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The Relation between Job Features and Employees' Affective Wellbeing.

The Moderating Role of Gender

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Employee wellbeing is widely studied in the academic literatures yet there are limited studies that focus on how employees' gender moderate the effect of job demands and resources on employees' affective wellbeing. The ESS 5th round dataset was used from where Dutch public sector employees were filtered out. A multiple regression analysis was done. The results shows gender does not moderate the effect of job demands and resources on employees' affective wellbeing.

Keywords: Gender, job demands and resources, subjective wellbeing, affective wellbeing.

The Relation between Job Features and Employees' Affective Wellbeing:

The Moderating Role of Gender

Employment is an integral part of human life between completion of education and before retirement. The importance of employment differs significantly for different people in different contexts (Bari & Róbert, 2016). Seeing as to how a greater part of one's life is spent on employment, how one feels at work greatly relates to life satisfaction. However, satisfaction with individuals' employment has been shown to differ for male and female employees (Hauret & Williams, 2013). Hodson (1989) explains this difference in satisfaction by the fact that working women have multiple functions along with their employment and they often give more importance to their function as "homemaker". Differences in work satisfaction emerge when jobs have less attractive features like, lower pay, fewer opportunities for career advancement, lower benefits and unexpected employment conditions (Hodson, 1989). However, even with these conditions, the study of Clark (1997) found female employees to be happier than their male colleagues. This difference of happiness between genders has been explained through differences in reference points. Indeed, female employees seem to think that their jobs "exceed their expectation". It happens because they compare their situation to that of other women, not to men and thus have fewer expectations than a fellow man would (Clark, 1997). In a former work of this field by Agassi (1982), this satisfaction is summed up as, "*the paradox of the contented female workers*".

Due to the rise of the dual bread earner model in developed society for the last 40 years (Helgeson, 2012); more women are seeking employment than before. As a consequence of this change, at present work and life are adjusted differently and gendered division of domestic labor is decreased than before (Hobson & Fahlén, 2011). By the evidence of the study of Hobson &

Fahlén (2011), it is also clear that at present men intentionally look for work that will grant them to adjust both their work and family responsibility. In spite of that, the study of Fahlen (2012) indicated that in any gender diverse workplace, multiple roles of women cause differences between male and female employees' wellbeing. This study (Fahlen, 2012) also found evidence that countries having social policies for ensuring work-life balance in the labor market and lower gender norms, have increased female representation in the labor force. In addition to that it ensures wellbeing of working women (Fahlen, 2012). For instance, childcare facilities will increase women's opportunity to combine work and role as a mother in societies where women are the primary caretaker of their children. An earlier study confirmed that female employees will give preference to jobs with less work pressure while male employees will look for jobs to uphold the family income though it reduces their family time (Gallie & Russel, 2009).

Problem definition and research question.

Employee wellbeing is an important outcome within the human resources management literature (Guest, 2017) because employees' performance is related to employees' wellbeing. Employment related wellbeing is distinguished as eudaimonic and hedonic. The eudaimonic dimension implies functioning well in the workplace and engaging in activities that will ensure human growth, for instance, "autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance etc." (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The hedonic aspect of work related wellbeing entails "feelings or emotions, such as presence of happiness or absence of anxiety", while eudaimonic wellbeing is, "an instrument to achieve greater purposes or outcome" (Rothausen, 2013).

Even though there are numerous studies which either concentrates on eudaimonic wellbeing (Guest, 2017) or cognitive components of hedonic or subjective wellbeing, like, on the job learning or being focused on job tasks (Taris & Schaufeli, 2015), very limited number of

studies focused on affective component of subjective wellbeing. Although the study of Briner (1997) suggested that, the probability of apprehension of the smallest differences, difficulties and changes of work experiences are better measured by multi dimensional nature of affective wellbeing. In a subsequent study, Daniels (2000) explained that assessing affective wellbeing can overcome weaknesses of existing research in this field which are astounded by cognitive processes that influence wellbeing, as wellbeing; or limiting work related psychological wellbeing as job satisfaction. Thus, this thesis will concentrate on the job related affective wellbeing of employees.

According to Bakker & Demerouti (2007) employee wellbeing is significantly influenced by job characteristics. For instance, job demands such as, “high work pressure, emotional demands and role uncertainty” have a negative effect on employees’ wellbeing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In addition to that, job resources like, “social support, performance feedback, and autonomy” encourage “job learning, work engagement and organizational commitment” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

On the other hand, earlier research has evidence that gender of employees moderate the relation between subjective wellbeing and job features. (Warr P. , 2007). However, there is an absence of empirical studies on how employees’ affective wellbeing could differ because of their gender (OECD, 2013). Although it is important because researchers in this area have found that because of womens’ desire to accommodate both their family life and employment (Garey, 1999), they are firmly considered being less dedicated towards their jobs (Allen, 2005) when they seek flexible work time to combine with their household chores (Walsh, 2013). Consequently, even though working women report greater happiness (Clark, 1997), this double burden indirectly decreases their happiness (Menacarini & Sironi, 2010).

