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The Contribution of Job Happiness and Job Meaning to the Well-Being of Workers from Thriving and Failing Companies

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Abstract In a time of global economic crisis, workers' well-being is of paramount concern for both organizations and society at large. Conceptualizations within positive psychology distinguish between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being components, and call for the need to include them in an integrated perspective. Within this framework, the present study aimed at investigating the impact of situational uncertainty on eudaimonic and hedonic well-being, and the spillover effects of work into individuals' lives. Data were collected from 85 Italian employees at a thriving insurance company and at a failing one. Participants were administered Job Content Questionnaire, Eudaimonic and Hedonic Happiness Investigation, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and Psychological Wellbeing Scales. Data were analyzed through hierarchical regression analyses. Concerning well-being at work, employees at the failing company reported higher job insecurity and lower job happiness compared to employees at the thriving company, while job meaning scores did not differ between groups. Concerning general well-being, an unexpected positive association was found between positive relations and situational uncertainty. A spillover effect of job happiness and meaning on life satisfaction, environmental mastery, and autonomy was also detected. In particular, a moderating effect of job meaning was identified, showing that attributing high importance to one's job had wide affective consequences, spilling over to global life evaluations. Findings bring forward practical suggestions for well-being promotion, in terms of shifting domain importance (Wu Journal of Happiness Studies 10:37–47, 2009), and investing in multiple life areas (Sirgy and Wu Journal of Happiness Studies 10:183–196, 2009) for the promotion of a balanced life.

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A great number of studies have shown that well-being at work can have crucial effects for both individuals and organizations. In the work setting, employees' well-being has been related—among others—to productivity (Zelenski et al. 2008) and organizational commitment (Fisher 2010). What is more, well-being at work influences employees' self-esteem, depression, and anxiety (Faragher et al. 2005), and spills over to their lives, in terms of overall life quality and satisfaction (Bowling et al. 2010; Sirgy et al. 2008), as well as satisfaction with single life domains, such as family (Kinnunen et al. 2006). In a time of global economic crisis (European Commission 2009) in which individuals are more and more frequently facing job insecurity and layoff prospects, the issue of well-being promotion becomes paramount for both organizations and society at large (Keyes and Grzywacz 2005). Given such conditions, the present study aimed at proposing a positive psychology perspective focusing on both well-being at work and the identification of those work components that can affect individuals' overall well-being in life. Specifically, we explored the relationship between situational uncertainty and both hedonic and eudaimonic indicators of well-being at work (Ryan and Deci 2001), the former referring to the affective and pleasant aspects of work, whereas the latter epitomizing optimal human functioning. Furthermore, we investigated how these indicators spill over to individuals' lives. Relevant to our research were the concurrent focus on multiple aspects of well-being, the emphasis on the work-life connection, and the acknowledgment that work is just one domain among many in people's lives. Taking all these elements into consideration could help propose practical suggestions for intervention.

Eudaimonic and Hedonic Well-Being

Well-being has been variously operationalized in the literature, ranging from objective measures of physical health to psychological constructs such as perceived quality, satisfaction, happiness, meaning, and engagement, referring both to life in general and to specific domains such as work. Positive psychologists have recently started to unravel such a great number of definitions, in line with their mission towards catalyzing a change in focus of psychology from the sole preoccupation with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). In particular, they have focused on two theoretical traditions: hedonism and eudaimonism, both rooted in ancient Greek philosophy (Ryan and Deci 2001).

While the hedonic view equates well-being with pleasant feelings, comfort and enjoyment, the eudaimonic view emphasizes optimal human functioning, and the related ability to fulfill one's potential and to pursue complex goals. These perspectives present different long- and short-term implications for individuals and societies. The former stresses the achievement of a homeostatic balance through the fulfillment of individual desires and appetites (Cummins 2010); the latter refers to a process of continuous construction and growth in complexity towards the achievement of a higher good. In addition, from the eudaimonic perspective, happiness as feeling good

can be set aside—at least temporarily—in the pursuit of important goals, such as family relations, good health, or maturity.

Main concepts related to the hedonic approach are life satisfaction, presence of positive affect, and absence of negative affect, together constituting *subjective well-being* (Diener 2009a, b). By contrast, from the eudaimonic perspective, Ryff (1989) developed the multidimensional concept of *psychological well-being*. A wide range of pathways leading to well-being was identified (Ryan and Deci 2001), such as fulfillment of basic psychological needs (Deci and Ryan 2000), optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1975; Delle Fave et al. 2011), and personal strengths and virtues (Seligman 2002). One essential aspect underlying all eudaimonic theories is meaningfulness (Baumeister and Vohs 2002), as meaning-making represents a crucial process in organizing individuals' experience in time (Kegan 1994), and as it satisfies needs for purpose, value, sense of efficacy, and self-worth (Baumeister and Vohs 2002).

Besides burgeoning systematic research in the work domain (Linley et al. 2010; Luthans 2002), some positive psychology constructs have been studied for many years (Fisher 2010). From the hedonic perspective, job satisfaction was investigated in terms of both cognitive evaluations and beliefs, and emotional states and affect (i.e. hedonic tone) (Sirgy et al. 2008; Weiss et al. 1999). Eudaimonic concepts such as job meaning (Brief and Nord 1990; Steger and Dik 2010) have also received researchers' attention, in line with Fisher's claim that "[…] hedonic happiness, conceptualized as mere pursuit of pleasurable experiences, is unsustainable over the long term in the absence of eudaimonc well-being" (2010, p.385).

