexpected, as it reproduces the earlier findings of McKenzie and Campbell (1987). It seems reasonable to say that since the survey measured subjective well-being, people of different educational levels may view the same absolute level of happiness differently. People who have completed more years of formal education may have view happiness on a broader range than do those people with less education. It is also possible that people with higher levels of education tend to be more conservative in answering the survey questions, thus avoiding the outer points on the rating scales and not showing as high a level of happiness. There are a multitude of possible reasons for this finding, the most likely of which may be illuminated through future research.

The hypothesis that satisfaction and happiness are different is supported by the similar percentages of variability

accounted for by the predictors for general satisfaction and life satisfaction, which differ from that of happiness. The measures account for approximately 15% more of the variability for happiness than for both life and general satisfaction. These results indicate that, although many of the same factors affect happiness and satisfaction, such things as education, satisfaction with work, and total household income play more prominent roles in determining happiness, and generally speaking, their impact is far greater on happiness than on life or general satisfaction.

Future research should focus on obtaining a more diverse sample of job classifications and ethnicities, as these results may not be generalizable to other populations. Also, other variables should be used to try to predict these constructs, as a large proportion of the variability has still not been identified. Studies with a larger, more diverse sample will be more helpful in finding demographic groups to compare, and will lend greater power to the design as well.

Table 1

Demographic Breakdown by Percentage of Survey Sample

Item	Responses	Percentage
Department	Human Resources	69
Gender	Male	51.3
	Female	48.8
Marital Status	Married	68.8
	Single	28.8
Race	Caucasian	65
	Am. Indian, African Am., or Asian Am.	15.6
	Not Specified	21.3
Age	20-30 years	21.3
	30-40 years	40.1
	40-55 years	35.0
	55 years or older	3.8
Personal Income Level	\$12-30,000	21.8
	\$30-40,000	22.5
	\$40-50,000	17.5
	\$50,000 or more	36.3

Table 1 (cont.)

Demographic Breakdown by Percentage of Survey Sample

Item	Responses	Percentage
Yrs. in Current Position	0-1	20.0
	1-3	51.3
	3-10	23.8
	10-20	5.0
Yrs. with Company	0-3	28.8
	3-10	33.8
	10-20	28.8
	20 or more	8.8
Job Classification	Executive	3.8
	Mid. Mgr. or Supervisor	33.7
	Professional	50.0
	Operator or Worker	12.5
Total Household Income	\$12-40,000	21.4
	\$40-50,000	12.5
	\$50,000 or more	62.5

Table 1 (cont.)

Demographic Breakdown by Percentage of Survey Sample

Item	Responses	Percentage
Formal Education	High School Graduate	17.5
	Associate's	6.3
	College Graduate	45.0
	Master's	27.5
	Doctorate	3.8

Table 2

Interrelations Between SWB Indicators for Members of the Work Force

Indicator	2	3	4	5	6
1. Life Satis.	.6905**	.4972**	-.4778**	.7500**	.0565
2. General Sat.	---	.4744**	-.5337**	.6544**	-.1017
3. JDI		---	-.5284**	.5518**	.0411
4. Burnout			---	-.5103**	-.0245
5. Happiness				---	-.0581
6. ABS					---

**denotes significance at $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed).

Table 3

Predictor Variables for Happiness and Satisfaction

SWB Construct	Predictors	Std. <u>b</u>	<u>p</u>
General satisfaction adj R ² = .36	burnout phase	<u>b</u> = -.41	<u>p</u> = .0006
	JDI - work	<u>b</u> = .28	<u>p</u> = .0180
Life satisfaction adj R ² = .38	burnout phase	<u>b</u> = -.21	<u>p</u> = .0700
	JDI - work	<u>b</u> = .25	<u>p</u> = .0400
	JDI supervision	<u>b</u> = .23	<u>p</u> = .0500
	tot hshld inc.	<u>b</u> = .20	<u>p</u> = .0400
Happiness adj R ² = .52:	burnout phase	<u>b</u> = -.28	<u>p</u> = .0082
	JDI work	<u>b</u> = .32	<u>p</u> = .0023
	JDI supervision	<u>b</u> = .24	<u>p</u> = .0218
	tot hshld inc.	<u>b</u> = .23	<u>p</u> = .013
	education	<u>b</u> = -.27	<u>p</u> = .0045

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Appendix

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please choose the responses that best fit your situation.

