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Emotional Satisfaction at Work and Sociodemographic Variables

Mateusz Hauk

Summary

The study attempts to analyse the relationship of selected sociodemographic variables, such as age, gender, education, having a partner, having children, form of employment, work experience, number of hours devoted to work per week, etc. with job satisfaction in emotional terms. The study involved 375 people, professionally active, aged 19–64. Emotional job satisfaction was measured with Jaros' Energy and Tension at Work Scale (2009). The obtained data indicated that only in a few cases sociodemographic variables were associated with the level of emotional job satisfaction, while other variables were significant from the energy level at work perspective (having a partner, working partner, having children and working outside the office), other were important from the work tension point of view (number of hours of work and overtime work). There were no real differences depending on gender. Age, in turn, was positively related to the level of energy at work and the education level differentiated the perceived tension at work. Study results confirmed the need to include the so-called Transactional Approach in the further research on job satisfaction (Zaleska, 2003) and estimating a larger pool of variables would be advisable. At the same time, they validate the inclusion of selected sociodemographic variables in the analyses, which can perform as intermediary variables in the studied relationships.

Keywords: job satisfaction, emotions at work, mood at work, sociodemographic features

Emotional Satisfaction at Work and Sociodemographic Variables

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Abstract

The study attempts to analyse the relationship of selected sociodemographic variables, such as age, gender, education, having a partner, having children, form of employment, work experience, number of hours devoted to work per week, etc. with job satisfaction in emotional terms. The study involved 375 people, professionally active, aged 19–64. Emotional job satisfaction was measured with Jaros' Energy and Tension at Work Scale (2009). The obtained data indicated that only in a few cases sociodemographic variables were associated with the level of emotional job satisfaction, while other variables were significant from the energy level at work perspective (having a partner, working partner, having children and working outside the office), other were important from the work tension point of view (number of hours of work and overtime work). There were no real differences depending on gender. Age, in turn, was positively related to the level of energy at work and the education level differentiated the perceived tension at work. Study results confirmed the need to include the so-called Transactional Approach in the further research on job satisfaction (Zaleska, 2003) and estimating a larger pool of variables would be advisable. At the same time, they validate the inclusion of selected sociodemographic variables in the analyses, which can perform as intermediary variables in the studied relationships.

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Introduction

Job satisfaction phenomenon is an important area of interest for practitioners and theoreticians of management and organization sciences (Chmiel, 2007; Schultz, Schultz, 2002). In addition to the level of performance and motivation, this concept is a central area on which owners, managers and employees of personnel departments, as well as representatives of public administration are focused (Central Statistical Office, 2017). The main factors influencing this state of affairs include the potential consequences that are attributed to job satisfaction (including increased productivity, increased pro-social behaviour, etc.). Job satisfaction survey also allows a closer look at the work culture in a given society (Juchnowicz, 2009).

The beginnings of systematized research on the satisfaction of individuals in the workplace date back to the 1930s (Brief, Weiss, 2002), and although there is a huge number of studies devoted to this issue in the literature, it still appears to be worth further, in-depth exploration. It should be noted that in the course of research on job satisfaction, one used very different ways of defining, conceptualizing and estimating this construct. Bańka (2005, p. 329) defines job satisfaction as: “an emotional reaction of pleasure or distress, experienced in connection with the performance of specific tasks, functions and roles”. In turn, according to Locke (1976,) job satisfaction can be understood as “a pleasant or positive emotional state resulting from the assessment of one’s own work or work-related experiences”. It is worth noting that until recently, the literature on the subject was dominated by the tendency to define satisfaction in affective terms (cf. the above definitions), while the researchers usually examined cognitive aspect. Job satisfaction, therefore, consists of two components: cognitive (what people think about their work, to what extent a person perceives his work as beneficial or unfavourable – this is the approach where the term job satisfaction is most often used) and emotional (what people feel about their work or what emotions they experience while at work, or experienced feelings towards work, cf. Jaros, 2005).