From a scientific standpoint, hedonic and eudaimonic well-being—measured as subjective well-being (Diener 2009a) and as psychological well-being (Ryff 1989), respectively—are distinct but highly correlated (Gallagher et al. 2009; Linley et al. 2009). Researchers have called for the analysis of both concepts, separately as well as jointly, in order to provide a deeper understanding of individuals' well-being as a whole (Keyes and Annas 2009). In this respect, Seligman (2002) maintains that authentic happiness is made up of a pleasant life, consisting of pleasant experiences; an engaged life comprising high levels of engagement in satisfying activities; and a meaningful life connected to the achievement of virtues. According to Sirgy and Wu (2009), another crucial element of authentic happiness deserving researchers' attention is balanced life, that is a state reflecting satisfaction or fulfillment in several important life domains with little or no negative effect in other domains. The need for this fourth dimension is supported by evidence suggesting that people are more satisfied with their lives when the source of satisfaction derives from multiple domains rather than a single domain. Diversified investment can allow individuals to compensate for dissatisfaction in some domains with satisfaction in others, and can thus contribute to higher levels of well-being. Furthermore, well-being is not determined solely by people, but by the interplay between people and their environment. As recently sustained by McNulty and Fincham (2012), positive processes can either benefit or harm well-being depending on the context in which they operate.

In summary, recent directions in positive psychology point to a crucial issue in researchers' agenda: the need to investigate both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being constructs, as well as their mutual relations, in contextualized domains for the promotion of a balanced fulfilling life.

The Present Study

In light of the research suggestions reported above and the spread concern for the current world economic situation, the present study aimed at investigating eudaimonic and hedonic well-being at work, and at analyzing its contributions to individuals' overall life quality. In particular, we posed the following questions: Does economic crisis impact on eudaimonic and hedonic indicators of well-being in the same way? How does well-being at work spill over to individuals' lives?

These issues were investigated in two groups of participants from different job contexts, namely employees working at a company with a thriving economic status, and employees hired in a failing company—that is a business in which heavy downsizing was announced as consequence of economic crisis. In order to provide a subjective measure of perceived job conditions in addition to the objective evaluation of situational uncertainty (thriving vs failing company; De Cuyper et al. 2010), we further collected information on employees' perceived job insecurity (Karasek 1979), expecting that people at the failing company would report higher job insecurity than participants from the thriving company.

We operationalized our research questions focusing on participants' well-being at work, well-being in life, and on the spillover effects of work in their lives, as described in the following sections.

Well-Being at Work

From the great number of available constructs, we selected job happiness and job meaning as hedonic and eudaimonic indicators, respectively (Delle Fave et al. 2011). While happiness captures the affective experience workers associate with their job (Weiss et al. 1999), meaning reflects job significance and importance (Steger and Dik 2010), and has been shown to represent a resource in dealing with work-related stresses (Clausen and Borg 2011). As shown in previous studies, affect is profoundly influenced by contingent work conditions, both as a disposition and as a transient experience fluctuating over time according to work events (Larsen and Kasimatis 1990; Weiss et al. 1999). As for job meaning, to the best of our knowledge no previous study has tackled it in relation to company economic conditions. However, due to the centrality of work as value in society, it has been shown to be relatively stable over time (Harpaz and Fu 2002). These findings led us to formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Situational uncertainty is negatively related to job happiness (H1a) and it is not related to job meaning (H1b).

Well-Being in Life

Participants' overall hedonic and eudaimonic well-being was investigated in terms of satisfaction with life (Diener 1984) and psychological well-being (Ryff 1989). The former refers to the cognitive appraisal of one's life, the extent to which one's aspirations are met, or the degree to which the person judges the overall quality of his/her life favorably (Veenhoven 1991). Psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept including (Ryff and Singer 2008): self-acceptance—acknowledging and accepting

multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities; positive relations—having warm, satisfying and trusting relationships with others; autonomy—being self-determining and able to resist social pressures; environmental mastery—having a sense of competence and control in managing the environment; purpose in life—having goals and a sense of directedness in life; and personal growth—seeing oneself as developing, growing, expanding and open to new experiences.

Literature has shown that individuals rely on different sources of information when constructing global judgments such as satisfaction with life (Diener et al. 2009). For example, they resort to their experience in life domains such as family, work, leisure, and social relations. Specifically, the process by which domain satisfaction judgments are aggregated can vary according to individual differences, cultural background, or social comparison (Diener et al. 2009). As suggested by Sirgy and Wu (2009), people may try to build a harmonious balanced life, investing differentially in multiple domains which contribute to their overall level of well-being. Nonetheless, many studies have generally attested to the negative effect of job insecurity on satisfaction with life (Silla et al. 2009; Stiglbauer et al. 2012). To the best of our knowledge, no studies targeted psychological well-being and job insecurity, even though researchers have begun to stress the importance of studying the dimensions of psychological well-being in the work domain (Siqueira and Rossi Padovam 2008; Wright 2009). Past research has shown that self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy and personal growth—but not positive relations—are susceptible to work conditions, and can be influenced by perceived workload among white-collar workers (Lindfors et al. 2006). Even though situational uncertainty—as objective threat of unemployment—can be seen as opposite to perceived workload, both constructs represent work-related stress leading us to reasonably expect similar results in our study.

In sum, concerning the relationship between situational uncertainty and employees' general well-being, we formulated the following hypothesis in congruence with the literature:

Hypothesis 2. Situational uncertainty is negatively related to the hedonic dimension of satisfaction with life (H2a), and to the eudaimonic dimensions of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy and personal growth (H2b), but not to positive relations (H2c).

