HAPPY AT WORK

Aspects of social capital and their influence on future job satisfaction

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ABSTRACT: This paper investigates the effects of individual measures of social capital on job satisfaction a year later. Firstly, psychological mechanisms such as social capital influencing general well-being, as well as the sociological mechanism of job matching are considered, providing a comprehensive view of the effects of social capital on job satisfaction. Secondly we look into the goal-specificity of social capital by comparing work-related social capital with relationships in other environments. The most important result is a generally positive effect of social capital on job satisfaction, while we find no conclusive support for the goal-specificity hypothesis.

KEYWORDS: Job satisfaction; Subjective career success; Goal specific social capital; Job matching; Social networks

Introduction

The relationship between social capital and career success has been the subject of much previous research. Social capital, that is, the resources people have access to through their social network, has often been found to have a positive effect on career success (e.g. Lin, Vaughn & Ensel, 1980; De Graaf & Flap, 1988; Ng et al., 2005). While this research has mostly focused on the relationship with objective career success, such as status attainment and promotions, less attention has been paid to subjective career success, such as job satisfaction (e.g. Flap & Volker, 2001; Requena, 2003). The latter will be the focus of the current paper.

Employment is an important part of many people's lives, as most employed people spend many of their waking hours on the job: from an average of 29 hours a week in the Netherlands to up to 49 hours a week in Turkey (OECD, 2017). Besides being a big part of many people’s day to day activities, it also offers a form of identity: jobs provide status, and allow people to quickly identify who belongs to their stratum (Irwin, 2017). Career success, such as status attainment and being satisfied with one's working environment, could therefore be considered an important aspect of day to day life.

A relationship between job satisfaction and job performance has been established previously (e.g. Bateman & Organ, 1983; Judge et al., 2001; Hsieh, 2016). Knowing how job satisfaction can be influenced through for example social capital can therefore lead to increased job

performance, smoother cooperation within organisations, and greater returns per effort invested into the job. There are also psychological benefits: if job satisfaction is low, overall unhappiness with life is significantly higher (Benin & Nienstedt, 1984). Acquiring knowledge about the specific factors influencing job satisfaction will therefore help policy makers and employers with coming up with appropriate interventions to increase it, and improve the general quality of life of employees.

Previous research has shed light on a positive relationship between social capital and career success. Having resourceful connections improves one's chances on the job market, because they have access to more information about available jobs, which leads to higher career success compared to those without much social capital (Lin, Ensel & Vaughn, 1981; Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001). However, most literature on the relationship between social capital and career success tends to focus on objective career success, such as the position one has within a company, or the wage one earns (Ng et al., 2005). Previous studies have found that while objective and subjective career success are positively correlated, they exist as distinct dimensions from one another (Ng et al., 2005). Subjective career success measures such as job satisfaction or the evaluation of the workplace are not necessarily explained by the same things as objective measures of career success (Ng et al., 2005).

Research on the relationship between social capital and subjective career success found that social capital is goal-specific (Flap & Völker, 2001). This means that certain forms of social capital are only useful for specific goals regarding achieving subjective career success, such as job satisfaction. In other words, aspects of social capital are not always equally relevant. By looking at the differential effects of aspects of social capital on job satisfaction, I will be able to determine which aspects of social capital are relevant for which career success purposes.

Several others have previously looked into the relationship between social capital and job satisfaction. Lange (2015) for example analysed a multitude of European countries and found an overall positive relationship between social capital and job satisfaction, but was not able to use longitudinal data for his analyses. Because of this, not much could be said about causality in this study. This same issue arises in the research on this topic by Flap & Volker (2001), Requena (2003), and Ommen et al. (2009).

Additionally, in the research of Ommen et al. (2009) and Lange (2015) job satisfaction was only measured by a single item. By using a wider belt of items on job satisfaction, I expect to be able to detect differences that a single-item approach – which usually simply consists of a

score from 1 to 10 – might not pick up on. Gaining knowledge about the differences in results between these measures may help reduce the costs of future research on this topic.

In this paper I will offer additional insight into the social capital-job satisfaction relationship, to see if this relationship holds when these limitations are overcome. In doing this I will be focussing specifically on the the Netherlands. In order to gain more knowledge about the relationship, we will answer the question: *to what extent do the different aspects of social capital explain future job satisfaction?*

By using the first and second waves of the *Longitudinal Internet panel for Social Science* [LISS] panel I will be able to do a longitudinal analysis, through using the data on social capital from an earlier wave than the data on job satisfaction. The LISS-panel includes multiple items on job satisfaction, and direct measures of the social network of the respondent, as well as items on other aspects of social capital. This richness in data allows for a comprehensive view of a person's subjective career success and social capital, making it possible to analyse which aspects of social capital have relatively the most impact on job satisfaction.

