Quality of work life and Generation Y: How gender and organizational type moderate job satisfaction

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine how Quality of Work Life (QWL) influences job satisfaction and to test if gender and organizational type moderate this relationship for Gen-Y.

Design/methodology/approach – Questionnaire data were collected from 328 Gen-Y employees in European hospitality businesses. Drawing on generational theory, social role theory, and Person-Environment (P-E) fit theory, we discuss how gender and organizational types (i.e., independent vs. corporate structures) moderate Gen-Y's QWL-job satisfaction relationship.

Findings – 1.) Gender and organizational type influence the QWL-job satisfaction relationship for Gen-Y. 2.) Job security does not change job satisfaction levels for female employees while high levels of job security negatively influence job satisfaction for male employees. 3.) Receiving appreciation at work increases job satisfaction for both women and men but, when receiving little appreciation at work, women remain more satisfied. 4.) Having opportunities to contribute to decisions positively affects Gen-Y's job satisfaction. 5.) Having the right to say is more important in independent organizations, while the opportunity to realize an employee's own potential leads to higher job satisfaction in corporate organizations.

Originality/value – The study contributes to the limited empirical scholarly research, adding to a deeper understanding of influencing factors of Gen-Y's QWL-job satisfaction relationship.

Key Words: Quality of Work Life (QWL), Job Satisfaction, Gen-Y, Generational Theory, Social Role Theory, Gender, Hospitality

Introduction

Human resource (HR) managers are challenged with contributing to strategies and activities that increase their employees' job satisfaction. A number of job-related attributes within the Quality of Work Life (QWL) domain have been identified as suitable measures to manage job satisfaction. These attributes include physical safety, payment, job security, appreciation of one's work, contribution to decisions affecting one's work area (i.e., having the right to say), and opportunities to realize one's own potential (Kim et al., 2017; Nadler and Lawler, 1983; Rathi and Lee, 2017; Robbins, 1998; Sirgy et al., 2001).

Generational differences in perceptions of these QWL attributes and how these relate to job satisfaction, however, are not well understood (Abubakar et al., 2018). Today's workplaces include employees with a broad range of ages and generational membership. Consequently, HR managers are confronted with an interplay of Baby Boomers (frequently in upper management and executive positions), Generation X (constituting the largest share of the workforce) and Generation Y (entering the job market and striving towards mid-management) employees, creating an inventory of cohort-based differences and conflict. Most importantly, this variation in workforce raises questions about the nature, characteristics and outcomes of supposed generational difference (Costanza et al., 2012).

The extant research has shown that Generation Y (Gen-Y) employees differ in terms of their values, motivation to work and workplace behavior when compared to other generations (Deal et al., 2010; Kuron et al., 2015). Precisely, Gen-Y employees have a higher appreciation for leisure and job security (Guillot-Soulez and Soulez 2014), higher self-esteem, and are more self-centered (Holt et al., 2007). Recent studies moreover confirm that Gen-Y employees need a nurturing and supportive work environment whilst demonstrating a lack of long-term organizational commitment (Twenge et al., 2010). Taking these considerations into account it remains largely unclear whether Gen-Y employees value the same QWL attributes that have been identified for other generations. Similarly, the relationship among QWL and job satisfaction should differ compared to previous generations.

It remains furthermore unclear if gender differences exist for Gen-Y in this QWL-job satisfaction relationship. Despite the attempted changes towards more gender equality in participation in work (Smith et al., 2012), there is still debate around whether social roles of

women and men have changed, and whether traditional social roles have been passed on from previous generations (Huang and Gamble, 2015; Powell, 2018). Studies posit that men and women differ in their underlying career attitudes, self-direction and organizational mobility preferences (Enache et al., 2011; Maxwell and Broadbridge, 2014), but it is unknown whether these differences also exist for Gen-Y. Hence, a deeper understanding of gender in the context of job satisfaction is of great importance.

Another important gap lies in the current lack of studies that investigate how different organizational types, such as independent vs. corporate structures and hierarchies (e.g., Porter and Lawler, 1965), influence the QWL-job satisfaction relationship (García-Serrano, 2011). Following Person-Environment (P-E) fit theory, employees choose a job environment that aligns with their interests, values, and goals (Nye et al., 2012). This job 'environment' predominantly involves organizational type (e.g., structures and hierarchies) as the core determinant for working conditions. HR managers must therefore understand how QWL attributes appeal for different organizational types in order to enhance targeted recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction strategies. Yet, there is scant literature providing a contextualized understanding of the QWL-job satisfaction relationship in relation to the dichotomy of independent vs. corporate structures (Hodson, 1984).

This study aims to empirically contribute to the literature with a more detailed understanding of the QWL-job satisfaction relationship for Gen-Y employees. A theoretical framework is developed to explain the link between QWL and job satisfaction for Gen-Y employees. Drawing on generational theory, we highlight the unique characteristics and motivation of Gen-Y. Applying social role theory, we discuss gendered job expectation and the job satisfaction-gender paradox. A self-administered online survey and hierarchical regression analysis are used to explore job satisfaction of Gen-Y employees within the European hospitality sector for the very first time. We particularly corroborate existing literature by showing that gender and organizational type serve as vital mediating variables in this relationship. Precisely, we demonstrate that specific QWL attributes obviously have lost importance for Gen-Y employees (e.g., job security), whereas others (e.g., appreciation, having a right say, promotion prospects) are considered as crucial for their job satisfaction. Most importantly, the effects were found to differ among men and women as well as among private

and corporate organizational structures. Results are discussed and theorized, practical implications relevant to HR managers are presented.

Research Framework and Hypotheses

Job Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life (QWL)

Job satisfaction represents the "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience" (Locke, 1976, p. 1304). It refers to a person's attitudinal state of readiness influencing one's response towards decisions, situations, subjects or objects in the workplace (Pacheco and Webber, 2016). These attitudinal states are highly individual (Judge and Klinger 2008) and formed through affective and cognitive processing, which helps to predict employees' subsequent behavior. In particular, job satisfaction to influences the following aspects of the employee-organization relationship: increased retention rates and higher innovation commitment (Rathi and Lee, 2017; Tsai and Yen, 2018); better leadership effectiveness and team performance (Braun et al., 2013); improved overall employee-organization relationship and lower absenteeism (Mowday et al., 2013); and stronger organizational commitment and citizenship behavior (Koys, 2001). Moreover, job satisfaction was found to positively influence attitudes towards change (Cullen et al., 2014), employees' health, wellbeing levels and their life satisfaction (Bowling et al., 2010). Achievement of employee job satisfaction is thus highly relevant to businesses.

