

Workplace Well-being, Gender and Age: Examining the ‘Double Jeopardy’ Effect

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Accepted: 9 October 2012 / Published online: 19 October 2012
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Abstract This study examines the effects of age and gender on work-related subjective well-being, looking at job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction. Specifically, it investigates whether older women, who may be doubly disadvantaged in being old and being women, are victims of a “double jeopardy” effect. Self-reported survey-data were obtained from 446 adults employed full-time. The results of this study suggest that age seems to matter more than gender in the workplace, and that aging is associated with lower job-related well-being and higher job satisfaction. Although older women reported slightly lower job-related affective well-being than men, the decrease of subjective well-being with age impacts on both genders.

Keywords Work-related subjective well-being · Job satisfaction · Age · Gender

1 Introduction

Workplace well-being has been an important research topic over recent decades (see e.g., Danna and Griffin 1999; Warr 2007 for a review). Underlying this interest is the idea that a better understanding of the concept can help promote employee well-being, leading to worthwhile individual and organizational outcomes. Achieving such outcomes poses a challenge for managers negotiating the on-going demographic changes in the contemporary workplace, specifically those concerning age and gender participation ratios.

The impact of socio-demographic variables on well-being has long been recognized (e.g., Diener et al. 1999). Among these variables, gender and age stand out as being two of the most basic individual attributes in terms of demographic identity. Despite their importance, these variables have usually been controlled and possible effects seldom

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analyzed on their own. Furthermore, both gender and age are constructs deeply rooted in social dynamics, are culturally defined and subject to macro-level changes. As such, the trends towards gender equality and socio-legal adjustments to the concept of age in organizations may impact on levels of well-being.

It is important to look at the joint effects of demographic variables since they may differ in combination. For instance, Lincoln and Allen (2004) found that age and gender interacted negatively and that older female actors received significantly fewer film roles compared to other actors. Ng and Feldman's (2010) meta-analysis shows that although older workers as a whole show more favorable job attitudes, these were not shared by older women. Other studies have also suggested the existence of discrimination towards women at different age stages (e.g., Duncan and Loretto 2004), but the combination of gender and age has been relatively overlooked.

The concept of well-being has been described by Ryan and Deci (2001, p. 1 41) as "a complex construct that concerns optimal experience and functioning". Two conceptions exist that reflect differing perspectives, namely subjective well-being and psychological well-being (see Keyes et al. 2002). While the former refers to subjective and global estimations of life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect, the latter bears upon the actualization of human potentials. Though related, these are in fact distinct (Keyes et al. 2002), albeit often used interchangeably.

Subjective well-being takes overlapping forms and can be examined on various dimensions of scope. Job-related affect is a core aspect of subjective well-being at work (Warr 2007). Research findings have indicated a positive relationship between subjective well-being and job satisfaction and the two constructs tend to be intercorrelated (e.g., Warr 2007). Research on employee subjective well-being has largely focused on job satisfaction (Page and Vella-Brodrick 2009).

Some authors (e.g., Davern et al. 2007) suggest that subjective well-being and domain specific satisfaction judgments are largely affective in nature and driven by affective heuristics. However, other authors (e.g., Rafaeli et al. 2009) claim that job satisfaction is a cognitive rather than an emotional response since it is an evaluation of working conditions and work features (e.g., autonomy, supervision, promotion opportunities) that implies less spontaneous assessments than feelings and emotions based on the situation at work. In the same line, Wright and Cropanzano (2000) argue that it is possible for a worker to report subjective well-being and job dissatisfaction simultaneously. Furthermore, as Kaplan et al. (2009) point out, most job satisfaction measures are cognitive in nature and employees are not asked how they feel.

Consistent with the latter line of enquiry, it seems that in order to grasp employee subjective well-being in the workplace it is essential to examine both job-related subjective well-being and job satisfaction. Job-related subjective well-being has attracted less notice in comparison with context-free well-being and there is still a need to test whether previous findings can be extended to different social contexts (Warr 2007).

