

# WORK SATISFACTION AND HAPPINESS AT WORK

KAROLINA DRELA

University of Szczecin, POLAND  
e-mail: karolina.drela@wzieu.pl, karolina.drela@usz.edu.pl

RECEIVED 12 May 2018  
ACCEPTED 21 September 2018

JEL  
CLASSIFICATION J2, J8, M5, M54

KEYWORDS work, labour market, happiness at work, motivation

ABSTRACT The aim of the deliberations in this article is presentation of chosen issues associated with happiness at work, professional motivation and satisfaction from work. A hypothesis was put forward: professional work affects satisfaction from work, and a change of an employer causes that an employee becomes happy. In the beginning deliberations concerning happiness at work were placed. Then professional motivation and work satisfaction were presented. For a better illustration the most important factors affecting work satisfaction were shown. The subject matter of a successive part was satisfaction from work and employees leaving the job. The final part deals with more important conclusions of the deliberations.

## Introduction

Work is a job, but also a place where most of one's life is spent. Thus it should give employees not only adequate remuneration, but also a feeling of happiness and fulfilment. Although only a few years ago everyday duties were for Poles a certain kind of coercion, at present they are more and more often assessed positively. Satisfaction from work is a factor of a key meaning not only for the analyses concerning management, but also for the practice of the

functioning of enterprises or general satisfaction from people's lives. Hence the subject of a particular interest within the framework of the present article is the issue associated with happiness at work and work satisfaction. Due to the scope limits of the present publication, an attempt was made to present selected issues associated with happiness at work, professional motivation, satisfaction from work, putting forward a hypothesis: professional work affects satisfaction from life, a change of an employer causes that an employee becomes happy. In the analysis of the data the descriptive method and the secondary data analysis were used.

## Happiness at work

Contemporary work environments are often a source of discomfort. Long-lasting staying at a sitting position, stress, uncertainty of employment, working overtime, these are the causes of such a situation. Present models of work are rarely conducive to well-being. Organizational culture or arrangement of office spaces also often does not take into account some biologically conditioned needs of a human. Therefore scientists maintain that in the 21st century it is just diseases caused by office work that will be the main group of professional ailments. It seems that a kind of rescue can be the increasingly important issue of maintaining a balance between professional activity and a rest – a holistic approach to the issue of so-called well-being. Despite undertaken, by more conscious employers, initiatives promoting well-being in the workplace (corporate wellness) it is still a topic requiring broader understanding and implementation (Łydowska, 2018).

A definition of happiness, especially in reference to work, is difficult to define. It means different things to different people – adequate remuneration, a balance between duties and private life, a possibility of the development or consequent climbing up a career ladder. In reality an employee often thinks of himself/herself as happy, although he/she would not recommend his/her work to his/her family and friends.

The job agency Jobhouse (Jobhouse, 2017) in 2017 (Happiness at work of Poles) carried out studies concerning the level of happiness at work (Stańczyk, Bogdan, 2018). In the carried out studies this concept was not defined, but it was assumed that happiness is a subjective concept, therefore each of the respondents himself/herself assessed what he/she felt towards his/her work. For the majority it was a concept convergent with the feeling of satisfaction from work. The employees in the 0 to 10 scale assessed their level of work happiness at 6.3. This result should be treated as positive. It seems obvious that there is still a lot to improve, but this result is satisfying. The employees should be aware to what extent they feel happy in their workplace and from what this satisfaction or dissatisfaction results. If they are able to define the causes of the discomfort or not achieving happiness at work, they should eliminate or change them. It should be noticed that a change of a job is not always necessary. Sometimes a talk with the superior and the performance of a larger number of tasks that give people satisfaction and are less tiring for the employee, is sufficient.

Not only the work itself influences the feeling of happiness, but also the workplace, the town, the locality and district in which the work is performed have the same effect (Jobhouse, 2017). Nearly every second respondent thinks so (47%). Only 11% of the surveyed maintain that they first choose the place of living and the job they want to do. 42% of the surveyed think of the work itself as the most important, the place where they perform it, is not of such great significance to them. As many as 63% of the surveyed would consider the change the place of residence in favour of a better job. However, only 29% of the surveyed would recommend their work.

Not only one works to receive high remuneration. This can be confirmed by everyone who earns much and is not happy at work (Society for Human Resource Management, 2016). Good remuneration is important

and the respondents mentioned (Jobhouse, 2017) it as the first factor responsible for happiness at work (88%), but immediately afterwards they listed coworkers on whom one can rely (84%) and a possibility of professional development (81%). Thus the material aspect is still very significant to the employees, but the human factor is not of no significance, either. Important factors deciding about happiness at work are also the values of employees which should be consistent with the values of the organization, the employees should be aware of them and should manage them in everyday choices.