The need to distinguish and study two aspects of job satisfaction separately is indicated by Organ and Near (1985), Brief (1998) and Zalewska (2003), because the cognitive and emotional element of the attitude towards an object do not have to be coherent and remain in harmony (Zajonc, Markus, 1982; Wojciszke, 2000), some factors may be the cause of cognitive job satisfaction, while others determine the subject’s emotional satisfaction (Rosenberg, Hovland, 1960). At this point, it is worth referring to Lubrańska’s research (2013) on the relationship between employee’s affective experiences and job satisfaction. The author showed that people experiencing positive affect at work are more satisfied with their work and value

its various manifestations higher. Also, Wróbel (2010) indicates that the emotional experiences of employees influence their professional satisfaction.

Cognitive job satisfaction concerns opinions about work and how beneficial it is for the subject. It is usually considered on two dimensions – from dissatisfaction to contentment. At the same time, one can extract the so-called general cognitive job satisfaction (work as a whole), and cognitive job satisfaction with individual components of work (cf. Zalewska, 2003). Most often, general job satisfaction is estimated in researches that aim to detect the causes, consequences of job satisfaction, or the relationships between this variable and other factors. In the case of cognitive job satisfaction with individual components of work, the literature shows a lack of consistency as to the number and content of dimensions of the professional environment, at the same time there is no theory that allows a coherent division of work components that are important for job satisfaction (Brief, 1998). For example, Locke (1976), reviewing the literature on job satisfaction, suggests that various dimensions/components of work can be reduced to four categories: awards, other people, work content, organizational context.

When it comes to emotional job satisfaction, it is worth emphasizing the existence of discrepancies in its definition and measurement. On the one hand, it is possible to examine experienced emotions towards work, on the other, emotions experienced at work (Brief, 1998). It should be noted that in the literature devoted to job satisfaction, it is much easier to find research on how people feel at work than on affective states experienced towards work (Crites et al., 1994).

A review of the literature on the subject currently indicates four ways of understanding and studying emotional job satisfaction:

- Estimating how one feels in a workplace using a pleasure scale by describing satisfaction on a one-dimensional continuum from positive to negative mood (Abele, 1992) or estimating the frequency of positive emotions (Diener et al., 1991).
- Estimating how one feels on two dimensions: positive affect and negative affect, for example: the approach proposed by Watson and Tellegen (Watson, Clark, 1999), as well as the concept of Thayer (2001; 2008), who formulated the Two-Dimensional Mood Theory (energy and tension).
- Estimating average mood level and its variability (average mood level mainly depends on the frequency of positive emotions, while mood variability mainly depends on the intensity of emotional states experienced). An example of this is the Russell and Carroll's approach (1999).
- Estimating how one feels at work on three dimensions: energy (liveliness – fatigue), tension (anxiety – peace), pleasure (joy – sadness), (Zalewska, 2003).

For emotional job satisfaction, surveys generally focus on assessing work as a whole (general satisfaction). This is due to the fact that the measurement of emotions concerns rather short-lived phenomena, and the measurement of the employee's global affective state does not allow to clearly determine which components of work are associated with the affective state experienced during the performed professional activity (Jaros, 2009). A certain supplement to this gap in Poland is the research carried out by Jaros (2009) who used an original method to estimate the mood (energy scale and tension scale respectively) induced by work (as a whole, as well as by its individual components). In these studies, the author focused on the analysis of emotional job satisfaction as a whole, as well as with selected work components: contacts with colleagues, contacts with the supervisor, content of work, physical conditions in the workplace.

In the Polish management psychology literature, relatively little space is devoted to the role of sociodemographic variables in the context of job satisfaction. Furthermore, the obtained data provide varied and inconsistent results. For example, Argyle (2005) and Brief (1998) claim that most studies show that the relationship between age and satisfaction is positive, while Polish studies (Zalewska, 1997) did not show a relationship between these variables, and yet other studies (Wosińska, 2004) indicate a curvilinear relationship between age and job satisfaction. Lipińska-Grobelny (2016) in her research on the phenomenon of the so-called "Multi-work" indicated that age differentiates satisfaction with selected dimensions of work, i.e., organization and management, and working conditions. Employees aged 45–65 are the most satisfied, while the least satisfied are employees in the mid-life period.

In the case of job satisfaction depending on gender, the results are also mixed. Some authors show that women are more satisfied with their work compared to men (Hersch, Xiao, 2016), others (Jaros, Zalewska, 2008) indicate that men are characterized by higher general job satisfaction and higher job satisfaction with its individual components, stronger positive affect and weaker negative affect. Already cited Lipińska-Grobelny (2016), indicated that women, compared to men, are more satisfied with interpersonal relations in the workplace and with working conditions, but less with remuneration.

