

From Office to Home: Drivers of Gender Job Satisfaction During COVID-19

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Research on job satisfaction and gender has yielded mixed results, underscoring the need to understand how men and women may experience job satisfaction differently. This study builds on extant literature by examining how extrinsic rewards, intrinsic rewards, work relations, work-life balance, and work design contribute to job satisfaction among men and women. Moreover, the study examines these relationships in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using measurement items from the International Social Survey Programme Work Orientation Module, the study examined data from 766 employees in the United States who were employed throughout the pandemic. Findings revealed that women and men reported similar levels of job satisfaction, although the drivers of job satisfaction differed across genders. The findings and implications of the study can assist managers in maximizing job satisfaction among employees.

Keywords: job satisfaction, gender, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

Locke (1976) defines job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (p. 1300). Although nurturing job satisfaction has long been important, it is perhaps more critical now than ever. Among the many changes the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted, the shifting nature of workplace experiences are conceivably some of the most salient for both individuals and organizations alike. As individuals grappled with new approaches to job design and role expectations, organizations grappled with a mass exodus of workers, including 2.3 million women who left the workforce at the onset of the pandemic in the United States in March 2020 (Mallick, 2021). While recent data suggests many have since re-entered the workforce, other challenges persist (Burton & McGlauffin, 2022).

Industry reports reveal that many individuals remain in their jobs yet pursue a path of “quiet quitting,” wherein they do the bare minimum rather than going above and beyond (Harter, 2022). Some may downplay quiet quitting as a buzzword popularized by Tik Tok, but for organizations, its effects can cost millions (Flood, 2022). Quiet quitting is believed to be driven, in part, by a lack of job satisfaction (O’Sullivan, 2022).

Given the drop in workforce participation for women during the pandemic and the crucial role that job satisfaction plays in predicting desirable individual and organizational outcomes (e.g., see Andrade et al., 2019), it is essential to understand how men and women experience job satisfaction. Previous studies have explored this line of inquiry. Yet, findings have been inconsistent, and the changes brought about by the pandemic may limit the generalizability of those findings in the post-pandemic world. Consequently, the current study aims to examine how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, as well as work-life balance, workplace relations, and work design contributed to men and women’s job satisfaction during the pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One strand of research on job satisfaction and gender has focused on the paradox of the contented female-worker, demonstrating that despite lower salaries, discrimination, limited promotion opportunities, and negative work environments, women often report greater job satisfaction than men (Bender et al., 2005; Clark, 1997; Donohue & Heywood, 2004; Hull, 1999; Kristensen & Johansson, 2008; Loscocco & Bose, 1998; McDuff, 2001; Metle, 2001; Mulinge & Mueller, 1998; Sloane & Williams, 2000; Zou, 2015). This may be due to women being socialized to expect less in terms of careers, resulting in lower ambitions (Clark, 1997; Gregory, 1990; Gutek, 1993; Konrad et al., 2000), or women may engage in family-friendly work while men prioritize extrinsic job aspects such as salary (Bender et al., 2005; Gregory, 1990; Gutek, 1993; Hakim, 2000; Konrad et al., 2000). These views align with traditional gender roles and social norms that identify men as primary wage earners and women as homemakers or secondary wage earners. Women may also self-select into jobs with characteristics they value (Sloane & Williams, 2000).

Other research has found no gender job satisfaction differences (e.g., Andrade et al., 2019; Ehrenberg, 2003; Fields & Blum, 1997; Hodson, 1989; Perugini & Vladisavljević, 2019; Sloane & Ward, 2000; Westover, 2009). Similarly, studies establishing that men are driven by extrinsic factors and women by intrinsic motivators has proved inconsistent (e.g., see Andrade et al., 2019; Baeza et al., 2018; Grönlund & Öun, 2018). Gaps in gender job satisfaction are smaller in European nations characterized by gender equality, where women work in traditionally male occupations and have similar work-related expectations as men (Perugini & Vladisavljević, 2019). Greater labor market access for women in countries such as Denmark and Finland is hypothesized to explain the lack of a gender gap (Kaiser, 2005), although studies have found evidence of higher job satisfaction for women in these countries, attributed to equal work opportunity and affordable childcare (Hauret & Williams, 2017). In Sweden, women with bachelor’s and master’s degrees working as civil engineers, police officers, lawyers, social workers, and psychologists, and who were equally committed to career and family had higher levels of job satisfaction than men (Grönlund & Öun, 2016, 2018). The findings from the latter two studies suggest that equitable and fulfilling work are drivers of job satisfaction for women.

Global Studies

A series of global studies on gender and job satisfaction examined a theoretical model of extrinsic rewards, intrinsic rewards, work relations, and work-life balance. The studies drew on data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) (2015), representing workers from 37 countries.