1. Company: _____ Department/Division: _____
2. Gender: a. male
 b. female
3. Marital status: a. married
 b. single
4. Race: a. Caucasian
 b. American Indian
 c. Negro
 d. Asian American
 e. Hispanic
 f. Other
5. Age: a. 20-25 years
 b. 25-30 years
 c. 30-35 years
 d. 35-40 years
 e. 40-45 years
 f. 45-55 years
 g. 55 years or older
6. My job can be classified as:
 - a. executive, or manager of middle managers
 - b. middle manager, or manager of supervisors
 - c. supervisor, or manager of operators or workers
 - d. professional (chemist, engineer, accountant, etc.)
 - e. operator or worker
7. Number of years in current position:
 - a. 0-1 year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 3-5 years
 - d. 5-10 years
 - e. 10-20 years
 - f. 20-30 years
 - g. 30 or more years
8. Number of years with this company:
 - a. 0-1 year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 3-5 years
 - d. 5-10 years
 - e. 10-20 years
 - f. 20-30 years
 - g. 30 or more years

9. Personal income level:
- below \$12,000
 - \$12,000-20,000
 - \$20,000-25,000
 - \$25,000-30,000
 - \$30,000-40,000
 - \$40,000-50,000
 - above \$50,000
10. Total household income:
- below \$12,000
 - \$12,000-20,000
 - \$20,000-25,000
 - \$25,000-30,000
 - \$30,000-40,000
 - \$40,000-50,000
 - above \$50,000
11. Formal education - indicate highest level achieved:
- did not finish high school
 - high school graduate
 - Technical school certificate
 - Associate's degree
 - College graduate (BA,BS, etc.)
 - Master's degree
 - Doctoral degree

CONCERNS AND EMOTIONS

During the past few weeks, have you worried about ---

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| yes | no | 12. Not having enough money? |
| yes | no | 13. Financial debts? |
| yes | no | 14. How things are going at work? |
| yes | no | 15. Getting along with your
wife/husband/girlfriend/boyfriend? |
| yes | no | 16. Moving ahead in the world? |
| yes | no | 17. Your children? |
| yes | no | 18. Sexual problems? |
| yes | no | 19. People you have trouble with? |
| yes | no | 20. Your health? |
| yes | no | 21. Things that happen in your neighborhood? |
| yes | no | 22. The world situation? |
| yes | no | 23. Growing old? |

During the past few weeks, did you ever feel ---

- | | | |
|-----|----|--|
| yes | no | 24. Particularly excited or interested in something? |
| yes | no | 25. So restless that you couldn't sit long in a chair? |
| yes | no | 26. Proud because someone complimented you
on something you had done? |
| yes | no | 27. Very lonely or remote from other people? |
| yes | no | 28. Pleased about having accomplished something? |
| yes | no | 29. Bored? |
| yes | no | 30. On top of the world? |
| yes | no | 31. Depressed or very unhappy? |
| yes | no | 32. That things were going your way? |
| yes | no | 33. Upset because someone criticized you? |

SATISFACTION SCALE

For questions 34 through 45, please use the following scale.

I feel:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed (about equally satisfied and dissatisfied)	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible

How satisfied are you with:

- _____ 34. Your house or apartment?
- _____ 35. Your city or place you live?
- _____ 36. Our national government?
- _____ 37. Your work?
- _____ 38. Your leisure activities?
- _____ 39. Your gender?
- _____ 40. Your health?
- _____ 41. Your marriage or love life?
- _____ 42. Your financial situation?
- _____ 43. Your friendships and social life?
- _____ 44. Your self-respect?
- _____ 45. Your religious faith?

To what DEGREE is each of the statements LIKE or UNLIKE you?

For questions 46 through 70, please use the following scale:

Very much UNLIKE me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very much LIKE me

- _____ 46. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
- _____ 47. I feel used up at the end of the workday.
- _____ 48. I feel similar to my co-workers in many ways.
- _____ 49. I feel personally involved with my co-workers' problems.
- _____ 50. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
- _____ 51. I feel uncomfortable about the way I have treated some co-workers.
- _____ 52. I can easily understand how my co-workers feel about things.
- _____ 53. I feel I treat some co-workers as if they were impersonal "objects".
- _____ 54. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
- _____ 55. I deal very effectively with the problems of my co-workers.
- _____ 56. I feel burned out from my work.