This reduction of happiness can be explained by the earlier works in this field which affirmed that men and women have different expectations from their job due to their different social roles (Hodson, 1989; Clark, 1997; Bericat, 2016). It becomes clear as the study of Fahlen (2012) confirmed that, in spite of the general family support model where parents have limited institutional aid, and reduced working hours could be requested, the trend of working part-time for women with young children is most common in the Netherlands (Fahlen, 2012). Further, the cross national study of Bari & Róbert (2016) also inferred that domestic responsibilities as a homemaker and primary caretaker of children leave most women in their productive age unable to have jobs exceeding 30 hours. These social traditions compel women to perform diverse roles along with their jobs as mother, wife and homemaker (Bericat, 2016) and affect the work-life balance of women who are active on the labor market, in turn affecting their wellbeing (Bericat, 2016). This study also hinted that unsecured or temporary jobs affect the wellbeing of men more than women (Bericat, 2016).

As an aftermath of the stated differences in wellbeing, the tremendous gain of women in social and professional conditions in the last century is disregarded, women still give preference to jobs in the public sector than the private sector (OECD, 2013). Most of them generally work in less paid, social sector jobs as education and health (OECD, 2013) or work part time which can be associated with their “slower career progression, lower income facility, lower earnings related pensions and lower job quality in comparison to full time employees” (OECD, 2019) yet will offer them the opportunity to carry on their family responsibilities.

According to the CBS statistics Netherlands, 2013; 78.7 percent of the male and 65.4 percent female population of the Netherlands are active on the labor market. Hence, the Dutch government has taken different policy initiatives for increasing female employment as a

predominant factor to “promote equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for men and women” (Rijksoverheid, 2013). In spite of that, a recent report of OECD (2019) stated that Dutch women spend more time in household chores and childcare in comparison to women from other Northern European countries. This results in lower employment related wellbeing for female employees. This is the reason many contemporary research of this field indicated that human resources policies should not be built upon the “single, occasional and unarticulated policies” because a countries’ culture cannot be changed overnight (Nguyen & Ermasova, 2018). Reasonably, developing mechanisms to overcome such cultural difference and gender stereotypes should be taken into consideration (Nguyen & Ermasova, 2018).

This thesis will, therefore, focus on such differences in perceived affective wellbeing of employees, and in particular of employees working in public sectors in connection to their gender. It will report the effect of job features on employees’ affective wellbeing. More specifically, how employees’ gender moderate the effect of job demands and resources on employees’ affective wellbeing

The research question of the study is, “*to what extent does gender of employees moderate the effect of job features on the affective wellbeing of Dutch public sector employees?*”

Academic and Societal Relevance

Many previous studies gave implications that the effect of job characteristics on employee wellbeing should be analyzed (Warr P. , 1994). In addition to that earlier works on employee wellbeing did not focus on the personal characteristics of employees; rather they presumed the reaction will be similar despite their age, gender or marital status. The studies of this area is solely focused on the reasons gender would affect the preference of jobs or traditional social roles which affect the career progression of women (Hodson, 1989; Garey, 1999; Clark,

1997; Fahlen, 2012; Bericat, 2016). Only a few studies focused on the job characteristics and their effect on the employment related wellbeing (Bericat, 2016). Thus, this study intends to fill the knowledge gap and go beyond the current understandings of the causal relationship; and analyze how the effect of job features on employee wellbeing could be moderated by employees, gender. Particularly, by using a quantitative method.

Henceforth, the aim of this research is to make contributions both in the field of public administration and human resources management. Within the area of public administration, the evidence of wellbeing differences found from this study would be of great importance for public managers to initiate the “setting and framing of new policies” by “identifying new areas for government intervention and policy formulation” (Global Happiness Council, 2018). It is necessary because public sector organizations are expected to advocate equal opportunity for both genders of the society. This will increase the probability for ensuring equal opportunity for both men and women (Trzcinski & Holst, 2012).