Theory

Career success is a broad concept, including both objective and subjective aspects (Ng et al., 2005). Objective aspects of career success are assessments of one's career success that are verifiable by others, and include achieved status, income, and achieved promotions. Subjective aspects of career success are more personal assessments of one's career success, and these focus more on matters like job satisfaction and personal sense of achievement (Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001). Job satisfaction is someone's subjective rating of their work environment and achievements, and incorporates judgments on multiple facets of their job. Perspectives on job satisfaction differ from it being instrumental, as a condition that may be satisfied in order to increasing productivity, or a more social view which considers job satisfaction as a type of employee's right that is a worthy goal for employers to aim for (Flap & Volker, 2001).

Social capital can be defined as the resources one has access to through the social network (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Lange, 2015). This means these specific resources are not owned by the actor, but are property of the associates of the actor. An actor can utilise these resources through the relationship with the associate, making these resources available to improve the actor's personal situation (Coleman, 1988). Like career success, social capital too is a multidimensional concept (Portes, 1998; Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001; Bjørnskov,

2006). Different aspects of social capital include the environment in which relationships exist, organisations one participates in, status of friends, trust in strangers, and access to information. While some research focusses on one of these specific aspects of social capital, this paper aims to take an integrative approach like that of Lange (2015), while focussing mainly on the relationships and social activity of the individual, and not so much on their values or trust in society (Portes, 1998). In this framework, the strength of relationships, the status of associates, the actor's organisational involvement and the specific context in which the relationship exists are examples of the different aspects of social capital (Lange, 2015).

Much previous research has been done into the relationship between social capital and objective career success. A positive relationship has been found between social capital and status attainment (Lin, Vaughn & Ensel, 1980; De Graaf & Flap, 1988), as well as a positive relationship between social capital and income and social capital and promotions (Ng et al., 2005). One of the proposed mechanisms explaining the relationship between social capital and career success is a mediation between social capital and career success through access to information (Lin, 1980; Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001). If someone has more social capital, they are able to get more strategic information about job opportunities, leading to increased career success in the form of promotions and raises. Different aspects of social capital, such as organisational involvement, close ties, and weak ties, have varying effects on different aspects of objective career success. Overall, there appears to be a strong positive relationship between social capital and objective career success.

Objective career success is easier to assess from a distance, making research into this topic less resource-intensive than subjective career success. However, objective measures tend to mainly focus on absolute measures, and not on achievements relative to the individual's goal or frame of reference (Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001; Ng et al., 2005). This disparity between the individual's position and the maximal possible achievement make that these dimensions are not the same, and cannot be used interchangeably. Objective and subjective career success are two separate dimensions of career success, explained by different predictors (Ng et al., 2005). It is therefore important to study their predictors separately, and not simply generalise from results obtained in research on the effects of social capital on objective career success.

The way social capital is expected to influence job satisfaction is through two different processes: social support, which operates mainly on a psychological level, and job-matching, which operates on a sociological level. Cohen & Mills (1985) concluded that social capital has a positive relationship with well-being. When someone is well embedded in a network

and they have access to much social support, this may lead to positive psychological effects such as feeling appreciated, desired, and needed. These effects provide the kind of stability necessary for psychological well-being, such as life satisfaction and trust in others (Cohen & Mills, 1985; Leung et al., 2013). If someone has good relationships with people, a measure of having access to social capital, this person will feel more appreciated. This effect radiates outward, and leads to a more positive outlook on life (Cohen & Mills, 1985). This positive outlook on life also permeates into the workplace, leading to a more positive appraisal of the job. Based on this, we may expect that having more social capital leads to increased job satisfaction.