There has been research on how older employees are discriminated against compared to younger employees (see e.g., Posthuma and Campion 2009). However, literature reviews on gender-related differences in subjective well-being are so far inconclusive and there is scant information for the relation between age and job satisfaction (e.g., Warr 2007). Furthermore, in this line of research an analysis of the additive or interactive effects of age and gender is still missing.

There are calls for research on the influence of age stereotypes in the workplace (e.g., Posthuma and Campion 2009) and the need to understand the influence of multiple group membership is particularly relevant considering the changes in the working population

with a significant presence of women in the workforce and an increasing number of older people who have to work longer. To manage diversity and promote subjective well-being requires deep comprehension of the employee demographics in organizational life. Understanding the combined effect of age and gender contributes to new perspectives on subjective well-being in organizations which is worthwhile for both researchers and practitioners.

The double jeopardy hypothesis was originally developed by examining sex and race (Beale 1970), but this study expands work previously done on the subject (e.g., Barnum et al. 1995) by looking into age instead of race. It also expands work on subjective well-being at work by analyzing job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction as indicators of subjective well-being at work. We begin with an overview of the relevant literature, followed in turn by the results of the empirical study, a discussion and a conclusion.

2 Job-Related Affective Well-Being and Job Satisfaction

Despite the growing interest and scientific inquiry into the structure of human affective experience, definite conclusions have yet to be reached. Researchers have traditionally relied on dimensional models of affect on the assumption that emotions are defined by two dimensions (Seo et al. 2008). Various models have been proposed. Watson and Tellegen (1985) put forward a structure with two functionally independent dimensions, labeled positive and negative affect. Russell (1980) represented affective well-being along two dimensions—pleasure and arousal—mapped out on a circumplex according to which different emotions were scaled. Warr (1990, 2007) formulated a circumplex model comprising an axis of pleasure-displeasure on a horizontal dimension alone, intersected by two axes accounting for mental arousal and pleasure running diagonally between opposite quadrants.

Work related subjective well-being has often been operationalized as job satisfaction, but Warr departed from that view to develop a model of affective well-being in the workplace context (1990, 2007). This construct is defined as an estimation of how well the subject feels while working and is influenced by personal and environmental aspects. The latter include generalized job-related experiences and facet-specific dimensions such as satisfaction with fellow workers and rates of pay. It is thus a multifaceted concept comprising pleasant and unpleasant states of high or low arousal and is differentially predicted by distinct job characteristics (Warr 1990, 2007).

Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which people report satisfaction with intrinsic and extrinsic features of the job (Warr et al. 1979), and may be regarded as an evaluative judgment to which affect can be seen as an antecedent (see Kaplan et al. 2009). Furthermore, research has shown that subjective well-being and job satisfaction may act independently (e.g., Wright and Bonett 2007). Consistent with this line of enquiry, it seems that in order to better capture employee subjective well-being in the workplace it is thus necessary to examine both job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction can be assessed either globally as overall satisfaction or as an aggregate of satisfactions having to do with specific job facets (see Spector 1997). There are advantages to studying job facets since diverse features contribute to the overall evaluation of the job, making it possible to be globally satisfied with one's job but not with all its aspects. Moreover, analyzing facet satisfaction has a more practical interest since it permits identification of key aspects of the workplace that may impact on employee well-being.

Various studies have investigated the relationships between job facets and well-being. Whether these are causal, curvilinear or reverse-causal or buffer the effect of stressors, they have been found to impact on the experience of work-related well-being. For instance, individual control over tasks, variety and demands placed on the employees have been found to be relevant predictors of subjective well-being (e.g., Fotinatos-Ventouratos and Cooper 2005; Holman 2002). There is also robust evidence that relationships at work are a major influence in job-related well-being, either directly or indirectly (e.g., Danna and Griffin 1999; Gilbreth and Benson 2004) as well as supervisor-employee feedback (e.g., Sparr and Sonnentag 2008).

In sum, overall findings suggest that in order to assess subjective well-being in the workplace it is better to bring together job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction and to assume that job facets have a clear impact on well-being. We turn now to gender and age differences.