To what DEGREE is each of the statements LIKE or UNLIKE you?

Very much UNLIKE me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very much LIKE me

- _____ 57. I feel I'm positively influencing my co-workers' lives through my work.
- _____ 58. I've become more callous toward co-worker's lives through my work.
- _____ 59. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
- _____ 60. I feel very energetic.
- _____ 61. I feel frustrated by my job.
- _____ 62. I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
- _____ 63. I don't really care what happens to some co-workers.
- _____ 64. Working directly with people puts too much stress on me.
- _____ 65. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my co-workers.
- _____ 66. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my co-workers.
- _____ 67. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
- _____ 68. I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
- _____ 69. In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
- _____ 70. I feel my co-workers blame me for some of their problems.

LIFE SATISFACTION SCALE

I think my life is:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 71. Boring | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Interesting |
| 72. Enjoyable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Miserable |
| 73. Useless | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Worthwhile |
| 74. Friendly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Lonely |
| 75. Full | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Empty |
| 76. Discouraging | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Hopeful |
| 77. Disappointing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Rewarding |
| 78. Brings out the best in me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Doesn't give me much chance |

HAPPINESS

79. Taking all things together, how would you say you are feeling these days?
- Very happy
 - Pretty happy
 - Happy
 - Neither happy nor unhappy
 - Not too happy
 - Unhappy
 - Very unhappy

JOB SATISFACTION SCALE

.....
Think of your present work. What is it like most of the time? In the space provided for each question, write in:

 Y for "Yes" if it describes your work

 N for "No" if it does NOT describe it

 ? if you cannot decide

WORK ON PRESENT JOB

 80. Fascinating

 81. Satisfying

 82. Good

 83. Respected

 84. Pleasant

 85. Tiresome

 86. Challenging

 87. Frustrating

 88. Endless

 89. Gives sense of accomplishment

 90. Routine

 91. Boring

 92. Creative

 93. Hot

 94. Useful

 95. Healthful

 96. On your feet

 97. Simple

.....
Think of the pay you get now. How well does each of the following words describe your present pay? In the space provided for each question, write in:

 Y for "Yes" if it describes your pay

 N for "No" if it does NOT describe it

 ? if you cannot decide

PRESENT PAY

 98. Income adequate for normal expenses

 99. Satisfactory profit sharing

 100. Barely live on income

 101. Bad

 102. Income provides luxuries

 103. Insecure

 104. Less than I deserve

 105. Highly paid

 106. Underpaid

.....

.....
Think of the majority of the people you work with now or the people you meet in connection with your work. How well does each of the following words describe these people? In the space provided for each question, write in:

 Y for "Yes" if it describes the people you work with
 N for "No" if it does NOT describe them
 ? if you cannot decide

PEOPLE ON YOUR PRESENT JOB

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <u> </u> 134. Stimulating | <u> </u> 143. Boring |
| <u> </u> 135. Slow | <u> </u> 144. Ambitious |
| <u> </u> 136. Stupid | <u> </u> 145. Responsible |
| <u> </u> 137. Fast | <u> </u> 146. Intelligent |
| <u> </u> 138. Easy to make enemies | <u> </u> 147. Talk too much |
| <u> </u> 139. Smart | <u> </u> 148. Lazy |
| <u> </u> 140. Unpleasant | <u> </u> 149. No privacy |
| <u> </u> 141. Active | <u> </u> 150. Narrow interests |
| <u> </u> 142. Loyal | <u> </u> 151. Hard to meet |

.....
Think of your job in general. What is it like most of the time? In the space provided for each question, write in:

 Y for "Yes" if it describes your job
 N for "No" if it does NOT describe it
 ? if you cannot decide

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u> </u> 152. Pleasant | <u> </u> 161. Bad |
| <u> </u> 153. Ideal | <u> </u> 162. Waste of time |
| <u> </u> 154. Undesirable | <u> </u> 163. Good |
| <u> </u> 155. Worse than most | <u> </u> 164. Worthwhile |
| <u> </u> 156. Acceptable | <u> </u> 165. Like to leave |
| <u> </u> 157. Better than most | <u> </u> 166. Makes me content |
| <u> </u> 158. Disagreeable | <u> </u> 167. Inadequate |
| <u> </u> 159. Excellent | <u> </u> 168. Enjoyable |
| <u> </u> 160. Rotten | <u> </u> 169. Poor |

.....
THIS IS THE END OF THE SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.