Secondly, there is the classic social capital argument of job matching. If someone is not satisfied with their job, they have the option of looking for another job that better suits their expectations and desires. This new job can be found through direct application to an employer, formal channels such as job ads, but also through utilising one's social connections (Lin, 1980). It has been well-established that informal contacts can play a big role in finding work, because they offer access to new information that is not directly available to the respondent themselves (Lin, 1980; Granovetter, 1983). This is especially the case if the person contacted through the social network is of a high status: these people tend to have more diverse relationships that can be utilised for finding a job, often with others in high places (Lin, 1980). These higher status contacts also tend to be in positions of power more often, sometimes allowing them to influence the hiring process (Lin, 1980). Through the process of job matching, then, social capital is able to influence job satisfaction: those who have access to more opportunities for new jobs are less likely to stay in jobs that do not provide adequate satisfaction.

H1: Social capital leads to increased job satisfaction in the future

In the case of Cohen & Mills, who discuss the benefits of social capital from a psychological point of view, the social capital utilised needs to be relevant to the field in which the stressful event occurs. Social capital outside of work would be unable to provide the support that is required if someone is facing adversity at work: these relationships would be less capable of understanding the problems that are being faced. Instead, relationships at work are likely facing the same problems, and thus are able to offer more relevant support. Work-related social capital would therefore be better suited for improving job satisfaction in the face of adverse working conditions than for example social capital at home (Cohen & Mills, 1985). This point is repeated by Flap & Volker (2001), who found that not all aspects of social capital are equally relevant for each purpose. In some cases, social capital that benefits a

person in one area, such as family life, does not benefit that person, or even holds a person back in another area, such as work (Coleman, 1988). Saying social capita per se increases job satisfaction, would therefore skip over important nuances.

When we apply this goal-specificity of social capital to the specific field of career success, we may expect different aspects of social capital, such as different forms of tie content, to explain different aspects of career success, such as objective career success or job satisfaction, as was previously found by Seibert, Kraimer & Liden (2001). Combining these findings with previous research into the goal-specificity of social capital by Flap & Volker (2001), who state that social capital needs to be relevant to a specific situation for it to have an influence, we can expect the effect of work-related social capital on job satisfaction to be stronger than the effect social capital established in other environments (Ng et al., 2005), because it is able to provide more relevant support.

H2: Work-related social capital has a bigger influence on job satisfaction than social capital in other environments.

Data and methods

Data

For the analysis we will use data from the panel *Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences* [LISS]. The LISS panel is a longitudinal study conducted by CentERdata in Tilburg, the Netherlands, running from 2008 up until 2017. Respondents have been selected on the basis of a true probability sample from Statistics Netherlands (LISS, 2017). Because of non-response through different steps in the selection process, in the end first-generation immigrants, older generations and single-person households are underrepresented in the data.

Each month, respondents get invited to participate in an online questionnaire, often a core study, which gets followed up on through the years. In case respondents do not have access to a computer, one is provided by the study. An incentive for respondents to answer the questionnaires exists in the form of a small reward for the time spent.

The current paper will look at data gathered in waves one and two, administered in 2008 and 2009 respectively. The core studies included in this paper are the social, work, and family studies, as well as general background variables. The social and family studies offer insight into the social capital of a respondent, while the work study offers information on job satisfaction. The files for the separate waves and studies were merged in SPSS. In total, we start out with 8054 respondents.

On average the response rate for wave one and two lies between 70 and 80 percent, with less response generally to the second wave. Because we use data from different studies, some respondents cannot be of use because they have not completed one or both questionnaires. Additionally, because we look at job satisfaction, about 2000 respondents drop out because they are not employed in wave two. We end up with 2665 people in our analyses.

Social capital

In order to measure social capital we look at a number of aspects of this concept, based on previous research (Flap & Volker, 2001; Requena, 2003; Lange, 2015). Specifically, we take a look at core discussion network size; proportion of family, friends and colleagues in the discussion network; proportion of close relationships in the discussion network; status of associates; and organisations one actively participates in.

Core discussion network size is measured by looking at the amount of alters answered to the question *"If you look back on the last six months, with whom did you discuss important things?"* Respondents were able to name up to a maximum of five discussion partners. It is important to note that this type of network measurement specifically focusses on strong ties, and because of the nature of the question this measure does not tend to take acquaintances into account (Marsden, 1987).

For the different aspects of social capital, the domain to which the social capital is related is a key aspect of our research. We focus on *work-related social capital* and *social capital in other environments*, which we measure by looking at whether or not someone has colleagues, friends and family in their core discussion network. This was measured on the basis of the answer to the question *"How do you know this person?"*. If a respondent answered with partner, parent, sibling, child, or other family, the alter was coded as *family*. If the person was referred to as a *colleague*, it was coded as such. If a person was neither family nor a colleague, they were coded as an *other friend*. Having one alter of a specific kind is enough to be coded as having those types of alters in the discussion network.

