Dr. Ankita Dutta
Assistance Professor,
Department of Human
Development and Family
Studies, College of Community
Science, Assam Agricultural
University, Jorhat, Assam, India

Dr. Juri Baruah
Retired Professor and Head,
Department of Human
Development and Family
Studies, College of Community
Science, Assam Agricultural
University, Jorhat, Assam, India

Thematic analysis of job satisfaction and subjective well-being of working adults of Assam, India

Dr. Ankita Dutta and Dr. Juri Baruah

Abstract
With a view to generate ideas for potential research in subjective well-being of working adults, an attempt has been made to uncover qualitative data regarding the area. Subjective Well-Being (SWB) is defined as a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life. SWB is the scientific term for happiness found by summation of one's life satisfaction, experience of positive affect and negative affect measured using standard tools. The paper primarily discusses the relationship between job satisfaction and subjective well-being of 60 numbers of adults selected from a base of 384 numbers of adults working in different professions from Jorhat, Assam, using Principle of saturation and Maximum variation sampling. Qualitative data was collected using an interview guide and the constructed questions had evolved throughout the sessions of interviews, according to the emerging pathways of information from the respondents. This helped to address optimum areas of response related to the area of study. Interviews were conducted until point of saturation, which means interviewing until no new information or themes of information emerged from the data collected. Thematic analysis with Inductive approach was used and steps given by American Psychological Association for qualitative study were used. The findings of the study are three main themes extracted from the analysis- a. Work plays a key construct in the experience of life satisfaction b. Balance between and within work and life can predict life satisfaction experienced by an individual c. Positive outlook and pro-social behaviour can facilitate greater life satisfaction. The paper discusses in detail the perspective of the samples within each central theme and concluded with how organizations can be strategic in creating a holistic work culture that fosters subjective well-being of the employees.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, subjective well-being, working adults, employees

1. Introduction
There are only few people that will ever doubt that happiness is very important. People consider happiness as important even above health, love, affection and wealth [1]. People want a 'good life' where they can be happy and satisfied. Aristippus, a former student of Socrates suggested that the goal of life was to experience maximum pleasure. While the Greek philosopher Aristotle, believed that true happiness was not to be found in maximized pleasure but rather, found in the realization of human potential. Consequently, two distinct approaches had emerged while explaining the concept of well-being; they were Hedonic and Eudemonic approach [2]. Hedonic well-being is often referred to as subjective well-being (i.e., maximizing positive affect and evaluation of better life satisfaction), and Eudemonic well-being is usually related to psychological framework of wellbeing [3]. Ed Diener's tripartite model of Subjective well-being (1984) describes how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments to it [4]. It posits three distinct but often related components of wellbeing: Frequent positive affect, Infrequent negative affect; and Cognitive evaluations of one's life satisfaction. It is considered as the scientific term of happiness.

Among the present economically productive population, working life is a significant part of people's lives. Job satisfaction is considered as a strong predictor of overall individual well-being. Job satisfaction from an employee perspective is to earn a good gross salary, have job stability, have a steady career growth, get rewards & recognition and constantly have new opportunities.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Ankita Dutta
Assistance Professor,
Department of Human
Development and Family
Studies, College of Community
Science, Assam Agricultural
University, Jorhat, Assam, India

On the other hand, Subjective wellbeing is popularly known to capture people's actual experience in a direct manner, which proves it to be a competent measure of well-being of individuals or a nation. Job satisfaction has been found to correlate positively with life satisfaction [5] that can help predict the subjective wellbeing count of people. Work is an integral and defining aspect in adult life. And satisfaction at work is a key construct in industrial and organizational psychology and has been associated with multiple desirable outcomes such as job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, absenteeism, and life satisfaction.

There is a considerable amount of empirical evidence to indicate a positive association between an employee's subjective wellbeing and job satisfaction. Most of the researches so far had focused on samples from the Western culture. But recent research has shown that the effects of happiness may be specific to some individualistic cultures. Therefore, new research questions need to be raised whether the associations between job satisfaction and SWB found in the Western world are the same in populations with different demographic characteristics as well. Considering these background, the present qualitative study aims to explore people's perspectives about subjective wellbeing and job satisfaction in a more in-depth manner.

