

Off-the-job Activities and Well-being in Healthcare Professionals

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The aim of the study was to explore the relationship between off-the-job activities and subjective well-being of the healthcare professionals. The sample of 185 healthcare professionals from three medical settings in Croatia were administered a questionnaire which included the measures of worker's satisfaction with the opportunity to carry out a set of 15 of off-the-job activities, as well as the measures of subjective well-being: life satisfaction, happiness and job satisfaction. Regression analyses were used to examine the effects of satisfaction with the opportunity to carry off-the-job activities on well-being measures. Out of various off-the-job activities, healthcare professionals in our sample were most satisfied with the opportunity to carry out family and household oriented activities (raising children, being with spouse or partner, shopping for household needs) and least satisfied with the opportunity to exercise, take part in organization and keep up with news. The satisfaction with the opportunity to shop for household needs was the only significant predictor of life satisfaction. None of the off-the-job activities predicted the overall happiness, only being younger was associated with higher reported overall happiness. Job satisfaction was predicted by satisfaction with balancing work and family life.

Key words: *off-the-job activities, life satisfaction, happiness, job satisfaction, work-family balance, subjective well-being.*

INTRODUCTION

Psychological well-being at work place is a topic of many studies (de Jonge et al., 2001; Adams et al., 1996; Bennett et al., 2001). Mostly, the well-being variables were examined in the context of work, in relation to job characteristics and work de-

mands. Job characteristics were found to be important predictors of workers' well-being (de Jong et al., 2001; Judge & Watanabe, 1993).

It has been argued recently that besides the factors that are directly work related, the manner in which work combines with

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other aspects of life (work-life balance) is also important in explaining the well-being of workers (Haworth & Lewis, 2005; Lewis et al., 2003). Off-the-job activities and conflict between work and family life were found to be good predictors of life and job satisfaction (Rode, 2004; Rode et al., 2007), as well as quality of life in general (Greenhouse et al., 2003). People reporting high levels of work-family imbalance were found to be less satisfied with their job and life, spending more time on work than on family was related to lower quality of life experienced. However, the study on quality of life and work conducted in 28 European countries in 2003 showed rather weak relationships between these two sets of variables, work-family balance and satisfaction with life and job (Wallace et al., 2007).

The increasing interest in exploring the nature and variety of off-the-job activities in relation to workers' well-being is inspired by the fact that recovery and rest which workers need in order to replenish own resources, usually happen in off-the-job time (Sonnetag, 2003; Sonnetag & Zijlstra, 2006; Winwood et al., 2007, Sonnetag & Zijlstra, 2006). It has been suggested that the degree of recovery obtained during free time is influenced by the nature of the leisure activity undertaken during that free time (Tucker et al., 2008). High amount of time spent on work-related activities was found to have a strong positive effect on the need for recovery, while time spent on social and physical activities had negative effect on the need for recovery (Sonnetag, 2003; Sonnetag & Zijlstra, 2006). Time spent on household or other low effort activities had no effect on the need for recovery. Winwood and colleagues (Winwood et al., 2007) showed that active and fulfilling off-the-job behaviours are significant factors that maximize recovery from work strain.

Our study follows this line of research by exploring the relationship between off-

the-job activities and worker's subjective well-being. A wide range of off-the-job activities covering 15 different individual responsibilities were used as predictors of several subjective well-being measures. In exploring subjective well-being, we employed the three components approach by using a measure of life satisfaction to represent the cognitive component, feeling of happiness to represent the affective component and the job satisfaction as third well-being component. It was expected that relationships between off-the-job activities and separate measures of well-being would be different, depending on the type of measure used, as a previous research showed that cognitive and affective components of well-being have different relationships with other variables (Diener, 2006; Lucas et al., 1996). Finally, we predicted different importance of off-the-job activities in predicting life and job satisfaction.