2.1 Gender and Age-Related Differences

Literature reviews on gender-related differences in subjective well-being are so far inconclusive. According to some sources, women have poorer emotional well-being (e.g., Fotinatos-Ventouratos and Cooper 2005; Hendrix et al. 1994). According to others, women have traditionally reported higher subjective well-being than men, but this has shown a downtrend since the 1970s. Examining data from the Eurobarometer for 12 European countries, Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) observed a decline in subjective well-being in both absolute terms and relative to men. Ryff and Keyes (1995) in their investigation on the various well-being dimensions found gender differences only on the dimension “positive relation with others” and by contrast, other surveys found insignificant gender differences on measures of subjective well-being (e.g., Diener 1984; Inglehart 2002). In the literature on stress, gender has been found to play a role in moderating the effects of stress on subjective well-being (e.g., Hendrix et al. 1994). It should be noted that research on gender in organizations has found that gender stereotypes still impact on how women are perceived in the workplace (e.g., Heilman and Eagly 2008) and this may affect their well-being.

On job satisfaction and related issues, some analyses indicate that women tend to be more satisfied at work than men and several researchers have proffered explanations (e.g., Clark 1997). Nevertheless, other research shows few or no gender differences in the determinants of job satisfaction (e.g., Hodson 1989) and reports similar patterns of relationships between job facets and job satisfaction for both genders (Voydanoff 1980). Still further studies produce evidence to show that gender moderates the association between subjective well-being and job features (Warr 2007). For instance, women tend to report greater satisfaction at the facet level: namely the activity itself, job security and working hours (Souza-Poza and Souza Poza 2000).

Variations in job facet preferences have also been documented. For instance, women seem to set a higher value on good social relations and rapport with management while men tend to prize personal control, skill use and income (Souza-Poza and Souza Poza 2000; Warr 2009). It is also noteworthy that women have reportedly higher turnover rates, stress and absenteeism (e.g., Hendrix et al. 1994). Support therefore for significant gender differences in work-related subjective well-being is inconsistent. However, age is also a factor that may impact employee subjective well-being commensurate with gender.

The literature review on age conducted by Shore et al. (2009) reveals negative predictors for older workers (e.g., stereotypes, age discrimination). According to some studies,

positive affect increases with age while negative affect declines (Mroczek and Kolarz 1998). Others found a U-shaped relation between age and depression (Peeters and Van Emmerik 2008), and still others report that only some dimensions of subjective well-being remain stable, while others decline, and that age per se is not a cause of decline (Kunzmann et al. 2000). Warr (2007) suggests that there is a positive linear trend between age and job-related well-being, and medium-aged workers report lower subjective well-being than both younger and older colleagues. Medium-aged employees were found to report the highest levels of depression and job anxiety (Warr 1992).

There is empirical evidence to show that context-free subjective well-being increases with age (see Carstensen 1995; Diener 1984; Ryan and Deci 2001; Ryff 1989). The arguments advanced suggest that with age there is a shift in the relative salience of cognition versus emotion (Carstensen 1995). Thus older people are more likely to experience positive emotions and less likely to experience negative emotions relative to young people (Charles et al. 2001). Moreover, coping resources tend to improve with age (e.g., Shirom et al. 2008). It is important to point out that significant country differences have been found regarding overall life appraisal and age (Ruiz Paiva et al. 2009).

There is ample evidence that job satisfaction also tends to increase with age (e.g., White and Spector 1987) and older employees tend to have lower rates of absenteeism and turnover (Shirom et al. 2008). Older employees tend to hold jobs that better fit their personal characteristics, have more influence in the organization and to acquire over time other cognitive or external resources that mediate the effects of age on satisfaction (see e.g., White and Spector 1987). Most researchers have found a positive linear relation between age and job satisfaction, but different types of relationship have also been reported such as positive linear, negative linear, U-shaped, inverted U-shaped or inverted J-shaped, or else no significant relationship (Bernal et al. 1998).