Along with that, in the human resources management literature, the priority to learn about the damaging effect of different practices of human resources management on employee wellbeing is of viable interest (Guest, 2017). Specifically, how deep the “human resources theory, research and practice” have concentrated on these issues and how relevant the existing practices and policies are, to develop employee wellbeing (Guest, 2017). This small research will, thus, fill in the knowledge gap about how gender of employees should also be considered during the adaptation or formulation of new human resources policies. On the organizational level, the evidence derived from the present study will also be foundation to formulate similar policy initiatives for the Dutch private sector organizations. It is because female representation is somewhat less in private sector organizations than in the public sector (OECD, 2013).

Furthermore, this paper intends to extend the job demands–resources model by connecting the influence of gender on employees’ affective wellbeing.

Thesis Structure

The first chapter of the paper states the problem, the research question and the academic relevance of the study. The second chapter will elaborate the literature review and hypotheses of the study. Chapter three will explain the methods used for data analysis. Chapter four presents the results of the data analyses. The final chapter concludes with a short summary of findings by which the main research question will be answered, as well as a discussion of the strengths, limitations of the study, policy suggestions and directions for future research.

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature the one addresses the reasons job features will affect employees' wellbeing. Firstly, the concept of affective wellbeing will be discussed. Next, the job features will be distinguished into job demands and resources. As a final point of my literature review, I will attempt to explain why the situation for men and women would be different.

Employee Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a personal view of feeling well in a particular predicament. The concept of being well thus, originates from two basic terms like, being “in a good or proper manner” or “in a pleasing manner” (Wellbeing, 1996). These two terms were anciently known as “hedonia and eudaimonia”, also referred to as happiness or psychological wellbeing (Rothausen, 2013). Within the field of public administration, wellbeing is a ubiquitous theme; nevertheless, employee wellbeing is the key area of interest in this thesis.

Multiple scholarly papers deal with employee wellbeing and its importance. Among them the study of Fisher (2003) stated that, “happy employees are productive employees”. In a subsequent study, Rothausen (2013) argued that, wellbeing at work is crucial because it makes one feel like they have a meaningful job and admire it; and such feeling enhances work engagement, motivation and other job related outcomes. According to the National Economic Foundation report, employee wellbeing approaches benefit the society by keeping employees “happy, competent and satisfied in their roles” (Jeffry, Mahoney, Michaelson, & Abdallah, 2014).

It's already recognized that in employment related wellbeing, the hedonic dimension explains if the job an individual is doing is pleasurable (Rothausen, 2013), whereas the

eudaimonic dimension explains if the job is capable of creating one's own identity, fulfill the wish of helping others, providing for the dependents financially or have the opportunity to grow and develop for the individual (Rothausen, 2013). Thus, work related wellbeing means a personal feeling, which is a contribution of their employment by enjoying their jobs and fulfillment of their purposes of performing the job (Rothausen, 2013).

In employee wellbeing, the hedonic dimension of wellbeing is based on the concept of subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing is defined as maximized pleasure and minimized pain (Albuquerque, 2010). A prior study of Lyubomirsky (2005) confirmed that employees with a high level of subjective wellbeing enjoy their work more than others who have a low level of subjective wellbeing. This was corroborated by the most recent studies on employees' wellbeing and established the claim that absence of hedonic wellbeing also significantly affects employees' performance (Ford, 2011; Taris, 2014). However, the study of Guest (2017) claimed that wellbeing literature is more focused on improving employees' performance, namely the eudaimonic wellbeing than to improve the actual employee wellbeing,

According to Diener (2006) employees having high work related subjective wellbeing have satisfaction in their job, regular positive emotions and scarcely any negative emotions. Positive work related wellbeing is expressed by being happy at work, engagement towards the job and job satisfaction (Diener E. , 2006). A later study of Diener & Ryan (2009) indicated subjective wellbeing as the satisfaction of an individual with different aspects of life. For instance, marriage, work and health etc. The most recent research by Schaufeli & Bakker (2010) found subjective wellbeing to be positively related to employees' mental state at work and is expressed by high levels of energy at work even during a difficult time.

In subjective wellbeing, negative emotions like burnout and work-holism have to be absent (UKessays, 2013). Work-holism is an individual struggle to work hard under time pressure to meet organizational goals, while burnout means employees' are less enthusiastic towards their job tasks (UKessays, 2013). Individuals having no such negative emotions will feel engaged to their work activities and will be able to efficiently handle their job demands. Such work engagement will be indicated by "vigor, dedication and absorption" towards their job (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Therefore, as confirmed by Schaufeli et al. (2006), an engaged employee will be solely involved and attached to their work and feel proud of their job tasks even during difficult times (Silla, De Cuyper, Gracia, Peiro, & De Witte, 2009). Job satisfaction is another expression of work related subjective wellbeing. A study of Grebner, Semmer, & Elfering (2005) found that employees with high levels of job satisfaction have heightened levels of pleasure and limited work stress. This often happens when work seems meaningful for employees (Segal, Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2019). A later study of this field (Warr & Inceoglu, 2012) found that employees who are satisfied with their job would not feel burdened by the job demands and would be satisfied with the existing job resources. Although, they would not look for new resources as long as they are content with the existing ones.

