



The Relationship between Work-Life Satisfaction and Marital Happiness

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Introduction

- With 85% of Americans marrying at least once by the age of 50,¹ several studies have found there to be a correlation between marital satisfaction and general happiness.
- The relationship between these one's work-life and marital happiness is not fully understood.
- A 2005 study found that an individual's satisfaction at work impacts, at least in the short run, their satisfaction with their marriage, and vice-versa.²
- Another study, however, found that there was no evidence of a causal relationship between job and family satisfaction.³

Research Questions

- Is there an association between job satisfaction and marital happiness?
- Do a person's sex, income, hours worked, and stress levels at work affect the relationship between job satisfaction and marital happiness, or will examining them reinforce the former research question?

Methods

Sample

- Data were drawn from the 2016 and 2018 publications of the General Social Survey (GSS), representing adult American residents.
- In 2016, 2,867 adults responded to the survey, followed by 2,348 in 2018, totaling 5,215 adult respondents aged 18 and older.
- In the case of the present analyses, only respondents who are both employed and married are being considered (N=1,384).

Measures

- A respondent's marital happiness was determined based on their response to a question scaled 1 (Not too Happy) to 3 (Very Happy). The variable was then dichotomized, with 1 indicating the respondent was very happy with their marriage and 0 indicating they were not.
- Job satisfaction and work stress were based on questions with responses ranging from 1 to 4 and 1 to 5, respectively.
- Income was dichotomized to differentiate between respondents who earned more or less than \$25,000 annually.

Results

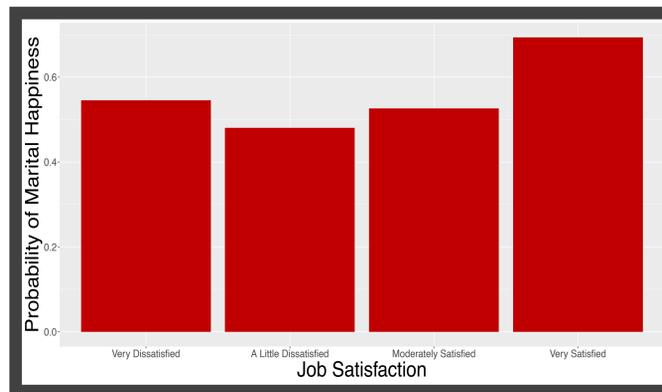
Univariate

- The most common response (49.6%) was that respondents were very satisfied with their jobs, and only 3.8% reported being very dissatisfied.
- Most respondents (62.1%) reported being very happy with their marriages.
- 63.1% of respondents had an income greater than or equal to \$25,000.

Bivariate

- A Chi-Square test of independence revealed that among married, employed adults (my sample), job satisfaction and marital happiness were significantly associated, $\chi^2 = 39.311$, 3 df, $p = 1.492e-08$.

Figure 1. Marital Happiness and Job Satisfaction



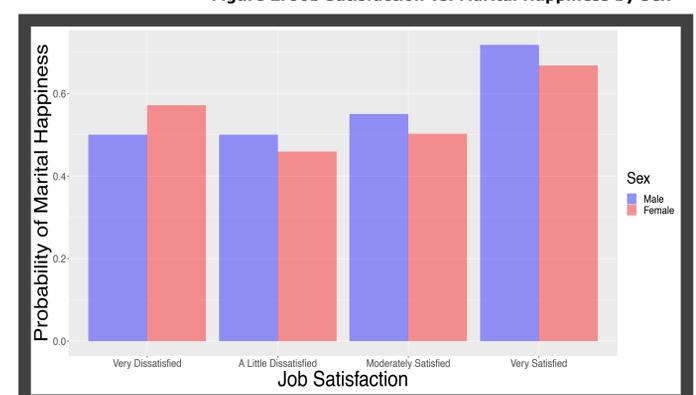
- Post hoc comparisons of rates of marital happiness by job satisfaction levels revealed that higher rates of marital happiness were seen among those "Very Satisfied" with their jobs. In comparison, rates of marital happiness were statistically similar among those "Very Dissatisfied," "A Little Dissatisfied," and "Moderately Satisfied" with their jobs (Figure 1).

- A simple logistic regression between job satisfaction and marital happiness further displays this association. Marital happiness is significantly higher for individuals "Very Satisfied" with their jobs compared to those "A Little Dissatisfied" or "Moderately Satisfied".

Multivariate

- Marital happiness was significantly associated with job satisfaction when accounting for sex, income, hours worked, and work stress levels. Respondents who were very satisfied at work were more likely to have a very happy marriage than those who were a little dissatisfied (3 times) or moderately satisfied (2.1 times) at work.

Figure 2. Job Satisfaction vs. Marital Happiness by Sex



- Also, sex appears to be significantly associated with marital happiness ($p=0.04$). On average, the odds of being satisfied with their marriage is 1.4 times higher for men than it is for women (Figure 2).
- Additionally, income, hours worked, and work stress levels are not significantly associated with marital happiness.

Discussion

- As shown with a Chi-Square test and a multiple logistic regression, individuals who are very satisfied with their jobs may be more likely to be very happy with their marriages.
- This research may be helpful to marriage counselors or other health professionals when providing advice to couples in fractured marriages. For example, knowing that a potential reason for unhappiness at home could be dissatisfaction with one's job, a job change could be suggested to possibly improve marital relations.
- Further research is needed to examine other possible confounding variables such as one's job industry, marriage length, number of children, or other personality factors that may affect marital happiness.

1 Wang, W., & Parker, K. (2014). Record Share of Americans Have Never Married. Retrieved from Pew Research Center

2 Heller, D., & Watson, D. (2005). The Dynamic Spillover of Satisfaction Between Work and Marriage: The Role of Time and Mood. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(6), 1273-1279. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.6.1273

3 Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1994). RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB AND FAMILY SATISFACTION - CAUSAL OR NONCAUSAL COVARIATION. *Journal of Management*, 20(3), 565-579. doi:10.1016/0149-2063(94)90003-5