YOUNG, BLUE AND HAPPY? CAREER SUCCESS AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG BLUE COLLAR WORKERS AROUND THE GLOBE

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Focus

- Career success as a multi-faceted concept: it’s not all about the money and power!

- Career and overall life satisfaction: do all dimensions of career success improve lives?

- Context matters:
  - Early life and its challenges for younger workers (school/work transition, private life changes, ...)
  - Addressing “elitism” by focusing on blue collars and their differences from white collars
  - Country-comparative analyses largely missing

- Our study:
  - three crucial aspects of career success based on “5C” research
  - analyzes effects of career success on life satisfaction and potential moderating variables on macro and micro level
  - Focuses on young members of the workforce in different lines of work
Model - Overview

Country Prosperity (IHDI)

Perceived Achievement of Career Success

Life Satisfaction

Occupational Group (Blue/White Collar)

Level 1 'higher level'

Level 2 'lower level'

H1

H2

H3

H4
Career success dimensions
(Mayrhofer et al. 2016)
Career success dimensions
(Mayrhofer et al. 2016)
Model - Overview

Country Prosperity (IHDI)

H1a) Perceived Achievement Learning & Development

H1b) Perceived Achievement Positive Impact

H1c) Perceived Achievement Financial Success

H2

H3

H4

Occupational Group (Blue/White Collar)

Life Satisfaction

Level 1 'higher level'

Level 2 'lower level'
Sample of our study (5C data)

- 25 countries (N per country ranges from 105 to 479)

- 4,902 workers younger than 35 years
  - 47.8% female
  - mean age as of 2015 29.4 years ± 3.8

- Two groups
  - White collar (73.3%, 29.8 years, 52.6% female)
  - Blue collar (26.7%, 28.1 years, 34.8% female)
Measurement

- Career success measures from 5C
  - 5-point Likert scale (strongly dis/agree)

- Life satisfaction
  - 5 items of the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985)

- Economic prosperity
  - Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI, hdr.undp.org)

- Control variables
  - Socio-economic status of parents, sex, age
**Results**

Country Prosperity (IHDI)

H4:  
\[
\begin{align*}
  a &: 0.000 (p < 0.000) \\
  b &: 0.003 (p < 0.000) \\
  c &: 0.000 (p < 0.000)
\end{align*}
\]

Level 1, "higher level"

Level 2, "lower level"

Learning & Dev.

Percieved Achievement

Perceived Achievement

Positive Impact

Financial Success

H1a)
BC .464 / WC .380 (p < .000)

H1b)
BC .431 / WC .362 (p < .000)

H1c)
BC .431 / WC .362 (p < .000)

H3:  
\[
\begin{align*}
  a &: 0.001 (p < 0.023) \\
  b &: 0.001 (p < 0.014) \\
  c &: 0.000 (p < 0.814)
\end{align*}
\]

H2:  
\[
\begin{align*}
  a &: BC > WC .10 (p < 0.000) \\
  b &: BC < WC .15 (p < 0.000) \\
  c &: BC > WC .15 (p < 0.000)
\end{align*}
\]

Life Satisfaction

Occupational Group (Blue/White Collar)
Discussion

- Clear differences between young blue and white collar workers in terms of career success – life satisfaction relationship
  - “Micro hypotheses” supported
  - Contrary to our expectation, growth more important for blue collar workers (H2a)
- Certain aspects of this relationship are influenced by country prosperity
  - Growth and design for life have stronger impact on life satisfaction in more prosperous countries
  - Material output always important, regardless of prosperity
- Growth, design for life and material output are positively related to life satisfaction, but
  - Relations differ based on type of occupation and economic prosperity
  - In high-prosperity countries, positive impact even more important for white collar than for blue collar
Conclusions

- Career success – life satisfaction link confirmed for our dimensions of all three themes: growth, design for life and material output

- Contextualization of research in terms of occupation differences required, focus on blue collar workers worthwhile

- Country specifics, e.g. prosperity, matter, though findings need more investigation through country-comparative research
  - Material output is always important, “luxury goals” dependent on prosperity

- HR practices/policies may have to account for different career success aspects of occupational groups and consider economic context of the country