A prior study of Diener (1994) reported that work related subjective wellbeing has two components, an affective component that contains "high positive and less negative affect" and cognitive component which means "satisfaction with their envisioned ideal life" (Counselling connection; Happiness and Positive psychology, 2010). Subjective wellbeing is, thus, "a persons' affective and cognitive evaluation of their life" (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2002). Recent study of this field by Diener & Ryan (2009) supported this statement and concluded that employees with such positive emotions will continuously work on their personal resources, for instance,

requesting feedback and cooperation. Thus, Daniels (2000) stated that the most appropriate measure to capture wellbeing is measuring the affective wellbeing of employees.

The theoretical and philosophical idea of affective wellbeing originates from the word *happiness* (Hosie & Sevastos, 2010). The word happy indicates, "...pleasure, content or gladness" (Delbridge, Bernard, Blair, Peters, & Butler, 1996). Affective wellbeing is generally distinguished into "context free or domain specific (job related or facet specific)" and is measured with two opposite axis, "discontented-contented, anxious- comfortable and depressed-actively pleased" (Warr P. B., 1987).

This is consistent with earlier research by Watson & Tellegen (1985) which found two state of affect, positive and negative. Positive affect is emulated when a person feels "enthusiastic, active and alert". With high positive affect a person will have high energy, will be able to concentrate and will be engaged in any task with pleasure (Watson, Clark, & Carey, 1988). Whereas person with low positive affect, will be disinterested in their work. Negative affect on the other hand is not fully opposite to positive affect but with time people with negative affect will show conflicting moods like, "anger, fear, guilt, disgust and nervousness" (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). People with high negative affect would have anxiety and will be relaxed with low negative affect. However, Individuals with low negative affect might be uncomfortable, unhappy and uninterested in any situation (Watson, Clark, & Carey, 1988).

According to Warr P. B. (1987), in job related affective wellbeing, a contented employee will have "job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational attachment. On the other hand, a discontented employee will be indifferent towards their work. Whereas, an anxious employee will experience job related tension or pressure and a comfortable employee will have

calmness. Lastly, an actively pleased employee will have “high morale and job involvement” and a depressed employee will feel fatigued, depressed and exhausted (Warr P. B., 1987).

Affective wellbeing is, thus, the collective assessment of affects of a definite time period; usually one or two week because during this period pleasantness or unpleasantness can cause other aspects to increase or decrease (Warr P. , 1990). In the study of Warr P. (1990), work related affective wellbeing was measured using two opposite axes, “discontentment-contentment, anxiety-comfort”. Subsequent studies of this line included other measures of affective wellbeing, “anxiety-comfort, depression-pleasure and tiredness-vigor” (Warr P. , 1992).

Impact of Job Demands and Resources on Employee Wellbeing

Job features will be evaluated in this thesis as demands and resources by using the Job demand resources model of burnout by Demerouti (2001). It focuses on “both negative and positive determinants of employees’ wellbeing”. The main claim of the model is; all professions have their individual “risk factors”. These risk factors are related to job stress. In the JD-R model of burnout by Demerouti (2001), job demands are defined as those job features that would be positively related to job stress by negatively affecting employees’ wellbeing through cost and exhaustion. Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) stated that job demands are not necessarily negative, unless they turn into stressors which costs high efforts and results into high costs that extracts negative responses like, “*depression, anxiety and burnout*”.

In a later study, Voydanoff (2005) also differentiated two prominent sources of job demands, these are: time and strain based demands. Time is considered the resource in time based demands; stands for time invested for roles as an employee and role at home. Demands like lengthy work time, strict routine, overtime, shift work hampers an individuals’ personal life, limiting the execution of their responsibilities at home and interrupts their family life, are time

based demands (Voydanoff, 2005). This study also found that strain based demands like, lack of support from spouses or economic hardships are associated with lack of security in employment, psychological pressures and affect quality of life (Voydanoff, 2005). Bakker & Demerouti (2007) stated that such job demands are, “high work pressure, unfavorable physical environment and emotionally demanding interaction with clients”. A recent study of Lawson, Noblet, & Rodwell (2009) found job demands having a negative effect on “psychological health and job satisfaction”.

