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Dispositional Effects on Job Stressors and Job Satisfaction: The Role of Core Evaluations

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Abstract

Core self-evaluations (CSE) is a broad, integrative trait indicated by self-esteem, locus of control, generalized self-efficacy, and (low) neuroticism (high emotional stability). The aim of this study was to investigate the role of core self evaluations and its traits in the job stressors and job satisfaction. Two hundred and twenty eight (45 males, 183 females) of Islamic Azad University employees completed Measures of Job Stressors which consisted of the Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale, the Organizational Constraints Scale, and Quantitative Workload Inventory, Overall Job Satisfaction, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), Eysenck Personality Inventory Neuroticism Scale, Internality, Powerful Others and Chance Scale (IPC), as well as Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSEs). Findings revealed the negative correlation of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy and core self-evaluations with interpersonal conflict at work, organizational constraints, and job satisfaction. Neuroticism had also a positive correlation with them. Furthermore, regression analysis of the data demonstrated that self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and core self-evaluations significantly predicted interpersonal conflict, organizational constraints, and job satisfaction. Therefore, based on the results it could be concluded that core self evaluation and four traits influence the job satisfaction and job stressors with the exception of quantitative workload.

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1. Introduction

Judge, Locke & Durham (1997) introduced the core self-evaluation concept in an effort to provide a useful predictor of job satisfaction and other applied criteria. Core self-evaluations are fundamental, bottom-line

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evaluations that people make of themselves. Like self-esteem, CSE is an appraisal of one's self-worth. However, CSE is broader than self-esteem in that it also reflects beliefs in one's capabilities (to control one's life) and one's competence (to perform, cope, persevere, and succeed) and a general sense that life will turn out well for oneself. CSE is viewed as a broad latent concept, indicated by at least four traits: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and (low) neuroticism (Judge, 2009).

Self-esteem is "the approval of oneself and the degree to which one sees oneself as capable, significant, and worthy" (Coopersmith, 1967). In theory, it seems likely that a person who lacks self-approval and views himself or herself in a negative way will also be dissatisfied with his or her job. Research suggests that self-esteem may moderate the stress-illness relationship and job satisfaction. It seems that self-esteem may be a stable pattern of influence on a person's appraisal of threats and also in patterns of autonomic arousal (i.e., heartbeat and respiration). Individuals with high self-esteem may, thus, have a higher threshold for experiencing job stress compared to their low self-esteem counterparts (Brunborg, 2008).

Generalized self-efficacy is an appraisal of how well one can handle life's challenges (Judge, 2009). Some studies have investigated self-efficacy in relation to job stress. Evidence indicates that high self-efficacy individuals will cope better with high job control, while low self-efficacy individuals will feel that high job control exacerbates job stress in demanding jobs (Brunborg, 2008).

Neuroticism is the tendency to have a negativistic outlook and to focus on negative aspects of the self (Bipp, 2010; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012a, 2012b; Judge, Hulin & Dalaal, 2009; Judge, Klinger & Simon, 2010; Judge, Van Vianen & De Pater, 2004; Stumpp, Ute.Hu'lsheger, Muck & Maier, 2009). Over the last decade, several studies have investigated the influence of individual dispositions on two important indicators of intrinsic career success — employee job satisfaction (e.g., Heller, Ferris, Brown & Watson, 2009; Judge, Heller & Klinger, 2008; Sutin, Costa, Miech & Eaton, 2009) and career satisfaction (e.g., Bowling, Beehr & Lepisto 2006; Lounsbury, Steel, Gibson & Drost, 2008). Whereas job satisfaction is associated with one's current work, career satisfaction refers to accumulated experiences of a person in one's occupation or profession (Erdogan & Bauer, 2005). Accordingly, job satisfaction is treated as a constituent of career satisfaction (Lounsbury, Gibson, Steel, Sundstrom & Loveland, 2004).

So finally, locus of control is concerned with beliefs about the causes of events in one's life—locus is internal when individuals see outcomes as being contingent on their own behavior. This term was introduced by Rotter who divided between internal and external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Internal locus of control is defined as an individual believing that he or she can control his or her own environment. External locus of control, on the other hand, describes an individual viewing his or her life as controlled by external forces (other people and events). According to Kahn, and Byosiene (1992), locus of control should be included in job stress research, since individuals with internal locus of control are more likely to cope actively with job stress and show greater levels of health and well-being in comparison to individuals with external locus of control.