One study found few gender differences across occupations regarding extrinsic work characteristics with slight differences in intrinsic work characteristics; work relations and work-life balance factors were more significant to job satisfaction for men than women (Andrade et al., 2019). Work relations and work-life balance, often associated with job satisfaction for women, were, in fact, more predictive of job satisfaction for men (e.g., contact with others, being harassed at work, working weekends, and flexible scheduling). This finding illustrates that work-life balance factors (e.g., weekends, flexible scheduling) are

not aligned by gender stereotypes. The intrinsic variable of helping others was more predictive of job satisfaction for women than men. These findings do not support the paradox of the contented female worker, nor do they support research suggesting that intrinsic factors are more relevant to job satisfaction for women than for men (e.g., see Clark, 1997; Konrad et al., 2000; Zou, 2015).

A second study using ISSP data found that mean job satisfaction scores for females were lower than those for men across hospitality occupations except for hotel receptionists, housekeeping supervisors, and hotel cleaners (Andrade, Miller, & Westover, 2021). Results also showed the positive impact of co-worker relations and the negative impact of discrimination and harassment, working weekends, marital status, and supervisory status for women. Whereas autonomy, work stress, education, and employment relationships were more predictive of job satisfaction for men. Interesting work, useful work to society, job security, pay, relations with management, and work interfering with family were significant for both genders. Work-life balance factors such as working weekends were more salient to women yet work interfering with family was important across genders. This study demonstrates that intrinsic and extrinsic factors do not neatly align with traditional gender stereotypes.

A third study found considerable variation across countries regarding gender job satisfaction (Andrade, Schill, Westover, & King, 2021). Overall, findings supported the paradox of the contented female worker. Although intrinsic factors were salient for men and women, these factors offered stronger predictability for women. Specifically, work-life balance factors such as schedule flexibility as well as intrinsic rewards in the form of helping others were strong predictors of women's job satisfaction. In contrast, extrinsic factors such as pay, promotional opportunities, and physical effort were more predictive of job satisfaction for men.

Work Design and the Impact of COVID

Work design factors such as working from home, how work hours are decided, work schedule, and the daily organization of work may also impact job satisfaction differently for men and women. These items are particularly relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic when flexible forms of work were adopted out of necessity and had varying impacts on workers. During the pandemic, workloads and resulting burnout and stress increased for women as they worked from home, cared for their families, and took on responsibility for educating their children (Chung, 2020; Power, 2020). A global survey found that 70% of women reported negative changes in their daily routines during the pandemic, which they viewed as slowing their career progression (Deloitte, 2020). Work-life balance and work design factors such as lack of flexible working arrangements, lack of flexible working arrangements, and expected work hours were identified as potential barriers to career advancement. Additionally, women's representation in the workforce during the pandemic dropped to a greater extent than men's partly due to their holding jobs more vulnerable to layoffs (Thompson, 2022).

During the pandemic, men reported more benefits from telework than women, indicating that it increased their productivity; they also reported more pay raises, promotions, increased responsibilities, and leadership opportunities while working at home than women (Boston College for Work and Family, 2021; Rogers, 2020). In fact, women who work from home risk damaging their careers due to missing out on networking and informal relationship-building opportunities (Partridge, 2021). One poll revealed that a third of managers anticipated that promotion opportunities would be less accessible to remote workers than to those physically present in the office. Although some advocate for managers to "develop flexible work options, including teleworking, reduced working hours, part-time schedules, flexible working hours, compressed work weeks, and role sharing (Thompson, 2022, p. 167), such arrangements could prove disadvantageous for women unless workplace cultures change.

RESEARCH MODEL AND DESIGN

Based on the literature review, findings are mixed regarding which job satisfaction variables are more salient to women and which to men, leading to the conclusion that "the [gender-job satisfaction] paradox could appear more paradoxical than ever" (Grönlund & Öun, 2018, p. 543). Additional research is needed

to identify “the extent to which the gender-job satisfaction paradox exists, where, and why, given the gains made in labor market equality for women and evidence in some contexts that women continue to exhibit greater job satisfaction than men despite equal educational levels, the same jobs as men, and gender equal societal conditions” (Andrade, Schill, Westover, & King, 2021, p. 7).

Additionally, the impact of COVID-19 on job satisfaction and how men and women experienced changes in the workplace and the resulting, and unequal, impacts on their careers must be considered. Country-specific studies are also critical to understanding these variations. In the study, based in the United States, we develop a research model, grounded in an established job satisfaction framework, and illustrated in Figure 1 (Handel, 2005), to examine the core drivers of job satisfaction for men and women. Leveraging insights from the preceding literature review, we propose the following hypothesize in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:

Hypothesis 1: Male and female workers will report similar levels of job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2a: Both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards will predict job satisfaction for male and female workers.

