

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND HAPPINESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF GENERATION X AND Y

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The aim of this study is to underline the importance of work-life balance and investigate the relationship between work-life balance and happiness. Convenience sampling is used and data are collected by survey method from 250 employees working in İstanbul, Turkey. Results show that there is a positive relationship between work-life balance and happiness. Findings are discussed in terms of Generation X and Y and fruitful implications are drawn for practitioners and researcher reflecting a cultural and paradigm change in both societal and organizational spaces.

Keywords: Happiness, Work-life balance, Generation X, Generation Y.

Introduction

Happiness is of great importance to almost every individual and is found to be a valued goal in most societies (Diener, 2000). From ancient Greeks and Buddhists to modern philosophers, researchers have questioned the nature of happiness (McMahon, 2006). Although happiness is a concept that attracted the attention of philosophers for many years, it is a quite new concept in psychology literature. The increased interest in positive psychology lead researcher to work on concepts such as job satisfaction, life satisfaction, happiness, organizational commitment, work engagement after the 80's (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Myers and Diener, 1995). Many researchers, especially, stressed the importance of measuring and promoting happiness in positive psychology in recent years and proposed orientations to happiness concept as important contributors to subjective well-being (Diener, Kesebir, and Lucas, 2008; Park, Peterson, and Ruch, 2009).

Many factors are defined as the determinants of happiness. Life circumstances and demographic variables, traits and dispositions and intentional behaviors are among those factors (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade, 2005). As an individual jump into work life, success on balancing work and social roles becomes a strong and important contributor to how well that individual feels (Gröpel and Kuhl, 2009). Research on work-life balance mostly focused on explaining the relationship between work-life balance and well-being (Gröpel and Kuhl, 2009), job satisfaction (Fox and Fallon, 2003), or life satisfaction (Ellwart and Konradt, 2011). However, the relationship between work-life balance and happiness got little attention because the concept happiness is criticised as unsuitable for use in scientific studies (Seligman, 2011), it remains elusive to define and problematic to assess. Within a potentially wide and diffuse literature, the Oxford Happiness Inventory emerged in the late

1980s and made an important contribution both to the definition and to the assessment of happiness (Robbins, Francis and Edwards, 2010).

While examining the relationship between work-life balance and happiness, it is thought that generation difference might be an important variable that may be taken into consideration. Generations differ from each other depending on their characteristics, life and work values and attitudes. If one considers that today, %25 of Turkey's population belongs to Generation Y (Kuran, 2010), the difference between Generation X and Generation Y might contribute to the findings about work-life balance.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between work-life balance and happiness. It is also aimed to see whether the relationship between work-life balance and happiness differs according to Generation X and Generation Y.

Happiness

Although psychologists have contributed to happiness literature by investigating measures, behavioral correlates, determinants, and consequences of the concept (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade, 2005; Mogilner, 2010), the meaning of happiness have been left open to discussion. Some argued that the meaning of happiness is common across all individuals and some argued that it is quite subjective (Gilbert, 2006; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade, 2005). According to Bradburn, (1969) happiness is characterized by "the experience of more positive affective states than negative ones". Seligman (2011) defined happiness as a cognitive evaluation that individual's life is moving in the right direction, individual's constant search for meaning and purpose in life, and frequent positive emotions. Similarly Veenhoven (1984, p.27) defined happiness as the "degree which an individual judges the overall quality of his/her life a whole favorably". According to Sheldon, Kashdan, and Steger (2011), happiness is often equated with perpetual cheerfulness and devoid of any negative affect. Among these definitions, the largest divide is between hedonic views and eudaimonic views of happiness (Ryff and Singer, 2008).

The hedonic view aims at maximising pleasure and avoiding pain, and can include living a life of shallow values, greed and exploitation of others (Vella-Brodrick, Park and Peterson, 2009). The hedonic view deals with assessing the frequency and intensity of pleasant and unpleasant emotions (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988). On the other hand, eudaimonic view focuses on doing what is right and virtuous, pursuing important goals and developing one's skills (Seligman, 2002). Sense of purpose in life, personal growth, autonomy, and vitality, which are considered as the indicators of eudaimonic happiness, follow from the humanistic perspective, and capture aspects of optimal living that are less pleasurable (Ryff and Keyes 1995). This study uses Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills and Argyle, 2002) to measure happiness. The questionnaire measures more global aspects of happiness and seems to reflect eudaimonic happiness. It measures eudaimonic happiness because the items reflect general contentment and reflection on aspects of one's life (Maltby, Day and Barber, 2005).

Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) argued that there are three types of variables that may influence happiness. These factors might be happiness-relevant life circumstances, such as marriage and employment status; a genetically determined set point for happiness; and the extent to which individuals engage in activities that would increase happiness such as expressing gratitude, nurturing relationships, physical exercise, or spiritual activities. Leading from Lyubomirsky et al.'s argument on the factors that may influence happiness, this study examines the influence of happiness-relevant life circumstances, work-life balance, on happiness. The following hypothesis is formulated concerning the relationship between work-life balance and happiness:

H1: Work-life balance explains the amount of variance in happiness levels of employees.

Work-Life Balance – Generation X and Generation Y

Work life balance is mostly defined as the opposite of work-life conflict. The concept of work-life/family balance has emerged from the awareness that an individual's both work and life/family responsibilities may exert conflicting demands. Since we have more than one role in our modern lives, - wife, daughter, mother, father, employee, friend, husband- it is inevitable to experience a conflict in terms of the demands of these different roles. It is difficult to allocate equal hours for work and family/personal lives but the term work-life balance refers to "meaningful achievement and enjoyment in each of the four quadrants of life-work, family, friends and self" (Sree and Jyothi, 2012). Conflict theory proposes that using human time and energy in one role, decreases the time and energy remaining for other roles, thereby undermining performances in that role (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000; Parasuraman and Greenhouse, 2002).

Today, many organizations apply organizational policies and human resources strategies in order to help their employees to reduce the conflict mentioned above and to balance work and life domain. Starting from 1970's, more women start entering the workforce and the number of dual-career families where both the spouses are working had increased (Sree, Jyothi, 2012). The consequences of providing a balance between work and life domains are employer branding, reduced turnover and absenteeism rates, employee commitment, reduced job stress, reduced anxiety and depression levels, better physical and mental health, reduced fatigue and more life satisfaction (Frone, Russell and Barnes, 1996; Allen, Herst, Bruck and Sutton, 2000; Rose, Hunt and Ayers, 2007).

Generations differ from each other depending on their characteristics, life and work values. Accordingly, generations can be grouped into four; Veterans (born in 1925-1945), Baby Boomers (born in 1946-1964), "Generation X (born in 1965-1979) and Generation Y (Nexters, Echo Boomers, Millennials, Trophy Generation or born in 1980-1999) (Crampton and Hodge, 2009). Today, 25% of Turkey's population belongs to Generation Y. It must also be underlined that Turkey's young population is an important contributor to labor force growth (Kuran, 2010).

"Although many think that Generation X and Y are similar in their pragmatic outlook on life, there are differences. Generation Y has been characterized as less cynical, more optimistic, more idealistic, more inclined to value tradition, more similar to baby boomers than Generation X (Reisenwitz and Iyer, 2009). Baby boomers have underlined the importance of work-life balance on their satisfaction with work, but Generation X (born 1960-1980) and Y (born 1980-2000) workers place even higher value on their work-life domains (Klun, 2008). Generation X'ers do not stay at the same place of employment for more than five years (Chatzky, 2002). They prefer a work environment contributive to relationship building. They are technologically oriented, more educated, flexible, value money and benefits and fulfillment (Joyner, 2000). For Generation Y, learning should be goal-oriented and they value practical knowledge more than theoretical one. Moreover, Generation Y embraces flexibility and freedom in determining their working hours, possesses independence and autonomy in their work life alongside a sense of belonging, wants to create opportunities in order to learn new things, values difference in society, security, work-life balance and wants to have a meaningful job (Allen, 2004; Jurkiewicz, 2000; O'Bannon, 2001) .

Although both generation X and Y believe a balance between life and work, generation Y give their private lives, personal values and goals more importance than generation X (Jorgensen, 2003). According to the results of a survey conducted among Turkish teachers, generation Y teachers prefer their private lives to their jobs in the work-life balance (Balci

and Bozkurt, 2013) Generation Y, lived in a period in which social movements and social values pass on the rise. Thus, they value social and moral duties. Moreover, generation Y may quit their job for more money and more flexible working programs (Balci and Bozkurt, 2013). Generation Y grew up watching their parents many of whom were overworked, stressed and burned out. Because the previous generation saw work as the primary part of life, generation Y's priorities are different. For Gen Y-ers, work needs to fit within their lives and many are not willing to shape their lives around work demands. They want a full life that includes ample time with family, friends, and free time to pursue outside interests. The most common request these employees make of their employer is for flexibility and acknowledgment of the obligations and responsibilities that they face outside of the office. (mypabenefit).