The *proportion of close relationships* is measured by looking at the question *"Are all these people equally dear to you,"* referring to the people named in the core discussion network. If all were said to be equally close, we assume that all people are dear to the respondent. If the question was answered negatively, the respondent had to answer the question for each person individually, stating whether or not the person is dear to them. A score of 0 on proportion of close relationships thus signifies that the respondent stated none of their discussion partners is dear to them. We use this measure as a proxy for social support that can be utilised, as close

relationships are likely to be more conducive to psychological benefits like feeling appreciated than weak acquaintanceships.

The *status of friends* is measured by taking the profession of each named alter, measured on a 9-point scale and taking the mean of this between all alters. This was done if at least one alter was named. Possible answer categories are (from high to low): *advanced intellectual or independent profession, advanced leadership position, medium-level intellectual or independent profession, medium leadership position or commercial profession, other 'white collar' work, skilled and supervisory manual work, semi-skilled manual work, unskilled and trained manual work and agrarian profession*. A higher score on this measure means a higher average level of profession among alters, and thus a higher average status.

In order to include respondents with no discussion network in the analysis, we code these respondents as 0 for having colleagues, family and other friends, and as the average sample value for the proportion of close relationships and the status of friends. In order to check if having no friends has an influence, we create a binary variable of 'no friends'.

The *organisations one is actively involved in* is measured on the basis of questions regarding 12 different types of organisations. A respondent was able to state if they had no connection, donated money, participated in an activity, were a member, or performed voluntary work for a sports club, cultural association or hobby club, trade union, professional organisation, consumers organisation or automobile club, organisation for humanitarian aid, environmental protection organisation, religious organisation, political organisation, education organisation, social society, or other organisations. We counted the amount of times a person stated they were either participating, a member, or volunteering for an organisation, and we considered them as active in those organisation, since as opposed to donating this could actually lead to social interaction with other members.

Job satisfaction

Table 1. Items and factor loadings* for job satisfaction

How satisfied are you with your wages	.458
How satisfied are you with your working hours	.469
How satisfied are you with the type of work that you do	.849
How satisfied are you with the general atmosphere among your colleagues	.590
How satisfied are you with your current work	.968

** Factor loadings after Promax rotation*

Job satisfaction is measured by doing an exploratory factor analysis on five items referring to job satisfaction, following the finding in Flap & Volker (2001) that job satisfaction comprises multiple aspects. For the five items (table 1), the standardised Cronbach's α = .80. One factor is extracted, with items having a loading between .46 and .97. Factor scores are saved, and the new variable is used to represent job satisfaction. A Pearson correlation between the new factor scores and the single item *"How satisfied are you with your current work"*. used to measure job satisfaction in previous research (e.g. Ommen et al., 2009; Lange, 2015), correlates very highly ($r = .994$, $p < .001$). This indicates that both measures are very similar, and most likely measure the same thing. However, as the computed measure is based on more information, we will use that in this paper.

Control variables

We control for age, gender, level of education, net income and being unemployed in the previous year.

Age is controlled for because we expect an U-shaped relationship between job satisfaction and age (Flap & Volker, 2001). Young people are expected to be more satisfied with their jobs as they have less to compare it to, and old people are expected to be more satisfied as well, as they have adjusted their previous expectations to reflect the possibilities that they've come to know over the course of their experience on the job market (Clark, Oswald & Warr, 1996). People were able to state their age prior to filling in the questionnaire in a questionnaire on background variables. For all respondents, we use the age reported in February of the first wave.

Gender is controlled for because previous studies have indicated that women have lower expectations for their jobs than men do, and are therefore more easily satisfied with their working conditions (Clark, 1997). We recoded the reported gender in the background variable questionnaire as a binary variable where 1 means female.

Education is controlled for because we expect that higher educated people have a more varied choice of jobs, and therefore will be less likely to stay in jobs that do not give them the satisfaction they are looking for (Glenn, Taylor & Weaver, 1977). Possible answer categories, standardised into Statistics Netherlands categories based on the Dutch educational system, are: *primary school, intermediate secondary education, higher secondary education/preparatory university education, intermediate vocational education, higher vocational education, and university.* We recode these categories into the amount of years of education completed. *Primary school* is coded as 8 years of education, *intermediate secondary education* as 12,

higher secondary education as 14, *intermediate vocational education* as 14, *higher vocational education* as 17 and *university* as 18. We take the level of education reported during the second wave.