In considering the relationships among these traits, it is worth noting that self-esteem, locus of control, and neuroticism (also known as emotional stability or emotional adjustment) are the most widely studied personality concepts in psychology—cumulatively, the traits have been the subject of more than 50,000 studies (Bono & Judge, 2003; Judge et al., 2009).

Individuals with positive core self evaluations appraise themselves in a consistently positive manner across situations; such individuals see themselves as capable, worthy, and in control of their lives. Research has consistently shown that the four core traits are substantially interrelated. For example, in the meta-analysis of Judge, Erez, Bono & Thoresen (2002), the average correlation among the traits was .64, which is as high as the correlations among alternative measures of the Big Five traits. Moreover, factor analyses—using both exploratory and confirmatory methods—have consistently shown that the four core traits load on a common factor (Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge, Erez & Bono, 1998b). Moreover, in predicting various criteria, it appears that the individual core traits show similar correlations with many criteria, including job satisfaction and job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001; Bono & Judge, 2003). The core self-evaluations typology was the only typology that was significantly related to job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2008).

More recently, high scores on CSE have been linked to reduced stress and burnout. Individuals with higher CSE may also experience less strain following exposure to stressors. CSE would act as a moderator: High CSE should reduce (i.e., make less positive) the relationship between stressors and strain, whereas low CSE should increase (i.e.,

make more positive) the stressor–strain relationship. Although CSE is the newest taxonomy, each of the core traits comprising the taxonomy—self-esteem, locus of control, generalized self-efficacy, and emotional stability—have been shown to be conceptually and empirically relevant to job satisfaction (Nauta, Liu & Li, 2010; Bowling, Wang, Tang & Kennedy, 2010; Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge & Bono, 2001).

Furthermore, it appears that CSE could be a useful organizing framework for understanding individual differences in the stressor appraisal and response process. For example, researchers have suggested that, chronic beliefs about the self, control, and outcomes reflect key components of an individual's view of the world and of his or her ability to function successfully in that world, and thus should be especially potent in shaping reactions to stressful life events (Judge et al., 2009).

Individuals with high levels of CSE perform better on their jobs, are more successful in their careers, are more satisfied with their jobs and lives, report lower levels of stress and conflict, cope more effectively with setbacks, and better capitalize on advantages and opportunities (Judge, 2009).

In sum, there are many studies indicate the relationship between measures of CSE and job satisfaction, at present a few published studies that have looked at the relationship between measures of CSE and perceived job stress. Since measures of CSE are suitable for predicting job satisfaction, and studies show relationships between job stress and the personality traits CSE comprises (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992; Salanova, Peiro & Schaufeli, 2002), there is reason to believe that CSE will account for a significant proportion of the variance in job stress.

The core model for the present article proceeds from the transactional model of stress, in which individuals perceive a threat from certain aspects of their environment (stressors), which causes negative psychological and physiological responses (strain); the behavioral response directed to reducing these stressors and strain is coping (Folkman, 2010; Hoepf, 2010; Judge, 2009; Judge et al., 2009).

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The sample was comprised of two hundred and twenty eight (45 males, 183 females) of Islamic Azad University employees from Islamic Azad University.

2.2. Measures

The levels of job stressors were assessed by measures of job stressors (Spector & Jex, 1998) including Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale (ICAWS), Organizational Constraints Scale (OCS), Quantitative Workload Inventory (QWI).

Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale. The ICAWS is a four-item, summated rating scale that was designed to assess how well the respondent gets along with others at work. The items ask about getting into arguments with others and about how often others act nasty. Respondents are asked to indicate how often each item occurs at work. Five response choices are given, ranging from 1 (rarely) to 5 (very often). High scores represent frequent conflicts with others.