Employees' QWL was first introduced by Nadler and Lawler (1983) and since then has been used to measure the extent to which employees are able to satisfy their personal needs through work and related experiences (Kim et al., 2017; Robbins, 1998; Sirgy et al., 2001). Employees were found to evaluate their QWL through specific organizational attributes, which are physical safety, payment, job security, and career-related factors, comprising the appreciation of their work, the right to say, opportunities to realize their own potential and prospective promotion prospects (Sirgy et al., 2001). The relationship between QWL and job satisfaction has been investigated by some authors, for example Yang (2010) show that QWL can be seen as an antecedent to job satisfaction, and QWL facets predict job satisfaction. Sharma et al. (2016) further discovered that QWL drives employee satisfaction— as well as their commitment and well-being, which in turn positively affects employee's performance. Kim et al. (2017) evaluated the relationship between work environment and job outcomes for Gen Y, confirming that job characteristics act as important mediator. A specific investigation of how QWL factors impact upon Gen Y's job satisfaction levels, however, is still lacking to date.

Generational Theory

Generational theory suggests that social changes and processes in the public sphere explain developments that occur over generations. Generations share similar "emotions, attitudes, preferences, and dispositions" (Eyerman and Turner, 1998, p. 94), resulting from a commonly shared generational identity (Mannheim, 1952), which is socially constructed and refers to the consciousness of a generation (Biggs and Lowenstein, 2011). Generational identities are created to distinguish generations from each other, enabling intergenerational comparison and forming generational and age-related social images (Biggs and Lowenstein, 2011). Generations can thus subsume multiple cohorts and smaller groups, although, 'cohort' and 'generation' are often used interchangeably (Kerzter, 1983).

Understanding generational differences in work is highly relevant for HR managers, as it has implications on workplace behavior. Lacking sensitivity to generational differences can create problems in attracting and retaining staff (Rathi and Lee, 2017; Tsai and Yen, 2018), increase absenteeism (Mowday et al., 2013), and negatively influence leadership effectiveness and team performance (Braun et al., 2013). HR managers and leaders of all generations thus need to understand how workplace behaviors have changed over generations to develop their awareness, understanding and managerial practices according to these changes.

A number of studies have already highlighted generational changes in expectations and preferences of distinctive workplace behaviors and found that Gen-Y personal values and motivation are unique (e.g., Abubakar et al., 2018; Deal et al., 2010; Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014; Kuron et al., 2015; Parry and Urwin, 2011; Twenge et al., 2010). It is known that, for example, Gen-Y employees have a higher appreciation for leisure (Guillot-Soulez and Soulez 2014) and a higher overall need for self-actualization and satisfaction of intrinsic benefits (Davidson et al., 2011). Recent studies moreover confirm that Gen-Y employees need a nurturing, positive and supportive work environment (Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014). Yet, they lack long-term organizational commitment (Twenge et al., 2010) whilst still wanting to have high levels of job security (Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014).

Although previous research inspected a diverse set of Gen-Y characteristics in a workplace context, unanswered questions remain, including '*which factors are influencing*

Gen-Y's job satisfaction?' (e.g., Lyons and Kuron, 2014), or whether the QWL-job satisfaction relationship differs compared to previous generations? Scholars have thus called for more evidence "to flesh out mediators and moderators in the relationship between generation and work-related variables" (Lyons and Kuron, 2014, p. 139). Applying the QWL-job satisfaction relationship to the cohort of Gen-Y employees, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1.   QWL, defined in terms of (a) physical safety, (b) pay, (c) job security, (d) appreciation at work, (e) right to say, (f) realization of one's potential and (g) promotion prospects, positively influences job satisfaction of Gen-Y employees.

Gender, QWL and Job Satisfaction

There is debate if gender moderates job satisfaction. Whereas previous research showed that gender is not a differentiator of job satisfaction (Fields and Blum, 1997; Mobley, 1977; Mobley et al., 1994), more recent studies stress that female employees usually have greater job satisfaction than men (Clark, 1997; Huang and Gamble, 2015). These results are surprising, since there is broad agreement that women experience less favorable working conditions, lower payment and career prospects than men (Hauret and Williams, 2017; Kossek et al., 2017). With the same performance levels, women are less promoted and receive less payment (Joshi et al., 2015), a situation often referred to as the '*job satisfaction-gender paradox*' (Westover, 2012).

One of the reasons for women's greater job satisfaction are their lower expectations (Clark, 1997). Yet, the management literature offers limited understanding of gender differences within Gen-Y and how these influence job satisfaction. Studies report a number of underlying differences with respect to careers and motivation that could explain the underlying reasons for the occurrence of the 'job-satisfaction-paradox' (Westover, 2012). Maxwell and Broadbridge (2014, p. 547), for example, found career differences, with recent female Gen-Y graduates "being more accepting to start in a non-graduate level job after graduation; and more women than men encountering gender discrimination in the workplace". Other studies revealed that men and women are seeking different intrinsic and extrinsic rewards at work (Clark, 1997; Huang and Gamble, 2015; Terjesen et al. 2007). Bosch et al. (2018) further emphasize how societal context shapes job satisfaction and motivation at work, with societal culture suspected to influence gendered views of job satisfaction (Eskildsen et al., 2004).

