

The Relationship between Heavy Work Investment and Life Satisfaction

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Abstract

To be happy is the most common desire among people in Western cultures, and a happy life is the life preferred by individuals in the modern and competitive world (Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995)- perhaps the whole world. In recent years research on positive psychology and happiness as subjective well-being (SWB) has flourished, highlighting aspects of human conditions that make life worth living and helping individuals feel happy and fulfilled (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011). Implications of heavy work investment for workers' happiness are highly intriguing, since to date no study has examined the relationship between these two important domains. The current study attempts to determine this relationship by comparing common workers with the two major types of heavy work investors in their level of life satisfaction, the cognitive aspect of happiness as SWB.

Organizational scholars show that work can serve as a source of general happiness (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011). Today work has become one of the most central domains in individuals' lives. People spend a great deal of their time preparing for work through education and training, and later in actual work (Snir & Harpaz, 2002a). New technology makes it possible to work from anywhere at any time (Burke, 2009). Globalization and consumerism cause employees to work longer hours (Fry & Cohen, 2009). Consequently, the concept of heavy work investment (HWI), expressing the investment of long hours and effort in working, has apparently spread in modern society. The study sets out from the HWI model proposed by Snir and Harpaz (2012), which relies on established scientific theories and is supported by relevant empirical data demonstrating HWI predictors, dimensions, types and outcomes. The HWI model distinguishes dispositional HWI, stemming from internal predictors (e.g., personality traits), from situational HWI, stemming from external predictors (e.g., organizational demands). Each major type of heavy work investment presented in the model has subtypes. Two dispositional subtypes are identified in the model: workaholism and work devotion. Two further HWI subtypes are organizational directed heavy work investors and economically oriented heavy work investors, which are both situational subtypes.

High happiness seems contingent on several preconditions: personal characteristics, and environmental setting (Diener & Seligman, 2002). The present study concerns the relationship between the organizational setting and the cognitive aspect of happiness as SWB- life

satisfaction. Life satisfaction reflects people's global judgments and evaluations of their lives (Warr, 2007). Activity Theory (Diener Suh, & Oishi, 1997) and Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) provide an explanation for the relationship between work activities to happiness. Interestingly, Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) found that people report most flow experiences not in their leisure time but at work; the accompanying feelings are more active, alert, concentrated, happy, satisfied, and creative. Heavy work investors, who spend more hours at the workplace than common workers, presumably will experience more flow than the latter. Bottom-up Theory maintains that happiness is simply the sum of many small pleasures. According to this view, an individual's life satisfaction is a mental calculation of the sum of the momentary pleasures and pains (Diener, 1984). Following this logic, we may conclude that heavy work investors who experience more positive affect at work than common workers are expected to report greater levels of life satisfaction than the latter.

Main hypothesis: *Heavy work investors will exhibit higher levels of life satisfaction than common workers.*

The study data were collected through cross-sectional research. The *general sample* comprised of 396 workers (a response rate of 33 percent), 64 percent men of which 68 percent were married. About half the workers (54%) were in managerial positions and two thirds (67%) worked in the private sector. Workers' mean age was 36 years, with average of approximately 15 years of education. About 50 percent of participants in this study were *heavy work investors* with a mean age of 37 years and average of education years was approximately 15; most of heavy work investors were men (75%) and (66%) held a managerial position. Approximately two thirds of the heavy work investors were employed in the private sector.

The study applied well established measurements including heavy work investment: time and effort, Type A behavior pattern, work enjoyment, work drive, work centrality, organizational culture, financial needs, and cognitive happiness (life satisfaction).

All responses (except 'time investment', 'work centrality', and 'financial needs') were on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1- "*Strongly disagree*", to 7 - "*Strongly agree*".

All Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranged from $\alpha=.71$ to $\alpha=.93$

The study demonstrates that heavy work investors either dispositional or situational report higher levels of life satisfaction than common workers. More importantly, heavy work investors are expected to exhibit higher life satisfaction than common workers. In addition, the findings show that more enjoyment all types of employees experience at work, the higher levels of life satisfaction they exhibit. However, workers tend to exhibit lower levels of life satisfaction the higher their work drive is.

In terms of practical implications, the findings of this research may play an important role in decision-making by human resource managers in employee recruitment, selection, and planning processes. To maximize employees' enjoyment at work and their well-being HR leaders should identify workers types and insure the fit between the different types of employees and job demands.