Most studies, however, emphasize the lack of differences between men and women in terms of job satisfaction (Kumari, Ibrahim, 2015; Spector, 1997) or point to the much greater significance of other (than sociodemographic variables) factors influencing satisfaction with various spheres of life (Trzebińska, 2012). It is important to point out that most studies concerned the cognitive component of job satisfaction, there is still little research in the literature on the relationship between sociodemographic features and emotional satisfaction.

The purpose of this article is to provide new data on emotional job satisfaction (despite the increased interest in this aspect of satisfaction, it occupies relatively little space in the field of management psychology), as well as to fill the gap regarding the relationship between sociodemographic features and job satisfaction in emotional terms.

Test method

Jaros' Energy and Tension at Work Scale (2009) was used to measure job satisfaction. It is based on the Thayer's mood concept (2001, 2008), which extracts two basic mood dimensions: energy, tension. These dimensions form four fields in which one can enter most of the moods experienced by people: calm energy, tense energy, calm fatigue, tense fatigue. The tool allows one to estimate, in the long term, the average mood triggered by the whole work as well as by selected work components. It consists of five parts: four allow one to assess the energy and tension caused by four work components: contacts with colleagues, supervisor, work content and physical conditions in the workplace. The fifth part allows one to assess the energy and tension caused by work as a whole. Each part consists of eight items, four for energy and four for tension. In the conducted own research, we decided to estimate energy and tension caused by work as a whole. Cronbach's alpha for the tension scale amounts to 0.82, and 0.90 for the energy scale.

This research problem is interesting from a practical point of view. The obtained results may allow for a better understanding of the conditions of emotional job satisfaction and – as a consequence – may help in a more conscious selection of intervention forms aimed at strengthening job satisfaction for different professional groups (e.g., different for people of different ages, different for people with children, etc.).

Study sample

Study sample consisted of 375 people from Łódzkie province. They were professionally active (work for at least 1 month as a white-collar worker, generating income), over 18 years of age and agreed to participate in the study.

The research was carried out in 2017–2018 in the Łódzkie province as part of the development of the doctoral dissertation: "Factors determining job satisfaction – verification of the modified Hackman and Oldham Job Characteristics Model". The research was conducted in a traditional form, i.e., using the "paper-pencil" method (200 people surveyed), as well as using electronic versions of questionnaires (contact

with the respondents took place via e-mail, participants received a description of the purpose of the research and its course, they received a link to an on-line survey after they agreed to participate in it, and the results were exported to an Excel spreadsheet). The use of the electronic version of research tools was dictated by the desire to increase the sample (standard versions of questionnaires sometimes contained incomplete answers, moreover, some of the respondents did not return questionnaires). Electronic versions of the questionnaires did not contain the identification data of the respondents (such as: name, surname, etc.), at the same time it should be noted that the results were secured using the functional capabilities of the tool. Test subjects were required to answer all questions contained in the test battery, otherwise it was impossible to move on to further parts of the test battery. There were no statistically significant differences in the mean values of the variables included in the study.

The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to 64 years ($M = 32.9$, $SD = 9.80$). Work experience varied widely, ranging from 1 month to 39 years ($M = 10.5$, $SD = 9.20$), while work experience in the current position ranged from 1 month to 34 years ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 4.10$). The respondents devoted 10 to 89 hours a week to work ($M = 39.1$, $SD = 10.91$) (including an average of 4 hours devoted to work outside the company/office, usually working at home). The study included few people with primary education and with a doctoral degree, in the course of further analysis these observations were included in adjacent categories (so a person with primary education was considered in the group of people with vocational education, while a person with a doctoral degree was considered in the group of people with master's degree).

Most of the respondents were women (61.6%), with bachelor's degree, in a formal or informal relationship. Over 60% of respondents performed their work based on a full-time employment contract.