Extent literature on the generation Y put forth 5 predominant themes; work-life balance, good-pay and benefits, opportunities for advancement, meaningful work experiences and a nurturing work experience. Generation Y demands for work-life balance at each stage of their careers (Corporate Leadership Council 2005; McDonald and Hite, 2008). Furthermore, Generation Y people had seen their parents (baby boomers) experienced work long hours, frequent layoffs, etc. Because of witnessing these unpleasant experiences of their parents', they prefer work conditions that provide enough time and space for non-work domain of employees. One of the main difference between Generation X and Generation Y is that Gen X employees are not committed and loyal towards their workplaces but to their fellow employees. On the other hand Gen Y employees develop a sense of commitment towards the products and ideas not to the workplace or fellow employees. The organizational commitment level of Gen Y is significantly lower than Gen X employees. Thus, it can be said that work or organization is just means to end not end itself for the Gen Y employees (Balci and Bozkurt, 2013).

In this study, it is expected to find out that employees who belong to Generation Y will be more happy than employees who belong to Generation X, if they have a work-life balance. There will be a significant difference between Generation X and Generation Y in terms of the relation between work-life balance and happiness. Based on the above argument, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₂: The positive relationship between work-life balance and happiness is moderated with belonging to whether Generation X or Y.

Method

In this part of the study, sampling, procedure of the study and measures will be discussed.

Sampling

The sampling of this stud consists of 251 white-collar employees working in İstanbul. The participants are working in large sized companies which operate at insurance, banking, medicine, tele-communication and chemical sectors. Convenience sampling was used as a sampling method.

Procedure

Some of the questionnaires were distributed by authors and some were distributed by key persons who had easy access to the respondents. These key persons were determined by authors and were given some information about the procedure of the study. Questionnaires

were answered and returned directly to the authors via e-mail or by hand in closed envelopes. 400 questionnaires were distributed and 258 of them were returned. The response rate is 64.5%. Seven of the questionnaires were inaccurately filled and left out of the analyses.

Measures

Work-life balance was measured by a scale that was originally developed by Fischer (2001) and adapted by Hayman (2005). The scale consists of 15 items. Sample items include “Hard to work because of personal matters”, “Jobs gives me energy to pursue personal activities”. A six point Likert scale ranging from “totally agree” to “totally disagree” was employed.

Happiness was measured by Oxford Happiness Inventory developed by Hills and Argyle (2002). This scale consists of 29 items and six point Likert scale ranging from “totally agree” to “totally disagree”. Sample items include “I usually have a good influence on events”, “I don’t find it easy to make decisions”.

In addition to the scales, some demographic questions were asked to determine the individual characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age, marital status, education, number of years in work life, and in current workplace.

FINDINGS

The analyses started with descriptive statistics of the sample. 55% of the sample is female and 57% is single. Mean age is 31.7 and ranges between 22 and 60 years. Majority of the sample is university graduate. 70% of the sample has a total work experience of 1-10 years. The findings are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Sample.

Variable	N	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Gender					
Male	114	55			
Female	137	45			
Age	251		31.78	6.99	22-60
Marital Status					
Married	107	43			
Single	144	57			
Education Level					
Primary	0	0			
High School	16	6			
University	182	73			
Post Graduate	53	21			
X Generation	104	41			
Y Generation	147	59			
Tenure	251		4.66	4.33	1-26 years
Total Experience	251		8.79	7.24	1-40 years

In order to find the factor structure of work-life balance scale, factor analysis using principal components solution with varimax rotation was used. 15 items of work-life balance measure were entered into factor analysis. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found as .780 which marked the homogeneous structure of the variables. The result of Bartlett Test (.000, Chi-Square: 1873.023, df: .105) showed that the variables were suitable for factor

analysis. 15 items loaded on four factors explaining the 71.816% of the total variance. The factor structure of the items was in line with Hayman's (2005) study, but last two items loaded on a separate factor. Factors were named as in Hayman's (2005) study i.e., work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, and work/personal life enhancement. The fourth factor was named as working with spouse because of the nature of the items. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Factor Analysis of Work-Life Balance Scale.