Scant information is available for the relationship between age patterns and job facets (Warr 2007). According to available research, satisfaction with the activity itself tends to be greater at older ages, but not so much as concerns opportunities, co-workers and supervisors. Income and promotion opportunities are less important to older employees of either gender and intrinsic satisfaction is more positively correlated with age than is extrinsic satisfaction (Warr 2007). Ng and Feldman's (2010) meta-analysis suggests a significant though weak relationship between age and affirmative attitudes towards work tasks, colleagues, supervisors and the organization in general.

Further research findings suggest that gender may be a factor in strengthening or weakening the positive associations between age and well-being. Hyde's (2005) meta-analysis shows that gender differences fluctuate with age. Mroczek and Kolarz (1998) report that when well-being is defined by positive affect, older people of both genders are happier than other adults. When defined by negative affect there was no association among women and unmarried men.

Nevertheless, Inglehart's (2002) findings from 24 countries show that in developed societies women under 45 tend to be happier than men but older women less happy. Pinquart and Sörensen (2001) also found that older women reported significantly lower levels of subjective well-being and Ng and Feldman's (2010) meta-analysis suggests that although older workers have more favorable job attitudes, these were not shared by older women, who may be victims of a "double jeopardy".

Legal changes and trends towards gender equality may have been countered by a tendency to depreciate the social worth of older women in some societies, as Inglehart (2002) suggests. Furthermore, some evidence of age bias in the workplace has also been reported (Goldman et al. 2006; Heilman and Eagly 2008; Posthuma and Campion 2009;

Riach 2009) and sex-role stereotypes may still be in place. Although it is known that women seem to be more likely than men to experience ageist attitudes directed at them, little is known about how ageism affects employees or the gender dimensions of ageism (Duncan and Loretto 2004).

As previously noted, despite the large number of studies, consistent conclusions have yet to be reached about gender differences and research findings on age are similarly inconclusive. On the whole, the review of the literature on the combined effect of age and gender suggests a positive association between age and well-being, except for older women. Regarding job satisfaction, on the whole there is ample evidence that job satisfaction tends to increase with age for both genders.

The current study aims at making a contribution to a better understanding of subjective well-being at work by investigating the joint effect of age and gender. It assesses job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction as indicators of subjective workplace well-being. Specifically, it investigates whether older women, who may be doubly disadvantaged in being old and being women, are victims thus of a “double jeopardy” effect.

Given the aforementioned, the following specific hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1 Job-related affective well-being would vary with age and gender combined and older women would report the lowest levels of job-related well-being;

Hypothesis 2 Job satisfaction would vary with age and gender combined and older women would report the lowest levels of job satisfaction.

3 Method

3.1 Respondents

Completed data were obtained from 446 full time working Caucasian adults. Women made up 52 % of the sample, 43 % of the sample were aged between 18 and 34, 40 % between 35 and 49, and 17 % over 50 years old. The majority were married (56 %). Twenty-four per cent had completed a basic education, 24 % a secondary education and 51 % had attended university, 63 % of the latter being females. Some 41 % were blue-collar workers, 46 % white collar workers, 3 % salespeople and the rest in various other occupations. Women constituted about 58 % of the white collars and 48 % of the blue collars. Six per cent occupied management positions and 1 % were top managers, all of them men. About 49 % had organizational tenure of between 1 and 9 years.

3.2 Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed over the period 2009–2010 in the north of Portugal to several organizations covering the industrial and services areas, by personal approach to respondents and through intermediaries, who were asked to forward a questionnaire to their work colleagues. The distribution did not have corporate endorsement or management involvement. Participants were told to complete the questionnaire in their own time and that their answers would be totally confidential. Questionnaires were collected by the authors or by their intermediaries. Since many questionnaires were distributed through work colleagues the response rate cannot be accurately determined, but it is estimated that about 50 % of the respondents returned a completed questionnaire.

3.3 Measures

Job-related affective well-being was assessed with the Warr (1990) 12 item scale. This scale has been widely used and its validity well studied. The response scale consisted of six positive feelings (enthusiastic, contented, excited, comfortable, interested, relaxed) and six negative feelings (tense, anxious, gloomy, depressed, worried and miserable). In this scale respondents are asked to report how they feel at work ("Thinking overall about the past weeks how have you felt about your job?") choosing on a 5-point Likert-type scale the degree to which they felt enthusiastic, miserable, gloomy and so forth. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal reliability of the scale was .75. As described by Warr (1990), the negative adjectives of the scale were reverse-scored and a global score was computed, higher values indicating greater well-being.