The Spillover Effect

Based on our research questions, we finally investigated the unique contribution of well-being at work to well-being in general. According to the spillover hypothesis, experiences from one life domain can spill over horizontally to other domains, and vertically to global life evaluations. We thus ran a series of hierarchical regression analyses investigating the effects of job happiness and job meaning on employees' satisfaction with life and psychological well-being, over and above situational uncertainty (thriving vs failing company). While previous studies reported a significant positive contribution of job happiness and job meaning to satisfaction with life (Bowling et al. 2010; Steger et al. 2012), no studies have specifically targeted psychological well-being. As reported above,

however, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy and personal growth, but not positive relations, have been shown to be susceptible to work conditions among adult white-collar workers (Lindfors et al. 2006). Consequently, we posited the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. Job happiness and job meaning are positively related to satisfaction with life (H3a), and to self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy and personal growth (H3b), but not to positive relations (H3c).

In considering the spillover effect, previous studies have also shown that the importance individuals attach to single life domains is crucial in determining the weight of a domain in contributing to overall well-being (Diener et al. 2009; Hsieh 2012). In quality of life (QoL) research, for example, the common procedure is to weight the satisfaction score by the importance score at item level, assuming that QoL variables at a lower domain level—such as psychological functioning, social functioning, and physical conditions—influence overall QoL evaluation at a higher level (Arnold et al. 2004). Applying this reasoning to the work domain, Sirgy et al. (2008) posited that "employees who regard their jobs as very important in their lives are likely to experience heightened satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs, which in turn […] spills over vertically to affect general life satisfaction" (p.183–184). From this perspective, moreover, Wu (2009) has shown that individuals' overall QoL can be influenced by shifting domain importance: In particular, QoL can be enhanced by increasing importance of a satisfying life area and by demoting importance of a dissatisfying one.

As reported above, in our study the eudaimonic concept of job meaning reflects job importance (Steger and Dik 2010). Meaning can represent the weight according to which job happiness—the hedonic aspect of well-being—is evaluated when its contribution to overall well-being is calculated. In statistical terms, job meaning can be considered as having a moderating effect in the relationship between job happiness and general well-being. To explore this relationship, we added the interaction term "job happiness x job meaning" in the final step of our hierarchical regression analyses, and examined its effect on the general hedonic and eudaimonic well-being indicators under investigation. In line with Sirgy et al. (2008), we expected that if participants who attached high meaning to work were unhappy at work, they would report low levels of overall well-being; were they happy, they would also report high levels of well-being. By contrast, if participants attached low meaning to work, levels of happiness at work would not have any significant effect on overall well-being levels. Particularly, in line with Hypothesis 3, this relation would be observed for satisfaction with life, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy and personal growth, and not with positive relations. Consequently, our final hypothesis reads:

Hypothesis 4. Job meaning moderates the relationship of job happiness with hedonic well-being (satisfaction with life; H4a) and with eudaimonic well-being (self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy and personal growth, but not positive relations; H4b), so that high job meaning has a significant moderating effect on well-being compared to low meaning.

Methods

Participants and Work Setting

A total of 85 employees from two industrial insurance companies in Northern Italy took part in the study. The companies were very similar in terms of history, size and type of products. They were the same legal entity until 1998 when they became separate companies. After demerging, both kept offering insurance products to medium-large companies. Moreover, they practiced a cross selling policy and continued cooperation. They maintained the same marketing and sales strategy focused on the same target customers until 2005 when they started to follow different strategies, and their financial conditions relentlessly diverged. At the time of the current study, one company throve economically, whereas the other had announced organizational restructuring due to negative economic results. In particular, the failing company planned to lay off 30 % of its employees, as officially communicated through intranet. It was not yet decided which departments would be involved in downsizing and who would be made redundant. For this reason, all employees could consider themselves at high risk of losing their job.

Of the total sample, 42 participants were from the thriving company and 43 from the failing one, respectively accounting for 87.5 % and 82.7 % of the entire workforce in the two businesses. They were hired as risk underwriters, account and sales managers, administrative staff, claims handlers, clerks working in finance and controlling, as well as workers in IT and facility. No information on their income was gathered due to privacy reasons. Their demographic characteristics and work-related experience are reported in Table 1. Overall, participants were in their 40s, evenly divided into women and men, primarily with a partner and children. In addition, they had a rather long work experience both in general, as well as in the local company.

No significant differences were detected between the two groups for these characteristics. However, employees differed in their educational level: In the thriving company, participants primarily had a secondary school degree, whereas in the failing company they mainly had a university degree ($\chi^2=7.45$, $p=.007$). This difference was not related to employees' type of work as the professions mentioned above can be performed by individuals with either secondary school diploma or university degree, alike. Rather, it is related to a convention signed between the failing company and some universities, so that its HR department preferentially recruited employees among graduates from these universities.

Instruments and Procedure

Participants were administered a set of questionnaires measuring the variables of interest in this study.