The study was a part of the international study conducted in Australia, Brazil, USA and Croatia in order to examine the extent to which several shift characteristics are associated with off-shift well-being. The study which combined four nations' research (N=906) was presented at the 18th International Symposium on Shift and Working Time (Barnes-Farrel et al., 2007) and later published (Barnes-Farrel et al., 2008). In the present paper, only the data which were not analysed in the combined four nations' study obtained in the Croatian sample are analysed. These results were presented as a poster at the XXIX International Congress of Psychology (Prizmić & Kaliterna Lipovčan, 2008).

METHODS

Subjects

Participants were 185 healthcare workers from three medical settings in Croatia.

Their age ranged from 19 to 65 years, with the mean age of 39.5 years (SD=10.46). Most of the participants were females (86%), with the 19.8 years (SD=10.6) of work experience in the health industry on average. The majority of the participants were nurses (82%), while the others were physicians.

Procedure and Measures

Healthcare worker volunteers completed the Survey of Work and Time for Healthcare Workers (SWAT-Healthcare) in their free time. The study was anonymous, conducted from October 2006 to February 2007 with the permission of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of Croatia. Completed surveys were collected a week after they were given to those participants who agreed to participate, so that the response rate was rather high (85%).

SWAT-Healthcare is a modification of a previous international collaborative survey (Barnes-Farrell & Rumery, 2000; Barnes-Farrell et al., 2002; Barnes-Farrell et al., 2008; Tepas & Barnes-Farrell, 1997). The survey included the measures of worker's satisfaction with the opportunity to carry out a variety of off-the-job activities, self ratings of different aspects of work demands, workers' ability, health, performance and job satisfaction. The Survey was translated from English to the Croatian language and then back-translated into English. For the purpose of this study, the items related to off-the-job activities and different subjective well-being measures were selected for the analyses.

Satisfaction with off-the-job activities. Participants rated how they feel about their opportunity to carry out each of the 15 off-the-job activities. Activities were related to household functioning (e.g. household work, shopping for household needs),

family functioning (e.g. raising children, being with spouse or partner), individual functioning (e.g. eating, sleeping, and exercise) and social functioning (e.g. contact with friends, taking part in organization). Ratings were done on the 5-point Likert scales on which 1 was ›unhappy‹ and 5 was ›pleased‹.

Life satisfaction. The five-item Satisfaction with the Life Scale was used (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). Subjects had to rate to what extent they agree with a particular statement (such as ›My life is close to my ideal life‹) using a 5-point scale on which 1 was ›totally disagree‹ and 5 was ›totally agree‹. The score was calculated as the mean of items. Higher scores mean better life satisfaction. The SWLS has been shown to have good psychometric properties (Pavot & Diener, 1993), which was confirmed in our study with Cronbach alpha of 0.84.

Happiness. The single item ›In general, how happy or unhappy do you usually feel?‹ rated on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 = ›extremely unhappy‹ to 10 = ›extremely happy‹ was used to estimate overall happiness.

Job satisfaction. Satisfaction with job was estimated with the single item: ›How satisfied are you with your job?‹ Participants rated their satisfaction on 4-point Likert on which 1 was ›very dissatisfied‹ and 4 was ›very satisfied‹.

Statistics

Correlation analyses were used to measure the relationships between off-the-job activities and three subjective well-being measures (life satisfaction, happiness and job satisfaction).

Hierarchical regression analyses were used to examine the effects of satisfaction with opportunity to carry off-the-job activities on well-being measures. Analyses were

done separately for life satisfaction, happiness, and job satisfaction.

RESULTS

Off-the-job activities and well-being

In Table 1 descriptive statistics of the examined variables are presented.

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics of 15 off-the-job activities, life satisfaction, overall happiness and job satisfaction (N=185)

Variable	M	SD
Household work	3.9	.80
Shopping for household needs	3.9	.95
Shopping for enjoyment	3.6	1.26
Being with spouse or partner	4.1	.98
Raising children	4.3	.82
Eating meals	4.1	.87
Sleeping	3.6	1.12
Entertainment	3.5	1.06
Exercise and sports	3.1	1.06
Contact with friends	3.8	.89
Taking part in organizations	3.2	.98
Education/training	3.2	.91
Keeping up with the news	3.6	.83
Obtaining health care	3.5	.93
Balancing work and family responsibilities	3.7	.87
Life satisfaction	3.1	.81
Happiness	6.96	1.66
Job satisfaction	3.0	.55

Among various off-the-job activities, participants were most satisfied with the opportunities to raise children, be with spouse or partner and eat meals. They were least satisfied with the opportunity to have exercise and sport, take part in organizations

and have education or training. The participants felt moderately happy and satisfied with their life in general, but were above average satisfied with their job (mean rating on job satisfaction scale ranging from 1 to 4 was 3.0 ± 0.55).