2. Materials and Methodology
2.1. Research design
The present study uses Explanatory design of research.

2.2. Participants
Participants were adults working in schools, colleges, banks, district administrative offices, police offices, retail trades and maintenance of age group 25- 55 years from Jorhat town area, Assam.

2.3. Sampling
Sample of 384 numbers were selected using Cochran's formula. Then, using maximum variation sampling, respondents for the qualitative data collection were selected out of those who scored high or low in the job satisfaction and subjective well-being count.

For determining the sample size, the principle of saturation was used. Saturation provides an indication of data validity and therefore is often included in criteria to assess the quality of the qualitative research work. According to the point of saturation of required data i.e. interviewing until no new information emerged, the final sample size was fixed at 60 numbers.

2.4. Materials Used
An interview guide was developed under the study consisting of 10 open ended questions, which are the central questions to be answered during the interview. Prior to construction of the questions, various researches related to the subject were reviewed. Such as, OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being (2013) [6], 'Subjective Well-being: A qualitative investigation of subjective well-being questions' by Ralph, *et al* (2011) [7] etc. Few questions had also evolved throughout the sessions of interviews, according to the emerging pathways of information from the respondents, to address optimum areas of response related to the subject. The final questions of the interview guide are listed below.

Interview Guide
1. Overall, how content do you feel in life? Can you tell me something about it?
2. What gives you satisfaction in your life? How so?
3. To what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are fulfilling your purpose? Please give me an idea, how?
4. Think about 'yesterday' even if it was not a typical day. How happy did you feel yesterday?
5. Tell me something about how happy do you feel in your personal relationships? (With your friends, parents, relatives, colleagues, partner etc.?).
6. According to you, what other things in life can affect your state of mind and emotions?
7. Now coming to another topic, Will you please say something about the choice of your career, how did you arrive at the present job?
8. How is life at work in general?
9. According to you, how can a work environment be satisfying and fulfilling?
10. Personally which statement do you believe? 'Work is life' or 'Work is a part of life'. Why do you think so?

The questions were formed as neutral as possible and, in a way, so as to elicit longest answers.

Table 1: Outline of the in-depth interviews

Sections of Interview	Content	Time interval
1. Introduction	▪ Self-introduction by the researcher ▪ Explanation of goals of the interview and use of the data ▪ Explanation of interview method ▪ Explanation of confidentiality of the interview	3-5 minutes
2. Open ended questions	▪ General questions ▪ Central questions from the research topic	20-30 minutes
3. Closing comments	▪ Asking for additional information if any ▪ Closing with thanks ▪ Asking if respondent would review a copy of the interview	2-5 minutes

2.5. Methodology
The statistical method of analysis used for analyzing the qualitative data was thematic analysis with Inductive approach. Codes and themes were derived from the content of the data themselves, and not deductions made of the data. This approach is completely based on the surface meaning of the data, as it helps to avoid assumptions and biases that may occur due to the researcher's opinion. The data was grouped thematically according to their semantic meaning only. This involved analysis within the "explicit and surface meanings" of the data only and the analyst need not look for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written" [8]. This means the semantic content of the interview transcripts were analyzed, rather than latent information. Mode of thematic analysis: Learning to do thematic analysis provides the analyst with a foundation in the basic skills needed to engage with other approaches to qualitative data analysis. The whole process is a beautiful experience

discovering novel understanding regarding the topic. Therefore, the researcher preferred manual thematic analysis of the data, instead of using any software.

Face to face interview method was used and the frequent themes raised by more than 5 numbers of participants were considered as fundamental to the formulation of the initial themes.

2.6. Procedure of data collection
The procedure of data collection for the study is presented under the following steps given by Braun & Clarke, 2012.