Job satisfaction was measured with a 16 item scale based on Warr, Cook and Wall's (1979) measure which is regarded as cognitive in nature (Kaplan et al. 2009). The scale covers the most important job facets widely used in similar research, covering both intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as personal influence, opportunity to use abilities, job demands and stress, variety, autonomy, recognition, work colleagues, pay rate, adequate physical setting, valued role, supportive supervision, job security and career outlook. Respondents were asked to rate their degree of satisfaction with each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = from very unsatisfied to 5 = extremely satisfied). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal reliability of the job satisfaction scale was .92. A mean score was computed across the 16 items of the scale, where higher values indicated higher satisfaction.

Finally, respondents were asked to identify their age, gender, marital status, educational level and occupation. Following Warr (1992), age was categorized into three groups: 18–34, 35–49, and over 50 years old.

4 Results

In this study job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction were treated as dependent variables while gender and age and other variables were treated as independent. Organizational variables (type and size), tenure, occupation and educational qualifications were controlled in the analysis reported here.

A confirmatory factor analysis of all the items of the job satisfaction and job-related well-being (with eigen values above 1.00) revealed that the two measures were factorially distinct, although there was a significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and job-related well-being. Results showed that mean scores were higher for job satisfaction than for job-related affective well-being. On job facet satisfaction, respondents were more satisfied with work colleagues followed by degree of responsibility given, and less satisfied with career outlook, work demands, stress and pay rate. Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the variables are presented in Table 1.

Analysis of variance were conducted to test if job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction would vary with age and gender. Gender differences were found for job-related affective well-being with men showing a slightly higher level of subjective well-being than women (see Table 2), $F(1,443) = 5.83$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. However, for job satisfaction no significant difference was found. Few significant gender differences were found for each job facet. Women were modestly more satisfied with work hours ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.0$) than men ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.1$), $F(1,405) = 3.63$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, while

Table 1 Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1 Job affective well-being	3.35	.45	–																	
2 Job satisfaction	3.54	.68	.55	–																
3 Working conditions	3.75	.94	.26	.51	–															
4 Autonomy	3.72	.98	.35	.69	.36	–														
5 Colleagues	4.06	.85	.28	.58	.19	.30	–													
6 Recognition	3.48	1.35	.28	.58	.26	.36	.29	–												
7 Immediate boss	3.71	.99	.36	.70	.24	.44	.40	.41	–											
8 Responsibility	3.86	.88	.41	.67	.31	.49	.32	.38	.48	–										
9 Rate of pay	3.06	1.24	.47	.67	.30	.42	.24	.25	.38	.42	–									
10 To use abilities	3.56	1.07	.41	.72	.34	.55	.38	.33	.49	.51	.46	–								
11 Relationship with management	3.70	1.02	.40	.71	.28	.48	.40	.43	.57	.46	.42	.55	–							
12 Career outlook	3.02	1.15	.45	.74	.39	.50	.27	.40	.47	.40	.50	.55	.55	–						
13 How the org. is managed	3.27	1.10	.44	.73	.28	.46	.26	.34	.50	.42	.47	.48	.54	.62	–					
14 Personal influence	3.43	.98	.40	.73	.28	.48	.28	.48	.28	.39	.60	.51	.41	.55	.54	–				
15 Work hours	3.60	1.07	.24	.47	.19	.27	.22	.19	.24	.29	.35	.17	.24	.25	.26	.23	–			
16 Variety in the job	3.73	.91	.39	.70	.32	.50	.32	.36	.44	.50	.39	.53	.43	.46	.47	.51	.30	–		
17 Job security	3.70	1.00	.43	.60	.27	.30	.30	.25	.32	.29	.39	.33	.38	.42	.40	.35	.36	.45	–	
18 Job demands/stress	3.03	1.18	.38	.39	.38	.39	.27	.36	.44	.50	.42	.32	.37	.37	.43	.39	.35	.37	.49	–

