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심리학석사 학위논문

**Dilemma Between What You Like
Best and What You Do Best:
What Happy People Choose**

좋아하는 일과 잘하는 일: 행복한 사람의 선택

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Abstract

When making career-related decisions, do you prefer pursuing work that you love or work that you do well? Four studies provide evidence that when two intrinsic characteristics—the feeling of liking work versus the feeling of doing it well—are pitted against each other, an individual’s level of happiness plays an important role in the career decision-making process. The results of Studies 1 and 2 show that happy people are holding their job because they like doing their work compared to unhappy people and putting more efforts on what they like rather than on what they are competent at. The results of Studies 3 and 4 also show that happy people prioritize the work they love over the work at which they excel, even if they were told that they would perform it poorly. Together, these findings demonstrate that happiness leads people to value doing work they like best more than doing work they do best. Our discussion focuses on the implications of this dilemma for psychological well-being and career decision-making.

Keyword : happiness, judgment and decision making, work

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I'd rather be a failure at something I love than a success at something I hate.

— *George Burns*

People work approximately two-thirds of their waking hours. For instance, full-time employees in the U.S. work 8.56 hours a day on average (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The average annual working hours of employees in Korea is 2,069 hours, which is 305 hours longer than the average working hours of OECD countries (OECD, 2018). Unfortunately, many individuals are unhappy during much of their working hours (Choi, Catapano, & Choi, 2017; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004; Kahneman & Krueger, 2006; Krueger et al., 2009). Kahneman et al. (2004) demonstrated that people are less happy when working than when performing other daily activities, such as commuting, housework, or taking care of children. Indeed, the unhappiness people experience during working hours considerably affects their overall well-being (Brayfield, Wells, & Strate, 1957; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Fisher, 2010).

Therefore, to live a happy life, it is important to choose a career that makes an individual happy. What kind of career would make one happy? To answer this question, scholars, career counselors, and experts from various fields often advise people to either do what they like or do what they are good at. For example, Warren Buffett, known as the “Oracle of Omaha,” advises people to pursue a career in which they can do what they love (LeylandPAM, 2013). On the other hand, Calvin Newport suggests that it is

more important for individuals to consider how well they do their job rather than how passionate they are at work (Newport, 2016). Given these contradictory pieces of advice, many people experience conflict between choosing work they like and work they do well.

It is ideal to choose an occupation that one likes and at which one is competent, but many people experience a dilemma when these two aspects are misaligned. For instance, it is common to meet an undergraduate student who loves painting (but does poorly at it) and has an excellent mathematical brain (but hates solving math problems) and is struggling to decide whether to major in art or mathematics. It is also common to meet people who are contemplating about quitting their jobs to pursue their passion. We ran a pilot study of 131 Korean undergraduate students (77 female, $M_{age} = 23.90$, $SD_{age} = 2.31$) and found that 128 participants (97.7%) experienced the dilemma of deciding between a class they would like and a class where they would excel. Specifically, 114 participants (87.0%) attended a class they liked but in which they did poorly, while 108 participants (82.4%) attended a class they disliked but in which they did well. This dilemma is common in the career decision-making process, as most people naturally care about both what they love and what they do well.

The present research focused on how happy people handle this dilemma. Would happy people choose a career that they like but perform poorly, as George Burns attested, or a career that they perform well but dislike? Specifically, the primary question the current studies sought to

answer is whether an individual's level of happiness plays an important role in his/her decision of a career that he/she loves and a career that he/she does well. The aims of this research were twofold. The first aim was to explore how much time happy people spend on work they like or work they do well (Studies 1 and 2). The second aim was to examine whether preferring either feature of work vary according to the level of trait-like happiness (Studies 3 and 4).

Prior Research on Liking Work Versus Excelling at Work

Extensive literature has demonstrated that people are happier when they pursue a career that simultaneously allows them to do something that they love and do well (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Deci et al., 2001; Diener, 1984; Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996). For example, Americans (Baard et al., 2004) and Bulgarians (Deci et al., 2001) who both liked and excelled in their jobs reported better psychological adjustment and work performance. Ilardi et al.'s (1993) study also showed that people who liked and performed well in their work experienced higher job and task satisfaction, better psychological adjustment, and higher self-esteem compared to their coworkers who disliked and did not perform well in their work. It is particularly noteworthy that greater autonomous satisfaction resulted in positive work-related attitudes even in the case of monotonous workplaces (e.g., a factory job), where liking the work might be expected to be less likely. Together, these studies have revealed that both

liking and excelling at work are necessary for well-being.

However, none of these previous studies have answered our research question, specifically, what happens if individuals must choose between what they like best and what they do best? Should they choose to do what they love the most and tolerate all the stress related to their poor performance, or should they choose to do what they do best, even if they do not like it at all? What would happy people do to resolve this dilemma? Before discussing these issues, in the following section, we first review how and why choosing a job one loves—or a job at which one excels—relates to overall happiness.

Why Is a Job You Love Important for Happiness?

Choosing an occupation where one does what he/she loves engenders happiness through at least three positive benefits: fulfilling the need for autonomy, pursuing a passion, and allowing one to be one's true self. First, pursuing the career that one likes leads to happiness because it provides a sense of autonomy. Self-determination theory (SDT) demonstrates that satisfying innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is necessary for well-being, while conflicts between these innate needs would jeopardize well-being (Diener, 1984; Ryan & Frederick, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon et al., 1996; Waterman, 1993). Autonomy is an inherent desire to feel fully engaged in and to experience a sense of freedom when carrying out actions (deCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci, 1975). Thus, autonomy is related to

seeking a job one likes, since it requires, in a way, choosing one's activities without being oppressed by ability or surrounding issues. Indeed, Van den Broeck and her colleagues developed a scale assessing autonomy with six items (e.g., "I feel like I can be myself at my job" and "The tasks I have to do at work are in line with what I really want to do"), which reflect the feelings of people who pursue work they love (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010).

A breadth of research on autonomy has shown that people who feel self-determined and act for more inherently identified reasons report fewer negative emotions (Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1995; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995), better psychological health (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Vallerand & Blssonnette, 1992), and higher subjective happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Kasser, Houser-Marko, Jones, & Turban, 2005). Moreover, greater autonomous satisfaction at work resulted in positive work-related attitudes and work performance (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2009; Man & Lam, 2003; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). The relationship between autonomy and happiness is consistent, regardless of whether one believes that one could succeed or not at work (Ryan & Deci, 2000). That is, people who satisfy their need for autonomy enhance their happiness even when they think they would do their work poorly.

Second, having passion for work increases life satisfaction and subjective happiness (Vallerand et al., 2003). Vallerand et al. (2003) asserted that the core concept of passion is to do work one likes (or loves). For

example, people who are passionate about teaching are not merely teaching students. These teachers have an intense inner drive that leads them to enjoy and love teaching without any contingencies attached to the activity. The existing research on passion and happiness has found that passion for activities is positively related to subjective well-being, psychological health (Carpentier, Mageau, & Vallerand, 2012; Philippe, Vallerand, & Lavigne, 2009; Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008; Vallerand, Houliort, & Forest, 2014), and feelings of enjoyment and love (Johri & Misra, 2014; Perttula, 2004). Philippe et al. (2009) examined both hedonic and eudaimonic happiness between passionate and non-passionate people and suggested that only passion for activities was conducive to well-being across the stages of adult life for both men and women.

Third, one's true self is expressed through work that one loves. True selves are reflected in accordance with what people value and prefer rather than in the attainment of rewards or the avoidance of punishments (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Goldman & Kernis, 2002). In fact, people define work they like as being one's true self (McGregor & Little, 1998). However, when people choose work they do not like, they are tormented by the fact that they are not being their true selves. The reason behind this is that people believe their true self is their core identity (see Gergen, 1991), and they would like to express "who they really are" (Turkle, 1995).

A number of perspectives converge to suggest that pursuing one's job in accordance with a core aspect of the self is a good indicator of

integration and psychological well-being (e.g., Bettencourt & Sheldon, 2001; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). True self contributes to creating meaning in one's life (Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt, & King, 2009; Schlegel, Hicks, King, & Arndt, 2011) and enhances subjective well-being (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995), whereas restrictive authenticity fosters distress (Bettencourt & Sheldon, 2001). The more people become their true selves, the more they report higher levels of life satisfaction and feelings of self-worth (Goldman & Kernis, 2002).