We control for *income* because we assume that those who have a higher income appreciate their job more, as it is the main provider of that income, and allows them to meet their basic needs. We transform the personal net income per month by taking the log of this, as we expect this effect is stronger for the first units of income, and then decreases as income is higher. By transforming the measure, it will become more intuitive to interpret. For example, a pay rise from €1.500 to €1.700 a month will likely be much more important to the person on the receiving end than an increase from €10.000 to €10.200 a month, as relatively the latter change is negligible. We take the income reported during the second wave, as jobs may have changed in the meantime.

Being *unemployed in the previous year* is controlled for because we assume that those who were looking for a job previous year are more satisfied, because they have a clearer reference of what it is like to be unemployed. Therefore, their baseline is different from those who were employed in the previous year. We compute this by creating a binary variable out of the response to the question *'I perform paid work (even if is it just for one or several hours per week or for a brief period)'* in 2008.

Analysis

To test our hypotheses, we will run an ordinary least squares regression with job satisfaction as the dependent variable, and our measures for social capital and our control variables as independent variables.

To test our first hypothesis we will look at the effect our social capital measures in wave one (network size, proportion of colleagues/family/other friends, proportion of close ties, status of friends and organisational involvement) have on job satisfaction in wave two, when controlling for our control variables. We expect a generally positive relationship between social capital and job satisfaction, meaning we expect significantly positive coefficients at an alpha level of .05. As this is a single-sided test, reported p-values will need to be divided by 2 to get the true significance level.

To test our second hypothesis, we will specifically compare the proportion of family, colleagues and other friends with each other. We will enter two out of three groups into the analysis at a time, and compare effect sizes and significance levels compared to the reference

category to see if work-related social capital has more of an effect on job satisfaction than social capital in other environments.

Finally, we will run a sensitivity analysis to compare the effects of our independent variables on our constructed scale of job satisfaction with the effects on the single item measurement of job satisfaction.

Descriptive statistics

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (N = 2673)

Variable name	*Min*	*Max*	*Mean*	*SD*
Job satisfaction	-4.68	1.64	.027	.950
Having friends of a certain type				
Colleagues	0.00	1.00	.233	
Family	0.00	1.00	.823	
Other friends	0.00	1.00	.654	
Network size	0.00	5.00	3.553	1.636
Proportion of close friends	0.00	1.00	.833	
Status of friends	1.00	9.00	5.965	1.427
No friends	0.00	1.00	.087	
Organisational involvement	0.00	12.00	2.483	1.889
Age				
Under 18	0.00	1.00	.009	
18 – 24	0.00	1.00	.060	
25 – 34	0.00	1.00	.216	
35 – 44	0.00	1.00	.287	
45 – 54	0.00	1.00	.283	
55 – 64	0.00	1.00	.138	
65 and over	0.00	1.00	.007	
Female	0.00	1.00	.507	
Education in years	8.00	18.00	14.605	2.456
Log (net income)	1.60	5.40	3.147	.289
Unemployed in 2008	0.00	1.00	.048	

Results

Overall, a significant regression equation is found ($F(18, 2654) = 4.848$, $p < .001$), with an R^2 of .036. As only 3.6% of variance in job satisfaction is explained in our model, the explaining value of the model is rather small.

Table 3. OLS regression of job satisfaction on social capital

Variable name	B	s.e.
Having friends of a certain type		
Colleagues	.075	.046
Family	.185**	.067
Other friends	-.016	.049
Network size	-.026	.018
Proportion of close friends	.190**	.072
Status of friends	.028*	.014
No friends	-.186*	.093
Organisational involvement	.013	.010
Age		
Under 18	.043	.212
18 – 24	*(ref)*	
25 – 34	-.325***	.088
35 – 44	-.171*	.087
45 – 54	-.182*	.088
55 – 64	-.057	.097
65 and over	.064	.232
Female	.106**	.042
Education in years	-.004	.009
Log (net income)	.363***	.082
Unemployed in 2008	-.309***	.087
Constant	-1.342***	.266
R^2	.036	
N	2673	

Reported betas are unstandardized coefficients. Reference category for age is 18-24.

* = Significant at p < .05 level, ** = significant at p < .01 level, *** = significant at p < .001 level.