All correlations are significant at the level of .01 (2-tailed)

Table 2 Job satisfaction and job affective well-being differences by age and gender

Dependent variables	Women					Men				
	Full sample					Full sample				
	18–34	35–49	Over 50			18–34	35–49	Over 50		
Job affective well-being	3.30 (.39)	3.38 (.35)	3.20 (.39)	3.33 (.44)		3.40 (.50)	3.48 (.49)	3.35 (.55)	3.32 (.41)	
<i>N</i>	233	102	98	33		211	90	79	42	
Job satisfaction	3.54 (.69)	3.53 (.63)	3.64 (.56)	3.39 (.65)		3.55 (.74)	3.55 (.74)	3.53 (.72)	3.70 (.83)	
<i>N</i>	232	102	96	34		209	90	77	42	

men were more satisfied with career outlook ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.1$) than women ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.1$), $F(1,427) = 3.99$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

The effect of age was significant on job-related affective well-being, $F(2,441) = 6.13$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .30$. Post hoc analysis using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance indicated that, with alpha at .05, only the means for the age group 18–34 years old ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .42$) and the group 34–49 years old ($M = 3.27$, $SD = .48$) showed a significant difference. For job satisfaction, age differences were also statistically significant, $F(2,438) = 3.79$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .30$.

Respondents aged between 35 and 49 years were the least satisfied across all job facets with the exception of work colleagues. Means plots for subjective well-being and age followed a reclining L-shape while those for job-satisfaction followed a V-shape. Table 2 presents the means for both dependent variables by age and gender. There were significant differences for age and for the job facets “career outlook”, “immediate boss”, “work colleagues” and “responsibility”, “the way the organization is managed”. The oldest age group was more satisfied than the younger groups for all these facets except for the category “work colleagues” (see Table 3).

To test hypothesis one, multivariate analyses of variance were conducted entering gender and age as the fixed factors together with the interaction age \times gender, and subjective well-being and job satisfaction as dependent variables. Results showed that the main effects were significant for job-related affective well-being and gender $F(1,438) = 5.75$, $p < .05$ and age $F(2,441) = 6.13$, $p < .05$. The effect sizes were respectively .01 and .03. The interaction between age and gender was not significant. For job satisfaction neither age nor gender approached significance.

Table 3 Job facet satisfaction by age

Job facets	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Immediate boss	429	3.72	.99	2,426	3.83	.02	.02
18–34	191	3.76	.92				
35–49	166	3.57	1.02				
Over 50	67	3.78	.99				
Responsibility	438	3.86	.88	2,435	3.09	.04	.01
18–34	190	3.93	.83				
35–49	172	3.73	.92				
Over 50	76	3.96	.87				
Work colleagues	441	4.06	.85	2,438	3.02	.05	.01
18–34	192	4.17	.79				
35–49	173	3.99	.83				
Over 50	76	3.93	.85				
Career outlook	428	3.02	1.15	2,425	6.45	.02	.03
18–34	188	3.07	1.07				
35–49	167	2.80	1.15				
Over 50	73	3.36	1.26				
The way the organization is managed	435	3.27	1.10	2,432	3.09	.05	.01
18–34	191	3.30	1.05				
35–49	171	3.13	1.13				
Over 50	73	3.31	1.16				

5 Discussion

The present study investigated job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction as components of subjective workplace well-being, and their association with age and gender and their combined effect. Results suggest that the constructs job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction although linked, may refer to different aspects of how employees feel in their jobs as has been suggested by Rafaeli et al. (2009) and Wright and Cropanzano (e.g., 2000). On this point, it is evident that respondents report higher levels of job satisfaction than of job-related affective well-being.

Support was partially found for Hypothesis 1. As predicted, findings show gender and age differences for job-related affective well-being, with men scoring higher than women. The youngest respondents of both genders exhibited higher levels of affective well-being, with young men scoring only slightly higher than younger women. This accords with previous research, which found smaller gender differences in subjective well-being in younger than in older groups (Pinquart and Sörensen 2001). Findings also agree with research that found that middle aged employees report lower job-related affective well-being than do both younger and older people (e.g., Warr 1992).