Job Insecurity was measured with the subscale from the *Job Content Questionnaire* (JCQ, Karasek 1979), a tool designed to measure the social and psychological characteristics of jobs. In its standard version, it comprises 49 items assessing 5 subscales: decision latitude, psychological and physical demands, social support, and

Table 1 Demographic characteristics and work experience for employees at the thriving and at the failing company

	Thriving company (N=42)[a]	Failing company (N=43)[a]
Age		
Mean (SD)	41.45 (10.30)	39.53 (8.26)
Gender		
Women	40.48 %	51.16 %
Men	59.52 %	48.84 %
Marital status		
No partner	30.95 %	39.53 %
Partner	69.05 %	65.12 %
Having children	66.67 %	53.49 %
Educational level		
Secondary school	69.05 %	39.53 %
University degree	30.95 %	60.47 %
Overall work experience		
Mean (SD)	19.21 (10.05)	15.70 (8.97)
Experience at local company		
Mean (SD)	11.63 (7.98)	8.73 (5.58)

[a] N participants

job insecurity. The latter includes three items measuring job steadiness, security, and future layoff prospects. A sample item is "Sometimes people permanently lose jobs they want to keep. How likely is it that during the next couple of years you will lose your present job with your employer?" (1=not at all likely, 4 = very likely). In line with other studies, Cronbach alpha amounted to .40, probably due to the small number of items (Edimansyah et al. 2008; Karasek et al. 1998). A job insecurity score was calculated according to the formula in the Job Content Questionnaire and User's Guide (Karasek 1985). Values ranged between 3 and 12, with higher scores accounting for higher job insecurity.

Job happiness and job meaning were measured using two items from the Eudaimonic and Hedonic Happiness Investigation (EHHI, Delle Fave et al. 2011). EHHI comprises open-ended questions exploring participants' definition of happiness, meaningful things and future objectives, as well as Likert-type scales assessing levels of happiness and meaning in 10 domains (work, family, standard of living, interpersonal relationships, health, personal growth, leisure, spirituality/religion, society issues, community issues), and life in general. In particular, participants were asked to evaluate their level of happiness at work on a scale ranging from 1 (extremely low) to 7 (extremely high), and how meaningful work was for them on a scale from 1 (not meaningful at all) to 7 (extremely meaningful).

Satisfaction with Life was measured with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS, Diener et al. 1985) which asks respondents to report how much they agree (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) on 5 statements assessing participants' level of overall satisfaction with their lives (e.g. "The conditions of my life are excellent"). In line with previous research (Diener et al. 1985), the alpha coefficient for this study was .87.

Psychological Well-Being was assessed through the 18-item version of the Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS; Ryff 1989). The questionnaire taps the 6 dimensions of psychological well-being with 3 items each: environmental mastery (e.g. "I am quite good in managing the many responsibilities of my daily life"; α=.67), autonomy (e.g. "I have confidence in my opinions even if they are contrary to the general consensus"; α=.62), purpose in life (e.g. "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them"; α=.47), personal growth (e.g. "I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world"; α=.55), self-acceptance (e.g. "I like most aspects of my personality"; α=.65), and positive relations (e.g. "Most people see me as loving and affectionate"; α=.51). Participants responded from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Some reliability coefficients were rather low, probably due to the small number of items in each dimension; however, they were consistent with previous studies (Culbertson et al. 2010; Ryff and Keyes 1995; Van Dierendonck 2004).

During the presentation of the study, a researcher assured the employees that questionnaires were anonymous, and that no information would be revealed to their employer. Participation in the study was voluntary, and no credit was given. Employees had 1 week to fill in the questionnaires. All the questionnaires were correctly filled in and thus entered in data analysis.

Data Analysis

As a preliminary step, we inspected the normality of our measures. All scales showed an acceptable distribution of the scores, with skewness and kurtosis values within the range of±2 (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). In order to assess the relation of situational uncertainty with job insecurity and with hedonic and eudaimonic well-being indicators according to Hypotheses 1 and 2, we conducted separate hierarchical regression analyses using OLS as estimation technique, with workplace as predictor representing situational uncertainty (0 = thriving company, 1 = failing company) and as criterion variables: job happiness, job meaning, satisfaction with life, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance, and positive relations. In block 1, we controlled for age (in years) and gender (0 = men, 1 = women). We also controlled for education (0 = high school degree, 1 = university degree) as some authors consider it as an objective indicator of employability, namely the employee's chance of finding alternative employment either on the internal or the external labour market (Forrier and Sels 2003). It also has to be acknowledged that, according to the Italian National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT 2011), the unemployment rate was quite similar among individuals with or without a university degree in the region our study took place: It amounted to 3.7 % among university graduates and to 5 % among people holding a secondary school degree.

Next, based on Hypotheses 3 and 4, we investigated the contribution of well-being at work to well-being in general through a set of four-step hierarchical regression analyses (OLS as estimation technique). In block 1, we controlled for the effect of workplace, age, gender, and education on the criterion variables satisfaction with life, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance, and positive relations. In blocks 2 and 3, the predictors job happiness and job meaning were entered respectively. The interaction term between job happiness and

job meaning was added in block 4. In order to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken and West 1991), both variables were centered at their mean values prior to creating the product term "Happy x Meaning". Moderation allowed us to examine if the relationship between job happiness and the criterion variables (satisfaction with life and the six dimensions of psychological well-being) changed at different levels of job meaning (the moderator). To interpret this effect more closely, simple slopes were calculated, plotted and tested for significance through *t* tests (Aiken and West 1991; Cohen and Cohen 1983), both for high and for low job meaning values (respectively, one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean).

Results

Comparing Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being Between Groups

Table 2 illustrates the means and standard deviations of the variables assessing job-related and general well-being indicators among employees from the thriving and from the failing company, separately. Correlations among variables are reported in Table 3.