2.6.1. Familiarizing with the data
Call recordings of the interviews were transcribed into written data. The texts were read again and again for understanding of common areas in the interviews. Contrasting experiences were also seen in the common areas, suggesting how people may experience a common event differently.

2.6.2. Generating initial codes
All the similar semantic data shared by the participants were collated together into small groups to form 'codes'. As new groups of information emerged, they were also integrated into the data of codes. Further the initial codes were again grouped to broader transitional codes.

2.6.3. Searching for themes
Basically four numbers of themes emerged from the frequently recurring data (recurring in more than two numbers of interviews). The themes were i) contentment in life, ii) factors perceived by people as predictors of their state of mind and emotions, iii) factors perceived as fundamental to satisfaction at work, and iv) basic views of people regarding life and work. The earlier transitional themes that were found meaningfully related to the 4 broad themes, are organized in clusters as sub-themes. The potential themes that can meaningfully explain the interview data are given below.

2.6.4. Reviewing potential themes
It was noticed that the sub themes highlighted some commonalities among them, implying a broader common idea. For eg. Sub-themes like career goals achieved, income, infrastructure and equipment availability, opportunity and growth, passion, job security, identity, supervisor qualities etc highlighted a common idea of how various dimensions of work play a significant role in life satisfaction as well. Again, sub themes 'absence of worries' and 'bad events' displayed a common idea that people are more affected by bad events, than the good ones. Also, some sub-themes were found to be individually adequate to be termed as a whole new theme finally. For eg. The sub theme 'balanced work-life' was found accurate enough as a new theme, because it explained many other sub themes from the data set such as entertainment, good health status, human values and personal relationships. People considered presence of these sub themes in life as important to achieve balance in work and life.

2.6.5. Defining and naming themes
Finally combining the related sub themes, 4 main themes were formulated. The final main themes given below are the findings of the study.

Main themes
a. Work can play a key role in the experience of satisfaction in life
b. Balance in work and life can predict satisfaction experienced by an individual
c. Positive outlook can facilitate life satisfaction

3. Results and Discussion
The main themes that surfaced through the analysis are the results of the study as discussed below.

3.1 Work can play a key role in the experience of satisfaction in life
When the participants were asked about how content do they feel in life and what brings satisfaction to their lives, one of the most common theme of response that appeared was that they considered success in their professions as success in their lives and that brings satisfaction to them. It was observed that they experienced contentment when they successfully acquired professional skills, when there was stability at work place and also when they could achieve their job targets in time.

Some extracts from the interviews are given below as evidence to the current idea.

"Yes I would say I am satisfied, because I get paid to do things that I love". "No. Not satisfied, as I want more stability in my career, I want a more secured position". "I always wanted an independent life and have an identity of my own, I am happy with the progress I have made in my career, though it is not the final stage I would want a better one... so I would say overall life has been good".

Achievement in career goals appeared to be a predictor of life satisfaction in the participants. Career goals were described by all the participants through various dimensions of work, such as job security, scope for personal growth, productivity of organization, motivating and inspiring supervisors, reinforcement for achievement in the form of rewards and appreciation, nature of work being monotony, challenging or stressful etc. They believed that they often feel strong as an independent individual from their job roles, financial independence and being a part of an organization. The participants considered many factors that can predict their satisfaction from life, and those factors are directly or indirectly related to work.

A study also found that striving for career success can be a means of enhancing well-being [9]. The study also found indirect positive associations between career success and life satisfaction.

Some participants considered their work as a service to the common people, while others commented that they had chosen professions that involve helping people. Achievement goals have a positive influence on life satisfaction [10]. And higher job satisfaction was found to be predicting higher life satisfaction both contemporaneously and longitudinally [11]. Since achievements and perceived success in job often lead to job satisfaction, we can conclude that success in career goals can predict life satisfaction in a person. Therefore, work can play a key role in the experience of satisfaction in life.