Hypothesis 2b: Extrinsic rewards will influence job satisfaction more strongly than intrinsic rewards among male workers.

Hypothesis 2c: Intrinsic rewards will influence job satisfaction more strongly than extrinsic rewards among female workers.

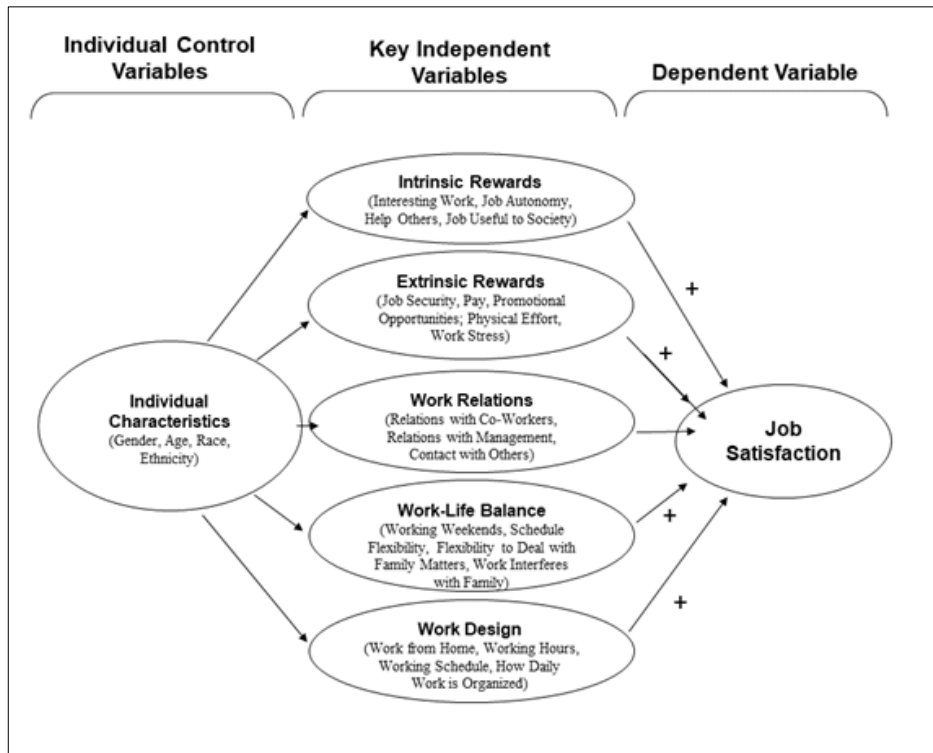
Hypothesis 3: Work relations will be more salient in predicting job satisfaction than motivational rewards for both female and male workers.

Hypothesis 4: Work-life balance determinants will be more salient in predicting job satisfaction for female workers than male workers.

Hypothesis 5: Work design determinants will be more salient in predicting job satisfaction for female workers than male workers.

Modeled, in part, after the International Social Survey Work Orientations Module, we developed a web-based survey to explore the shifting nature of the workplace during and coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey included a range of questions related to intrinsic, extrinsic, workplace relations, work-life balance, and work design variables. The survey was administered during the summer of 2022 using a stratified random sampling method across the United States, resulting in 766 completed surveys.

**FIGURE 1
RESEARCH MODEL**



Operationalization of Variables

We operationalized the study variables using items from the ISSP Survey Work Orientations Module (2015). In Table 1, we report the measures for all variables.

**TABLE 1
STUDY VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENTS**

Variable	Item
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	
Job satisfaction	“How satisfied are you in your main job?” (0) extremely dissatisfied to (10) extremely satisfied
<i>Intrinsic Rewards</i>	
Interesting Job	“My job is interesting.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job autonomy	“I can work independently.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Help others	“In my job I can help other people.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job useful to society	“My job is useful to society.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Extrinsic Rewards</i>	
Pay	“My income is high.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job security	“My job is secure.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Promotional opportunities	“My opportunities for advancement are high.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree

Physical work	“How often do you have to do hard physical work?” (1) never to (5) always
Work stress	“How often do you find your work stressful?” (1) never to (5) always
<i>Work Relations</i>	
Relations with management	“In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between management and employees?” (1) very bad to (5) very good
Relations with coworkers	“In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between workmates/colleagues?” (1) very bad to (5) very good
Contact with others	“In my job, I have personal contact with others.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>	
Weekend work	“How often does your job involve working weekends? (1) never to (5) always
Flexibility to deal with family matters	“How difficult would it be for you to take an hour or two off during work hours, to take care of personal or family matters? (1) not difficult at all to (5) very difficult
Work interference with family	“How often do you feel that the demands of your job interfere with your family?” (1) never to (3) always
Family interference with work	“How often do you feel that the demands of your family interfere with your job?” (1) never to (3) always
<i>Work Design</i>	
Work from home	“How often do you work at home during your normal work hours? (1) never to (5) always
Work hours decided	“Which of the following statements BEST describe how your working hours are decided?” Statements ranged from (1) no worker discretion to (3) full worker discretion in setting work hours.
Work schedule	“Which of the following statements best describes your usual working schedule in your main job?” Statements ranged from (1) regular schedule (no variability) to (3) irregular schedule (high variability)
How daily work is organized	“Which of the following statements best describes how your daily work is organized?” Statements ranged from (1) no worker discretion to (3) full worker discretion in organizing work.
<i>Controls</i>	Age, race, and ethnicity

Statistical Methodology

Using a multi-step approach, we analyzed respondents’ work experience and characteristics and job satisfaction data. First, we performed bivariate and descriptive analyses on work characteristics and attitudes, by gender and for the entire sample. Then, we tested for statistical difference of job satisfaction between genders (hypothesis 1) using t-test analyses, examined gender-specific OLS and probit regression models to examine the relative contribution of work characteristics and experiences on job satisfaction for each gender (hypotheses 2-3), and tested statistical difference between genders of the impact of work-life and work-design determinants on job satisfaction (hypotheses 4-5) using moderation analyses.

RESULTS

Participant Demographics

More than 750 respondents ($n=766$) participated in the modal stratified random sample in Utah and other areas of the U.S. The respondents were full- or part-time workers who worked prior to the COVID pandemic and were employed at the time of the study. Males comprised 49.1% ($n=376$) of the sample and females 50.3% ($n=385$). Most respondents were employed full-time, with 79% of women and 89.6% of men being full-time employees. However, there were significantly ($p<.001$) more women (21%) employed part-time compared to men (10.4%).

Respondents provided details on their racial background; as seen in Tables 2 and 3 below, 51.4% of the sample was White or Caucasian, 21% of the sample was Black or African American, 17.5% of the sample was Asian, 1% was Native American or Alaska Native, 1.7% was Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 5.6% identified as “other.” Less than 1% of the sample preferred not to report their race. They also reported their ethnicity, and 77% of respondents were not Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin, and 23% of respondents were. Female respondents had greater ethnic diversity, while male respondents had greater racial diversity.

TABLE 2
ETHNICITY PERCENTAGE BY CATEGORY AND GENDER

VARIABLE	Total Sample	Female	Male
Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	76.89	71.17	82.98
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	23.11	28.83	17.02
Total Percentage	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 3
RACE PERCENTAGE BY CATEGORY AND GENDER

VARIABLE	Total Sample	Female	Male
White or Caucasian	51.44	61.56	40.69
Black or African American	21.80	20.26	23.67
Asian	17.49	8.05	27.39
Native American or Alaska Native	1.04	1.56	0.53
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.70	1.56	1.86
Other	5.61	6.49	4.79
Prefer Not to Say	0.91	0.52	1.06
Total Percentage	100%	100%	100%

Finally, respondents identified their age category, as seen in Table 4 below; approximately 18.6% of respondents were younger Millennial or GenZ workers, about 56% were younger GenX or older Millennial workers, about 16% were older GenX workers, and approximately 9.5% of were Baby Boomer or Silent Generation workers. Female workers generally tending younger than their male counterparts.

TABLE 4
AGE PERCENTAGE BY CATEGORY & GENDER

Age Group	Total Sample	Female	Male
16-20	2.09	2.60	1.60
21-30	23.11	28.83	17.02
31-40	30.81	27.27	34.57
41-50	21.41	21.30	21.28
51-60	15.14	14.29	16.22
61-70	6.01	4.16	7.98
71-80	1.04	1.30	0.80
>80	0.39	0.26	0.53
Total Percentage	100%	100%	100%

Descriptive Results

Table 5 below shows the means of job satisfaction and other main study variables, by gender, as well as significant differences where present. As shown, there is no statistical difference in reported job satisfaction between men and women, thus supporting hypothesis 1. However, there are significant differences in several other variables. Namely, female workers report significantly higher levels of interesting work and opportunity to help others in their work. They also reported significantly lower pay and less physical effort in their work compared to their male counterparts. These results are consistent with prior research examining gender differences in job satisfaction and job characteristics (Bokemeier & William, 1987; Hodson, 1989; Blau & Kahn, 1992; Lynch, 1992; Mobley et al., 1994; Roxburgh, 1999; Clark, 1997; Konrad et al., 2000; Donohue & Heywood, 2004; Westover, 2008; Westover, 2012).