Unlike other studies (e.g., Inglehart 2002) that report the negative association between subjective well-being and age only for females, in this study the negative association extended to males as well, whilst women between 35 and 49 years old reported the lowest level of job-related well-being. This being the case, the initial hypothesis of this study was not confirmed.

Results indicate that job satisfaction varied with age but not much with gender, and that the most satisfied were men over 50 years old, thus providing only partial support for Hypothesis 2. Positive correlations were found between age and job satisfaction in line with previous studies that show that older employees have more favorable job attitudes (e.g., Ng and Feldman 2010). As also reported in previous studies (e.g., Warr 2007), job satisfaction seems to decrease in the mid 30s and pick up again at an older age. In this study respondents aged between 35 and 49 years old were the least satisfied, but the pattern follows a V-shape rather than a U or J-shape.

As noted before, there are several plausible explanations for the low level of job satisfaction of the group between 35 and 49 years old. This age group tends to have jobs with more responsibility involving more stress as compared with younger colleagues and as a result may be less satisfied with their jobs. Mroczek (2004) points out that mid-life is often a period when work and family demands are maximized, particularly for women, owing to the task of balancing children and a career. This age group is now increasingly caught between delayed onset families and more demanding careers (The Economist 2012). Other plausible reasons include elevated expectations associated with higher education (when compared with older employees) contradicted by career stagnation in the middle years and/or insufficient opportunities for advancement (Sonnenfeld 1989). To these explanations it is necessary to add the strains having to do with the national social and economic context aggravated by the trend to replace medium-aged employees by young graduates. As for older employees, although the age group of 50 and over are often targeted for redundancies and pushed into early retirement and have fewer opportunities, they are relatively more financially secure than younger employees and probably get more of what they want out of work as White and Spector (1987) point out. They tend to occupy positions that give greater responsibility and satisfaction and a sense of personal achievement. This may explain why they constitute the most satisfied group.

The data gave no support to a line of investigation that found women to be more satisfied with their jobs than men (e.g., Clark 1997). Gender differences for job satisfaction were not significant. However, women of all ages are more satisfied with their job facets

than men, but no gender differences were found concerning social relations (having good relations with one's boss and colleagues) as described in some studies (e.g., Warr 2007). Women were more satisfied with working hours in line with previous research that shows they tend to report greater satisfaction at this facet level (Souza-Poza and Souza Poza 2000). Men were more satisfied with career outlook, which suggests that women may still face difficulties in getting promoted.

Regarding job facets, age-related differences were found for five facets. In previous research (e.g., Ng and Feldman 2010), age was only weakly related to satisfaction with supervisors and management-related variables. However, in this study the oldest respondents were the most satisfied with the way the organization was managed and with their immediate boss, which may be due to their position in the organizational hierarchy. Medium-aged respondents were the least satisfied with the way the organization was managed and with career outlook, which may indicate that they are possibly more critical or that they aspire to a more prominent organizational role and feel their ambitions to have been frustrated (Sonnenfeld 1989). Although age is usually negatively related to promotions (Ng and Feldman 2010), in this study the oldest respondents were more satisfied with their career outlook than the youngest. This could be because career outlook is less important to older employees of either gender (Warr 2007).

Contrary to studies which found younger employees less satisfied with their jobs than older employees (e.g., Hall 1994), the youngest felt more satisfied with most job facets than middle aged respondents. A plausible explanation could be that their degree of satisfaction matches their expectations, which may be lower for the youngest group. Another interesting result is that, in spite of the troubled economic period in which data was collected (in a context of layoffs and downsizing), respondents were satisfied with their job security. Moreover, there were no age and gender differences regarding this job facet. This is also surprising since the oldest employees and women face more difficulties during economic downturns once unemployed.

According to some researchers (e.g., Clark 1997; Ng and Feldman 2010), female employees are less likely to have positive job attitudes than male employees partly because they have less access to prestigious occupations and have difficulties in getting promoted. In the study sample, more women had attended university than men and although the top managers were male, most women occupied white collar positions. This may explain the minimal gender differences found for job satisfaction.