The managers emphasise that 3 factors decide about work happiness:

- talent (whether we are good at what we are doing or have predispositions to it) (Society for Human Resource Management, 2016),
- passion (whether we like what we are doing) (Piątkowska, 2018),
- the so-called reward (what we get for work: remuneration, perceiving a deeper sense of our work, being appreciated by superiors and the development through work) (Dobre, 2013).

Most of the people dissatisfied with their work have a loss in one of the three foundations. It often happens that work enjoys the worker through a definite time, and then it stops. Psychologists call it professional burnout. However not always the organization, the employer or even the work itself is hopeless. The employee often lacks challenges – the employee has mastered his tasks and they start boring him/her. In this case it is worth: determining what the worker likes at work and wants to do it more, and what he/she does not like, and wants to do it less, and also he/she wants to start to “leave” his her sphere of comfort – e.g., sharing their knowledge with others during public appearances.

The lack of happiness is felt by workers, but HR departments should improve the quality of work, taking into account the fact that the worker is unhappy: the behaviour of a person who once was smiling, and at present does not participate in the life of the organization should be a sign that something is going wrong. Apart from the observations, a talk is the most important. Good moments to start the topic on work satisfaction are e.g. periodic assessments of employees. It is worth asking the employees about their feelings – about the determination of processes, situations, tasks or factors that have changed for better and for worse in the enterprise and of those that the worker lacks for being happy. HR, like each worker, can change in a real way the atmosphere in the firm. Common initiatives of the workers strengthen the ties between them, therefore it is worth participating in them. Whereas, if the problem is the employer’s behaviour, it is worth defining it from the point of view of what does not suit the worker, it is worth thinking about emotions caused by such behaviour and conveying this in a diplomatic way to the manager. This can be done personally or by a trusted person (Stråberg, 2010).

Concluding, the situation on the labour market is conducive to a possibility of choosing a satisfying job, giving people happiness. Those who are looking for a job, and those who are working, do not have to undertake a job that does not meet their expectations. People professionally active have increasing awareness that happiness or lack of it spread on other fields of life, therefore they search for the organization which would provide it with a larger probability. However it should be remembered that it is not only the employer who takes care of the development of the employee and the balance between private and professional life. First of all the employee has a significant influence on it, therefore it is necessary to define what each worker can do in order to achieve happiness at work.

## Professional motivation and satisfaction from work

Many European countries change their attitude towards the employee. France is thinking of shortening working time, in Scandinavia more and more often free Fridays and certain minimum remuneration are mentioned and for years working hours have been meticulously controlled and overtime is only in extreme case permitted. Poland also decisively tries to introduce changes, but still not too effectively. Increasingly more people in Poland focus their attention to the possibility of keeping the so-called work-life balance. The employees do not think only of a promotion and of how to earn more at the expense of private life. They more often point to the need for the time for family and for non-work passions and for, mentioned earlier, happiness at work.

Many employers attach great importance to the worker's satisfaction, assuming that an increase in satisfaction will result in the growth of work effectiveness (Grabowska, Słotwińska-Roslanowska, 2017). Satisfaction from work, despite the fact that the relation between satisfaction from work and the effectiveness of the worker is not unambiguous (Springer, 2010), is mentioned as one of the key tools of the worker's motivation. Satisfaction from work is important and necessary. When the worker is satisfied with what he/she does every day, he/she works and lives better, is healthier and happier. However, as the studies of 2016 of the Gallup organization report, only 6% of people in Poland feel this satisfaction from work. What the employee needs to work pleasantly, in order that the employee is involved in what he/she does, is a very individual matter. Table 1 presents the factors that affect work satisfaction.

**Table 1.** The most important factors affecting work satisfaction

Factors	
Balance between life and work/separation of private life from work	Relations with people: interaction with competent people, with other people, being a part of a close-knit team
Lack of rat race	Attentiveness to the employees
Innovativeness	Good atmosphere
Clearly defined objectives and realistic expectations	Remuneration and benefits
A feeling of security, aim and sense, competence, self-agency, justice	A possibility of doing what the employee can do best
Locality/good access ways to workplace	Motivating tasks and challenges
Individual and group work	Responsibility
Respect for the employees/mutual respect	Work consistent with interests
Intercultural environment	Openness to changes and in relations
Praise/appreciation	Helping others
Prestige	Development
Self-reliance	Stabilisation
Freedom	Support
Facilities	Trust
Convergence of the value of the firm with the values of the employee	Business trips or lack of them

Source: the author's own description.