TABLE 5
VARIABLE MEANS AND TEST OF DIFFERENCES

Variable	Total Mean (SD)	Female Mean (SD)	Male Mean (SD)	T Statistic & p-value for differences	sig.
Job Satisfaction	7.23 (2.03)	7.25 (2.10)	7.22 (1.94)	<i>n.s</i>	
<i>Intrinsic Rewards</i>					
Interesting work	3.76 (1.02)	3.84 (.97)	3.68 (1.50)	$t(759) = -2.30; p = .02$	
Job autonomy	3.94 (1.04)	3.99 (1.09)	3.89 (.98)	<i>n.s</i>	
Help others	4.08 (.88)	4.20 (.82)	3.94 (.92)	$t(759) = -4.10; p < .001$	
Job useful to society	4.03 (.93)	4.10 (.93)	3.97 (.92)	$t(759) = -2.02; p = .04$	
<i>Extrinsic Rewards</i>					
Pay	2.99 (1.11)	2.83 (1.14)	3.15 (1.07)	$t(759) = 3.90; p < .001$	
Job security	3.92 (.91)	3.96 (.89)	3.89 (.93)	<i>n.s</i>	
Promotional opportunities	3.24 (1.12)	3.26 (1.11)	3.23 (1.13)	<i>n.s</i>	
Physical effort	2.72 (1.32)	2.56 (1.31)	2.90 (1.32)	$t(759) = 3.52; p < .001$	
Work stress	3.27 (1.02)	3.32 (1.06)	3.20 (.98)	<i>n.s</i>	
Relations with managers	3.75 (.92)	3.78 (.94)	3.73 (.89)	<i>n.s</i>	
Relations with coworkers	4.01 (.80)	4.01 (.83)	4.02 (.77)	<i>n.s</i>	

Variable	Total Mean (SD)	Female Mean (SD)	Male Mean (SD)	T Statistic & p-value for differences	sig.
Personal contact with others	4.05 (.97)	4.10 (.99)	4.00 (.93)	<i>n.s</i>	
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>					
Weekend work	3.01 (1.37)	2.97 (1.46)	3.04 (1.26)	<i>n.s</i>	
Flexibility to deal with family matters	2.19 (.99)	2.22 (1.02)	2.16 (.96)	<i>n.s</i>	
Work interference with family	1.75 (.63)	1.71 (.65)	1.78 (.60)	<i>n.s</i>	
Family interference with work	1.61 (.61)	1.59 (.62)	1.62 (.60)	<i>n.s</i>	
<i>Work Design</i>					
Work from home	2.57 (1.50)	2.59 (1.55)	2.54 (1.47)	<i>n.s</i>	
Working hours decided	1.59 (.66)	1.56 (.66)	1.63 (.65)	<i>n.s</i>	
Working schedule	1.32 (.56)	1.29 (.53)	1.35 (.59)	<i>n.s</i>	
How daily work is organized	1.91 (.70)	1.94 (.72)	1.87 (.68)	<i>n.s</i>	

Regression Results

Following the approach of Andrade and Westover (2018a, 2018b), Andrade, Westover, & Kupka, (2019), and Andrade, Westover, & Peterson, (2019), we examined the association between job satisfaction and the independent variables across multiple regression analyses. The first model served as the base model wherein job satisfaction was regressed on the control variables. Subsequently, we examined the influence of intrinsic rewards (model 2), extrinsic rewards (model 3), work relations (model 4), work-life balance (model 5), and work design (model 6) variables on job satisfaction, by gender. In the combined model (model 7), we examined the joint influence of all control and independent variables (intrinsic, extrinsic, work relations, work-life balance, and work design) on job satisfaction for each gender and for the total sample. The results of the analyses are reported in Table 6.