Why Is a Job at Which You Excel Important for Happiness?

Choosing work where one is skilled fosters competence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, resulting in a happier life. To begin, people who excel at their work feel happy because their need for competence is satisfied. Competence has positive psychological properties related to being skillful, intelligent, and scientific (Rosenberg, Nelson, & Vivekananthan, 1968). SDT describes the human need for competence as a desire to feel that one can work effectively and bring about desired outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Skinner, 1995; White, 1959). In fact, competence is associated with pursuing work that one does well in order to work efficiently and achieve results. For instance, the Work-related Basic Need Satisfaction Scale assesses competence with six items (e.g., "I am good at the things I do in my job" and "I feel competent at my job"), and the responses to those items reflect the emotions of people who have work at which they excel (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). People who are satisfied with their competence

experience a sense of well-being, health, and vitality (Atchley, 1991; Carver & Scheier, 1990; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006), but people who are not satisfied with their competence experience more depression and distress (Blechman, McEnroe, Carella, & Audette, 1986; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Additionally, when people engage in work at which they are good and when they feel like they are performing to the best of their ability at work, they have high self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to an evaluation of the self based on one's abilities and achievements; it is essentially an assessment of one's worth. In fact, achieving positive self-esteem is not only an end goal; rather, it is a means to influence an individual's level of happiness in life. In previous studies, self-esteem was used as an important indicator of happiness (e.g., Ryff, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Branden (1994) argued that self-esteem is "a fundamental human need" (p. 3) and that self-esteem "has profound consequences for every aspect of our existence" (p. 5). For instance, high self-esteem reinforces happiness while low self-esteem can make people feel depressed, unstable, and inferior (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Therefore, it is predictable that pursuing what one does well boosts one's self-esteem, and it may eventually lead to happiness in life.

Lastly, people who excel in their work often experience successes and downward social comparisons, which in turn foster pleasure (Brigham, Kelso, Jackson, & Smith, 1997) and positive beliefs about their abilities

(Wood & Bandura, 1989). A person's optimistic belief in his/her capabilities to accomplish a task refers to self-efficacy. While self-esteem is a more general feeling of worthiness, self-efficacy is a judgement of more specific abilities (Beck, 2008). Self-efficacy is an important aspect of happiness (Bandura, 1997, 1990) and health (Baumeister, 1993; Brissette, Scheier, & Carver, 2002; Carver & Scheier, 2002), and it can protect people from stress and burnout (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Thus, self-efficacy enhances motivation to achieve desired outcomes (Van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2002) and raises the likelihood of goal completion (Axtell & Parker, 2003; Brown & Inouye, 1978). For instance, people with high self-efficacy feel confident and motivated to tackle difficult tasks, while people with low self-efficacy doubt their ability to cope with adversity and become depressed (Luszczynska, Gutiérrez-Doña, & Schwarzer, 2005; Luszczynska, Schwarzer, Lippke, & Mazurkiewicz, 2011).

As described above, previous findings have clearly shown that choosing work one loves or work at which one excels can promote happiness. Therefore, people must be strategically wise enough to choose work they like or the work they do well in the best possible way to maximize happiness. The goal of the present research was to contrast the two intrinsic characteristics—the feeling of liking work versus the feeling of doing it well—and examine the association of these characteristics with individuals' level of happiness. Specifically, we expected that happy people will weigh each aspect differently.

What Would Happy People Pursue: Liking or Excelling?

This research focused on how happy individuals handle the dilemma of choosing between what they like to do and what they perform well. We speculated that happy people value doing the work they love more than doing the work they perform well. Two streams of research support this hypothesis: happy people view desirability as more important than feasibility, and happy people are less concerned about social comparison.

Happy People View Desirability as More Important Than Feasibility

Happiness increases focus on the “why” aspect of an activity and the adoption of abstract goals (i.e., high-level construal) but decreases attention to the “how” aspect of an activity or concrete goal (i.e., low-level construal) (Labroo & Patrick, 2008; Zacks & Tversky, 2001). For example, when deciding whether to participate in an activity, happy people ask *why* questions (e.g., Am I interested in the activity?) rather than *how* questions (e.g., Am I able to do the activity?). Previous studies have explored different construal levels, including meaning versus pleasure (Kim, Kang, & Choi, 2014), idealistic versus pragmatic self (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007), and considerations in favor of an action versus considerations against an action (Eyal, Liberman, Trope, & Walther, 2004).

Among the previous studies, we focused primarily on those that explored desirability versus feasibility. Desirability of an activity’s end state constitutes a higher construal level compared to the feasibility of attaining its end state (Liberman & Trope, 1998; Liberman, Trope, & Wakslak, 2007;

Trope & Liberman, 2003, 2010). In choosing a university course assignment, the interest in an assignment represented desirability and the difficulty of an assignment represented feasibility (Liberman & Trope, 1998, Study 4). Accordingly, desirability reflects what one loves doing, whereas feasibility reflects what one performs well. Taken together, happy people who tend to adopt their life circumstances to a high construal level will place greater significance on desirability considerations than feasibility considerations. Therefore, when making a career-related decision, happy people would place more emphasis on how much they like the work rather than on how well they will perform.

Happy People Are Less Concerned About Social Comparison

Social comparisons threaten happiness (Ahrens & Alloy, 1997; Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Swallow & Kuiper, 1992; Wheeler & Miyake, 1992; Wood, Taylor, & Lichtman, 1985). Human beings compare themselves with others frequently in terms of their capabilities. Notably, one's evaluation of one's own abilities may depend on absolute standards or accomplishments, although it is determined mostly by comparing one's performance with the performance of others (Festinger, 1954; Wills, 1981). For instance, pianists participating in an international piano competition may believe that they are playing the piano well, but their evaluation of their competence can change through social comparison. The pianists who won prizes would continue to think they excelled at playing, while others who performed poorly may no longer regard their performances as expert or

professional. In many instances, personal evaluations rely heavily on the relative success of others (Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997). Individuals often compare their ability to do work with the ability of others (e.g., grade, rank, level) but rarely compare their passion for or interest in the work. Generally, it is difficult to assess or compare one's passion for playing piano, and it is unusual to take part in a competition that ranks pianists based on their passion for playing.

Prior research has also demonstrated that happy people are less vulnerable to social comparison information compared to unhappy people (Kim, Hong, Choi, & Hicks, 2016; Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997). For example, Lyubomirsky and Ross (1997) found that the knowledge of peer's performances heavily influenced unhappy people's mood and self-confidence. Unhappy people who received negative performance evaluations reported positive changes in their mood and confidence after learning that their peers performed even worse. Happy people, by contrast, were rather successful at ignoring negative social comparison and were responsive to absolute evaluations of their own performance. Accordingly, since happy people are less sensitive to social comparisons, they are more likely to choose the work they love even if they perform it worse compared to others.

In sum, when choosing a job, happy people are more concerned with the extent to which they like doing the job. We believe that happy people would prefer to pursue the work they love rather than the work at

which they excel.

The Present Studies

Many people experience a dilemma in deciding between doing what they love and what they do well, since they probably regard both aspects of work as important determinants of happiness. Abundant evidence suggests that liking the work one does and/or doing it well enriches our well-being. Our investigation expands on these findings by examining the idea that when the feeling of liking work versus the feeling of doing it well are pitted against each other, one's subjective happiness plays an important role in the career decision-making process. Our working hypothesis in the present research is that pursuing what one loves rather than what one does well allows for happy people to maintain their optimal level of happiness. Specifically, happy people place relatively more weight on work they love rather than on work they do well, as indicated by simple surveys (Studies 1 and 2) and when given hypothetical situations (Studies 3 and 4).

We conducted four studies to test this hypothesis. In Study 1, we recruited only full-time employees and asked them to rate the extent to which they like doing the work and to which extent they perform well in their occupational field. We predicted that people who hold their jobs because they like their work rather than because they are good at what they do would be characterized as happy employees. In Study 2, we provided a list of ten circumstances requiring endurance (e.g., staying up all night, skipping meals, and/or spending time doing the work even if they were

offered little compensation) and asked participants to indicate how often they have experienced such situations in the pursuit of either the work they love or the work at which they excel. We predicted that happy participants would be more likely to tolerate such circumstances for work they like rather than for work they do well.