From the report "Non-wage benefits", prepared by the ARC Rynek i Opinie (the ARC Market and Opinions) in 2018 (Łuszczczyk, 2018), it can be seen that the meaning of each motivators of non-wage labour have changed. The so-called work-life balance, which for the employees was one of the most important factors, and still is important, has however been replaced by a more friendly atmosphere of work. It has also been overtaken by

stability of employment, locality of workplace, a good access way to work, a kind and form of employment and a possibility of the development and promotion. There has also been a change in understanding of the balance between professional and private life. Work and private life complete each other and combine in a various way depending on the stage of the employee's life. The employers have begun to perceive the significance of the needs of the employees, such as tolerance towards personal life and flexible working hours. The possibility of separating work from personal life constitutes one of the elements of the present definition of the concept of work-life balance.

There has been an increase in the percentage of workers who think that they maintain "a complete balance between work and personal life" (32% of the surveyed). At the same time the group of people who think that they do not keep this balance at all amounts to 6%. It turns out that the balance is more often declared by men, the employees within the age range between 26–45 and people with high education. Independently of the gender and the level of education the general work satisfaction has decreased. Such factors as, for example, flexible working hours (42%) and also "part-time job" (17%) would help the employees achieve the dream balance.

What should then the entrepreneurs do to increase the employees' satisfaction? The employers more and more often enable their workers to perform their duties at home, in the workplace there are more partnership relations, the employee's personal and intellectual development is taken care of. Increasingly more people think that work is an important sphere of life, but it should not be separated from the remaining life activities by an artificial barrier, nor should it be a dominating sphere. Not accidentally at the top of ranking list of non-wage benefits are: a friendly atmosphere, a location of the firm, a possibility of the development. All these benefits refer to the sphere of personal satisfaction. The skillful use of this trend by employers gives them a chance for good relations with the employees at relatively low costs.

### Work satisfaction and the employees' leaving work

Not all working people do a dream job – only a few such a job possess, but it does not mean that it is not worth looking for such one that will make us happy. If there is a reason that an employer has no need for searching for a new job, it is worth considering what to do to derive more pleasure from the current job. In such a case the theory of work modeling, the so-called "*job crafting*" will be helpful. American scientists have been developing this theory since 2001. They think that due to modeling it is possible to find a feeling of sense of work (the lack of a feeling of a sense leads in turn to occupational burnout) which is strictly connected with being involved in it. The method consists in the analysis of the employees' everyday duties, and whenever possible, adding to them such ones that give a concrete person the most satisfaction. Gradually, the ones which are burdensome to the employee, are eliminated or their intensity is decreased. *Job crafting* consists in taking over more initiative in the current professional life of a given worker's professional life. This kind of method is already used by some corporations which encourage their employees to change the range of their duties. They do not do that without a reason. As presented by the Gallup organization ([kariera.goldenline.pl](http://kariera.goldenline.pl)), the employees involved are by 50% more productive and bring the organization by 33% higher profits, and the clients with whom they cooperate show by 56% larger loyalty.

However, what happens when the workers are not satisfied with the current job? According to the Hudson and Great Digital research (Tymczyk, 2018), as many as 35% of the employees are not satisfied with their workplace and seriously think of changing it. Whereas 45% of the surveyed, despite general satisfaction from present work, consider changing the job to a different one. More than half the respondents want the change because of the lack of possibilities of the development in their firm, and 45% as a reason for leaving give the dissatisfaction with level

of remuneration and the benefits achieved. Whereas 41% of the employees admitted that the factor which inclines them to search for a new job is a bad atmosphere prevailing in the enterprise.

Sometimes a tiny aspect can cause that the employees will start looking for a new workplace. In order to prevent the employees' uncontrolled leaving the job, it is enough to check cyclically their experiences connected with the workplace and implement adequate action which improve their feelings.

The examination of the employees' experiences connected with the enterprise and an appropriate reaction to their suggestions raises the satisfaction of the group and transfers on multi-dimensional benefits for the organization. Firstly, an increase in the involvement of the employees spreads on the effectiveness of their work. A direct benefit for the firm are lower costs of work – within the framework of the same remuneration more tasks are realised. An indirect benefit for the organization is a growth in the satisfaction of the clients and the achievement of long-term relations with them. The involved employees become the ambassadors of the firm and thus form tighter bonds with contracting parties.

Secondly, the satisfaction with work limits, in a natural way, staff rotation and thus enables budget savings. The creation of friendly workplaces on the basis of the information collected from the employees will make it possible in future to keep valuable specialists to limit the costs associated with free job quitting.

Thirdly, the care of a positive experience of the employees with the firm increases a potential attraction of the employer on the market, and so, the number of the required candidates. People want to work in firms in which a say of the employees is taken into account and is significant to the superiors. High comfort of work and realization of good practices in the context of the relations the worker – the employer transfer on the number of applications and provide the enterprise with access to the qualified staff. A regular analysis of the employees' experiences with a given firm allows the employer to react quickly to challenges that appear in the organization, and positively influence the atmosphere and, the most significant, decrease the risk of the loss of good workers.