TABLE 6
OLS JOB SATISFACTION REGRESSION RESULTS BY GENDER

Variable	Model 1: base model controls		Model 2: intrinsic rewards		Module 3: extrinsic rewards		Module 4: work relations		Module 5: work-life balance		Module 6: work design		Module 7: combined model		Total Sample
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Age	.11	.20***											.10**	.15***	.12***
Race	.11	.01											.06	.01	.04
Ethnicity	<-.01	.01											<-.01	.08*	.03
Interesting job			.40***	.47***									.22***	.24***	.24***
Job autonomy			.16***	.07									.08*	-.02	.03
Help others			.08	.05									<-.01	.02	<.01
Job useful to society			.02	.06									.03	.03	.02
Pay					.13	.14*							.07	.08	.07*
Job security					.21***	.23***							.03	.08*	.05
Promotional opportunities					.25***	.23***							.11*	.08	.09**
Physical effort					.04	.06							.08*	.09	.08**
Work stress					-.20***	-.28							-.08*	-.18***	-.12***
Relations with management					.46***	.41***							.25***	.23***	.25***
Relations with coworkers					.07	.20***							.05	.10*	.07*
Contact with others					.17***	.09*							.07	.02	.06*
Weekend work									.07	.90			-.05	.08*	.01
Flexibility to deal with family matters									-.17	-.19***			.02	-.06	-.02
Work interference with family									-.31***	-.22***			-.18***	-.15***	-.12***
Family interference with work									.10	-.01			.07	<-.01	.04
Work from home													-.07	.04	.08
Work hours decided													.06	.09	-.04
Work schedule													-.05	-.09	<-.01
How daily work is organized													-.15**	-.12*	-.03
Adjusted R-squared	.02	.03	.29	.32	.26	.37	.35	.35	.12	.12	.12	.06	.47	.52	.50
Change in R-squared (from base model)			.28	.29	.25	.34	.33	.32	.12	.10	.10	.04	.48	.51	.48
F	2.95	5.04**	22.91***	25.95***	17.97***	28.42***	34.75***	34.87***	8.74***	8.53***	8.53***	3.32*	15.61***	18.46***	33.56***

Note: Beta values; Significance levels: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; Base model adjusted R-squared for total sample was .03

Nearly all variables were statistically significant ($p < .001$) when the individual control model and models 2-6 were run. Additionally, there were variations in *adjusted r-squared* values for the individual controls model and models 2-6 (with the separate intrinsic and extrinsic rewards models holding the strongest predictability), with the combined model (including all intrinsic, extrinsic, work relations, work-life balance, work design, and control variables) accounting for nearly 50% of the variation in job satisfaction (adjusted r-squared = 0.495).

As can be seen in Table 6, there is variation in standardized beta coefficient statistical significance for each of the intrinsic, extrinsic, work relations, work-life balance, and work design job characteristics and control variables in predicting job satisfaction when comparing male and female workers. Additionally, the statistical model for male workers had an adjusted r-squared value of 0.52, versus an adjusted r-squared value of 0.47 in the model for female workers, meaning this job satisfaction model explains nearly 52% of the variation of job satisfaction among male workers compared to explaining nearly 47% of the variation in job satisfaction for female workers.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are significant predictors job satisfaction for male and female workers, which was supported, as demonstrated across models 2 and 3. Of the intrinsic rewards included in this study, an interesting job was a significant predictor of job satisfaction for both women and men. Additionally, job autonomy was a significant predictor of job satisfaction for women but not men. Of the extrinsic reward variables tested, job security, promotional opportunities, and work stress were significant predictors of job satisfaction for women. Whereas pay, job security, and promotional opportunities were significant predictors for men. Consistent with hypotheses 2b, intrinsic rewards, compared to extrinsic rewards, were more salient predictors of job satisfaction for women. While extrinsic rewards were more salient predictors of job satisfaction among men, thus supporting hypothesis 2c.

Hypothesis 3 proposed work relations variables will be more salient in predicting job satisfaction than motivational rewards for both female and male workers. As shown from model 4, all three work relations variables were predictive of job satisfaction for men, while only relations with management and contact with others were significant predictors of job satisfaction for women. Relative to intrinsic rewards (model 2) and extrinsic rewards (model 3), work relations (model 4) offered greater explanatory power for women's job satisfaction as indicated by the improved r-square value from the base model. For men, however, work relations were more salient in predicting job satisfaction than intrinsic rewards but not extrinsic rewards. Further, when considering the joint effect of all intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, and work relation variables on job satisfaction in model 7, relations with management was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction for women and the second strongest predictor for men. For men, the intrinsic reward of having an interesting job was slightly more predictive of job satisfaction than relations with management. It is also worth noting that relations with coworkers was a significant predictor of job satisfaction in both the independent model and the combined model, whereas it was not significant for women in either model. In summary, hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 4 proposed work-life balance determinants as more salient predictors of job satisfaction among women than men. Work interference with family was a significant negative predictor of job satisfaction for both women ($B = -.31, p < .001$) and men ($B = -.22, p < .001$). Although the effect was stronger for women than men, moderation analyses revealed that this difference was not statistically significant. Additionally, two other work-life balance variables, namely weekend work and flexibility to deal with family matters, were significant negative predictors of job satisfaction for men but not for women. Thus, hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Similarly, hypothesis 5 proposed work-design determinants as more salient predictors of job satisfaction among women than men. As shown in the model 6 results, only one work design variable (i.e., how daily work is designed) was a significant predictor of job satisfaction for women ($B = -.15, p < .01$) and men ($B = -.12, p < .05$). Again, the effect was stronger for women than men, however moderation analysis revealed the difference was not statistically significant. Thus, hypothesis 5 was not supported. Interestingly, however, although work from home was not a significant individual predictor of job satisfaction in models 4 and 7, the interactive effect of work from home and gender was marginally significant when moderation

analysis was conducted ($B = -.16, p = .08$). Specifically, in the total sample, work from home was marginally predictive of job satisfaction ($B = .27, p = .07$), but that effect was weaker for women than men.