3.2 Balance between and within work and life can predict satisfaction experienced by an individual
"Work is a part of life because I cannot be working all the time, I need my family and friends to spend time with. My priorities keep changing between work and family". "We should work hard but not at the cost of our health, I don't

want to affect my health while dealing with the work schedules", "My boss is very productive and motivating but not at all understanding to some problems. He does not have basic human values, too mechanical. I feel scared to even call in sick".

Participants asserted that they prefer balancing their busy work life with family time and recreations. Spending time with families and friends was considered an ideal balance for a busy work life by the participants. However, they preferred limited people and personal relationships in their lives, which were fulfilling enough. They wanted a mutual understanding of space and freedom in the relationships. In case of the environment of a workplace, the participants commented that they consider a work environment as an ideal one, where there is considerate and flexible rules and regulations and freedom of working independently. They appreciated rules and regulation that were based on human values and needs.

This means that balance was considered as an important element, not only between professional and personal life, but also within professional as well as personal life. The World Happiness Report (2017) reported that work-life balance was one of the strongest predictors of happiness. People often tend to balance the 'work- life' equation with social interactions. The "Social Capital" is a moderate predictor of happiness. Work-life balance programs were found to impact employees in terms of their satisfaction, reduce absenteeism, job stress levels, work-life conflict, accident rates; and increased productivity [12].

3.3 Positive outlook and pro-social behaviour can facilitate life satisfaction

"I get very sad when I hear any bad news related to my near and dear ones……also when I see accidently struck animals in the road………..Today I thanked God that we are safe and healthy at home". "Yes, there is some monotony in my job role, the same procedure every day, but I get to help people that's satisfying". "There are no serious issues related to my children, nor any issue with my family members, so, that good for me".

Positive outlook was considered by many participants, as instrumental in staying stable and satisfied. Positive thinking is quite similar to the concept of "being optimistic towards the future" in positive psychology [13]. Optimism, positivity and positive affect are other concepts related to positive outlook [14]. Positive thinking includes self-enhancement and self-affirmation. The participants described that they try to find positivity in any event and that helps them to keep moving forward. Although most of them made it clear from the interviews that there were more career goals to be achieved yet, still they asserted that they chose to be happy, thinking of the everyday learning opportunities they get at work and that at least it is facilitating fulfillment of their basic needs. Positive thinking significantly affects life satisfaction [15]. Positive thinking, independent of demographic variables, resulted in 17 percent variance in life satisfaction. Positive correlation was found between optimism (and optimism-related variables) and life satisfaction [16].

As reported through the interviews, participants also experienced satisfaction in helping people through their jobs or simply being useful to their families and friends. Pro-sociality is associated with happiness, even when accounting for demographics and the country/territory code[17]. World Happiness Report (2019) also reports a robust link between volunteering and greater life satisfaction, positive affect, and reduced depression.

3.4 Ethical considerations
Informed consent was taken from the participants prior to the study and were assured that confidentiality and anonymity of the participant as well the organization he/she worked in would be strictly maintained. The interviews were held through enjoyable informal conversations, so that there was no pressure to participate. They were given right to withdraw at any time of the interview. Once the interviews were done recording, participants' answers were briefly paraphrased to them, and asked for their approval if the interview information had been recorded correctly or not. After the recordings were transcribed, the voice recordings were destroyed, taken in line with the British Psychological Society Code of conduct.

4. Recommendations for future research
More robust qualitative follow up studies are required to elucidate how the relationship of job satisfaction and subjective well-being can be intervened for better quality of life of oneself as well as people around us.

5. Conclusion
The present study has found that work itself, balance in work as well as life in general, positive outlook and prosocial altruistic behaviour can evidently predict better wellbeing. People should be in an engaging work, where the tasks are clearly defined and provide a sense of flow and regularity. Practicing any act of kindness through one's job can help to form a cycle of happiness for oneself and the benefiter. Negative factors such as excessive working hours, health hazards, disinterest and job insecurity must be limited for better job satisfaction. Working hours should be balanced with family time and personal space for better productivity as well as wholesome quality of life.

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