## Conclusions

The labour market undergoes large changes. The employees are the participants in the 4th industrial revolution which will affect the way and the attitude towards work. The attachment to one position, one career path or one employer will be a rarity. The development or keeping the firm on the market will require from its employees knowledge (*"knowledge workers"*) and new skills, inter alia, skills in learning throughout the whole life (*"life-long learning"*), including getting rid of old habits, skills in shaping one's own professional path, undertaking additional professional activities or work in favour of some entities in various projects, competent management of one's own time and agile regeneration of one's own energies.

Many employers still prefer directive way of management and do not take a say of the employees into account. Such an attitude inhibits the development of an enterprise and can result in wrong decisions. Open communication and recognition of the employees' perspectives result in benefits for the whole enterprise. If the employer wants his/her employees to be involved in shaping their workplace and talk about their needs, he/she has to prove that it is important to him/her.

Thus, the hypothesis put forward in the introduction should be rejected. Professional work influences satisfaction from life, however not always, and a change of the employer, also not in every case, causes that the employee becomes happy at work: he/she can work in worse conditions than at present or is accustomed to the performed job and does not need to change the employment. Searching for an ideal workplace, it could seem, that

it is important to do what one likes doing. Really, it is still one of the most important criteria that give the employer a chance for the development consistent with interests and for happiness at work. However it is worth drawing attention to one's own predispositions and first of all to organizational culture. To everyone important is a different thing: development, promotions, training courses. But there are also people who do not like many changes and prefer a safe workplace in which they know their duties well. Thus it is worth adjusting one's workplace so that it would really be suitable for a given employer and bring satisfaction from work performed.

## References

- Dobre, O.-I. (2013). Employee motivation and organizational performance. *Review of Applied Socio- Economic Research*, 1, 53–60.
- Grabowska, I., Słotwińska-Rostanowska, E. (2017). Zadowolenie z pracy a godzenie obowiązków zawodowych i rodzinnych przez pracujące kobiety z dziećmi w wieku do lat 14 w Polsce. *Kobieta i Biznes*, 1–4, 13–22.
- Jobhaus (2017). Szczęście w pracy Polaków. Raport z badania. Retrieved from: <https://www.jobhouse.pl/szczescie-w-pracy-polakow-wyniki-raportu,285.pl.html> (18.03.2018).
- Luszczuk, P. (2018). Satysfakcja z pracy a work-life balance. Retrieved from: <https://www.pb.pl/satysfakcja-z-pracy-a-work-life-balance-908557> (23.03.2018).
- Łydowska, E. (2018). Dobre samopoczucie w miejscu pracy. Retrieved from: <https://www.hbrp.pl/b/dobre-samopoczucie-w-miejscu-pracy/P12bxJ3sy> (10.03.2018).
- Piątkowska, A. (2018). Praca marzeń. Jak połączyć zwykłą pracę ze swoją pasją? Retrieved from: <https://kariera.goldenline.pl/praca-marzen-jak-polaczyc-zwykla-prace-ze-swoja-pasja> (23.03.2018).
- Society for Human Resource Management (2016). Employee job satisfaction and engagement. Revitalizing a changing workforce. A research report by the Society for Human Resource Management. Retrieved from: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Documents/2016-Employee-Job-Satisfaction-and-Engagement-Report.pdf> (20.03.2018).
- Springer, A. (2010). Satysfakcja a poziom dopasowania kompetencji do wymagań stanowiska pracy. *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej we Wrocławiu*, 19, 151–165.
- Stańczyk, D., Bogdan, N. (2018). O szczęściu w pracy, czyli czy Polacy są w końcu szczęśliwi? Retrieved from: <http://www.wyzwaniahr.pl/szczescie-w-pracy> (20.03.2018).
- Stråberg, T. (2010). Employee perspectives on individualized pay. Attitudes and fairness perceptions. Stockholm: Stockholm University.
- Tymczyk, J. (2018). Zjawisko niekontrolowanych odejść z firmy coraz powszechniejsze. Jak skutecznie badać zadowolenie pracowników? Retrieved from: <http://www.pulshr.pl/rekrutacja/zjawisko-niekontrolowanych-odejsc-z-firmy-coraz-powszechniejsze-jak-skutecznie-badac-zadowolenie-pracownikow,51885.html> (15.03.2018).

**Cite this article as:** Drela, K. (2018). Work satisfaction and happiness at work. *European Journal of Service Management*, 3 (27/1), 81–87. DOI: 10.18276/ejism.2018.27/1-10.