In addition to expanding the general phenomenon of happy people, the proposed studies examined their preferences for work they love rather than for work at which they are competent using hypothetical scenarios. In Study 3, we placed participants in real-life scenarios in which we provided information regarding the dimension of either liking the work or doing it well; specifically, we required them to rate the subjective importance of the unprovided dimension of either doing it well or liking it. For example, when participants were told to imagine a scenario in which they like doing the work, we asked them to rate how important it would be for them to know whether they would do their work well. In Study 4, we replicated Study 3 and gave participants scenarios in which we provided information regarding the dimension of work, either liking it but doing it poorly or doing it well but disliking it, and we asked them to rate the likelihood of choosing the work. We predicted that happy participants from Studies 3 and 4 would prioritize the work they like best over the work they do best. For all studies, we reported all conditions run and relevant measures. We conducted each study in a single wave and analyzed the data only after data collection was complete.

Study 1:

Happiness Is More Related to Work You Love Than Work You Do Well

As an initial attempt to test our hypothesis, Study 1 investigated the relationship between full-time employees' happiness and their reasons for working in their current positions. Our question was as follows: Do happy people find passion for or competence in their work? We predicted that a person's happiness would show a stronger association with the degree of liking the work than with the degree of doing it well. In addition, happy employees were expected to report that they are doing work for which they have passion, unlike unhappy employees.

Method

Participants. One hundred fifty U.S. citizens completed the study via Amazon's Mechanical Turk in exchange for modest payment. We specifically recruited participants who were currently employed full-time. Three participants were excluded for failing an attention check question, leaving a final sample of 147 (61 females, $M_{age} = 36.97$, $SD_{age} = 12.58$). Participants worked an average of 40.15 hours per week ($SD_{working_time} = 10.09$). Mean job tenure was 5.77 years ($SD_{job_tenure} = 5.96$), ranging from less than a year to more than 36 years. The annual income distribution of the participants was: < \$15,000, 6.8%; 15,001–25,000, 16.3%; 25,001–35,000, 21.1%; 35,001–50,000, 20.4%; 50,001–75,000, 24.5%; 75,001–100,000, 7.5%; 100,001–150,000, 2.7%; > \$150,000, 0.7%.

Measures and procedure. We first asked participants to indicate

their job field among the list of twenty-three different occupations (see Appendix A). Participants were then presented, in random order, with eight statements specifying the reasons *why* they were working in their current job field. They were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with each statement: *I like the work that this job entails; I like the overall atmosphere at this job (e.g., relationships with coworkers, physical surroundings, etc.); I enjoy doing this kind of work; the work fits well with my interests and values; I am good at doing work that this job entails; I have the skill-set required for this job; I have the knowledge and expertise required for this job; and I have a natural talent for work that this job entails*. The questions were measured on a 9-point Likert scale (scale endpoints were labeled *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*).

We factor analyzed these eight statements using an oblimin rotation to examine whether the structure of the statements is characterized by two dimensions that map the conceptual distinction between liking their work versus excelling at it. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .87, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(28) = 1073.17, p < .001$). This analysis indicated that two factors yielded the most interpretable solution, explaining 66.71% and 14.58% of the variance each (see Appendix B). Their eigenvalues were 5.34 and 1.17, respectively. Factor 1 included the first four questions that indicated the extent to which the participants worked in their job field because they like their work ($\alpha = .95$). Factor 2 included the four remaining questions, referencing the

extent to which they worked in their job field because they are competent at their work ($\alpha = .88$). As expected, Factor 1 (liking the work) and Factor 2 (excelling at the work) were positively but not too highly correlated ($r = .59$).

Next, following a short filler questionnaire, participants were asked to describe the number of hours worked per week, the number of years they had been working in the current job, and their annual salary (chosen from 11 categories). We controlled for those occupational factors in our analyses because extensive research has found that employees' well-being is associated with income (e.g., Kahneman & Deaton, 2010), working hours (e.g., Grosch, Caruso, Rosa, & Sauter, 2006; Ng & Feldman, 2008), and tenure on the job (e.g., Bedeian, Ferris, & Kacmar, 1992).

To examine the participants' chronic happiness, in this and all subsequent studies we administered the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and the 4-item Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). All questions were measured on a 7-point scale. The reliabilities of the two questionnaires were satisfactory ($\alpha = .95$ for SWLS; $\alpha = .87$ for SHS). Subsequently, participants completed a demographic questionnaire and were debriefed.

Results and Discussion

A mixed-model analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the reason for working (liking vs. excelling) as a within-subjects factor

and SWLS (happy vs. unhappy) as a between-subjects factor, controlling for hours worked per week, years worked at the current job, and annual salary. The main effect of SWLS, $F(1,142) = 49.15, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .26$, indicated that the degrees of both liking and excelling were higher when participants were satisfied with life rather than when they were unsatisfied.

Most importantly, and consistent with our prediction, the interaction effect between the reason for working and SWLS was significant, $F(1,142) = 36.65, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .21$. As shown in Figure 1, this interaction effect indicated that the participants who were satisfied with life reported distinctively different reason for working compared to those who were less satisfied. Specifically, self-rated satisfied participants (+1 *SD* from the mean on the SWLS) demonstrated that the reason for working in their job is because they both like ($M = 6.25, SE = 0.16$) and excel at ($M = 6.28, SE = 0.12$) doing their work, $F(1,142) = .03, p = .862, \eta_p^2 = .00$. On the contrary, self-rated unsatisfied participants (-1 *SD* from the mean on the SWLS) reported that they are holding their job due to their competence at work ($M = 5.58, SE = 0.12$) rather than liking it ($M = 4.38, SE = 0.16$), $F(1,142) = 82.60, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .37$. Put differently, satisfied people reported a higher degree of liking compared to unsatisfied people (6.25 vs. 4.38), $F(1,142) = 68.30, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .32$, whereas for the degree of excelling, the mean difference between satisfied and unsatisfied people was attenuated (6.28 vs.

5.58), $F(1,142) = 17.01, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .11$.

We ran identical ANCOVAs, except that SHS was used as a between-subjects factor instead of SWLS. The analysis revealed that the main effect of SHS was significant, $F(1,142) = 56.96, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .29$, indicating that happy participants reported greater degree of liking and excelling at work than did unhappy participants. As predicted, the interaction between SHS and the reason for working was significant, $F(1,142) = 28.92, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$. This interaction effect demonstrated that happy participants (+1 *SD* from the mean on the SHS) reported that they both love doing their work ($M = 6.23, SE = 0.16$) and they also excel at it ($M = 6.32, SE = 0.11$), $F(1,142) = .51, p = .475, \eta_p^2 = .00$, yet unhappy participants (-1 *SD* from the mean on the SHS) reported low degree of liking their work ($M = 4.41, SE = 0.16$) but high degree of excelling at it ($M = 5.53, SE = 0.11$), $F(1,142) = 72.42, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .34$. Put another way, happy participants reported higher degrees of both liking, $F(1,142) = 64.70, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .31$, and excelling, $F(1,142) = 25.79, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .15$, compared to unhappy participants. However, the difference between happy and unhappy people was greater for the degree of liking (6.23 vs. 4.41) than for the degree of excelling (6.32 vs. 5.53). As a result, participants' reasons for working (liking vs. excelling) in their current job were contingent upon their self-rated happiness.



Figure 1. Level of agreement in accordance with the reason for working in their current job fields and happiness (Study 1).

In the subsequent analyses, we further examined the relative effect of liking the work and excelling at the work on well-being, controlling for the occupational factors. A multiple regression analysis was conducted in which the number of hours worked per week, years worked, and annual salary were entered in the first step, followed by liking and excelling factors in the second step. As indicated in Table 1, individuals with higher scores on SWLS were more likely to report working in their current job because they liked the work that the job entailed, $\beta = .57$, $t(141) = 6.54$, $p < .001$, rather than because they were good at it, $\beta = -.06$, $t(141) = -.68$, $p = .496$. Similarly, liking was significantly associated with higher SHS scores, $\beta = .53$, $t(141) = 5.92$, $p < .001$, whereas excelling was unrelated to happiness, $\beta = .03$, $t(141) = .35$, $p = .729$ (see Appendix C). The results of our

regression analyses indicated that happiness has a stronger relationship with liking the work than with excelling at the work, regardless of the number of hours the participants worked per week, the number of years they had been working in their current job, and income.