In the combined model (model 7), the joint influence of all study variables was examined. As shown in Table 6, there are some unique drivers of job satisfaction across genders. Job autonomy, promotional opportunities, and physical effort are all statistically significant drivers of female job satisfaction (but not for male job satisfaction). While, job security, relations with coworkers, working weekends, working from home, and ethnicity were all statistically significant for male workers (but not female workers). Nonetheless, there is substantial overlap between the strongest job satisfaction predictors for women and those of men. For women, the three strongest predictors are relations with management ($B = .25, p < .001$), interesting job ($B = .22, p < .001$), and work interference with family ($B = -.18, p < .001$). For men, the three strongest predictors are interesting job ($B = .24, p < .001$), relations with management ($B = .23, p < .001$), and work stress ($B = -.18, p < .001$), followed by work interference with family ($B = -.15, p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

This study builds on the evolving conversation on the gender-job satisfaction paradox. It also extends that line of inquiry by examining how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, as well as work-life balance, workplace relations, and work design contributed to men and women's job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, this study advances academic literature and offers valuable insights for managers.

Previous research on job satisfaction and gender has yielded mixed results. Many empirical studies have found that women tend to enjoy significantly higher levels of job satisfaction compared to their male counterparts (Roxburgh, 1999; Clark, 1997; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2000; Bender et al., 2005), while other studies have found no such differences, particularly after controlling for relevant workplace and organizational factors (Bokemeier & William, 1987; Mobley et al., 1994; Fields & Blum, 1997; Westover, 2009, 2010). In this study, men and women reported similar levels of job satisfaction, which is consistent with reports by Andrade et al. (2019), Ehrenberg (2003), and Perugini and Vladislavljević (2019), among others. Although overall job satisfaction levels were similar across genders, our findings revealed similarities and differences between the job satisfaction drivers for women and men.

Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards have long been recognized as key antecedents of job satisfaction, and in this study, both impacted job satisfaction among women and men. Although, to some extent, they did so in unique ways. While an interesting job was one of the strongest drivers of job satisfaction for both genders, women's job satisfaction was also significantly influenced by the extent to which they perceived job autonomy. This result differs from previous research, wherein autonomy has been a stronger predictor of job satisfaction for men than women (Andrade, Schill, Westover, & King, 2021). It is plausible to assume that job autonomy impacted women differently in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as they unexpectedly assumed additional responsibilities, thus contributing to their job satisfaction differently than in times past. Moreover, whereas previous findings (e.g., see Andrade, Schill, Westover, & King, 2021), have demonstrated that the intrinsic reward of helping others is a strong predictor of job satisfaction for women, this study did not. In fact, the intrinsic rewards of helping others and having a job useful to society were not significant predictors in the male nor female model, despite women reporting significantly higher levels of both.

Similarly, regarding extrinsic rewards, although men reported significantly higher income than women, pay was not a significant contributor to their job satisfaction. Instead, job security impacted men's job satisfaction, and stressful work, which was a key driver of job satisfaction for both genders. Again, these findings can be viewed through the lens of the pandemic, during which millions of people lost their jobs. By July 2022, the U.S. economy had regained the 25 million jobs it lost in the early days of the pandemic, nonetheless 64% of states still faced employment lags when this study was conducted (Henderson, 2022). With stories of job loss abounding, it is unsurprising that job security surfaced as a key predictor of job satisfaction during the pandemic. Likewise, stressful work, which has been more predictive of job satisfaction among men than women (Andrade, Schill, Westover, & King, 2021), was significantly negatively related to job satisfaction for both genders in our study. This is an important consideration for

all moving forward, especially given the toll the pandemic took on individuals' physical and mental health. Moreover, some research has shown that women are more vulnerable to stress (Sareen et al., 2013), and stress during COVID-19 was higher among women (e.g., see Salari et al., 2020). Thus, it is essential to be mindful of curbing additional strains from work-related stress.

We posited that workplace relationships would be critical drivers of job satisfaction, which was generally true for both men and women. Even after accounting for the influence of all study variables, the relations with management variable were one of the strongest predictors across genders. Whereas previous research (e.g., Andrade, Schill, Westover, & King, 2021) has shown that relations with coworkers are equally important for men and women, in this study, the impact of coworker relations on job satisfaction was only significant for men. It is possible that, for women, such relations were less important in the context of the pandemic when supervisor behaviors and support likely had a larger impact on their ability to grapple with pandemic-related job and family changes.