We can see in table 3 that the results are partially in line with our expectations that more social capital leads to increased job satisfaction (H1). Where we find significant results, these results are in the predicted direction: more social capital predicts more job satisfaction. When we look at the status of associates, we see that this has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction (B = .028, p = .041/2). A similar effect is found for the proportion of close relationships in a discussion network, which also has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction (B = .190, p = .008/2). Not having anyone at all to discuss important matters with has the expected negative effect on job satisfaction (B = -.186, p = .045/2). Other aspects of social capital, such as organisational involvement (B = .013, p = .212/2) and network size (B = -.026, p = .136/2), are found to have no significant effect on job satisfaction. Overall, we can say that quite some support is found for our first hypothesis.

To test the prediction that work-related social capital has a bigger influence on job satisfaction that other forms of social capital (H2), we compare the effects of having colleagues, family, and other friends in the core discussion network. In table 3, we see that having colleagues in the core discussion network only marginally has no significant effect on job satisfaction (B = .075, p = .104/2). Having family in the discussion network, however, has a significantly positive effect on job satisfaction (B = .182, p = .006/2). Having other friends in the discussion network is found to have no significant on job satisfaction (B = -.016, p = .749). These findings are not in line with our prediction that work-related social capital has more of an effect on job satisfaction than other forms of social capital: while having colleagues in the discussion network borders on being a significant predictor, having family in the discussion network has an unquestionably bigger effect on job satisfaction. We therefore do not find support for our second hypothesis.

Furthermore, as expected we find a U-shaped effect of age, the positive effect of being female, and a positive effect of the log of income on job satisfaction. Not being employed in the previous year has a significant negative effect on job satisfaction, which is opposed to our expectations, and no significant effect is found for level of education.

Sensitivity analysis

Overall, a significant regression equation is found ($F(18, 2654) = 5.162$, $p < .001$), with an R^2 of .034. The explaining value of the model is rather small with 3.4% of variance in single-item job satisfaction explained, but this is comparable the explained variance in the main model of our scale of job satisfaction (3.6%).

In table 4 we see the results of our sensitivity analysis. For this we compare the standardised effects of our independent variables on single-item job satisfaction with those for the scale measurement job satisfaction. The correlation between the two measurements is very high ($r = .994$, $p < .001$), and this fact is reflected in the sensitivity analyses. No big differences are found between effects of our independent variables on the single-item and scale measure of job satisfaction. Effects are similarly significant, and effect sizes do not differ much between the two models.

Table 4. OLS regression of different measurements job satisfaction on social capital

Variable name	Single-item job satisfaction	Scale job satisfaction
	β	β
Having friends of a certain type		
Colleagues	.033	.034
Family	.072**	.074**
Other friends	-.007	-.008
Network size	-.048	-.045
Proportion of close friends	.054**	.054**
Status of friends	.035*	.042*
No friends	-.055*	-.052*
Organisational involvement	.029	.025
Age		
Under 18	.003	.004
18 – 24	(ref)	(ref)
25 – 34	-.140***	-.141***
35 – 44	-.081*	-.082*
45 – 54	-.087*	-.086*
55 – 64	-.023	-.021
65 and over	.006	.006
Female	.054**	.056**
Education in years	-.017	-.010
Log (net income)	.107***	.111***
Unemployed in 2008	-.067***	-.069***
Constant	5.530***	-1.342***
R^2	.034	.036
N	2673	2673

Reported betas are standardized coefficients. Reference category for age is 18-24.

* = Significant at p < .05 level, ** = significant at p < .01 level, *** = significant at p < .001 level.

Conclusion and discussion

In this paper I looked at whether social capital had an effect on job satisfaction, and specifically which aspects of social capital have the most influence. Previous research shows that while social capital has an influence on other measures of career success, the effect of social capital on job satisfaction has not gathered as much attention (e.g. Flap & Volker, 2001; Requena, 2003; Ommen et al., 2009; Lange, 2015). Studies that do look into this relationship found that there is some evidence for a positive effect of social capital on job satisfaction, but these studies do not make use of longitudinal data, or use simpler measures of job satisfaction, leaving room for improvement. Current findings suggest that social capital has a positive effect on Besides looking into the general relationship between social capital and job satisfaction, we also look into the benefits of goal-specific social capital in achieving higher

job satisfaction (Flap & Volker, 2001). We do this to see if social capital that is specific to the domain of interest, in our case the workplace, has a bigger effect on job satisfaction than other forms of social capital.