The relation between situational uncertainty and job insecurity as well as Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using hierarchical regression analyses. Preliminary inspection of correlations in Table 3 showed that the predictor workplace correlated positively with the control variable education. Among criterion variables, satisfaction with life correlated positively with all the six dimensions of psychological well-being. Among the latter, significant positive correlations were obtained except for purpose in life with environmental mastery, autonomy, and personal growth, and for personal growth with autonomy and self-acceptance. Furthermore, job happiness correlated positively with job meaning and environmental mastery. In addition, gender correlated negatively with the criterion variables job happiness and job meaning, and positively with positive relations; education correlated positively with personal

Table 2 Means and standard deviations of employees' hedonic and eudaimonic well-being

Variables	Thriving company (N=42)[a]		Failing company (N=43)[a]	
	M	SD	M	SD
Job insecurity	6.58	2.60	8.42	2.90
Job happiness	4.55	1.15	3.42	1.52
Job meaning	5.64	0.98	5.26	1.35
Satisfaction with life	4.76	1.20	4.94	0.90
Environmental mastery	3.98	1.02	4.42	1.01
Autonomy	4.46	0.97	4.67	0.95
Purpose in life	4.15	0.81	4.02	0.97
Personal growth	4.66	0.95	4.95	0.87
Self-acceptance	4.09	0.92	4.25	0.94
Positive relations	4.30	0.93	5.02	0.86

[a]*N* participants

Table 3 Correlations among study variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
(1) Age	–												
(2) Gender	−.20	–											
(3) Education	.08	−.18	–										
(4) Workplace	−.10	.11	.30**	–									
(5) Job insecurity	−.11	−.02	.00	.32**	–								
(6) Job happiness	.09	−.21*	−.18	−.39***	−.08	–							
(7) Job meaning	.21	−.33**	.11	−.16	−.17	.34**	–						
(8) Satisfaction with life	.09	.10	.02	.09	−.09	.17	−.18	–					
(9) Environmental mastery	.05	−.04	.13	.21	−.11	.26*	.03	.49***	–				
(10) Autonomy	.08	.05	−.06	.11	−.01	.11	.10	.35**	.51***	–			
(11) Purpose in life	−.13	.04	−.15	−.07	−.08	.06	−.04	.32**	.18	.17	–		
(12) Personal growth	−.13	.09	.21*	.16	.07	.01	−.02	.25*	.27*	.15	.18	–	
(13) Self-acceptance	.02	−.02	.05	.09	−.11	.14	−.12	.71***	.53***	.35**	.30**	.20	–
(14) Positive relations	−.17	.31**	.09	.38***	.05	−.03	−.16	.40***	.37***	.26*	.37***	.53***	.29**

Workplace: 0 = thriving company, 1 = failing company; Gender: 0 = men, 1 = women; Education: 0 = secondary school degree, 1 = university degree

*** $p<.001$; ** $p<.01$; * $p<.05$

growth; and workplace correlated positively with job insecurity and positive relations, and negatively with job happiness.

Only significant models from the hierarchical regression analyses are reported in Table 4. The control variable gender uniquely added to explain job happiness, job meaning and positive relations. In particular, women reported lower job happiness and meaning, and higher positive relations than men. Further, education significantly contributed to job happiness, as employees with a university degree reported lower job happiness.

As expected, a negative relation was detected between situational uncertainty and job insecurity, explaining 11 % of the model variance ($F(1,80)=10.05$, $p=.002$). Specifically, employees from the failing company reported higher job insecurity than employees from the thriving company. Moreover, in line with Hypothesis 1a, situational uncertainty was negatively related to job happiness (10 % of the variance, $F(1,80)=9.49$, $p=.003$), with employees at the failing company reporting lower levels of job happiness. Hypothesis 1b was also supported in that no significant relation was detected between situational uncertainty and job meaning.

With respect to general well-being, contrary to expectations, employees from the failing company did not report lower levels of satisfaction with life (H2a), as well as they did not report lower levels of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy and personal growth (H2b). By contrast to H2c, a significant model was obtained for positive relations, with employees at the failing company reporting higher positive relations than participants from the thriving company, over and above gender differences (explaining an additional 9 % of the model variance, $F(1,80)=9.59$, $p=.003$).

Testing the Spillover Hypothesis Between Well-Being at Work and Well-Being in General

We next ran four-step hierarchical regression analyses to test the spillover effects of job happiness and job meaning on the different general components of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being separately, as described in Data Analysis. As shown in Table 3, few significant correlations were obtained between predictor and criterion variables. As reported above, among control variables, gender correlated positively with positive relations; education correlated positively with personal growth; and workplace correlated positively with positive relations, and negatively with job happiness. Among predictors, job happiness positively correlated with environmental mastery, and job meaning did not correlate with any of the criterion variables.

The few significant correlations between predictor and criterion variables can be related to the hypothesized moderation effect of job meaning in the relationship between job happiness and general well-being indicators. In this case, a suppressed relation between predictor and criterion variables is expected. A suppressed relation between two variables does not emerge through their bivariate correlation, but only when the influence of a third variable is taken into account. Specifically, a suppressor variable is a variable that does not correlate with the criterion but does correlate with one or more predictor variables (Maassen and Bakker 2001), as occurred for job happiness and job meaning in this study.

Table 4 Hierarchical regression analyses for job insecurity, hedonic and eudaimonic well-being indicators with workplace as predictor

Variable	Job insecurity					Job happiness					Job meaning					Positive relations				
	B	*SE* B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	B	*SE* B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	B	*SE* B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	B	*SE* B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				.01					.10*					.13**					.13*	
Age	−.04	.04	−.12			.01	.02	.06			.02	.01	.15			−.01	.01	−.12		
Gender	−.21	.66	−.04			−.71	.32	−.24*			−.69	.26	−.29**			.60	.21	.31**		
Education	.04	.65	.00			−.67	.31	−.23*			.11	.25	.05			.30	.20	.16		
Step 2				.12	.11**				.20	.10**				.15	.02				.22	.09**
Workplace	2.04	.64	.36**			−1.00	.31	−.33**			−.35	.26	−.15			.62	.20	.33**		

Workplace: 0 = thriving company, 1 = failing company; Gender: 0 = men, 1 = women; Education: 0 = secondary school degree, 1 = university degree

** $p<.01$; * $p<.05$

Significant regression models were obtained for the outcome variables: satisfaction with life, environmental mastery, and autonomy. For purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance, and positive relations, the variables job happiness, job meaning, and/or their cross product had no significant predictive effects. Results of the significant models are reported in Table 5. The control variables did not add to explaining any of the outcome variables.