Gender role social expectation theory (Eagly, 1987) can explain the 'job satisfaction-gender paradox', stating that women and men adopt different social roles in relation to job characteristics, family responsibilities and personal expectations (Hodson, 1989; Aletraris,

2010; Huang and Gamble, 2015). Sociologists, for instance, suggest that social roles (e.g., Doering and Thébaud, 2017) might prevail in the workplace, with women and men having a different appreciation of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Clark, 1997) and acting differently in social relationships (Clark, 1997; Konrad et al., 2000). Whereas women are more relationship-oriented and derive a greater sense of accomplishment from their family roles than from their employee roles (Zhao, et al., 2017), men are rather agentic and task-oriented (Collins et al., 2014; Spence and Buckner, 2000). As women traditionally compare themselves rather with other women than with men regarding their personal expectations (Hodson, 1989), we argue that these social roles might be "inherited" and passed on to future generations. Hence, gender role social expectation may explain why men continue to identify more with their job and put more emphasis on their work role while women hold on to be concerned with family roles (Eagly, 1987). Consequently, based on theoretical considerations and empirical findings, we assume that gender moderates the link between QWL and job satisfaction and the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Gender (female vs. male) moderates the relationship between QWL and job satisfaction.

Organizational Type, QWL and Job Satisfaction

Independent vs. corporate structures of businesses are two organizational types that shape hierarchy, operations, communication, roles, and responsibilities (Porter and Lawler, 1965) while influencing employees' attitude and behavior (Pierce and Delbecq, 1977). Decades ago, a few examples linked structural factors to job satisfaction. Ivancevich and Donnelly (1975) demonstrated that sales employees in flat organizations display higher levels of job satisfaction in terms of their perceived autonomy and self-actualization, and subsequently perform at a higher level. Similarly, Hodson (1984) suggested taller corporate structures tending to have fewer satisfied employees than small, independent businesses. Despite knowing that organizational characteristics shape workplace behavior (Sony and Mekoth, 2016), there is little recent research and an overall disinterest in investigating whether the type of organization influences the QWL-job satisfaction relationship.

The lack of research in this area is surprising, as different organizational types bring different advantages. Knowing and articulating these advantages in relation to job satisfaction

and, ultimately, understanding how they appeal to different employees, is most relevant for an organization's overall attractiveness and employer branding activities (e.g., Reis et al., 2017). For example, independent owner-manager structures are often smaller and determined by flat hierarchies, a wide span of control for the owner-manager, and decisions centralized around him or her. Such small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are less formalized in their operations and thus centered on the managerial orientation of the owner-manager (Culkin and Smith, 2000). A major disadvantage for these SMEs, however, lies in the relatively low pay and fewer career prospects for employees (Storey, 2016). Larger, corporate organizations, such as chain-affiliated hospitality businesses, however, are taller structured and characterized by decentralized decision-making and narrow spans of control. Typically, managers have fewer employees but operate in multi-level hierarchies with greater financial support (Yeung and Law, 2004).

Theoretically, the question, *Which organizational type fits better to an employee's individual's attitudes and values?* can be approached by applying Person-Environment (P-E) fit theory to workplace environments (Caplan, 1987; Edwards, 2008; Lievens et al., 2001; Tepper et al., 2018). Here, the positive relationship between the person (P) and the environment (E) explains why positive work attitudes of some employees are lower. As employees choose work environments that align with their interests, higher satisfaction can be achieved (Nye et al., 2012). In this study we apply P-E fit to explain why particular people choose to work in a specific organizational structure. In their quest for the right P-E fit, we assume that job security, pay, and career prospects, provide greater job satisfaction for Gen-Y employees in larger, corporate structures. In contrast, the work environment of SMEs might be the right fit for Gen-Y employees with a higher appreciation for having the right to say, receiving individual appreciation, and getting opportunities to realize own goals. We support this argument as SMEs might have flatter hierarchies, centralized decision-making and, potentially, higher agility. Ultimately, we assume that organizational type (independent vs. corporate structure) plays a vital moderating role on the influence QWL exerts on job satisfaction for Gen-Y employees. To examine this assumption, the subsequent hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Organizational type (independent vs. corporate structure) moderates the relationship between QWL and job satisfaction.

Figure 1 presents our research framework.

<< **Please insert Figure 1. Research Framework about here** >>

Method

Sample and Data Collection

A self-administered online survey was used to measure the impact of QWL on job satisfaction for Gen-Y employees working in the service sector. A pre-test of the questionnaire (n = 31) was administered to enhance the clarity and content validity. The main study was conducted in May 2016 by applying a convenience sampling strategy within the hospitality industry. Gen-Y employees were targeted using specialized online hospitality communities within the leading professional networks LinkedIn and XING. Young professionals working on different levels in the hospitality industry were invited by posting a link to our online survey in the respective group dashboards or home threads. To increase participation, respondents could enter a raffle to win one of five Amazon gift cards (worth 30 EUR each).

Measurement

The survey instrument is based on a review of the literature in the area of QWL and job satisfaction. Reliable scales from literature are used to properly reflect the context of this study. QWL is measured with six items adapted from QWL need satisfaction measures (Sirgy et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2017): physical safety ("I feel physically safe at work"), pay ("I am satisfied with what I am getting paid for my work"), job security ("I feel that my job is secure for life"), appreciation ("I feel appreciated at work"), right to say ("My job requires me to make challenging decisions affecting my department"), realization of one's potential ("I feel that my job allows me to realize my full potential") and promotion prospects ("My employer provides opportunities for advancement").

To measure our dependent variable job satisfaction, we used the single item measure "How satisfied are you with your current job?" (Dolbier et al., 2005). This is line with previous researc, which has demonstrated the effectiveness of measuring job satisfaction as an overall, general measure rather than as faceted construct: for example, Kunin (1955), found a single-item measure of overall job satisfaction as being superior to a scale based on a sum of specific

job facet satisfaction. Scarpello and Campbell (1983), Wanous et al. (1997) and Nagy (2002) further confirm that single items are more efficient and contain more face validity. Descriptives and correlations are reported in Table 1.

<< Please insert Table 1. Descriptives and correlations about here >>

All items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) scale. To account for the variance caused by variables not directly linked to our hypotheses, this study controlled for several sample- and industry-specific factors (Bryman and Cramer, 2011). Specifically, the study controlled for age (Lee et al. 2013; Chen and Fahr, 2001), business size (Kallmuenzer et al., 2018), leadership position (Chen and Fahr, 2001), higher education (i.e., holding a university degree; Loi and Ngo, 2010) and full-time job (i.e., whether their current employment is a full-time position; Johnson et al., 2013).