Results were mostly in line with the expectations, with more social capital leading to higher job satisfaction. Closeness of relationships, status of associates, having any discussion partners at all, and having family in the core discussion network were found to be significant predictors of job satisfaction. These findings corroborate previous results by Flap & Volker (2001), Requena (2003), and Lange (2015). The effect of closeness and having family in the network seem to offer support for the psychological benefits argument: having more support leads to higher general wellbeing, and more specifically also higher job satisfaction. The effect of friends' status then offers support for the job matching argument: those with more resourceful connections are able to find a job that better suits their needs and desires, leading to higher job satisfaction.

Network size, organisational involvement, and having colleagues or other friends in the discussion network were not found to be significant predictors of job satisfaction. It is possible that for core discussion networks, it is not the size of the network but the quality of the support derived from it that truly makes a difference, in line with the psychological benefits argument brought up by Cohen & Mills (1985). In the same vein, we may argue that occasional contact with acquaintances at sports clubs, industry-related organisations and the like do not provide the type of social support that is necessary for improving job satisfaction.

Instead, these weaker ties may be more appropriate for other uses, such as for example finding a job, as has been extensively researched (e.g. Granovetter, 1983). However, in the current studies these effects were not found in relationship to the job-matching argument outlined previously. Possibly the status of associates plays a role in these instances too: simply having acquaintances might not increase the opportunity for a better job unless these acquaintances are of a high enough status.

The expected stronger effect of work-related social capital on job satisfaction than social capital in other environments was not found, with instead only a significant positive effect of having family in the discussion network, and no significant effects for discussing important matters with colleagues, or other friends outside the workplace. This does not offer support for the goal-specificity of social capital as outlined by Flap & Volker (2001).

A possible explanation for these results is the fact that relationships with family members, especially partners, are inherently closer and deeper than relationships with colleagues. In our

sample, 82.3% of respondents have family members in their core discussion network. More specifically, 61.1% of our sample named their partner as a member of their discussion network – this is 75% of those who have family members in their discussion network. If we assume life partners (and family members in general) are closest to the respondent and offer the most support, it is not surprising that their presence in the discussion network – a measure specifically focussing on close relationships - has a significantly positive effect. After all, social support retrieved from close relationships in general is expected to increase well-being in general, but specifically job satisfaction in our case. The nature of our measurement of social networks – that is, using data on core discussion networks – may therefore give us an incomplete or skewed view of the entire social network, and the complete effects of social capital on job satisfaction (Marsden, 1987).

Because we only look at the core discussion network in our analysis, we can cautiously say that on the basis of the questions regarding one's social network we are underestimating the effects social capital has on job satisfaction. Since social support is not necessarily limited to the five people closest to you, which is the maximal extent of the LISS-data, excluding these weaker – although still close – types of relationships will give us a conservative view of the effects of social capital (Marsden, 1987). It is for this reason that our results concerning the goal-specificity of social capital, while marginally insignificant, should not be thrown out immediately, especially in light of our sensitivity analysis. When we run the model for single-item job satisfaction without filtering for the same subset of respondents as was used in our main analysis, we find significant results for the effect of having colleagues in the network. It is therefore likely that when more complete network measures are used, which include information on weaker ties than the close relationships measured in core discussion networks, having colleagues in a social network does in fact increase one's job satisfaction.

For future research the results of our sensitivity analysis indicate it would suffice to analyse the influence of social capital on job satisfaction as a whole by measuring job satisfaction as a single item. This will save time and resources that can be used for other purposes. For example, future research would benefit from looking into more extensive network measurements that go beyond those utilised in the current paper. Shifting the focus from the core discussion network to a broader, more complete measurement of one's social network will allow for a broader view of the social capital a respondent has available. This will allow us to better assess the true effects of social capital on job satisfaction. Adding to this, an approach like that of Flap & Volker (2001), one that involves gathering information on

network structure, will allow us to move beyond simply the analysis of the content of ties, and is bound to offer interesting additional insights the current data structure could not provide.

Furthermore, because of data limitations like no structural network information, and a limited set of items on job satisfaction, it was not possible to look into differential effects of social capital on instrumental job satisfaction and social job satisfaction. Future research could benefit from further studying this distinction, as was previously done by Flap & Volker (2001), while making use of longitudinal data and a broader dataset that is more representative of the general population, as was done in the current paper.

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