Concerning satisfaction with life, Hypothesis 3a was partially supported: Both job happiness and job meaning had significant effects, accounting for 12 % of the model variance (respectively, 6 %, $F(1,79)=5.14$, $p=.026$, and 6 % $F(1,78)=5.41$, $p=.023$). However, while job happiness was positively related to life satisfaction as expected, job meaning was negatively related to it. Moreover, in congruence with Hypothesis 4a, the cross product of job happiness and job meaning was significant and positive, accounting for an additional 5 % of the variance ($F(1,77)=5.22$, $p=.025$). The interaction term is plotted in Fig. 1, illustrating how the relationship between job happiness and satisfaction with life changed at different levels of job meaning (±1 standard deviation). As hypothesized, only the simple slope for high job meaning (+ 1SD) was significant ($t(80)=3.74$, $p<.001$), showing that levels of job happiness had different effects on satisfaction with life when participants attached high meaning to their work. Specifically, individuals who reported high job meaning were more satisfied with their lives if they reported high job happiness. By contrast, they were less satisfied with their lives if they reported low job happiness. As for participants attaching low meaning to their work, levels of job happiness—be they high or low—did not significantly impact on their life satisfaction.

Concerning environmental mastery (Table 5), job happiness expectedly made a significant positive contribution, accounting for 14 % of the model variance ($F(1,79)=13.93$, $p<.001$). By contrast, the coefficient of job meaning was not significant. The interaction term was significant, and explained another 5 % of the variance ($F(1,77)=4.97$, $p=.029$).

The simple slopes of high and low job meaning for environmental mastery are depicted in Fig. 2. As for satisfaction with life, they presented similar trends. In particular, only the simple slope for high job meaning (+ 1SD) was significant ($t(80)=4.44$, $p<.001$). Participants with high levels of job meaning reported lower environmental mastery if they were unhappy at work, and higher mastery if they were happy. By contrast, among participants attaching low meaning to their work, the level of happiness did not have a significant impact on perceived environmental mastery.

The last significant model was obtained for autonomy (Table 5). In this case, the only significant predictor was the cross product between job meaning and job happiness, accounting for 8 % of the model variance ($F(1,77)=7.00$, $p=.010$). Figure 3 illustrates the interaction plot. Once again, only a significant effect of high job meaning in the relationship between job happiness and autonomy was detected ($t(80)=2.56$, $p=.0126$). As before, employees with high levels of job meaning reported lower autonomy if they were unhappy at work, and higher autonomy if they were happy; on the opposite, low job meaning did not impact on the relationship between autonomy and happiness.

Table 5 Moderated hierarchical regression analyses for hedonic and eudaimonic well-being indicators with job happiness and job meaning as predictors

Variable	Satisfaction with life					Environmental mastery					Autonomy				
	B	*SE* B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	B	*SE* B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	B	*SE* B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				.03					.06					.03	
Workplace	.18	.25	.09			.42	.24	.21			.28	.22	.15		
Age	.01	.01	.12			.01	.01	.06			.01	.01	.11		
Gender	.24	.24	.11			−.09	.24	−.04			.07	.22	.04		
Education	.00	.25	.00			.12	.24	.06			−.20	.23	−.10		
Step 2				.09	.06*				.20	.14***				.06	.03
Job happiness	.20	.09	.27*			.30	.08	.42***			.12	.08	.19		
Step 3				.15	.06*				.20	.01				.07	.01
Job meaning	−.24	.11	−.27*			−.07	.10	−.08			.08	.10	.10		
Step 4				.20	.05*				.25	.05*				.15	.08*
HappyxMeaning	.13	.06	.26*			.12	.05	.24*			.14	.01	.31*		

Workplace: 0 = thriving company, 1 = failing company; Gender: 0 = men, 1 = women; Education: 0 = secondary school degree, 1 = university degree

"HappyxMeaning" stands for the interaction term Job Happiness*Job Meaning

*** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

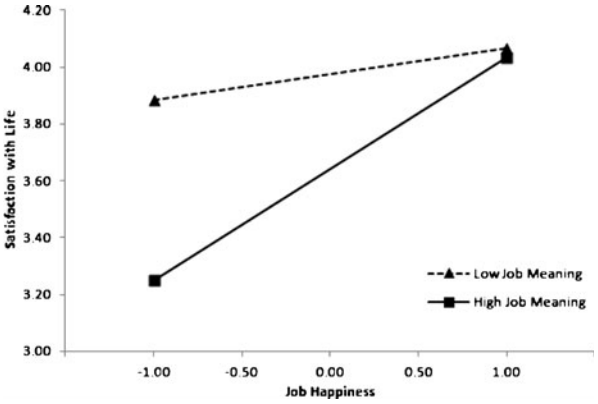

Fig. 1 The interaction effect between job happiness and job meaning for satisfaction with life

Discussion

In a time of global economic crisis, the findings obtained from employees working under different job conditions allowed us to delve deeper into the complex nature of well-being, examining and integrating hedonic and eudaimonic indicators in accordance with the positive psychology perspective. In particular, they allowed us to analyze the relations between situational uncertainty and well-being at work and in general, as well as the spillover effects of work to overall life evaluations. The objective situational uncertainty of employees from the failing company was supported by a significantly higher level of perceived job insecurity compared with employees from the thriving company.