To summarize our findings thus far, we offer initial evidence that individuals' level of happiness plays an important role in their reasons for working in their job, and its association with liking the work is significantly stronger than with excelling at it. Specifically, happy people were more motivated to hold their jobs because they like their work more compared to unhappy people. Based on the results of Study 1, an interesting question arises: Will these happy people commit themselves more to doing work they love than to doing work they perform well? Study 2 was designed to answer this question by exploring whether happy people, compared to unhappy people, typically spend more time, money, and energy on work they like rather than on work they do well.

Table 1

Summary of Regression Analysis on SWLS (Study 1)

Models	$R^2(\text{adj})$	ΔR^2	B	$SE B$	β
Model 1	.13	.15			
Hours worked per week			.00	.01	.02
Years worked at the current job			.02	.02	.08
Annual salary			.42	.09	.37**
Model 2	.39	.26			
Hours worked per week			.01	.01	.05
Years worked at the current job			-.00	.02	-.02
Annual salary			.30	.08	.26**
Liking the work			.62	.09	.57**
Excelling at the work			-.10	.15	-.06

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Study 2:

Happy People Work Harder at the Activities They Love Than They Do Well

In Study 1, we found that happy people work at their current job because they like doing the work it entails. Our aim in Study 2 was to expand the findings of Study 1 by exploring the ways in which happy people spend their resources on what they like versus on what they do well. Specifically, participants were asked how often they have voluntarily invested their assets and endured fatigue or shame to do work they like or work they do well. We predicted that happy people would invest more in work they love compared to unhappy people while a few or no differences would be found for work they do well.

Method

Participants. One hundred twenty-one Korean undergraduate students (85 females, $M_{\text{age}} = 22.77$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.19$) completed a short survey in exchange for modest compensation.

Measures and procedure. Participants were asked to answer ten questions in random order about how often they have to deal with situations requiring endurance for work they love ($\alpha = .80$) and work they do well ($\alpha = .81$), including “*Staying up all night*,” “*Skipping a meal*,” “*Thinking about the work all day*,” “*Spending time*,” “*Investing money*,” “*Disregarding other aspects of life (e.g., looks, relationships)*,” “*Not caring about losing face*,” “*Coming up with a challenging plan*,” “*Spending time doing the work, even*

if I was offered a lower-level position;” “*Spending time doing the work, even if I was paid a small reward.*” Responses were measured on a 7-point scale with endpoints labeled *not at all* and *all the time*. They then completed the SHS and a demographic questionnaire. They were debriefed upon the completion of all surveys.

Results and Discussion

Participants overall reported that they have more frequently committed their resources to the work they love ($M = 5.21, SD = 0.92$) than to the work they do well ($M = 4.38, SD = 0.96$), with the mean ratings of both liking and doing well being above the midpoint of the scale (see Table 2), $F(1,119) = 78.96, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .40$.

Our key prediction was that happy people commit themselves significantly more often to the work they love compared to unhappy people, whereas the difference between happy and unhappy people in the frequency with which they commit to the work they perform well would be not significant. As predicted, the more participants reported happiness, the more they had endured challenging circumstances in the work they like, $F(1,119) = 8.01, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .06$, but not in the work they do well, $F(1,119) = 2.80, p = .097, \eta_p^2 = .02$. Specifically, as shown in Table 3, happy people (+1 *SD* from the mean on the SHS) experienced more incidents of staying up all night, $F(1,119) = 6.18, p = .014, \eta_p^2 = .05$, spending time, $F(1,119) = 7.47, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .06$, disregarding other aspects of life (e.g., looks,

relationships), $F(1,119) = 7.58, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .06$, not caring about losing face, $F(1,119) = 7.86, p = .006, \eta_p^2 = .06$, and spending time doing the work they love, even if they were offered a lower-level position, $F(1,119) = 4.26, p = .041, \eta_p^2 = .04$, compared to unhappy people ($-1 SD$ from the mean on the SHS). Conversely, for the work they do well, as shown in Table 4, happy people reported significantly more incidents of only disregarding other aspects of life (e.g., looks, relationships), $F(1,119) = 7.42, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .06$, compared to unhappy people.

The results of Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated that happy people are more likely to report that their reason for working is because they like doing the work (Study 1) and work harder on what they love even though they have to commit more of their time, money, and energy (Study 2). However, in Study 1, participants were asked about their current jobs while in Study 2, they were asked about their past behaviors pertaining to the activities they either love or do well. We generated further questions: When choosing a career, will these happy people prefer the work they like to the work they do well? Furthermore, will they actually choose the work they love even though they would perform it poorly? The following two studies addressed these questions.

Table 2

ANOVA Results for Comparing Work You Like and Work You Do Well (Study 2)

Circumstances of endurance	Work you like		Work you do well		<i>F</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
1. Staying up all night	5.34	1.60	4.69	1.71	21.70**
2. Skipping one's meal	4.79	1.87	4.16	1.74	15.96**
3. Thinking about the work all day	5.45	1.38	4.55	1.49	2.41
4. Spending time	6.40	.73	5.71	1.13	171.91**
5. Investing money	5.69	1.38	4.80	1.51	44.29**
6. Disregarding other aspects of life	4.93	1.68	4.05	1.61	33.68**
7. Not caring about losing face	4.41	1.76	3.63	1.61	30.82**
8. Coming up with a reckless plan	4.75	1.74	3.86	1.70	30.24**
9. Spending time doing the work, even if I was offered a lower-level position	4.88	1.63	4.01	1.59	29.61**
10. Spending time doing the work, even if I was paid for a small reward	5.45	1.40	4.31	1.58	57.02**
Total	5.21	.92	4.38	.96	78.96**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 3

ANOVA Results for Comparing Happy People and Unhappy People for Work You Like (Study 2)

Circumstances of endurance	Happy People		Unhappy People		<i>F</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	
1. Staying up all night	5.69	.20	4.98	.20	6.18*
2. Skipping one's meal	5.11	.24	4.47	.24	3.59
3. Thinking about the work all day	5.65	.18	5.26	.18	2.46
4. Spending time	6.58	.09	6.23	.09	7.47**
5. Investing money	5.62	.18	5.75	.18	.29
6. Disregarding other aspects of life	5.35	.21	4.52	.21	7.58**
7. Not caring about losing face	4.85	.22	3.97	.22	7.86**
8. Coming up with a reckless plan	4.87	.23	4.63	.23	.55
9. Spending time doing the work, even if I was offered a lower-level position	5.19	.21	4.58	.21	4.26*
10. Spending time doing the work, even if I was paid for a small reward	5.51	.18	5.40	.18	.22
Total	5.44	.12	4.98	.12	8.01**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4

ANOVA Results for Comparing Happy People and Unhappy People for Work You Do Well (Study 2)

Circumstances of endurance	Happy People		Unhappy People		<i>F</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	
1. Staying up all night	4.97	.22	4.40	.22	3.40
2. Skipping one's meal	4.40	.22	3.91	.22	2.40
3. Thinking about the work all day	4.68	.19	4.43	.19	.89
4. Spending time	5.74	.15	5.68	.15	.07
5. Investing money	4.70	.20	4.91	.20	.56
6. Disregarding other aspects of life	4.44	.20	3.66	.20	7.42**
7. Not caring about losing face	3.80	.21	3.46	.21	1.40
8. Coming up with a reckless plan	4.02	.22	3.70	.22	1.07
9. Spending time doing the work, even if I was offered a lower-level position	4.06	.21	3.96	.21	.12
10. Spending time doing the work, even if I was paid for a small reward	4.41	.20	4.22	.20	.45
Total	4.52	.12	4.23	.12	2.80

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Study 3:

Happy People Prefer the Work They Love over the Work They Do Well

The results of Studies 1 and 2 are consistent with our hypothesis that happiness is associated more with doing what one loves than with doing what one does well. To further probe the scope of this association, we next examined whether happy people would give greater consideration to the work they love than to the work at which they are competent when making a career-related decision. In Study 3, participants were placed in hypothetical situations that provided information regarding either work they like or work they do well. They were then asked to rate the importance of liking when information that one does the work well was provided and the importance of doing well when the information that one likes the work was provided. We expected that happy participants would regard liking their work as more important than doing it well when choosing a job.

