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Social cognitive predictors of Korean secondary school teachers' job and life satisfaction



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ABSTRACT

This study tested a social cognitive career theory of work and life satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2006, 2008) in a sample of Korean secondary school teachers. The model offered a good fit for the data, yielding that 15 of 19 individual path coefficients were significant. The variable of family support had both a direct and an indirect effect on job and life satisfaction, while positive affectivity had a direct effect on life satisfaction, but only an indirect effect on job satisfaction via core social cognitive variables of social cognitive career theory, such as self-efficacy and outcome satisfaction. In addition, self-efficacy influenced job satisfaction via both outcome expectation and job stress, while job stress impacted life satisfaction only via job satisfaction. Implications of the findings for future research and suggestions to promote job and life satisfaction in teachers are discussed.

1. Introduction

In current societies, quality of life, which refers to subjective feelings and attitudes about various features of the job (Spector, 1997), is closely connected to job satisfaction. This close connection is due to the tight knit relationship between work and other life domains (Lent & Brown, 2006; Spector, 1997). Since people tend to seek self-actualization through their work with the purpose of earning a living, numerous studies have been conducted to explore what psychological needs are met by work and contribute to greater satisfaction with work and overall life (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

The term relatedness describes feeling connected and appreciated within close and genuine interpersonal relationships (Gagné & Deci, 2005) and is one of the major basic psychological needs that is fulfilled by work and leads to better work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction and work performance (Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010; Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2014). The needs of being related to others can be fulfilled by various interpersonal relationships, such as family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and so forth. Especially within Korea, which is characterized as a collectivistic culture, the satisfaction of being related and supported is met mainly within one's family throughout one's life (De Leersnyder, Kim, & Mesquita, 2015; Kagitcibasi, 2013). Thus, higher level of family support has been investigated as a major variable to explain higher degree of academic satisfaction (Jung & Cho, 2011), career exploration behavior (Jeon & Kim, 2015), vocational identity development (Shin & Kelly, 2013), and career satisfaction (Jung & Cho, 2012) for adolescents and college students and also job satisfaction and job stress for various groups of working adults within Korean contexts (Kim, 2013; Song, Lee, Choi, Heo, & Lee, 2014).

The majority of studies that have explored the impact of family support on work have mainly focused on the conflicts or enrichments between family and work, such as how family obligations interrupted work performance and contributed to stress (Chen, Powell, & Cui, 2014; Mauno et al., 2015) or how the family's emotional and instrumental support enhance the job satisfaction

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(Carlson, Hunter, Ferguson, & Whitten, 2014; McNall, Scott, & Nicklin, 2015; Tang, Siu, & Cheung, 2014). However, there is a dearth of studies that have investigated what intra-personal variables (e.g., cognitive, emotional, and motivational characteristics) mediated or moderated the relationship between family support and job-related satisfaction. Thus, in the current study, we used Social Cognitive Model of Well-being (Lent & Brown, 2008) as a theoretical framework to try to examine how family support can positively influence work satisfaction and contribute to overall life satisfaction.

In addition, we chose South Korean school teachers as our research subjects because, despite South Korea being identified as one of the countries with the lowest job satisfaction and highest job stress among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (Jung, 2010), the teaching profession has a reputation for having a higher degree of job and life satisfaction in South Korea (UNESCO, 2014). In a nationwide survey conducted in South Korea, teaching ranked the highest of all K-12 students' job preferences (UNESCO, 2014). Highly qualified people are attracted to teaching positions in South Korea and their retention rate is very high (OECD, 2014). In this study, we explored how personal and environmental factors interact to promote teachers' well-being as indicated by their job and life satisfaction using Lent and Brown's integrated social cognitive model of well-being (Lent & Brown, 2008).

1.1. Social Cognitive Career Theory of well-being

Following Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), that has been empirically tested and confirmed across different cultures for the past two decades, Lent and Brown (2006, 2008) extended SCCT by proposing a model of work and life satisfaction. This model combines many of the traditionally studied components of job satisfaction (e.g., work-related self-efficacy, trait affect) into a unified, empirically-testable framework that is conceptually linked to social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994). We applied the SCCT model of well-being as this study's theoretical framework because it provides pathways to investigate the process of how environmental supports and obstacles and intra-personal variables, including personal, emotional, cognition, and behavioral variables are related and contribute to career and overall psychological satisfaction (see Fig. 1).

As found in well-being literature (e.g., Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2003), Lent and Brown (2006, 2008) postulated personality traits and affective dispositions (e.g., positive affect, extraversion) as antecedents of overall life satisfaction. In addition, they suggested that work satisfaction (educational or career satisfaction for students) might be an indication of an individual's well-being and may influence life satisfaction. They postulated that personal cognitive variables such as personal control beliefs (e.g., academic self-efficacy, job related self-efficacy), outcome expectations or work conditions and goals, and environmental supports or obstacles are significant contributors to domain satisfaction and well-being.

More specifically, Lent (2004) proposed that (a) personality traits and affective dispositions are related to environmental supports and resources, self-efficacy, career satisfaction, and overall life satisfaction; (b) environmental supports and resources are linked to self-efficacy, outcome expectations/work conditions, and goal progress; (c) self-efficacy is related to outcome expectations, goal progress, and career satisfaction; (d) outcome expectations or work conditions influence goal progress and domain-specific satisfaction; (e) goal progress is related to career satisfaction and overall life satisfaction; and (f) career specific satisfaction is linked to overall life satisfaction.

Since the SCCT model of well-being was introduced, approximately a decade ago (Lent, 2004; Lent & Brown, 2006, 2008), it has received substantial empirical attention. Cross-sectional tests of the SCCT model of well-being in samples of colleges students in the United States (e.g., Caucasian-American, Asian-American, African-American, and Mexican-American college students) verified the

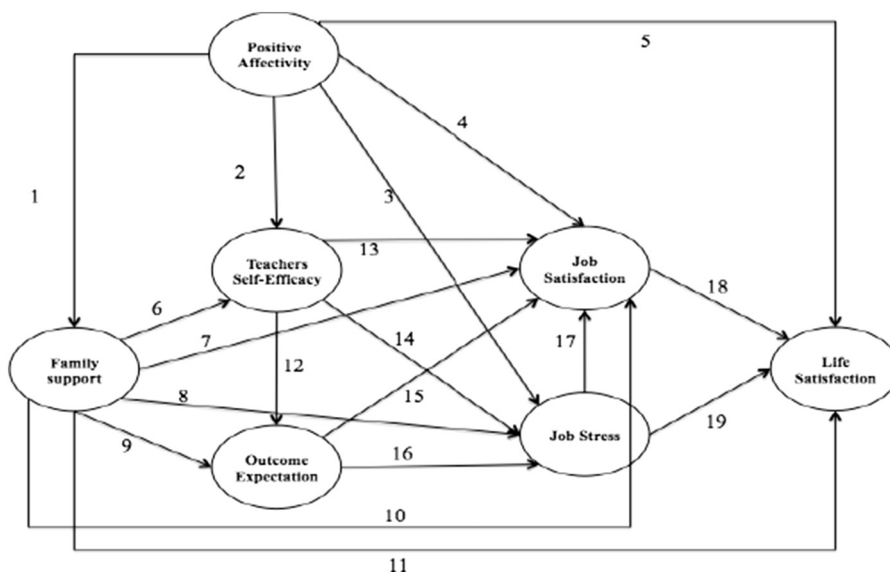


Fig. 1. Hypothesized social cognitive model of well-being with Korean secondary teachers.

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