Results

Demographics

Four hundred and forty-eight completed responses were received. Only employees belonging to Gen-Y (born between 1981 and 2000; Gursoy et al., 2013) are included in the study, resulting in a final sample of 328 cases. The respondents are on average 26 years old, female (76.8%), well educated (81.1% completed A-levels and/or hold a university degree), and work full-time (61.3%). On average, respondents have been working between one and three years (43.3%) for their current employer. Most respondents work for independent businesses (65.9%). Table 2 details the demographic profile of the sample.

<< Please insert Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents about here >>

Hypotheses Testing

The study uses a moderated hierarchical regression analysis with IBM SPSS 24 to empirically test the hypotheses. In accordance with Jaccard and Turrisi (2003), independent variables (mean = 0) were mean-centered during moderated regression analysis to minimize the effects of multicollinearity among the variables comprising the interaction terms. Values of the

variance inflation factors (VIFs) did not exceed the boundary value of 10, indicating that our results have little multicollinearity and that no variables require deletion (Hair et al., 2014). The results are reported in Tables 3 and 4. Control variables (age, business size, leader, higher education, full-time job) are entered into the first block (Model 1); the predictors are entered into the second block (Model 2); moderating variables are in the third block (Model 3); interaction effects are tested in the fourth block (Model 4).

Among this study's controls (Model 1), specifically age ($\beta = -.111$, $p < .1$) and leadership experience show a significant relationship with our dependent variable ($\beta = .251$, $p < .001$). Model 2 includes independent variables and shows a positive effect of most QWL attributes on job satisfaction: physical safety ($\beta = .160$, $p < .001$, H_{1a} supported), payment ($\beta = .190$, $p < .001$, H_{1b} supported), appreciation of one's work within the organization ($\beta = .188$, $p < .001$, H_{1d} supported), having a right to say in decisions affecting one's work area ($\beta = .104$, $p < .1$, H_{1e} supported), realization of one's potential as a professional ($\beta = .161$, $p < .001$, H_{1f} supported) and promotion prospects within the organization ($\beta = .148$, $p < .001$, H_{1g} supported) all show a highly significant, positive relationship with our dependent variable. By contrast, job security ($\beta = -.055$, $n.s.$, H_{1c} not supported) does not exert a significant impact on respondents' satisfaction with their current employment in Model 2. H_1 can thus be partially supported.

Model 4 represents the hierarchical model with four steps and is significant for both moderating variables gender and organizational type (F=13.131, $p < .001$; F=12.238, $p < .001$). A specific analysis of the moderating effects and interactions terms is provided below.

<< Please insert Table 3. Results of moderated hierarchical regression analysis (gender) about here >>

<< Please insert Table 4. Results of moderated hierarchical regression analysis (organizational type) about here >>

Moderating Effects of Gender

The hierarchical analysis of the interaction effects in Model 4 reveals that the coefficients of interaction among gender and job security ($\beta = .211$, $p < .001$, H_{2c} supported) as well as gender and appreciation ($\beta = -.402$, $p < .001$, H_{2d} supported) significantly correlate with job

satisfaction of Gen-Y. The interaction of gender and physical safety (β = .013, *n.s.*, H_{2a} not supported), payment (β = $-$.113, *n.s.*, H_{2b} not supported), right to say (β = .116, *n.s.*, H_{2e} not supported), realization of one's potential (β = .050, *n.s.*, H_{2f} not supported) and promotion prospects (β = .001, *n.s.*, H_{2g} not supported), however, did not show a significant effect with our dependent variable, thus leading to partial support for H_2. Following Dawson (2014), the study presents the graphs for the significant interaction effects of gender and job security (Figure 2) and appreciation (Figure 3) with job satisfaction.

<< Please insert Figure 2. Moderating effect of gender on job security and job satisfaction about here >>

<< Please insert Figure 3. Moderating effect of gender on appreciation and job satisfaction about here >>

Moderating Effects of Organizational Type

Exploring the moderation effects of organizational type on the relationship of QWL attributes and job satisfaction, two QWL attributes show significant effects. First, the right to say (β = $-$.129, *p* <.001, H_{3e} supported) and second, the realization of one's potential (β = .166, *p* <.001, H_{3f} supported) reveal significant influence on our dependent variable. The remaining QWL attributes, these are, physical safety (β = $-$.019, *n.s.*, H_{3a} not supported), payment (β = $-$.017, *n.s.*, H_{3b} not supported), job security (β = .047, *n.s.*, H_{3c} not supported), appreciation (β = $-$.021, *n.s.*, H_{3d} not supported) and promotion prospects (β = .011, *n.s.*, H_{3g} not supported), did not show a significant interaction with organizational type on job satisfaction, thus resulting in partial support for H_3. Again, the two significant effects are highlighted by the respective graphs (Figures 4 and 5).

<< Please insert Figure 4. Moderating effect of organizational type on right to say and job satisfaction about here >>

<< Please insert Figure 5. Moderating effect of organizational types on realization of one's potential and job satisfaction about here >>

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explain the QWL-job satisfaction relationship for Gen-Y employees and to test whether gender and organization type (i.e., independent vs. corporate structures) influence this relationship. Social role theory is used to discuss gendered job expectation and the job satisfaction-gender paradox. Overall, our data confirm that six out of seven QWL attributes had a positive influence on job satisfaction: *physical safety, payment, appreciation of one's work within the organization, having a right to say in decisions affecting one's work area, realization of one's potential, and promotion prospects within the organization*. Job security, however, did not significantly influence job satisfaction.

In terms of gendered effects, this study presents another significant and surprising result. When men felt high levels of *job security,* their job satisfaction declined. In contrast, job security did not change women's job satisfaction levels. This finding is in stark contrast to existing studies, predicting that low levels of job security have negative implications on employees in general (Nikolova et al., 2018), and Gen-Y employees in particular (Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014). According to our findings, Gen-Y men positively embrace speed, change, and view ambiguities of workplace contracts as opportunities, thus adopting expectations and values accordingly. Further, men might see more opportunities and greater flexibility, particularly in the hospitality area, where seasonal employment, high job mobility, and self-directed careers are common. The evidence that Gen-Y women were indifferent towards job security supports social role theory, suggesting that Gen-Y women rather prefer to concentrate on other roles outside their work environment. Further, since career prospects in the hospitality industry are lower compared to other industries, Gen-Y employees seem to be prepared to take risks, preferring 'adventure' and ambiguity over a safe and secure job environment.