Method

Participants. One hundred seventy-two Korean undergraduate students (60 females, $M_{\text{age}} = 21.03$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.55$) completed the study in exchange for partial course credit.

Measures and procedure. Participants were instructed to complete the SWLS and SHS questionnaires. They were then presented with two job search scenarios that varied in the provided dimension (liking vs. doing well) and the state of the provided dimension (positive vs. negative). The order of the scenarios was counterbalanced and had no effect on the results.

Participants in the positive-state liking condition were presented with the following scenarios. The positive-state doing well condition appears in square brackets.

Enrolling in a course. Imagine that you read an advertisement on your department bulletin board about a new course starting next semester. Upon reading the ad, you think you would like [do well in] the coursework. When choosing to enroll, how important would it be to know whether you would do well in [like] the coursework or not?

Being an intern. Imagine that you read an internship advertisement from a company at a work conference. Upon reading the ad, you think you would like [do well in] the work at the company as an intern. When deciding whether to apply for the internship, how important would it be for you to know whether you would do well in [like] the work or not?

In the negative-state conditions, “like” was replaced with “dislike” and “do well” with “do poorly” (see Appendix D). Participants in the liking condition rated the importance of doing well and those in the doing well condition rated the importance of liking on a 9-point scale with endpoints labeled *not at all important* and *very important* to decide. Following a short filler questionnaire, the participants reported their age and gender. Subsequently, they were debriefed.

Results and Discussion

We conducted a 2 (the provided dimension: liking vs. doing well) × 2 (state of the provided dimension: positive vs. negative) × 2 (happiness:

happy vs. unhappy) \times 2 (the type of scenario: course vs. intern) mixed-model ANOVA on the subjective importance of the unprovided dimension, with the fourth variable as a within-subjects factor and the others as between-subjects factors. First, we performed the analysis with SWLS as a happiness variable. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of the type of scenario, $F(1,164) = 10.32, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .06$, which indicated that the subjective importance of the unprovided dimension was greater when the participants were considering an internship ($M = 6.37, SD = 0.14$) than when they were considering a course to take ($M = 5.92, SD = 0.16$), which is of no interest for our purpose. A main effect of the provided aspect was also obtained, $F(1,164) = 9.39, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .05$, suggesting that information about the extent of liking ($M = 6.54, SD = 0.19$) was statistically more important than information regarding the extent of doing well ($M = 5.74, SD = 0.18$). No additional main effects emerged, all F s $< 0.33, p$ s $> .570$.

As one might expect, the interaction effect between the provided dimension, the state, and happiness was not significant, $F(1,164) = 0.40, p = .526, \eta_p^2 = .00$, suggesting that the relationship between happiness and the extent of the unprovided dimension did not depend on the state of the provided dimension. Most importantly, and consistent with our prediction, the interaction between the provided dimension and happiness was significant, $F(1,164) = 12.65, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$, indicating that interest in the unprovided dimension depended on an individual's happiness. As

presented in Figure 2, happy participants (+1 *SD* from the mean on the SWLS) considered knowing the extent of *liking* when the *doing well* dimension was provided ($M = 7.09, SE = 0.26$) to be more important compared to knowing the extent of *doing well* when the *liking* dimension was provided ($M = 5.35, SE = 0.26$), $F(1,164) = 22.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .12$. In contrast, unhappy participants (-1 *SD* from the mean on the SWLS) did not show a significant difference in the importance of knowing the extent of *doing well* when the *liking* dimension was provided ($M = 6.14, SE = 0.26$) and the extent of *liking* when the *doing well* dimension was provided ($M = 6.00, SE = 0.27$), $F(1,164) = 0.14, p = .709, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

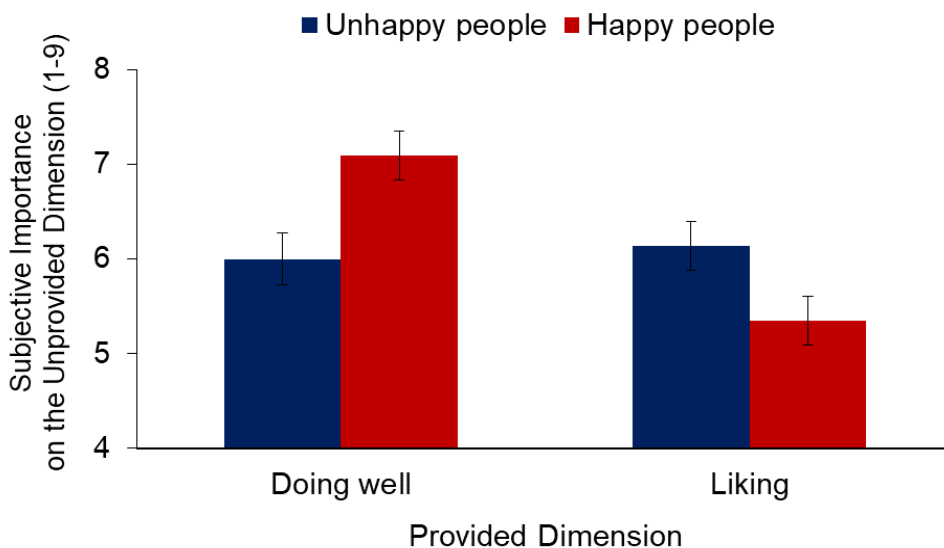


Figure 2. Significance of the unprovided dimension in accordance with provided dimension and happiness (Study 3).

We then performed mixed-model ANOVA with SHS as a happiness

variable instead of SWLS. An identical pattern emerged. Participants considered knowing the extent of liking ($M = 6.53, SD = 0.19$) as more important than the extent of doing well ($M = 5.73, SD = 0.18$), $F(1,164) = 9.31, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .05$. We also obtained a main effect of the type of scenario, $F(1,164) = 10.21, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .06$, which suggested that knowing the extent of the provided dimensions regarding the internship ($M = 6.35, SD = 0.14$) was considered more important than it was regarding the course ($M = 5.90, SD = 0.15$). This effect was of no interest for the main purpose. No additional main effects emerged, all F s $< 0.40, p$ s $> .532$.

Consistent with the analyses of SWLS, the interaction effect between the provided dimension, the state of the provided dimension, and SHS was insignificant, $F(1,164) = 1.74, p = .190, \eta_p^2 = .01$. However, most importantly, the analysis yielded an interaction between the provided dimension and happiness, $F(1,164) = 12.28, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$. This interaction indicated that interest in the extent to which the participants like the activity (e.g., enrolling in the course) was statistically greater than interest in the extent to which they would do well in the activity. Specifically, happy participants (+1 SD from the mean on the SHS) considered knowing the extent of *liking* when the *doing well* dimension was provided ($M = 6.90, SE = 0.26$) as more important compared to knowing the extent of *doing well* when the *liking* dimension was provided ($M = 5.19, SE = 0.26$), $F(1,164) = 21.50, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .12$. In contrast, unhappy participants ($-1 SD$ from

the mean on the SHS) did not show a significant difference in the importance of knowing the extent of *doing well* when the *liking* dimension was provided ($M = 6.27, SE = 0.25$) and the extent of *liking* when the *doing well* dimension was provided ($M = 6.15, SE = 0.27$), $F(1,164) = 0.11, p = .741, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

Study 3 confirmed our central hypothesis that preferring either aspect of work depends on the level of happiness. The findings of Study 3 demonstrated that compared to unhappy participants, happy participants were more inquisitive about the extent to which an activity is interesting than about the extent to which it is easy or difficult for them.