Further, we explored the relationships between 15 off-the-job activities and three well-being measures: life satisfaction, happiness and job satisfaction. Correlation analyses revealed a number of significant associations (Table 2).

The relatively highest positive correlations with life satisfaction showed variables that could be considered as family oriented activities, like being with spouse or partner (0.40) and shopping for household needs (0.39). The highest positive associations with happiness had social variables such as contact with friends (0.32), taking part in organizations (0.32) and entertainment (0.32). The strongest positive association with job satisfaction showed satisfaction with balancing work and family responsibility (0.36).

Correlations between satisfaction with off-the-job-activities showed weak to moderate relationships between various activities. The highest correlations were found between similar activities, such as shopping for household and for enjoyment (0.58) or between various out-off-home activities, such as taking part in organizations, education/training and keeping up with news (0.59). The lowest correlations were found between domestic and out-of-home activities, such as between taking part in organizations and household work (0.14) or between education/training and raising children (0.10).

Table 2.
Intercorrelations between 15 off-the-job activities and outcome variables: life satisfaction, overall happiness and job satisfaction (N=185)

15 off-the-job activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Household work	.49**														
2. Shopping for household	.25**	.58**													
3. Shopping for enjoyment	.26**	.43**	.47**												
4. Being with spouse	.21**	.26**	.30**	.46**											
5. Raising children	.16*	.23**	.22**	.26**	.32**										
6. Eating meals	.37**	.27**	.27**	.40**	.22**	.50**									
7. Sleeping	.22**	.27**	.40**	.48**	.28**	.36**	.59**								
8. Entertainment	.21**	.29**	.20*	.25**	.16	.30**	.39**	.55**							
9. Exercise and sports	.26**	.34**	.42**	.41**	.41**	.25**	.39**	.55**	.39**						
10. Contact with friends	.14	.31**	.39**	.27**	.24	.22**	.37**	.52**	.45**	.56**					
11. Taking part in organiz.	.20*	.35**	.31**	.28**	.10	.27**	.36**	.50**	.59**	.37**	.59**				
12. Education/training	.13	.33**	.35**	.20**	.17	.22**	.35*	.39**	.37**	.36**	.54**	.59**			
13. Keeping up with news	.35**	.30**	.27**	.33**	.26**	.37**	.47**	.49**	.47**	.47**	.48**	.55**	.50**		
14. Obtaining health care	.38**	.37**	.28**	.33**	.30**	.40**	.42**	.49**	.30**	.51**	.42**	.42**	.38**	.62**	
15. Balancing work/ family															
Outcome variables															
Life satisfaction	.16*	.39**	.33**	.40**	.23**	.17*	.28**	.38**	.34**	.36**	.34**	.25**	.23**	.36**	.32**
Happiness	.16*	.28**	.25**	.29**	.25**	.07	.28**	.32**	.22*	.32**	.32**	.17*	.15*	.24**	.28**
Job satisfaction	.04	.19*	.07	.11	.18*	.11	.22**	.21**	.24**	.23**	.21*	.25**	.30**	.28**	.36**

Notes: ** p<.01, * p<.05; The numbers from 1-15 in the first raw correspond to the numbers of the variables in the first column.

To examine the relationships between opportunity for various off-the-job activities and well-being variables, separate hierarchical regression analysis were conducted. Life satisfaction, happiness and job satisfaction were dependent variables and 15 off-the-job activities were separate predictors. Also, gender and age were entered in the model first to control their possible influence on examined variables. The results of hierarchical regression analysis with correspondent R and adjusted R square values for the each step are shown in Table 3.