	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Mean Value
Factor 1: Personal Life Interference with Work variance: 23.331		.888	2.3912
My work suffers because of personal life.	.891		
Too tired to be effective at work.	.840		
Hard to work because of personal matters.	.823		
Worried at work because of personal activities.	.784		
Personal life drains me of energy for work.	.780		
Factor 2: Work Interference with Personal Life variance: 19.093		.851	3.4512
Put personal life on hold for work	.874		
Miss personal activities because of work	.851		
Job makes personal life difficult.	.786		
Personal life suffers because of work	.775		
Factor 3: Work/Personal Life Enhancement variance: 16.981		.797	4.0777
Better mood at work because of personal life	.820		
Better mood because of my job.	.813		
Jobs give me energy to pursue personal activities	.771		
Personal life gives me energy for my job.	.742		
Factor 4: Affect of Working with Spouse variance: 12.411		.915	3.4841
Working with spouse affects my job negatively.	.953		
Working with spouse affects personal life negatively.	.952		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Value: .780 df: 105			
Bartlett Significance Value: .000 Chi-Square Value: 1873.023			

Dependent variable of the study, happiness, was entered to the analyses as a total score. Twenty-nine items measuring happiness were summed and divided by twenty-nine.

The first hypothesis of the study stating that "Work-Life balance explains the amount of variance in happiness level of employees" was tested by regression analysis. The results of the regression analysis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis.

Dependent Variable: Happiness			
Independent Variables:	Beta	t value	p value
Personal Life Interference with Work	-.095	-1.727	.085
Work Interference with Personal Life	-.307	-5.507	.000
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	.377	6.965	.000
Affect of Working with Spouse	-.003	-.049	.961
R=.544; R²=.296; F value=25.892; p value=.000			

The results show that “work interference with personal life” has a negative influence and “work/personal life enhancement” has a positive influence on happiness. Based on these results, the first hypothesis is partially supported.

Second hypothesis stating that “The positive relationship between work-life balance and happiness is moderated with belonging to whether Generation X or Y” is tested by regression analysis. The X-Y Generation is entered as dummy variable to the analysis. The results are tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Regression Analysis.

Generation X		Dependent Variable: Happiness		
Independent Variables:	Beta	t value	p value	
Personal Life Interference with Work	-.029	-.325	.746	
Work Interference with Personal Life	-.378	-4.253	.000	
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	.275	2.138	.130	
Affect of Working with Spouse	.101	1.156	.250	
R=.504; R ² =.254; F value=8.414; p value=.000				
Generation Y		Dependent Variable: Happiness		
Independent Variables:	Beta	t value	p value	
Personal Life Interference with Work	-.142	-2.001	.057	
Work Interference with Personal Life	-.236	-3.247	.054	
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	.437	6.334	.000	
Affect of Working with Spouse	-.081	-1.154	.251	
R=.584; R ² =.342; F value=18.413; p value=.000				

Results of the regression analysis show that for employees who belong to Generation X, “work interference with personal life” negatively influences happiness. On the other hand, employees who belong to Generation Y, “work/personal life enhancement” positively influences happiness.

Discussion

According to the findings of the study, affect of work on life factor of work-life balance and work-life development explain the amount of variance in happiness (β :-.307, p =.001 β =.377, p =.000). This shows that when the work domain influences employees' life domain their happiness level decreases. On the other hand, when employees are motivated and full of energy both in their work and life domains their happiness level increase. This finding is also supported by the work of Gröpel and Kuhl.(2009). They stated that as an individual jump into work life, success on balancing work and social roles becomes a strong and important contributor to how well that individual feels.

One of the important finding of this study is the difference of the relationship between work-life balance and happiness according to Generation X and Generation Y. The findings of the study reveal that work interferences personal life negatively influences happiness for Generation X (β :-.378, p =.000). Concerning Generation Y, it is found that work/personal life enhancement positively influences happiness (β =.437, p =.000). This finding is in line with the related theory. Generation Y gives their private lives, personal values and goals more importance than Generation X (Jorgensen, 2003). For Gen Y-ers, work needs to fit within their lives and many are not willing to shape their lives around work demands. Related literature states that five themes are important for Generation Y of which one is work-life balance. Generation Y demands for work-life balance at each stage of their careers

(Corporate Leadership Council 2005; McDonald and Hite, 2008). When Generation Y feels energetic and have better mood at home and work, they feel happy.

The sampling size might be one of the limitations of the study. The relationship between work-life balance and happiness was also tested from the perspectives of Generation X and Y. Different variables would be used in future studies and studies may focus on the contingent factors in the relationship between work-life balance and happiness levels of Generations X and Y.

Today, in the neo-liberal era, we talk about a new workforce typology called “golden collar workers”. These employees are mostly employed in the service sector and have an excellent educational background. They are competent and possess many skills ranging from managerial skills to interpersonal skills such as conflict management, problem solving, team work etc. It can be said that this new workforce shows the characteristics of Generation Y. They have different goals, desires, life and work expectations than the previous generation which is Generation X. Thus, it is at high importance to study and understand this new employee profile in order to find out what should be the new human resources management strategies and implementations.

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