As far as well-being at work is concerned, findings supported our hypotheses that situational uncertainty is negatively related to job happiness (H1a) and it is not related to job meaning (H1b). Indeed, employees from the failing company reported lower levels of job happiness than employees from the thriving company, as well as similar values of job meaning. As shown in previous studies (Larsen and Kasimatis 1990; Weiss et al. 1999), the hedonic dimension of affect is influenced by contingent job conditions. In our study, situational uncertainty was no exception. However, levels of the eudaimonic dimension of job meaning did not differ between companies, showing

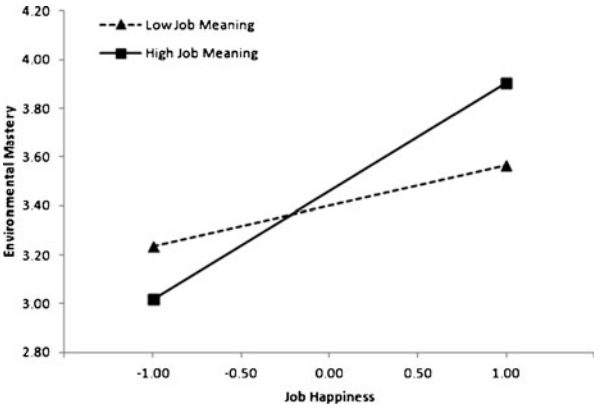

Fig. 2 The interaction effect between job happiness and job meaning for environmental mastery

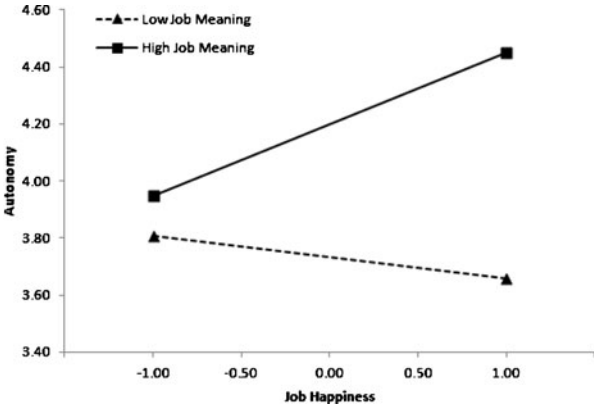

Fig. 3 The interaction effect between job happiness and job meaning for autonomy

relative stability in the face of the working context. Job meaning is profoundly rooted in individuals' values and beliefs (Harpaz and Fu 2002), and does not seem to be easily shaken by layoff prospects.

As far as well-being in general is concerned, findings did not support Hypothesis 2: Situational uncertainty was not related to the hedonic dimension of satisfaction with life (H2a), nor was it to the eudaimonic dimensions of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy and personal growth (H2b); but it was positively associated with positive relations (H2c). Though dissimilar from previous work-related literature (Lindfors et al. 2006; Silla et al. 2009; Stiglbauer et al. 2012), these results could be interpreted in light of those studies showing that comprehensive constructs such as satisfaction with life reflect people's global evaluations and tend to be relatively stable in the face of everyday life events and conditions (Diener et al. 2009). In particular, due to their ability to adapt to changing factors in their environment, individuals try to homeostatically maintain a positive level of well-being (Cummins 2000, 2010). It is when the negative environmental challenge chronically overwhelms people's coping resources that well-being is strongly affected, and even clinical conditions such as depression can ensue (Cummins 2010). Moreover, as individuals rely on multiple sources of information when building their global judgments, other life domains—which were not investigated in this study—could make a substantial contribution to general well-being, e.g. family, leisure, and social relations (Delle Fave et al. 2012). In the attempt to build a balanced life, people may differentially invest in various domains contributing to their overall level of well-being, as suggested by Sirgy and Wu (2009). This line of reasoning may also account for the unexpected positive association between situational uncertainty and positive relations. In this respect, the higher values of positive relations among employees from the failing company may hint to a sort of "compensation effect" of uncertain work conditions, with participants over-investing in life areas which support satisfying social bonds. Future research is needed to lend support to this suggested explanation.

Our study next investigated the unique contribution of well-being at work to the different components of general hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. We tested the spillover effect through four-step hierarchical regression analyses in which the direct

effects of job happiness and job meaning were analyzed, as well as the role of job meaning in moderating the relationship between job happiness and the general well-being indicators. Findings globally highlighted that job-related variables impacted differently on the various components of general well-being. Their significant effect on the hedonic dimension of satisfaction with life was expected (H3a) and found, in line with previous studies (Bowling et al. 2010). As for the eudaimonic dimensions, no effect was found for positive relations (H3c) but, contrary to expectations (H3b), only environmental mastery and autonomy were susceptible to job happiness and meaning. Considering that general well-being judgments are based on individuals' evaluations of multiple life areas (Diener et al. 2009), results showed that job-related variables made a relatively substantial contribution to satisfaction with life, environmental mastery and autonomy, altogether accounting for 17 %, 19 % and 12 % of their variances. At the same time, no effect was detected for purpose in life, self-acceptance, and personal growth, hinting once again that life areas other than work may come into play in contributing to these dimensions of well-being.