The effect of receiving *appreciation at work* on job satisfaction is also different for men and women. Despite receiving less appreciation at work, women are more satisfied with their jobs. This result supports the existence of the 'job satisfaction-gender paradox' (Hauret and Williams, 2017; Kossek et al., 2017; Westover, 2012) and extends prior studies of this paradox to Gen-Y (e.g., Clark, 1997; Eagly, 1987; Zhao, et al., 2017). Our findings concur with previous assertions, stating that the paradox becomes salient in situations where women are more satisfied with their jobs, albeit facing less favorable working conditions, career prospects, and pay (Joshi et al., 2015; Kossek et al., 2017). According to social role theory (Aletraris, 2010; Eagly, 1987), the paradox is often rooted in the fact that women have lower expectations regarding workplace appreciation as compared to their family roles (Zhao, et al., 2017).

Employers and HR managers should thus critically question how they can influence workplace behaviors to reduce this gap. An advancement in this respect is highly critical, as the "assumption that women have lower expectations in the workplace can be problematic as it begs the question why this should be the case" (Huang and Gamble, 2015, p. 331).

Results also show that organizational types influence the QWL-job satisfaction relationship. More precisely, the two QWL-attributes *having the right to say* and *realization of one's potential* both reveal significant differences between employees in independent vs. corporate structures. Gen-Y employees with fewer opportunities to contribute to decision making were more satisfied in corporate structures than in SMEs. By contrast, Gen-Y employees of independent businesses showed higher levels of satisfaction when they had *the right to say*, and very low satisfaction levels when having *little right to say*. This is consistent with prior work suggesting that organizational structures influence job satisfaction (García-Serrano, 2011; Porter and Lawler, 1965). Today's SMEs may create the impression of greater opportunity to contribute with one's own ideas. Employees in corporate businesses, however, might expect a lower say due to multi-layered decision-making processes and standardized work design (e.g., processes and workflows). Consistent with P-E-fit theory, Gen-Y employees will thus choose their jobs to align with their interests, values, and goals (Nye et al., 2012).

Finally, Gen-Y employees with good opportunities to *realize their own potential* were found to be more satisfied with their jobs, particularly when working in corporate businesses. Employees with limited opportunities to realize their own potential, by contrast, showed greater levels of satisfaction when working for SMEs. In this context, past research confirms causality between personality and organizational type (Lievens et al., 2001), and P-E fit theories (e.g., Tepper et al., 2018) could provide a useful explanation for this result, since the positive relationship between the person and the environment explains why attitudes of some groups of employees are lower than those of other groups.

Practical Implications for HR Managers

Implications of this study include a variety of valuable suggestions for HR managers relative to QWL, gender, and Gen-Y. It is important to recognize that QWL attributes (including physical safety, payment, job security, appreciation, right to say, realization of one's potential and promotion prospects) have diverse effects on job satisfaction. Particularly, HR managers might want to consider that job security has lost momentum for Gen-Y. In managerial practice, this means that long-term contracts might be less appreciated. For men, high levels of job security might even be counterproductive towards job satisfaction.

Our results further show that appreciative leadership, positive responses and being valued for one's performance increase job satisfaction for Gen-Y. Here, awareness and leadership development might only be a start, and the implementation of recognition systems and leadership performance appraisals might be even more effective (e.g., Schleicher et al., 2019). For SMEs, HR managers should concentrate on encouraging and enabling staff to have the right to say, as this is the most important QWL attribute when seeking to influence job satisfaction. Encouraging voice behavior might help to outweigh the drawbacks of lower pay and lower career prospects, particularly in the hospitality environment (e.g., Storey, 2016). Corporate HR managers might want to focus on providing long-term career development opportunities, so that Gen-Y employees can realize their full potential, as this QWL attribute is most effective in leading to higher job satisfaction.

Finally, we found that Gen-Y women seem to better cope with low-appreciation situations and report almost consistent levels of job satisfaction, regardless of a stable or insecure environment. Considering the gap in payment and career prospects, women might rethink if they are required to become more assertive in demanding more appreciation so that the gender-paradox could be reduced. Also, Gen-Y employees working in SMEs should find their voice and clearly express their opinion, as this can result in greater job satisfaction. In larger corporations, however, it might be more appropriate to adapt to both environment and corporate culture first and carefully evaluate when it is target-aimed to raise one's voice. Here, Gen-Y employees should also demand tasks from their supervisors where they can unfold their true potential, as this will further increase their job satisfaction.

Limitations and Future Research

The primary focus of this paper was to examine the QWL-job satisfaction relationship for Gen-Y employees in one specific industry (i.e., the hospitality industry and services sector). Future research for an assessment of QWL attributes and job satisfaction of Gen-Y in different industries is thus encouraged. Second, a large proportion of our sample (i.e., 76.8%) was comprised of women, and thus potentially limiting our findings regarding the job-satisfaction-paradox. Third, SMEs represented a large number of businesses (91.7%) in this study. The classification of companies as SMEs, however, follows a precise recommendation from the European Union (2003/361) and reflects the actual conditions in the hospitality and tourism industry, where the vast majority of businesses are independently operating SMEs. Taken together, we acknowledge that our sample characteristics (Gen-Y, predominantly female, working in SMEs) might have influenced our results.

Future research could explore how factors such as the length of employment, the time elapsed between one's current and prior employment, and employees' current career stage influence the QWL-job satisfaction relationship; especially, as time-bound contextual factors were not considered in this investigation. Our results show that appreciation at work is one of the antecedents of job satisfaction. Yet, this study did not control for the source of appreciation and future studies could make this distinction. Key sources of appreciation might stem from peers and direct colleagues as well as from managers (e.g., Rathi and Lee, 2017). Another important research avenue lies in developing improved leadership performance appraisals to incorporate important QWL attributes such as, for example, recognition. As there is an obvious gap in understanding the effectiveness of performance management (e.g., Schleicher et al., 2019), we suggest discussing our findings in the light of leader development and performance management to enhance job satisfaction and QWL for Gen-Y.