22% of life satisfaction score. It is interesting to note that all off-the-job activity variables showed significant positive correlation with life satisfaction, but only satisfaction with shopping for household need was a significant predictor ($\beta = .27$). Workers who were more satisfied with shopping for household need reported to have better life satisfaction.

Overall happiness

The regression analysis for overall happiness showed that R for the final model

Table 3. Results of multiple regression analyses with 15 off-the-job activities as predictors of life satisfaction, overall happiness and job satisfaction

15 off-the-job activities as predictors	Life satisf.			Happiness			Job satisf.		
	β	R	R ²	β	R	R ²	β	R	R ²
Step 1		.19	.02		.27	.06		.14	.02
Age	-.10			-.28**			-.12		
Gender	-.18			-.05			-.10		
Step 2		.58	.22		.54	.17		.50	.12
Age	-.07			-.25**			-.13		
Gender ¹	-.10			.03			.00		
Household work	-.14			-.11			-.23*		
Shopping for household needs	.27*			.22			.20		
Shopping for enjoyment	.05			-.02			-.15		
Being with spouse or partner	.16			.04			-.07		
Raising children	-.01			.14			.15		
Eating meals	-.07			-.15			-.14		
Sleeping	.02			.19			.17		
Entertainment	.06			.06			-.06		
Exercise and sports	.16			.10			.13		
Contact with friends	.03			-.03			-.02		
Taking part in organizations	.11			.18			-.08		
Education/training	-.17			-.11			.03		
Keeping up with the news	-.08			-.01			.15		
Obtaining health care	.19			.19			-.01		
Balancing work and family	.06			.13			.34**		

Notes: ** p<.001, * p<.05; R= multiple correlation; R²= adjusted R square; ¹Gender variable was coded as 0= male and 1=female.

Life satisfaction

The regression analysis for Life satisfaction showed that overall R for the final model was 0.58 (p<.001). Based on adjusted R square, the off-the-job variables predicted

was 0.54 (p<.001). Based on adjusted R square, the off-the-job variables predicted 17% of life satisfaction score. However, none of the off-the-job activities significantly predicted happiness scores, the only

significant predictor appeared to be age ($\beta = .25$). Being younger significantly predicted higher overall happiness.

Job satisfaction

The regression analysis for job satisfaction showed that overall R for the model was 0.50 ($p < 0.001$). It explained around 12% of variance, based on adjusted R square. Job satisfaction was best predicted with satisfaction with balancing work/family responsibility ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) Workers who reported to be more satisfied in balancing work/family responsibility reported higher levels of job satisfaction. Satisfaction with household work was a suppressor variable ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < 0.05$), it improved prediction but showed no correlation with job satisfaction ($r = 0.04$, $p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

In this study, workers' satisfaction with opportunities to carry on different off-the-job activities were examined as predictors of well-being. In the growing literature on subjective well-being and/or quality of life, relatively little attention has been paid to the data on activities that people do in their free time (Robinson & Martin, 2008). Our results showed that some off-the-job activities have predictive values for different subjective well-being measures.

First, we explored the average satisfaction with opportunities to carry out different off-the-job activities of the healthcare workers, who are considered to be a group with high work demands (Galantino et al., 2005; (Bennett et al., 2001). Out of various off-the-job activities, healthcare professionals in our sample were most satisfied with the opportunity to carry out family and household oriented activities (raising children, being with spouse or partner, shopping for household needs) and least satisfied with the opportunity to be engaged in the activities which are usually freely

chosen (Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006) such as exercise, taking part in organization and keeping up with news.

In order to understand the association between off-the-job activities and subjective well-being better we examined their predictive value on each of the well-being measures. Our hypothesis that different activities would predict different well-being measures was confirmed. The satisfaction with opportunity to shop for household needs turned out to be the best and only significant predictor of life satisfaction. Reported satisfaction with spending for household might indicate the worker's buying capabilities and thus indirectly reflect their income. In our previous study, we showed that Croatian citizens were feeling happier and more satisfied with their lives the higher their income was (Kaliterna Lipovčan et al., 2007). However, as we did not include the measure of income in this study, we could only speculate on this.