Organizational Constraints Scale. The OCS is an 11-item scale covering each of the constraints areas discussed in Peters and O'Connor (1980). Each area is assessed with a single item, and a total constraint score is computed as the sum. For each item, the respondent is asked to indicate how often it is difficult or impossible to do his or her job because of it. Response choices range from 1 (less than once per month or never) to 5 (several times per day). High scores represent high levels of constraints.

Quantitative Workload Inventory. Originally, the workload scale was designed to assess both qualitative (work difficulty) and quantitative (how much work there is) workload. Its first version had eight items. In subsequent studies, it became apparent that some items were problematic and that eliminating them would enhance the scale's internal consistency. One item was dropped for the second version, and eventually two more items were dropped. In the final version, only five items concerning quantitative workload were retained. Each item is a statement about amount of work, and respondents indicate how often each occurs, from 1 (less than once per month or never) to 5

(several times per day). High scores represent a high level of workload. For the norms presented here, scores were adjusted for length as if all samples used the five-item version. This was done by first computing the mean score per item and then multiplying by 5, so that the range is always comparable to the final five-item version.

Nomological validity from the meta-analysis showed a pattern of correlations that conformed reasonably well to what would be expected based on prior occupational stress theory and research (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992; Spector & Jex, 1998). For the most part, correlations between the scales and other variables were as expected. Specifically, the job stressor scales were correlated with affective strains and have symptoms, but the workload scale had smaller correlations than the other two job stressor scales with depression and job satisfaction. The OCS correlated most strongly with role ambiguity and role conflict and correlated more moderately with Using meta-analysis, Spector and Jex (1998) combined the results of 18 studies to provide information about four scales. Data showed moderate convergent validity for the 3 job stressor scales, suggesting some objectivity to these self-reports. The three job stressors correlated with one another from .20 (ICAWS and QWI) to .44 (ICAWS and OCS). Two of the scales, OCS was causal indicator scales for which internal consistency reliability would be inappropriate as a standard. Although the coefficient alpha for the OCS was quite good (.85), it suggests that these constraints are related in organizations or at least the perceptions of them are related. The other two effect indicator scales, ICAWS and QWI, demonstrated good internal consistency across several samples.

The ICAWS related most strongly with role conflict and related to a lesser degree with role ambiguity and negative affectivity. QWI related most strongly to role conflict and to work hours per week (Spector & Jex, 1998).

Job satisfaction was measured with 6-items from the Brayfield & Rothe (1951) overall job satisfaction scale. This scale used a five-point Likert response system with strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5) as endpoints. The items can be summated to form an overall measured of Job satisfaction. Stronger agreement with items represents higher levels of overall Job satisfaction. Weaker agreement with the items represent lower levels of overall Job satisfaction. Reliability of .90 has been reported with 6-item measure.

Core Self-Evaluations (CSES) were measured by Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES); Internality, Powerful Others and Chance Scale (IPC); Eysenck Personality Inventory Neuroticism Scale.

Self-esteem was measured with Rosenberg's (1989) 10-item Self-Esteem Scale. It includes items such as "I take a positive attitude toward myself," and "I certainly feel useless at times" (reverse-scored). This scale used a five-point Likert response system with strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5) as endpoints. All items are averaged to create a single self-esteem score for each respondent. Strong agreement equates to higher self-esteem, while weak agreement reflects lower self-esteem. Blascovich and Tomaka (1991) have found prior scale reliabilities ranging from .77 to .88. The coefficient alpha was .88 for the undergraduate sample and .84 for the classified staff sample (Oyler, 2007).

Generalized self-efficacy was measured with Judge, Locke, Durham & Kluger (1998a) 8-item generalized self-efficacy scale. It used the same five-point response system as the other scales- strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5) as endpoints. All items are averaged to create a generalized self-efficacy score for each respondent. Strong agreement reflects high generalized self-efficacy, and weak agreement equates to low generalized self-efficacy. Several studies have found an average reliability of .85 (Judge et al., 2003). The coefficient alpha was .89 for the undergraduate sample and .88 for the classified staff sample (Oyler, 2007).