Conclusion

Job satisfaction reflects an employee's attitudinal response to decisions and situations towards QWL attributes. This study shows that gender and organizational type influence this QWL-job satisfaction relationship for Gen-Y. The realization of one's potential as a professional, physical safety, promotion prospects and having a right to say within the organization all significantly predicted job satisfaction. Findings contradict prior studies by showing that job security has lost importance for Gen-Y. We show that low job security does not change job satisfaction for female employees and high levels of job security even had a negative effect on job satisfaction for male employees. Receiving appreciation at work leads to an increase job satisfaction for both men and women. However, even when receiving little appreciation at work, women remain more satisfied than men. With this finding we extend social role theory and the job-satisfaction-paradox for Gen-Y. Lastly, the organizational type moderats the QWL-job satisfaction relationship. P-E fit theories are extended for Gen-Y, showing that employees who appreciate having the right to say, fit better into independent organizational types (and usually smaller structures), while employees who appreciate realizing their own potential tend to be more satisfied with their jobs in corporate structured organizations.

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Table 1. Descriptives and correlations

Variables	M	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Age AGE	26.09	5.108	1														
Business size SIZE	.082	.275	.002	1													
Leader LEAD	.314	.465	.397**	.012	1												
Higher education HE	.451	.498	.267**	.085	.033	1											
Full time job STA	.613	.488	.385**	.033	.363**	.016	1										
Physical safety NSHS1	3.59	1.143	−.145**	−.028	−.101	.026	−.155**	1									
Pay NSEF1	2.90	1.204	−.082	−.058	.051	−.046	−.124*	.403**	1								
Job security NSEF2	4.04	1.108	−.212**	.050	.049	−.080	−.025	.210**	.299**	1							
Appreciation NST1	3.47	1.196	−.027	−.025	.097	−.121*	−.070	.455**	.400**	.398**	1						
Right to say NST3	3.26	1.324	.199**	−.076	.432**	.052	.257**	.217**	.316**	.350**	.449**	1					
Realization of potential NSA2	3.75	1.097	.133*	.078	.274**	−.056	.116*	.235**	.305**	.342**	.491**	.502**	1				
Promotion prospects NSKA2	2.99	1.274	−.054	−.024	.201**	−.181**	.191**	.157**	.207**	.280**	.392**	.391**	.313**	1			
Job satisfaction ESAT6	3.59	.966	−.033	−.024	.203**	−.095	.042	.391**	.436**	.265**	.512**	.435**	.450**	.395**	1		
Gender GEND	.768	.423	−.145**	−.072	−.251**	.033	−.125*	.144**	.020	−.008	−.050	−.153**	−.158**	−.197**	−.141*	1	
Structure STRUCT	.342	.475	.065	.065	.025	−.097	.242**	−.163**	−.084	−.064	−.003	.008	0,000	.217**	−.004	−.016	1

** p-value < .01

* p-value < .05.

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents

Demographics	N=328, %
Gender	
Male	23.2
Female	76.8
Age	
under 21	16.2
21-25	30.5
26-30	32.6
31-36	20.7
Education level	
Primary	18.0
Secondary	36.0
University	45.1
Other	0.9
Employment relationship	
Full-time job	61.3
Part-time job	10.1
Minimal employment	11.3
Internship	17.4
Duration of employment	
Less than 1 year	35.1
1-3 years	43.3
4-6 years	13.4
7 or more years	8.2
Organizational type	
Independent business	65.9
Corporate structured business	34.1
Employees	
Small enterprise (0 – 49)	46.0
Medium-sized enterprise (50 – 249)	45.7
Large enterprise (more than 250)	8.2

Table 3. Results of moderated hierarchical regression analysis (gender)

DV: Job satisfaction	Model 1 β	Model 1 t-Value	Model 2 β	Model 2 t-Value	Model 3 β	Model 3 t-Value	Model 4 β	Model 4 t-Value
Step 1: Control variables								
Age	−.111*	−1.741	−.075	−1.405	−.080	−1.501	−.094*	−1.753
Business size	−.020	−.374	−.001	−.034	−.007	−.164	.008	0.179
Leader	.251***	4.129	.097*	1.851	.085	1.606	.108**	2.043
Higher education	−.072	−1.272	−.025	−.549	−.023	−.507	−.017	−0.373
Full time job	−.004	−0.067	.023	.453	.026	.513	.031	0.616
Step 2: Independent variables								
H1a Physical safety			.160***	3.125	.173***	3.361	.164	1.516
H1b Pay			.190***	3.790	.192***	3.839	.301***	2.720
H1c Job security			−.055	−1.083	−.051	−1.011	−.244**	−2.483
H1d Appreciation			.188***	3.186	.188***	3.187	.557***	4.342
H1e Right to say			.104*	1.745	.102*	1.706	−.025	−.197
H1f Realization of potential			.161***	2.962	.153***	2.824	.104	.779
H1g Promotion prospects			.148***	2.935	.134***	2.635	.137*	1.134
Step 3: Moderating variable								
Gender (G)					−.081*	−1.792	−.084*	−1.717
Step 4: Interaction terms								
H2a G × Physical safety							.013	.123
H2b G × Pay							−.113	−1.036
H2c G × Job security							.211**	2.171
H2d G × Appreciation							−.402***	−3.147
H2e G × Right to say							.116	.936
H2f G × Realization of potential							.050	.389
H2g G × Promotion prospects							.001	.007
Model R²	.062		.429		.435		.461	
Model F	4.236***		19.708***		18.566***		13.131***	
ΔR²	.062		.367		.006		.026	
ΔF	4.236***		28.923***		3.211*		2.152**	

*** p-value < .01

** p-value < .05

* p-value < .10.