A close inspection of results from the hierarchical regression analyses allowed us to identify the relation of job happiness and job meaning with general well-being, over and above control variables, especially situational uncertainty. Direct effects were found for satisfaction with life and environmental mastery, but not for autonomy. In particular, increases in job happiness accounted for significant increases in life satisfaction and mastery, whereas increases in job meaning were associated with significant decreases in life satisfaction, and had no direct effect on mastery. In particular, the negative effect of job meaning on life satisfaction was unexpected and contrary to previous findings (Steger et al. 2012). However, it can be related to the fact that increases in job meaning may imply investing a lot of energy and effort in work, to the detriment of other life areas, and eventually to life satisfaction.

The role of job meaning in contributing to general well-being was further clarified when we analyzed its moderating effect on job happiness. Consistently with Hypothesis 4, a significant interaction between job happiness and meaning was obtained for all the three criterion variables: satisfaction with life, environmental mastery, and autonomy. These findings supported the crucial role of job importance in weighting the effect of job happiness on individuals' overall well-being (Arnold et al. 2004; Diener et al. 2009; Hsieh 2012). In particular, performing simple slope analyses, we found that the slope for high job meaning was significant, whereas the slope for low job meaning was not. In line with previous studies (Sirgy et al. 2008; Wu 2009), findings suggest that attributing high importance to one's job could generate wide affective reactions—both positive and negative—which spilled over vertically to life satisfaction, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Participants who attached high meaning to work and who were happy at work were more satisfied with their lives, more autonomous, and experienced higher mastery in dealing with the environment. By contrast, participants who rated work as highly meaningful, but who were not happy at work, were less satisfied and autonomous, and experienced lower mastery. Vice versa, among participants attributing low meaning to work, levels of happiness at work did not significantly impact on the criterion variables. In line with McNulty and Fincham (2012), these results show that positive features such as job meaning can either benefit or harm general well-being, depending on the context in which they operate. At equally high levels of job happiness, participants attributing high meaning to their work reported higher life satisfaction,

environmental mastery, and autonomy. At equally low levels of job happiness, however, reporting high job meaning could be detrimental to these dimensions of well-being. In the latter case, attaching low meaning to work seemed to somehow protect individuals from a negative spillover effect of job unhappiness to general well-being.

Towards a Balance in Life

Overall, our results brought forward practical suggestions for well-being promotion, taking into account both the work sphere and individuals' lives as a whole. As situational uncertainty and job insecurity undermine the hedonic pleasure and happiness associated with work, eudaimonic well-being in terms of job meaning represents a viable and stable resource organizations can rely upon to motivate their employees and to support them in facing job-related stress and strains (Clausen and Borg 2011; Fisher 2010). From a global life perspective, however, work represents just one life domain spilling over to just some components of individuals' well-being. Considering that finding a more rewarding job is not always a viable option—especially in a time of economic crisis—two complementary strategies can be followed to promote individuals' general well-being, as suggested in the literature and originally supported in this study:

(a) To shift domain importance (Wu 2009). Job meaning—which is quite stable and can have positive consequences in the work sphere—can be a double-edged sword when it comes to general levels of well-being. As shown in this study, attributing high meaning to one's work can have a direct negative impact on satisfaction with life, as well as a pervasive indirect effect on satisfaction with life, environmental mastery and autonomy when low job happiness is reported. In this latter case, in particular, downplaying work importance in the face of low job happiness can pay off more in detaching oneself from contingent low levels of job happiness and safeguarding one's general well-being. By contrast, reporting low job meaning in conditions of job happiness does not add to satisfaction with life, environmental mastery and autonomy. In this case, upgrading job importance in the face of high job happiness can represent a positive strategy enhancing individuals' general well-being.
(b) To invest in multiple life areas (Sirgy and Wu 2009). Not only is general well-being a complex construct made up of different hedonic and eudaimonic components, also multiple life areas contribute to these different components. Investing all one's energy and efforts in just one life domain such as work can be detrimental, because people need to satisfy a broad spectrum of development needs (Deci and Ryan 2000), and different domains tend to focus on different human needs. In addition, if things go wrong at work, a person can experience negative generalized consequences in terms of life dissatisfaction. In this situation, investing in multiple areas, including for example social relations and family, can help offset dissatisfaction in some domains with satisfaction in others, and allow a person to thrive in the face of difficulties.

Both strategies can be conducive to a balanced fulfilling life (Sirgy and Wu 2009), in which individuals' well-being can be promoted in the face of hardships befalling important life areas such as work.

While our findings gave credit to these strategies, much still needs to be done to understand the complex nature of well-being and to promote it. In spite of its original information, this study presented limitations that should be addressed in future research. First of all, we focused only on employees at insurance companies, but other categories of workers should be targeted as well. In addition, future research should take into account differences in the levels of situational uncertainty, as well as objective threat of unemployment—that is individual communication of dismissal (De Cuyper et al. 2010)—which was not analyzed in this study, and could have a relevant impact on general well-being. In our study, we controlled for gender, age and educational level but other work-related variables, such as income, or personality traits could come into play, and thus deserve further investigation. Another limitation of our study was that data were cross-sectional, and did not allow us to identify causal effects between well-being at work and well-being in general. Longitudinal designs are needed to support present findings. Finally, more attention should be paid to eudaimonic well-being. A great number of studies have targeted hedonic dimensions such as satisfaction with life (Diener 2009a, b), but little is known about the antecedents of psychological well-being (Ryff 1989; Ryff and Singer 2008). Findings from this study highlighted that situational uncertainty is positively associated with positive relations, and that well-being at work can contribute to environmental mastery and autonomy, while purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance and positive relations are not susceptible to it. Identifying the factors that positively affect these dimensions and understanding their relative importance could bring us a step forward in building a flourishing society.

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