Locus of control was measured with 8 items from Levenson's (1981) Internality, Powerful Others, and Chance scale. As with the other measures, the scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to indicate participants' level of agreement with items such as "I have often found that what is going to happen will happen" (reverse-scored) and "I am usually able to protect my interests." All items were averaged to develop a single locus of control score for each respondent. Strong agreement represents an internal locus of control, while weak agreement reflects an external locus of control. Previous research has indicated a reliability of .85 (Judge et al, 1998a). The coefficient alpha was .70 for the undergraduate sample and .59 for the classified staff sample (Oyler, 2007).

Neuroticism was measured with the 12-item Eysenck Personality Inventory Neuroticism scale (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1968). It consists of items such as "I'm a nervous person" to "I often feel fed up." This scale used the same five-point response system as the other core scales- strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). All items were averaged to create a neuroticism score for each respondent. Stronger agreement with these items reflects neuroticism. The average reliability for this scale is .83 (Caruso, Witkiewitz, Belcourt- Dittloff, & Gottlieb, 2001).

Oyler (2007) obtained a coefficient alpha of .90 for this measure. Although the core traits are almost universally treated as separate and distinct, Judge et al. (2002) completed a meta-analysis of the relationship between the traits, using studies from the ten psychology journals most likely to include trait pairs. The average (absolute) correlation among the traits is 0.60. The relationships involving locus of control are the weakest. Indeed, without locus of control, the average intercorrelation is .70, providing evidence of substantial overlap in the personality space assessed by measures of the four traits (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012b). In the present study, the reliability of all criteria and traits measured by Cronbach’s alpha was at least satisfactory. All reliabilities exceeded values of .70.

General Core self-evaluations were measured using a 12 item measure developed by Judge et al. (2003). Responses for each were recorded on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). This is the only current CSE scale, and is known to have sound psychometric properties. The CSE scale measures a single factor that is the intersection of self-esteem, locus of control, generalized self- efficacy, and emotional stability. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was acceptable (.77) and similar to those observed in younger cohorts (Tsaousis, Nikolaou, Serdaris & Judge, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge & Scott, 2009).

3. Results

The findings revealed that there is significant correlation between four core self- evaluations traits strongly. There is a negative and significant correlation between self-esteem, and generalized self-efficacy with ICAWS, and OCS and a positive and significant correlation between neuroticism with them. In addition, job satisfaction is correlated with self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, and core self- evaluation positively and correlated with neuroticism, ICAWS, and OCA negatively (Table1).

Table 1. Correlation coefficients of studied variables

variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Self-esteem	38.30	5.17								
2.Generalized self-efficacy	32.15	4.61	.725**							
3. Locus of control	28.30	3.24	.370**	.434**						
4. Neuroticism	31.73	8.99	-.489**	-.512**	-.142					
5.ICAWS	8.04	2.96	-.289**	-.277**	-.020	.330**				
6.OCS	20.11	7.73	-.235**	-.250*	-.007	.341**	.509**			
7. QWI	14.85	5.82	.049	-.016	.248*	.029	.270**	.271**		
8. Job Satisfaction	3.50	1.15	.264**	.270**	.092	-.377**	-.280**	-.337**	-.068	
9.Core self- evaluation	20.11	7.73	.385**	.650**	.395**	-.522**	-.324**	-.664**	-.044	.213'

**P<.01, *P<.05

The results of analysis by linear regression show that self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and core self- evaluation predict ICAWS (respectively F=8.939, P<.004, F=8.167, P<.005, F=10.345, P<.001, and F=11.469, P<.001) and OCS (respectively F=5.752, P<.018, F=6.543, P<.012, F=12.924, P<.001 and F=7.358, P<.008) significantly. They are shown in table 2 and 3.

Table 2.The Results of Linear Regression Model for ICAWS

Predictor Variables	F	R ²	SE	β	t	Sig.
Self-esteem	8.939	.084	.055	-.289	-2.99	.004
Generalized self-efficacy	8.167	.077	.062	-.277	-2.85	.005
Neuroticism	11.995	.109	.031	.330	3.462	.001
Core self- evaluation	11.469	.105	.043	-.145	-3.38	.001

Table 3.The Results of Linear Regression Model for OCS

Predictor Variables	F	R ²	SE	β	t	Sig.
Self-esteem	5.752	.055	.147	-.235	-2.398	.018
Generalized self-efficacy	6.543	.063	.164	-.250	-2.558	.012
Neuroticism	12.924	.117	.082	.341	3.595	.001
Core self- evaluation	7.358	.070	.114	-.264	-2.712	.008

As shown in table 4, the results indicate that among these four core traits, locus of control was the only significant predictor of QWI ($F=6.439$, $P<.013$).