Table 4. Results of moderated hierarchical regression analysis (organizational type)

DV: Job satisfaction	Model 1 β	Model 1 t-Value	Model 2 β	Model 2 t-Value	Model 3 β	Model 3 t-Value	Model 4 β	Model 4 t-Value
Step 1: Control variables								
Age	−.111*	−1.741	−.075	−1.405	−.075	−1.401	−.081	−1.483
Business size	−.020	−.374	−.001	−.034	−0,001	−.028	.013	.283
Leader	.251***	4.129	.097*	1.851	.097*	1.833	.093*	1.749
Higher education	−.072	−1.272	−.025	−.549	−.026	−.552	−.019	−.414
Full time job	−.004	−0.067	.023	.453	.024	.460	.028	.550
Step 2: Independent variables								
H1a Physical safety			.160***	3.125	.159***	3.075	.168**	2.576
H1b Pay			.190***	3.790	.190***	3.783	.207***	3.461
H1c Job security			−.055	−1.083	−.055	−1.085	−.087	−1.451
H1d Appreciation			.188***	3.186	.189***	3.181	.175**	2.487
H1e Right to say			.104*	1.745	.104*	1.739	.190***	2.642
H1f Realization of potential			.161***	2.962	.161***	2.955	.070	1.058
H1g Promotion prospects			.148***	2.935	.149***	2.881	.142**	2.288
Step 3: Moderating variable								
Organizational type (T)					−.004	−.083	−.006	−.134
Step 4: Interaction terms								
H3a T × Physical safety							−.019	−.302
H3b T × Pay							−.017	−.283
H3c T × Job security							.047	.770
H3d T × Appreciation							−.021	−.260
H3e T × Right to say							−.129**	−1.966
H3f T × Realization of potential							.166**	2.229
H3g T × Promotion prospects							.011	.173
Model R²	.062		.429		.429		.444	
Model F	4.236***		19.708***		18.135***		12.238***	
ΔR²	.062		.367		.000		.015	
ΔF	4.236***		28.923***		.007		1.163	