Small diversity of the sample was caused by the selection method, because the "snowball method" was used in the research, in which participants were asked to recommend other people who could take part in the study. It is therefore difficult to extrapolate the obtained results to the entire population.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	n	%	% valid	% cumulative
<i>Sex</i>				
Woman	231	61.6	61.6	100
Man	144	38.4	38.4	38.4
<i>Education</i>				
Primary	1	0.3	0.3	0.3
Vocational	86	22.9	22.9	23.2

Variable	n	%	% valid	% cumulative
Secondary	64	17.1	17.1	40.3
Bachelor	163	43.5	43.5	83.7
Master	56	14.9	14.9	98.7
Engineer	4	1.1	1.1	99.7
Ph.D.	1	0.3	0.3	100
<i>Having a partner or spouse</i>				
Yes	271	72.3	72.3	72.3
No	104	27.7	27.7	100.0
<i>Number of children</i>				
0	186	49.6	49.6	49.6
1	106	28.3	28.3	77.9
2	66	17.6	17.6	95.5
3	15	4.0	4.0	99.5
4	2	0.5	0.5	100.0
<i>Contract type</i>				
Full-time employment contract	227	60.5	60.5	60.5
Part-time employment contract	58	15.5	15.5	76.0
Contract of mandate	54	14.4	14.4	90.4
Specific task contract	9	2.4	2.4	92.8
Self-employment	27	7.2	7.2	100.0

Source: own study.

Results

To analyse the relationship between emotional satisfaction and selected sociodemographic variables, a correlation analysis and one-way analysis of variance were conducted. Below are the data received.

Table 2. Correlation between selected sociodemographic variables and emotional satisfaction at work in terms of energy and tension

	Emotional satisfaction – tension	Emotional satisfaction – energy
Age	0.021	0.107*
Total work experience	0.039	0.056
Work experience in the current place/company	-0.003	0.034

cont. table 2

	Emotional satisfaction – tension	Emotional satisfaction – energy
Work experience in the current position	0.023	0.041
Number of working hours per week	0.105*	0.010
Number of working hours per week outside the office/ company headquarters	0.090	0.074

* $p < 0.05$

Source: own study.

As Table 2 shows, age is only related to energy at work ($p = 0.039$), with this relation being small. Among other variables, the number of working hours per week is significantly related to the tension at work (the more hours spent on work, the greater the employee's tension level, while the reverse relation cannot be excluded in this case, $p = 0.043$). In this case, the relationship is small again.

Below, we show data on the differences in the average results of emotional job satisfaction depending on the further, selected sociodemographic variables.

Table 3. Comparison of means in terms of emotional satisfaction due to energy and tension depending on sociodemographic variables

	Emotional satisfaction – tension	Emotional satisfaction – energy
Sex		
W	8.72	11.92
M	8.69	11.38
<i>p</i>	0.918	0.095
Having a partner		
Y	8.82	11.91
N	8.44	11.19
<i>p</i>	0.212	0.039
Having children		
Y	8.86	12.05
N	8.56	11.37
<i>p</i>	0.257	0.030
Working partner		
Y	8.77	12.00
N	8.64	11.36
<i>p</i>	0.613	0.040

	Emotional satisfaction – tension	Emotional satisfaction – energy
Level of education		
At most primary vocational	9.22	11.66
Secondary	8.00	11.83
Tertiary, bachelor's degree	8.56	11.87
Tertiary, master's degree	9.18	11.21
<i>p</i>	0.021	0.545
Contract type		
Full-time employment contract	8.87	11.87
Part-time employment contract	7.88	11.00
Contract of mandate	8.71	11.63
Self-employment	9.15	12.07
<i>p</i>	0.054	0.232
Overtime work (over 40 h/week)		
Y	9.09	11.83
N	8.55	11.66
<i>p</i>	0.047	0.627
Work outside the office		
Y	8.58	12.24
N	8.78	11.42
<i>p</i>	0.469	0.012

Source: own study.

Statistically significant differences in the case of emotional satisfaction in the energy dimension were noticed for variables, such as: having a partner, working partner, having children and performing work outside the office. People who have a working partner exhibit significantly higher levels of energy at work. Similarly, people who have children, as well as those who do at least part of their work outside the headquarters/office, show a higher energy.

As for the dimension of emotional job satisfaction, significant differences were observed for two variables: education (the highest tension is attributed to people with primary vocational education and master's degree, and the lowest – to people with secondary education) and overtime work (people working over 40 hours a week are characterized by a significantly higher level of tension at work).