Table 4. The Results of Linear Regression Model for QWI

Predictor Variables	F	R ²	SE	β	t	Sig.
Locus of control	6.439	.062	.175	.248	2.538	.013

Furthermore, these findings indicate that self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and core self-evaluation predict overall job satisfaction significantly (respectively $F=7.362$, $P<.008$, $F=7.713$, $P<.007$, $F=16.248$, $P<.000$, and $F=6.034$, $P<.016$). They are shown in table 5.

Table 5. The Results of Linear Regression Model for Job Satisfaction

Predictor Variables	F	R ²	SE	β	t	Sig.
Self-esteem	7.362	.070	.021	.264	2.713	.008
Generalized self-efficacy	7.713	.073	.024	.270	2.777	.007
Neuroticism	16.248	.142	.012	-.377	-4.031	.000
Core self- evaluation	6.034	.045	.129	.317	2.456	.016

4. Discussion

As expected on theoretical grounds, the findings revealed that there are significant correlation between four core self- evaluations traits and general core. Consistent with this finding, the four core traits have also been shown to be empirically related: Meta-analytic evidence confirmed substantial inter- correlations between the underlying core traits (Judge et al., 2002) and confirmatory and exploratory factor analytic studies revealed that one common factor underlies the four core traits (Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge et al., 1998a).

The findings also showed that three core self- evaluations traits could predict ICAWS and OCS significantly but locus of control could not. In contrast, the only trait could predict QWI, was locus of control. Self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, general core self- evaluation predict overall job satisfaction significantly. These finding consist with prior research (e.g. Thoits, 2013; Hoepf, 2010; Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1995). In other words, the results showed that levels of CSE had a significant effect on job stress and job satisfaction. This is in accordance with other studies using personality traits as predictor variables for job stress (Brunborg, 2008; Judge, 2009; Judge et al., 2009), and job satisfaction (e.g., Bono & Judge, 2003; Heller et al., 2009; Judge et al., 2008; Judge et al., 1997; Sutin et al., 2009; Oyler, 2007).

It seems that a sense of personal agency and control are central components of CSE, those who are lower in CSE should therefore perceive stressors as more overwhelming. Conversely, a positive sense of self-worth should lead to improved mood in the face of threats and greater confidence that one can exert control over potential stressors (Judge et al., 2009). CSE should make individuals more confident that they can respond successfully to challenging situations, resulting in fewer negative emotional and behavioral reactions to stressors. Individuals with higher CSE may also experience less strain when confronted with stressors because they will believe they are of value in general (Judge et al., 2004), so their positive sense of self-worth and well-being can serve as a buffer against any specific threat.

What is notable in the present study is the non significant correlation between workload and core self- evaluation and its traits. In other words, the results suggested that heavy workload is not perceived as a job stressor. Therefore, this finding is inconsistent with research suggesting a strong association between workload and experiencing negative social interactions and psychological strains at work, and emotional reactions such as feeling anxious and frustrated (Spector & Jex, 1998).

One explanation for this result is the missing of a distinct definition of workload and its heaviness in the organizational system of Iran. In many organizational contexts the mere physical presence is important and the amount of work (effort) in due time is not seriously considered. Therefore the sample of this study may not experience the anxiety and frustration resulting from the heavy workload with uncertainty as its consequence which made people doubtful about their ability to perform the job activities. In conclusion, in this study workload is not perceived as a job stressor in Iranian employees.

Limitations and future studies

One limitation of the study is that the data were cross-sectionally designed and self-reported, which in turn could lead to the potential problems of common method variance and inflation bias. Future studies should measure other-rated and objective job stress. Also, the direct causal relationship between CSE and job stress should be assessed given the fact that exploring CSE's effect on job stress. That being said, future research with longitudinal data and other typologies of job stress measure is necessary to confirm and generalize this study's findings.

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