*** p-value < .01

**   p-value < .05

*   p-value < .10.
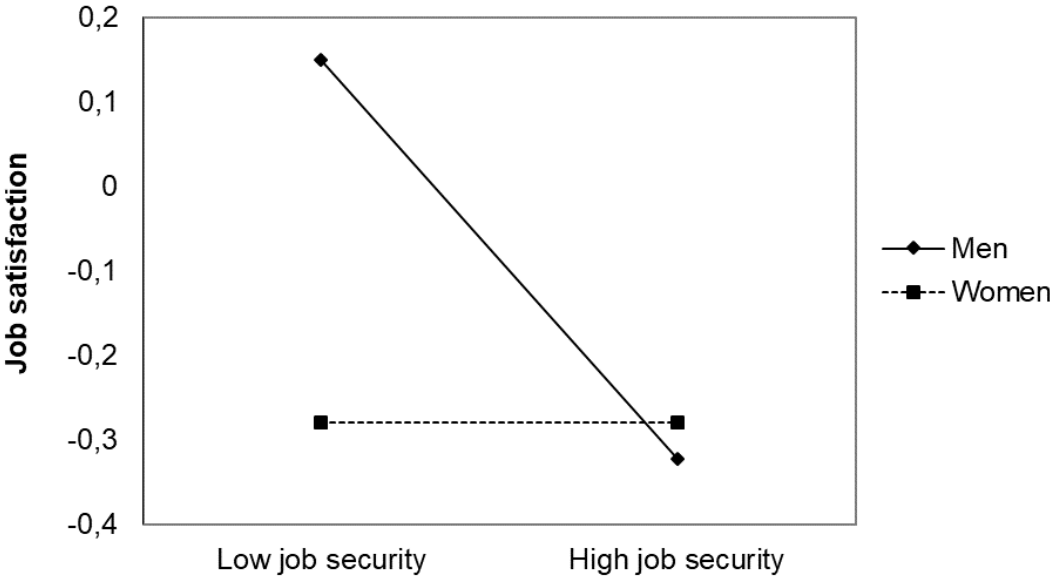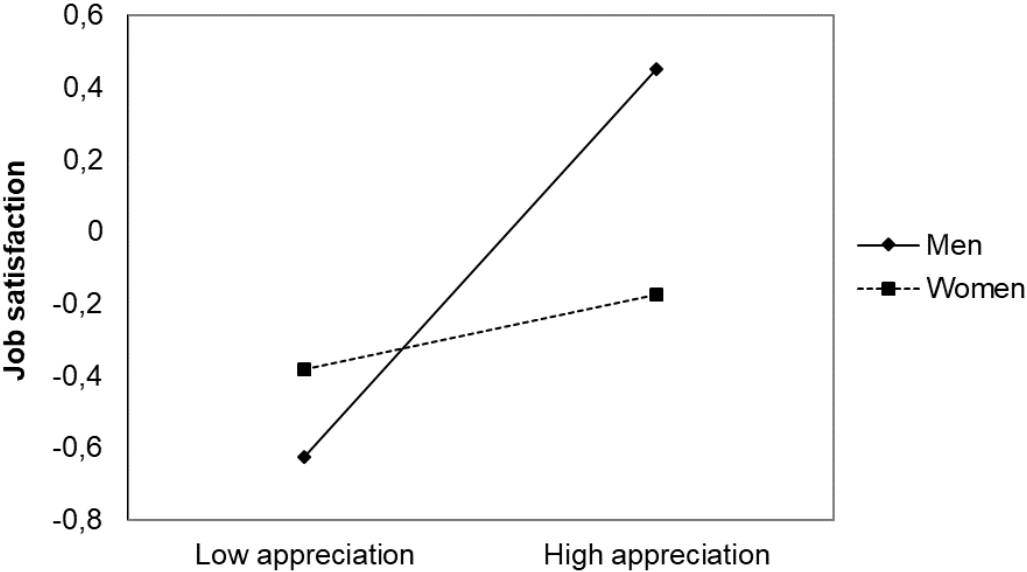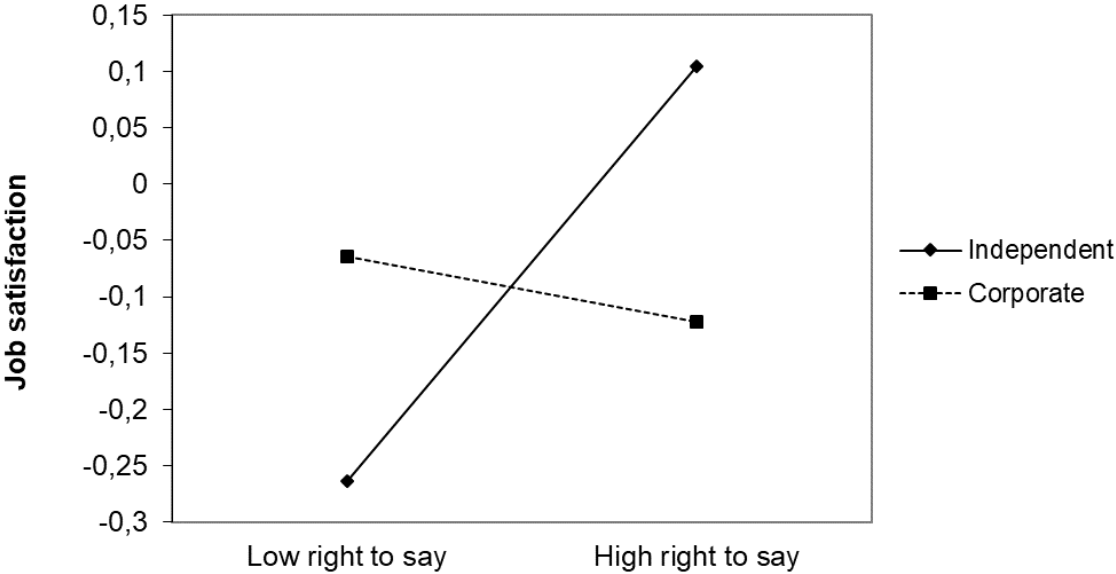
Figure 1. Research framework
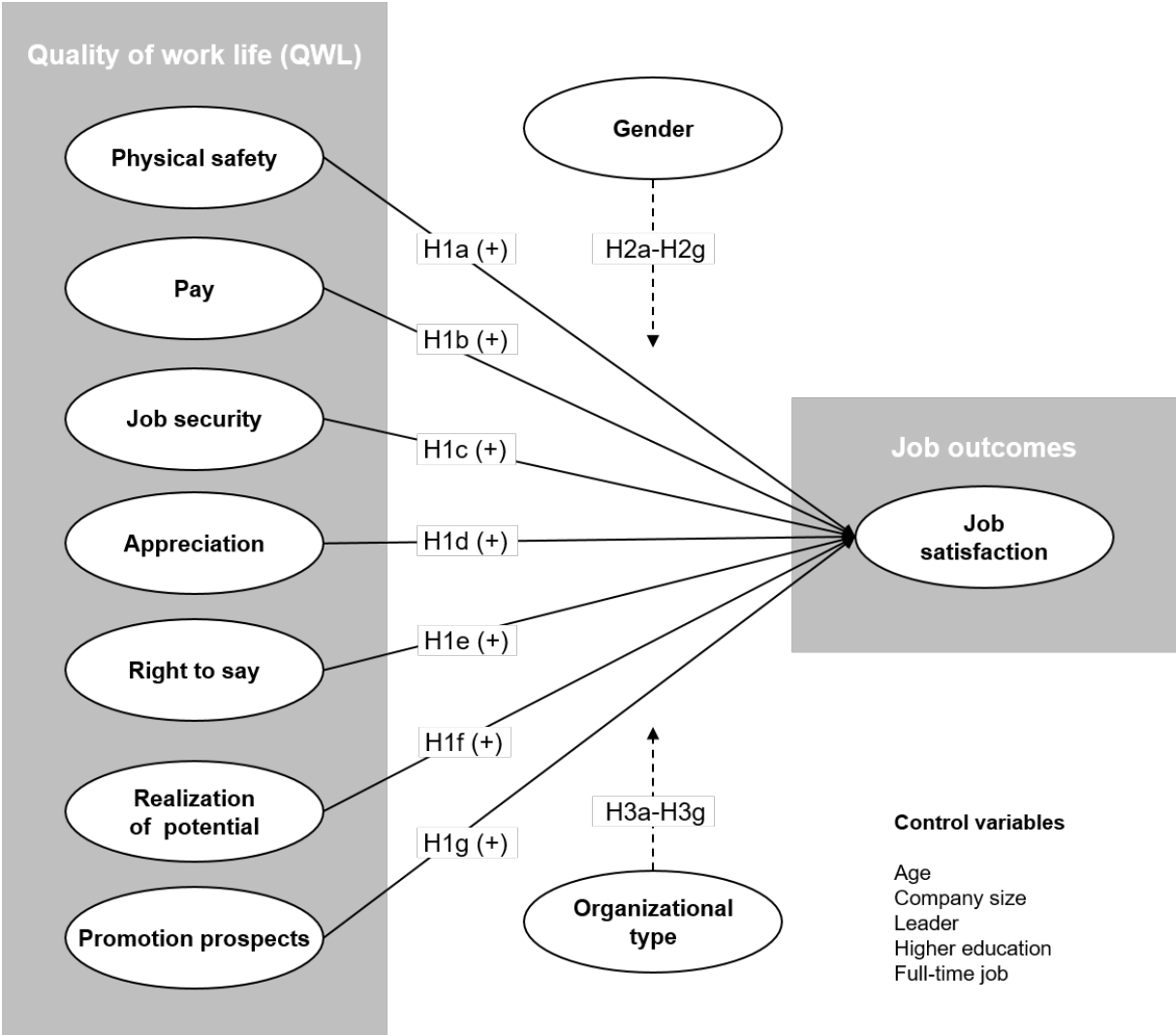
Figure 2. Moderating effect of gender on job security and job satisfaction

Figure 3. Moderating effect of gender on appreciation and job satisfaction

Figure 4. Moderating effect of organizational type on right to say and job satisfaction

Muskat, B., & Reitsamer, B. (2019). Quality of work life and Generation Y

Figure 5. Moderating effect of organizational types on realization of one's potential and job satisfaction

Muskat, B., & Reitsamer, B. (2019). Quality of work life and Generation Y