The level of job satisfaction can, of course, be the result of the combined impact of several individual factors, and the combined effect of several factors (their interaction) may be different than of each factor separately. Two-factor covariance models were

constructed to examine the interactive relationship of variables, taking into account two discrete factors and continuous covariance variables simultaneously.

However, the conducted analyses did not show significant interaction effects for pairs of factors, also after isolating the impact of covariance variables.

Conclusions

The obtained results indicate that only in a few cases sociodemographic variables are associated with the level of emotional job satisfaction, while other variables are significant from energy level at work perspective, while others from the tension at work perspective. Undoubtedly, energy at work is most influenced by variables such as: having a partner, working partner, having children and working outside the office. These variables in the literature are often described as factors buffering the individual against conflicts on the work-home line (cf. Janicka, 2008; Zalewska, 2008), positively related to human well-being (Chodkiewicz, 2009). Similarly, performing work outside the office gives the employee more opportunities to reconcile different life roles, contributing positively to job satisfaction (Hauk, 2008).

In the case of tension, a significant relationship was noted for the number of hours of work and overtime work. The more time an individual devotes to professional activity, the more tension can accompany it. Probably it is associated with the so-called role overload or role conflict, time spent on performing work-related tasks may limit the effective fulfilment of other life roles (cf. Janicka, 2008; Zalewska, 2008).

There were no significant differences in terms of emotional job satisfaction by gender. This result is consistent, among others, with the research of Kumari and Ibrahim (2015) or Spector (1997). As far as age is concerned, it is positively related to the level of energy at work ($r=0.107$), which is coherent, among others, with Argyle's conclusions (2005). Level of education does not differentiate job satisfaction in terms of energy, but significant differences were noted in the case of tension at work. In this sample, the highest tension characterized units with at least vocational education (which may be related to the lack of a sense of security in the workplace and stability of employment, as the qualifications held may not be sufficient for these employees to meet the challenges and needs of employers, cf. Dobrowolska, 2007; Ratajczak, 2007; Strykowska, 2002), as well as in the case of people with master's degree (probably these people can perform more responsible functions and take responsibility for a larger number of tasks in organizations).

The obtained data, as predicted, indicate a small relationship between sociodemographic features and emotional job satisfaction. Currently, literature on the subject of job satisfaction emphasizes at least three groups of factors (the so-called

transactional approach) that affect employee's satisfaction or emotions in the workplace (Brief, 1998; Spector, 1997; Zalewska, 2003): 1. personality factors or employee dispositions, 2. environmental factors related to work characteristics (cf. work design, Hackman and Oldham, 1980; 2010), 3. person-professional environment fit.

In further research aimed at exploring this area, it is worth considering other variables, including primarily: personality traits consisting in the so-called "Big Five" (Judge et al., 2002), traits associated with self-perception (Judge, Bono, 2001), temperamental traits (Zalewska, 2003, 2004). It also seems worthwhile to estimate the suitability of selected characteristics of employees and their professional environment (person-environment fit, in various approaches: work, team, supervisor fit, etc., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). To achieve it, it would be necessary to take into account the needs of employees combined with the level of their fulfilment by the organization. The obtained results also indicate the need to consider the conflicts on the work-home line.

At the same time, the data received somewhat confirm the legitimacy of including sociodemographic variables in further analyses of emotional job satisfaction, they are a starting point of a more in-depth analysis of the sociodemographic variables role in the relationship between dispositional or environmental features to emotional job satisfaction (perhaps as intermediary variables, maybe taking into account their interaction with other variables).

Overall, the conducted analyses can also be useful from the practical side, providing partial guidelines for managers and HR departments. Recently, the importance of shaping the positive image of the company has been growing (employer branding, App et al., 2012; Biswas, Suar, 2016), while organizations undertake various activities aimed at increasing employee well-being, striving for a situation in which employees will show positive emotions towards work and at work. Therefore, it seems important to diversify activities related to improving the well-being of employees depending on which subpopulation (in relation to sociodemographic features, e.g., the level of education) the individual belongs to. Preparation of appropriate programmes dedicated especially to those employees who work overtime, so that they can cope with the accompanying tension (e.g., dedicated programs related to stress reduction) seems to be crucial.

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