It should be noted, however, that the present study has a limitation. If we assumed that an individual's preference underlies his/her selection, happy people would choose to do the work they love rather than the work at which they are adept. Yet, their choice does not always reflect personal preference when choosing among appealing alternatives (Tversky & Shafir, 1992). For example, Bass, Pessemier, and Lehmann (1972) demonstrated that people chose the option that they prefer only half of the time. Specifically, although happy participants value the work they are passionate about more than the work at which they are skillful, it is still unclear whether they would select either option strictly according to their preferences. We dealt with this issue in Study 4 by asking participants about their likelihood of making selection when considering both aspects of work.

Study 4:

After All, Happy People Choose the Work They Love

In Study 4, we expanded upon previous studies by examining three primary contentions. First, while participants in Study 3 were presented only with one facet of work, participants in Study 4 were presented with choice scenarios comprising both features (liking but doing poorly and disliking but doing well). To elaborate, in Study 3, we provided only one aspect, either liking the work or doing it well, in order to ask participants to rate the importance of the aspect of work that was not provided to them. In Study 4, however, we presented both aspects of work at once by proposing (hypothetical) trade-offs between the feelings of liking the work and doing it well in order to examine the likelihood of choosing either the work they love but at which they perform poorly or the work at which they perform well but dislike.

Second, Liberman and Trope (1998) proposed that desirability would be further encouraged in distant future activities, whereas feasibility would be encouraged more highly in near future activities. In other words, when anticipating making a work-related decision in the distant future, people put more weight on the work they like; whereas when making work-related decisions in near future, they place more weight on the difficulty of the work. Therefore, we probed whether the probability of selecting either aspect of work would vary in different time contexts (e.g., tomorrow vs. a year from now).

Third, we also considered the wording order of both features. Prior studies have suggested that the order in which the information is presented (positive to negative direction vs. negative to positive direction) affects judgements (e.g., Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Coker, 2012; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). For example, the participants who were presented with the positive hotel reviews first ranked the hotel more favorably than when they were presented with the negative reviews first (Coker, 2012, Experiment 2). Therefore, we wanted to test the subtle differences between the nuances of the work one likes to do but does poorly and the work one does poorly but likes, and vice versa.

We predicted that happy participants would be more likely to select the work they *like but do poorly* than the work they *dislike but do well*. Thus, we attempted to explore the effect of different time contexts and wording order on our prediction. We examined whether happy participants, regardless of whether the activity occurs either tomorrow or a year from now, would choose an activity they love although they are poor at performing it over an activity they perform well but dislike.

Method

Participants. One hundred ninety-seven Korean undergraduate students (100 females, $M_{\text{age}} = 24.11$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.34$) completed the study in exchange for partial course credit.

Measures and procedure. The procedure was identical to Study 3, with the following exceptions. We randomly assigned participants to one of

the eight conditions that varied in terms of provided aspect, time, and the order of the wording. Participants were presented with two real-life scenarios in random order. The scenarios presented below are the *liking but doing poorly* in *near future* condition where the wording of *liking* comes first. The *distant future* condition appears in square brackets (see Appendix E for the other conditions). Participants rated the likelihood of making a selection on a 9-point scale with endpoints labeled *not at all likely* and *very likely*.

Book review assignment. Imagine that tomorrow [a year from now] you are selecting a book for a book review assignment from one of the classes in which you are enrolled. Leafing through a book, it seems that you would like writing the assignment due to the content of the book. However, you think you would do poorly at it. In this situation, how likely is it for you to select the book tomorrow [a year from now]?

Internship. Imagine that tomorrow [a year from now] you read an advertisement for a company at a job fair. From reading the ad, it seems that you would like working in this industry sector of the company. However, you think you would do the work poorly. In this situation, how likely is it that you would choose to do the internship tomorrow [a year from now]?

Results and Discussion

We began by conducting a 2 (the provided dimension: liking but doing poorly vs. disliking but doing well) × 2 (happiness with SWLS: happy vs. unhappy) × 2 (time: near future vs. distant future) × 2 (wording order:

liking/disliking first vs. doing well/doing poorly first) \times 2 (the type of scenario: assignment vs. internship) mixed-model ANOVA on the subjective likelihood of choice, with the type of scenario as a within-subjects factor and the other variables as between-subjects factors. As predicted, the interaction between the provided dimension, happiness, time, and wording orders was not significant, $F(1,181) = 0.15, p = .703, \eta_p^2 = .00$. We were then able to collapse across the wording orders, since only the interaction effect between the provided dimension and the wording orders was significant, $F(1,181) = 7.90, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .04$, which was not the focus of this study.

A 2 (the provided dimension) \times 2 (happiness with SWLS) \times 2 (time) \times 2 (the type of scenario) mixed-model ANOVA was conducted. No significant main effects emerged, all $F_s < 2.83, p_s > .094$. The ANOVA yielded an interaction effect between time and happiness, $F(1,189) = 4.21, p = .042, \eta_p^2 = .02$, suggesting that the preference for activities in the near future increased when the participants were less happy, whereas preference shifted to activities in the distant future when one's chronic happiness was greater. Most importantly, and consistent with our prediction, the interaction effect between the provided dimension and happiness was significant, $F(1,189) = 5.02, p = .026, \eta_p^2 = .03$, indicating that probability of choosing either *liking but doing poorly* or *disliking but doing well* in activities depended on individuals' happiness. That is, as shown in Figure 3, happy

participants (+1 *SD* from the mean on the SWLS) preferred to choose *liking but doing poorly* activities ($M = 6.49, SE = 0.25$) more than *disliking but doing well* activities ($M = 5.63, SE = 0.21$), $F(1,189) = 6.87, p = .010, \eta_p^2 = .04$. In contrast, for unhappy participants (-1 *SD* from the mean on the SWLS), difference in selecting *liking but doing poorly* ($M = 5.58, SE = 0.21$) and *disliking but doing well* ($M = 5.76, SE = 0.24$) was not significant, $F(1,189) = 0.29, p = .592, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

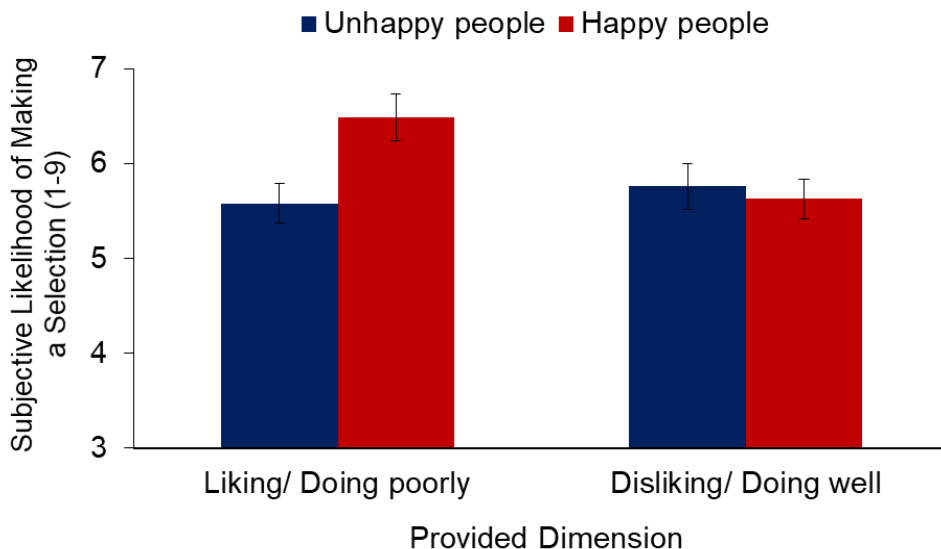


Figure 3. Likelihood of making a selection the unprovided dimension in accordance with provided dimension and happiness (Study 4).

We then conducted the analysis with SHS as a happiness variable, and an identical pattern emerged. As expected, an interaction among provided dimension, happiness, time, and wording orders was not significant, $F(1,181) = 0.11, p = .736, \eta_p^2 = .00$. We collapsed across the

wording orders since all other effects were insignificant except for an interaction between provided dimension and the wording orders, $F(1,181) = 8.16, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .04$, which is irrelevant to our purpose.

