



Dissatisfying Jobs: Effects on Health and on Happiness

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Aim: The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between some aspect of dissatisfaction with work and both self-assessed health conditions and self-reported happiness score. The hypothesis to test is that the physical effect (health) and the psychological effect (happiness) of different stressful conditions at work may be somewhat different. Among the stressful conditions we test the effect of dissonance between desired income and income-generating effort, between desired and actual amount and quality of post-work time, between expected and actual job security, between freedom at work expected and obtained.

Data: The release 2 of European Social Survey is used to test the effectiveness of dissatisfaction with work as a potential health and happiness damaging factor. Limitations of the dataset are the poor content in variables representing objective health conditions, while its strength are the rich availability of social capital variables and of working conditions variables. According to specifications the used dataset is made of around 35000-40000 individuals from many countries. Both the health and happiness/life satisfaction equations are estimated with an ordered probit specification.

Results: The results show that the important factors on physical ground are the lack of correspondence between income expectations and income generating effort and the unmet need for a secure job, while on psychological ground the relationship between effort and reward loses its importance, while new factors comes to attention, namely the dissonance between wanting a job allowing decisional freedom and obtaining it effectively and the too absorbing nature of work, subtracting more time than expected to family interests. Further result is the importance of social capital more on happiness than on health.

Discussion: Desiring a job that gives you a high income and not obtaining it, desiring a secure job and not obtaining it, desiring a job giving time for your family and not obtaining it, desiring a job according some freedom and not obtaining it, can adversely affect either health or happiness: which are the tentative causes of such dissonances? We make a first test on the importance of values/opportunities transmitted by parents: is the level of education of parents important? Is their occupation relevant? The provisional attempt seems to give some support to the view that parents' education and occupation may affect later health and happiness achievements of children via the job satisfaction channel.