Given reports that women often assumed the brunt of additional responsibilities during the pandemic, such as educating their children (Chung, 2020; Power, 2020), and 70% reported negative changes in their daily routines during the pandemic (Deloitte, 2020), we proposed that work-life balance determinants would be more salient in predicting job satisfaction among women than men. Our findings revealed that work interference with family was negatively related to job satisfaction for both genders. Men's job satisfaction was also hampered by weekend work and flexibility to deal with family matters, whereas women's satisfaction was not. Consequently, our findings highlight a more complicated story of work-life balance that is consistent with the work of Padavic and colleagues (2020), who assert the work-family narrative for explaining gender inequality is incomplete. Men experience work-family conflicts too. The work-family narrative fails to relieve men from the disconnection they may have from family due to their work and, likewise, does little to relieve women from the perceived choice between family and career (Padavic et al., 2020). As organizations move forward in the post-pandemic world, it is perhaps more critical now than ever to address the "always on," "24/7" work culture that likely drives work-family conflict and impedes job satisfaction for both women and men.

Finally, similar to work-life balance, we expected that work-design determinants would be more salient in predicting job satisfaction among women than men. When examining work-design variables, how daily work is organized was a significant predictor of job satisfaction for both genders. Namely, when employees had no discretion in organizing their work, it negatively impacted their job satisfaction. However, when all variables were considered, the work-design variables were insignificant. This result could be an artifact of the measurement (i.e., a 3-point scale with limited variability); thus, future studies could employ more expansive work-design scales. Further, we found the interaction effect of work from home and gender was marginally significant, where a higher frequency of working from home increased job satisfaction for men but not women. While this result needs to be explored more rigorously in future studies, it is consistent with previous literature indicating that men may reap more benefits from remote work than women (Boston College for Work and Family, 2021; Rogers, 2020).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As organizations navigate the wake of the pandemic, this study offers important practical implications. In the post-pandemic climate described at the outset of this paper, one in which "quiet quitting" has detrimental consequences for organizations (Harter, 2022), leaders can apply a customized approach to fostering job satisfaction. Rewards have direct implications on job satisfaction. Understanding which rewards are valued most by each gender will enable managers to improve situational and contextual factors at work to enable men and women to experience enhanced satisfaction. Underscoring opportunities for advancement and autonomy are particularly important for women. While, reinforcing communications that instill a sense of job security are particularly important for men.

Similarly, attending to rewards that are common drivers of job satisfaction across women and men will behoove organizations, and to this end, we encourage organizations to be particularly mindful of helping employees manage work-related hindrance stressors and maximizing opportunities for interesting work.

Organizations might consider facilitating a stress audit to better understand the source of employees' stress and, in turn, ways to reduce it. In tandem, leaders should employ supportive practices to help employees juggle the demands of their roles. To increase opportunities for interesting work, organizations might consider implementing interventions to craft jobs toward strengths and interests, such as the intervention employed by Kooij et al. (2017), which can increase person-job fit.

Our results also suggest that relations with management and work-life balance efforts are critical for both men and women. As such, leaders should invest in establishing and maintaining positive relationships in the workplace. Among other ways, relationships can be strengthened when leaders treat their colleagues with respect, build trust, affirm their contributions, facilitate success through coaching and feedback, and create opportunities for fun (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). These could be part of a broader organizational effort to strengthen culture, including aspects of culture that may perpetuate the negative effects of work-life conflict. As previously discussed, both genders grapple with work-life balance challenges, and responsible organizations will take steps to foster greater work-life balance for all their members.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with all research, this study is subject to limitations. One limitation is the use of single-item survey measures; however, the items were drawn from the ISSP and have been used extensively in previous research. The findings are also limited to the self-reports of males and females only and do not include the perspectives of those who may identify as non-binary, for example. Future studies might address this point and consider intersectionality rather than gender alone.

We also suggest additional research that focuses on company policies and culture, which may be at odds with job satisfaction preferences, perhaps to the detriment of one gender than another (e.g., see Boston College for Work and Family, 2021; Rogers, 2020; Thompson, 2022). Additionally, research that enumerates the benefits of adjusting practices and policies that support both genders in the workplace can ultimately support the growth and success of the entire organization. Finally, as previously noted, we suggest future studies capture a more expansive view of work-design determinants and their impact on job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to help understand how men and women may experience job satisfaction differently and examine how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, as well as work-life balance, workplace relations, and work design contributed to men and women's job satisfaction during the pandemic. Although women and men reported similar levels of job satisfaction, our findings revealed distinct drivers of job satisfaction across genders, and some similarities. By leveraging the insights from this research, leaders can help create a more satisfying work experience for employees.

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