A mixed-model ANOVA with the type of scenario as a within-subjects factor and the provided dimension, happiness with SHS, and time as between-subjects factors was conducted. A main effect of happiness was significant, $F(1,189) = 4.75, p = .031, \eta_p^2 = .03$, indicating that happy participants were more likely to choose the presented book and internship compared to unhappy participants. Importantly, the analysis also yielded a marginally significant interaction effect between the provided dimension and happiness, $F(1,189) = 3.64, p = .058, \eta_p^2 = .02$. In particular, happy participants (+1 *SD* from the mean on the SHS) were more likely to choose *liking but doing poorly* activities ($M = 6.44, SE = 0.23$) relative to *disliking but doing well* activities ($M = 5.70, SE = 0.23$), $F(1,189) = 5.24, p = .023, \eta_p^2 = .03$. On the contrary, unhappy participants (-1 *SD* from the mean on the SHS) did not show such a tendency of choosing either *liking but doing poorly* ($M = 5.50, SE = 0.21$) or *disliking but doing well activities* ($M = 5.64, SE = 0.24$), $F(1,189) = 0.19, p = .666, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

Study 4 extended our findings of Study 3 by assessing the likelihood of choosing the work one loves versus the work one does well. To elaborate, Study 3 examined how happy people rate the two aspects of work in terms of their importance, whereas Study 4 went one step further and

explored how happy people would eventually *choose* between those aspects of work. As we hypothesized, happy participants were more inclined to select the activity they like, regardless of performing poorly at it, and relatively less inclined to select the activity they dislike despite being competent at it. Studies 1 through 4 have shown consistent and robust evidence that happiness leads individuals to favor the work they love over the work they perform well.

General Discussion

Overall, 77% of 2,040 working-age adults indicated that the most important decision in life, more important than the choice of “where to live,” “whether to enter into marriage,” or “when to start a family,” is the choice of “career” (The Recruitment & Employment Confederation, 2015). Psychological research assists with making such crucial life decisions by demonstrating the relationship between a job people love and/or a job at which they are competent, and happiness. However, no research to date has compared the work one loves versus the work at which one excels to identify which aspect of work is more related to psychological well-being.

Summary

Present studies predicted that when the work one loves and the work one does well are pitted against each other, happy people are more inclined to prioritize the work they love. To test our hypothesis, we conducted four studies. First, employees who rated themselves as being happy were more likely to report that they were doing the work they loved (Study 1). Second, happy people were more likely to invest their time in the activities about which they were passionate, even if this resulted in lower status (Study 2). Furthermore, happy people regarded the work they love as being more important compared to the work they do well (Study 3), and they were more likely to select the work they love, despite being aware that they would perform poorly at it (Study 4).

Implications

Theoretical implication. Our research contributes to the previous studies that have explored how happy people maintain and enhance their optimal level of well-being. Happy people interpret and respond to their environments differently from unhappy people (e.g., Choi et al., 2017; Kim, Hong, Choi, & Hicks, 2016; Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997; Seidlitz & Diener, 1993; Seidlitz, Wyer, & Diener, 1997). For example, happy people are acquainted with how to maximize their happiness by practicing appropriate decision-making strategies (e.g., hedonic editing; Sul, Kim, & Choi, 2013) and daily activities (Robinson & Martin, 2008). Thus, happy people are more apt to choose a job that grants autonomy and meaning compared to unhappy people (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). Even in the workplace, happy workers receive better job evaluations from their bosses (Staw et al., 1994), perform better (Côté, 1999), and display a lower rate of turnover (Donovan, 2000; Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003; Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000). Consequently, happy people report greater satisfaction with their work life (e.g., Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000). Based on these previous studies, we attempted to explore how experts on happiness, *happy people*, resolve the dilemma between the two aspects of work and, as a result, we were able to find that happiness is related more to the work one loves as opposed to the work at which one is skilled.

Practical implication. Another important contribution of this

research comes in recognizing an active role of an individual's subjective happiness in the context of a job choice. People believe that knowing their personality helps them find a job that best suits them. For instance, people may choose their career path after examining their personality, utilizing measures such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Others believe that they need to be brave enough to chase after their passion in order to find happiness. People also make career choices according to their surrounding environments. For example, people typically choose a job that matches the field they studied during undergraduate years or a profession that offers high salary because they are currently struggling financially. However, our data indicated that happiness is more strongly connected to the career they like best rather than to the one they do best. That is, despite individuals' personalities or ambient environments, their happiness plays a pivotal role in their choosing to pursue the work they love despite not being competent at doing the task.

Can Choosing What You Like Help You Succeed?

Our research supported the importance of liking one's work. However, people often have doubts about following their passion because they tend to believe that pursuing the work they love means embarking on a risky career path and ignoring external information, particularly regarding work efficiency, which may thwart their happiness.

However, previous studies have found a significant linear relationship between liking the task and excelling at it, indicating that the

more participants like a task, the better they perform (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Lepper & Henderlong, 2000; Renninger, 1992, 2000; Ryan & La Guardia, 1999; Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). For instance, the initial interest in work is positively related to work performance (Van Yperen, 2003). People who have a job that interests them are more engaged in work and feel comfort compared to those who do not (Prenzel, 1992). Further, individuals' passion for work they like contributes to flow, concentration, commitment, and ultimately leads to success (Carpentier et al., 2012; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Vallerand et al., 2003, Study 1). Therefore, unlike what one might think, choosing work one loves increases overall well-being by influencing work-related behaviors.

Limitations and Future Studies

Causal relationship. Studies 1 through 4 provided evidence that pursuing work that one loves is associated with overall well-being. However, the studies were all correlational; thus, it is necessary to investigate whether a causal relationship exists between happiness and preferences for work one likes versus the work one does well. Previous research has indicated that happiness is a comparatively consistent trait but, at the same time, it can change according to surroundings (Fujita & Diener, 2005; Lucas & Donnellan, 2007; Lykken & Tellegen, 1996; Schimmack & Oishi, 2005; Stones, Hadjistavropoulos, Tuuko, & Kozma, 1995). It would be worthwhile to conduct longitudinal studies to examine whether happy

people selectively choose what they love or whether the habit of pursuing what they love makes them happy.

Realistic situations. In the present studies, we segregated two different intrinsic characteristics: the feeling of liking the work versus the feeling of doing it well. For example, in the hypothetical scenarios in Study 4, we deliberately asked participants to choose either work they love but perform poorly or work at which they excel but dislike. However, some individuals may find it unrealistic or even impossible to think of those two characteristics independently. They may expect that the feelings of liking and being competent at the work are intertwined and cannot be polarized. To elucidate our understanding of how happy people make career decisions in *real life* situations, future research should replicate our studies with more practical scenarios. For example, we may ask participants to choose between work they love but perform fairly well and work for which they are qualified but feel indifferent about.

Specifying the context of work. It is necessary to replicate the present studies in the context of diverse aspects of work beyond job, class, or assignment. Activities can be categorized into occupation-related activities (vocation) and leisure activities (avocation). Vocation can be described in terms of ‘efficiency’ or ‘achievement’ (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), while avocation is viewed as ‘self-realization’ and ‘self-expression’ (Haggard & Williams, 1992). Interestingly, although the

efficiency in vocation is critical, our studies demonstrated that happier people were more likely to prioritize the vocation that they loved rather than the one they performed well.

Would happy people also value what they loved in the context of choosing leisure activities? Notably, in Study 2, we widened the range of activities and inquired about the frequency with which happy people spent their time, money, and energy on activities they loved versus activities they did well, but we did not distinguish between vocation from avocation. Hence, within the occupation-related activities, we can subdivide the respondents based on whether they enrolled in a course or decided on a career path. Therefore, in future research, replicating the present studies in the context of leisure activities or various occupation-related activities (beside the job itself, course or assignment) may help generalize our findings.

Cultural orientation and age. Cultural differences may moderate the relationship between happiness and pursuing what one loves. Individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States) value the power of individuals and perceive independence and autonomy as highly important (Triandis, 1989). Individualists are concerned about their own personal goals rather than being tied to a group (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Triandis, 1989). In contrast, collectivistic cultures (e.g., South Korea) emphasize the importance of group harmony and integrity (Triandis, 1989); caring for the group goals

and conforming to in-group norms rather than pursuing own benefits (Nisbett et al., 2001; Oyserman et al., 2002; Triandis, 1989). Therefore, when making an important life decision, such as choosing a career, individualists may be more likely to chase after what they like while neglecting the group goals. However, for collectivists, conforming to group norms and performing their roles as one of group members is rewarding (Nisbett et al., 2001; Oyserman et al., 2002; Triandis, 1989), potentially making them less motivated to follow their personal passion. Although we conducted Study 1 using U.S. participants, we need to further validate cultural effects using both cultural groups in future studies.