Progress in gender equality has much improved the overall status of women, but at the same time, as Inglehart (2002) argues, this trend has been largely offset by a tendency to undervalue the social worth of older women. However, in this study, age affects both genders, albeit modestly. Older women experience lower well-being, but so do men of the same age. This raises the question of the possible existence of implicit or explicit ageist attitudes in organizations which impact on subjective well-being in the workplace, as some recent research suggests (e.g., Goldman et al. 2006) and the possibility of generational tensions cannot be excluded. The fact that medium-aged respondents scored particularly low on job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction suggests that this age group experiences specific problems in the workplace as will be discussed.

This study contributes to existing knowledge of subjective well-being by identifying gender and age-related differences that may guide organizational interventions. Data suggest that aging in the workplace is associated with lower job-related affective well-being. Medium-aged respondents scored lowest on both job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction compared to any other age group, which suggests they may face specific problems that require attention.

It is important to identify groups at risk in organizations, and to investigate the underlying reasons. Several explanations for low levels of job-related affective well-being can be advanced as mentioned before. HR managers should be attuned to subjective well-being levels in order to predict declines in well-being, with a special focus on particular problems in mid-life and late career planning (Sonnenfeld 1989). They should thus implement counseling programs, career development, more flexibility in work patterns, and training programs tailored to different age groups.

Understanding aging in organizations is especially relevant given current developed-country legislation to extend working life and the benefits of developing a benign climate for older workers are well known (see e.g., Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser 2008). Organizations will comprise greater age diversity with concomitant generational differences in work values and expectations, which may well represent a more important overall challenge for management than gender alone.

Ultimately, what happens in an organization depends on a given social context: what it means to be in work and satisfied with a job is culturally informed. Cross-cultural generalisability is thus important and the study sample provides a step in that direction. The study contributes to the field of subjective well-being literature and both confirms and disconfirms previous findings with other national groups. It also analyses gender and age differences regarding job facet satisfaction which has a practical interest since it permits identification of key aspects of the workplace that may impact on employee well-being. Furthermore, it explores a line of investigation concerning the relationship between affective job-related well-being and job satisfaction that needs more attention.

Some limitations to the study should be pointed out. First, it should be noted that the mean level differences between age groups may be caused by the different size of age groups. Age effects are created not only by the aging process itself but also by the influences associated with membership in each age cohort. Both effects are confused in cross-sectional data, which represents a limitation. Another limitation is that all the data were collected at a single point of time. Job-related affective well-being ought better to be sampled over time in order to chart emotional fluctuations since changes may occur with the daily events that occur in the workplace (Brief and Weiss 2002). An additional limitation is that age categories did not allow of more precise age distinctions which may be important for refinements of interpretation.

Other factors may exist that mediate the relationship between gender and age, job-related affective well-being and job satisfaction, which were not examined in this study. Future studies should add other variables (individual, organizational and extra-organizational) and include other forms of assessment. Gender and age in the workplace need further investigation if their effects are to be well understood. Future research may gain insights by looking at female and male dominated workplaces as well as age composition. Gender and age are but two of the salient identity categories to take into account. As Holvino (2010) argues, it is urgent to address the simultaneity of gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, (dis)ability and sexuality in organizations.

6 Conclusion

Social change highlights the importance of examining the impact of age and gender on various aspects of well-being. Moreover, legal changes under way at the time of writing make it particularly important to understand the effects of aging in the workplace.

From the results two main conclusions can be drawn. First, age seems to matter more than gender in the workplace when it comes to job-related affective well-being. However, while job-related affective well-being seems to decline with age, job satisfaction does not follow that trend. The medium-aged rate themselves worse in both dimensions than any other age group. Older women experience lower well-being, but not more so than men of the same age: in this study any “double jeopardy effect” attributable to gender was not therefore found. The second major conclusion is that the concepts of job satisfaction and job-related affective well-being assess different aspects of how people actually feel in their jobs.

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