On the other side, none of the off-the-job activities predicted the overall happiness, only being younger was associated with higher reported overall happiness. One of the explanations of this finding could be that the measure of happiness that we used was measuring the overall level of feelings and referred to general affective tendencies. It has been argued recently that in examining affective well-being the dimension of time should be considered (Ilies & Kelly, 2007; Krueger et al., 2009). When individuals report the subjective well-being with actual events that occurred in their lives or report the feelings experienced during the daily activities, the results should give more reliable accounts of emotional quality of each activity. However, using real-time data collection or diary recall methods could be costly and time consuming, so the attempts are rare (Krueger et al., 2009).

Beside those general subjective well-being measures, we explored whether the

off-the-job activities predict work-related well-being, such as job satisfaction. The satisfaction with balancing work and family life has been the only significant predictor of job satisfaction. Previous research on the relationships between family-work conflict and job satisfaction showed inconclusive results. Similarly to our results, some studies showed that conflict between work and family life had negative effect on job satisfaction (Adams et al. 1996, Rode et al., 2007), but also that it has very little or no effect on job or life satisfaction (Wallace et al., 2007). Taking into account that our sample consisted of healthcare professionals and mostly women, it could be expected that they lead an unbalanced life, working shifts and having family responsibilities, which significantly influenced their job satisfaction. Family and social support proved to be important for highly demanding jobs such as healthcare professionals (Bennett et al., 2001). Nurses with low levels of support from family reported higher stress levels at work and lower job satisfaction (Tyler & Cushway, 1995). Achieving an appropriate work-family balance is considered important not only for improving quality of life in general, but also for making family life sustainable.

In summary, multivariate analyses indicated that opportunities to carry out some off-the-job activities, particularly those that are family and household oriented are important determinants of subjective well-being and job satisfaction. Since our results relied on cross sectional data, it is not possible to determine the causal relationships among the variables. It would be interesting to analyse the gender as well as education level in relation to off-the-job activities and well-being, but the structure of our sample (the majority of sample were nurses and women) did not enable such analyses. In that respect, this study can be perceived as a starting point for further research that should include a larger scale of off-the-job

activities and a more heterogeneous sample of participants.

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Sažetak

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Cilj istraživanja bio je utvrditi povezanost između aktivnosti koje se obavljaju u slobodno vrijeme i subjektivnog blagostanja kod zdravstvenih djelatnika. Na uzorku od 185 zdravstvenih djelatnika iz tri zdravstvene ustanove u Hrvatskoj primijenjen je upitnik o zadovoljstvu s obzirom na mogućnost da se u slobodno vrijeme obavlja 15 pojedinačnih aktivnosti te nekoliko mjera subjektivnog blagostanja: životno zadovoljstvo, osjećaj sreće i zadovoljstvo poslom. Regresijskim analizama ispitan je utjecaj zadovoljstva mogućnošću da se u slobodno vrijeme obavljaju različite aktivnosti na svaku od mjera subjektivnog blagostanja. Rezultati su pokazali općenito da su ispitanici zdravstveni djelatnici najzadovoljniji mogućnošću da u slobodno vrijeme obavljaju aktivnosti vezane uz obiteljski život (bavljenje djecom, provođenje vremena sa supružnikom ili partnerom, kupovanje za potrebe domaćinstva), a najmanje zadovoljni mogućnošću sudjelovanja u različitim organizacijama, rekreativnog vježbanja i praćenja dnevnih događaja u medijima. Jedini značajni prediktor životnog zadovoljstva bila je mogućnost da se kupuje za potrebe domaćinstva, dok je za osjećaj sreće bila prediktivna jedino dob sudionika. Mlađa životna dob upućivala je na veći osjećaj sreće. Zadovoljstvo poslom najbolje je predviđalo zadovoljstvo uspostavljenom ravnotežom između života i rada.

Ključne riječi: slobodno vrijeme, životno zadovoljstvo, osjećaj sreće, zadovoljstvo poslom, ravnoteža života i rada.