In addition, age may also have a moderating effect on the relationship between happiness and the two aspects of work. Older adults show higher motivations to have fun and feel enjoyment in the work environment (Kooij, De Lange, Jansen, Kanfer, & Dijkers, 2011). It would be interesting to explore the possibility that the older an individual is, the more likely he/she is to prefer work he/she loves rather than work in which he/she does well. Most of our data was obtained from young adults, therefore the association between happiness and pursuing what one loves may become more apparent when the results are replicated with older adults. In a follow-up study, we will investigate how happy people solve the dilemma of valuing what they like best versus what they do best by conducting a comparative study among different age groups (e.g., middle-aged adults, elderly).

Conclusion

At least one time in life, every person has faced or will face the dilemma of having to choose between the work they love and the work they perform well. Which choice would make people happier? As our data show, chasing what one likes best rather than what one does best leads to happiness. In life, people are occasionally inclined to disregard the significance of seeking what they love in the belief that they need to pursue work at which they excel to make a living. The work they love becomes relegated to the status of a hobby based on their belief that it is selfish or naive to chase after their passion or due to pressure that they need to be the best at work all the time. Our research advises people to put more weight on a job that stimulates “I want it so bad” feelings than on a job at which they can work effectively but does not excite them.

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Appendix A. Twenty-three Different Occupations (Study 1)

#	Occupations	Frequency	Cum. Percent
1	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	3	2.0
2	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media Occupations	12	10.2
3	Building, Grounds Cleaning, & Maintenance Occupations	1	10.9
4	Business & Financial Operations Occupations	10	17.7
5	Community & Social Services Occupations	3	19.7
6	Computer & Mathematical Occupations	15	29.9
7	Construction & Extraction Occupations	2	31.3
8	Education, Training, & Library Occupations	15	41.5
9	Farming, Fishing, & Forestry Occupations	3	43.5
10	Food Preparations & Technical Occupations	8	49.0
11	Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations	5	52.4
12	Healthcare Support Occupations	6	56.5
13	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair Occupations	1	57.1
14	Legal Occupations	7	61.9
15	Life, Physical, & Social Science Occupations	4	64.6
16	Management Occupations	2	66.0
17	Military Specific Occupations	0	66.0
18	Office & Administrative Support Occupations	15	76.2
19	Personal Care & Service Occupations	2	77.6
20	Production Occupations	2	78.9
21	Protective Service Occupations	1	79.6
22	Sales & Related Occupations	20	93.2
23	Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	10	100.0

Appendix B. Factor Loadings for Eight Statements (Study 1)

Items	L	E
1. I like the work that this job entails.	.89	.09
2. I like the overall atmosphere at this job.	.91	.01
3. I enjoy doing this kind of work.	.97	-.04
4. The work fits well with my interests and values.	.93	.00
5. I am good at the work that this job entails.	.28	.69
6. I have the skill-set required for this job.	-.15	.99
7. I have the knowledge and expertise required for this job.	.00	.79
8. I have a natural talent for the work that this job entails.	.17	.78

Note. L = degree of liking the work; E = degree of excelling at the work

Appendix C. Summary of Regression Analysis on SHS (Study 1)

Models	$R^2(\text{adj})$	ΔR^2	B	$SE B$	β
Model 1	.08	.10			
Hours worked per week			.00	.01	.01
Years worked at the current job			.04	.02	.18*
Annual salary			.24	.09	.23**
Model 2	.36	.28			
Hours worked per week			.00	.01	.03
Years worked at the current job			.02	.02	.09
Annual salary			.13	.07	.12
Liking the work			.46	.08	.53**
Excelling at the work			.04	.12	.03

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Appendix D. Scenarios (Study 3)

Participants in the negative-state liking condition were presented with the following scenarios. The negative-state doing well condition appears in square brackets.

Enrolling in a course. Imagine that you read an advertisement on your department bulletin board about a new course starting next semester. Upon reading the ad, you think you would dislike [do poorly in] the coursework. When choosing to enroll, how important would it be to know whether you would do well in [like] the coursework or not?

Being an intern. Imagine that you read an internship advertisement from a company at a work conference. Upon reading the ad, you think you would dislike [do poorly in] the work at the company as an intern. When deciding whether to apply for the internship, how important would it be for you to know whether you would do well in [like] the work or not?

Appendix E. Scenarios (Study 4)

The scenarios presented below are the *disliking but doing well* in *near future* condition where the wording of *liking* comes first. The *distant future* condition appears in square brackets.

Book review assignment. Imagine that tomorrow [a year from now] you are selecting a book for a book review assignment from one of the classes in which you are enrolled. Leafing through a book, it seems that you would not like writing the assignment due to the content of the book. However, you think you would do well at it. In this situation, how likely is it for you to select the book tomorrow [a year from now]?

Internship. Imagine that tomorrow [a year from now] you read an advertisement for a company at a job fair. From reading the ad, it seems that you would not like working in this industry sector of the company. However, you think you would do the work well. In this situation, how likely is it that you would choose to do the internship tomorrow [a year from now]?

The scenarios presented below are the *liking but doing poorly* in *near future* condition where the wording of *doing well* comes first. The *distant future* condition appears in square brackets.

Book review assignment. Imagine that tomorrow [a year from now] you are selecting a book for a book review assignment from one of the classes in which you are enrolled. Leafing through a book, it seems that you would do poorly at writing the assignment due to the content of the book. However, you think you would like writing with it. In this situation, how likely is it for you to select the book tomorrow [a year from now]?

Internship. Imagine that tomorrow [a year from now] you read an advertisement for a company at a job fair. From reading the ad, it seems that you would do the work poorly in this industry sector of the company. However, you think you would like working at it. In this situation, how likely is it that you would choose to do the internship tomorrow [a year from now]?

The scenarios presented below are the *disliking but doing well* in *near future* condition where the wording of *doing well* comes first. The *distant future* condition appears in square brackets.

Book review assignment. Imagine that tomorrow [a year from now] you are selecting a book for a book review assignment from one of the classes in which you are enrolled. Leafing through a book, it seems that you would do well at writing the assignment due to content of the book. However, you think you would not like writing with it. In this situation, how likely is it for you to select the book tomorrow [a year from now]?

Internship. Imagine that tomorrow [a year from now] you read an advertisement for a company at a job fair. From reading the ad, it seems that you would do the work well in this industry sector of the company. However, you think you would not like working at it. In this situation, how likely is it that you would choose to do the internship tomorrow [a year from now]?

좋아하는 일과 잘하는 일: 행복한 사람의 선택

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정민화

많은 사람들은 자신이 좋아하는 일과 잘하는 일 중 하나를 선택해야 하는 딜레마를 경험한다. 행복을 극대화하기 위해 우리는 둘 중 과연 어떤 일을 선택해야 할까? 본 연구에서는 좋아하는 일과 잘하는 일이 상충하는 상황에서 개인의 행복도가 진로 결정에 중요한 역할을 하는지에 대해 주목했다. 연구 1과 2에서는 행복도가 높은 사람일수록 현재 좋아하는 일을 하고 있으며, 잘하는 일보다는 좋아하는 일에 더 많은 노력을 기울이는 것으로 나타났다. 연구 3과 4에서는 행복한 사람일수록 잘하는 일보다 좋아하는 일을 더욱 선호하며, 비록 자신이 못하는 일이라도 좋아하는 일이라면 선택할 경향이 높은 것으로 나타났다. 본 연구의 결과들은 개인의 행복도가 높을수록 잘하는 일보다 좋아하는 일을 더 중요하게 생각한다는 일관된 결과를 보여주었다. 종합논의에서는 이러한 딜레마가 심리적 안녕감과 진로 선택에 미치는 의미와 추후 연구 방향에 관해 논의하였다.

주요어 : 행복, 판단과 의사결정, 일

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