Job demands could be distinguished as emotional demands which are qualitative and quantitative demands like work overload (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Employees perceive their workload to be heavy when they perceive that their job tasks will not be completed within allocated time (Bolino & Turnley, 2005; Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). This causes workplace stress (Khan & Khurshid, 2017). It is, therefore, relevant to consider the effects of these demands. In this thesis, the determinant of job demands is quantitative, “*heavy workload*”.

On the other hand, in the JDR model, job resources are claimed to be the protection from burnout and exhaustion caused by job demands (Demerouti, 2001a). The model also mentioned job resources as necessary factors to achieve work goals, encourage individual “growth and development” (Demerouti, 2001a). According to Demerouti (2001a) absence of such resources always increases the negative effect of job demands. This was later slightly discarded in the study of Bakker & Demerouti (2007) stating that job resources have special importance than only omitting job demands. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) explained that along with generally considered job resources that will influence personal skills, autonomy and participation in decision making; job resources like pay, career growth or job security are also important resources in an organization.

Among these job resources, job security was suggested to be a powerful determinant for employees' wellbeing in the study of Kuhnert, Sims, & Lahey (1989). Furthermore, it was confirmed by the results of a recent survey that job security has a great impact on employees' wellbeing (Waddingham, 2015). The relationship of job security and employee wellbeing was found to be significantly correlated in a most recent study of Daud, Raja, & Batu (2017). They argued that employees' perception of job security makes employees feel safe thus improving their wellbeing (Daud et al., 2017). A former study of Silla, De Cuyper, Gracia, Peiro, & De Witte (2009) also found that less secured jobs are negatively related to employees' subjective wellbeing. Another contemporary study (Adil & Baig, 2018) validates the result of the JDR model of Bakker & Demerouti (2007) and states that job demands and resources significantly impact employees' wellbeing. They also argued that less workload and increased autonomy would enable them to maintain balance between work and family life (Adil & Baig, 2018).

Accordingly, job demands will negatively affect employees' wellbeing and job resources will positively affect employee wellbeing and thus employees who assume their job demands to be higher would report a lower score for employee wellbeing. And employees who assume their job resources to be higher would report a higher score for employee wellbeing. Thus, the first two hypotheses of the study are:

H1: Employees with higher job demands will likely have lower wellbeing

H2: Employees with higher job resources will likely have higher wellbeing.

Gender Differences in Wellbeing

The previously introduced literature offered no explanation about the effects of employees' personal characteristics on the relations between job demands and resources on employee wellbeing. They hint that employees have uniform reactions to their job and thus will

have an equal effect on their wellbeing despite their individual characteristics like age, marital status or gender. This is surprising because according to the role theory (Eagly A. H., 1987) above discussed effects might be dependent on various roles of a person.

Eagly (1987) defined gender roles as a standardized set of desirable behavior for both genders. Peoples' perception of such connection between the group characteristics and group role they are expected to be engaged in or try to be engaged in create preconceived feelings (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This grouping of roles could be relative to their gender, race, color or age. In their subsequent study, they defined gender roles as an agreed ideology about the characteristics of male and female gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The following study of Eagly (2005) supported this statement again and argued that the criteria for a social group to be favorably assessed is, when the attributes of the group are considered similar as its' traditional social role. Therefore, gender roles are considered as the starting points that authorize expected attitudes of men and women (Eagly A. H., 2005). Such stereotypical social practice pictures one gender to be unfit to function in non-traditional roles in comparison to the other gender. For instance, women are expected to be better in nurturing children, accomplished in household duties and men to be breadwinners of the family. This restricts the opportunities for both genders to function in non-traditional roles. This thesis concentrates on groupings relative to employees' gender and assumes that gender indirectly affects employees' wellbeing. As formerly introduced, preconceived feelings about gender roles occur when social observers support certain conditions about a social group (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Ridgeway & Correll (2004) supported the evidences of Eagly & Karau (2002) and explained that the inflexibility of gender roles like gendered division of household labor, job separation based on gender, differences in status and authority dependent on the persons' gender,

is fully caused by a traditional gender system. Thus, it is apprehensible that jobs having flexible work time and jobs that allow the opportunity to spend more time with family will be preferable to women than that of men (Hodson, 1989). The findings of the recent OECD (2019) report are also in line with previous literature. It is still noticeable that although men in the Netherlands are willing to participate more in childcare and family responsibility, women are still thought to be better in the upbringing of their children (OECD, 2019). Thus, the trend of women working in part time jobs and bringing a small paycheck at home at the end of the month is most common, despite higher participation of women in the labor market (OECD, 2019). It is also evident that only 12.5% women want to work more hours and 8.8% men want to work less hours (OECD, 2019).

In a report on top public managers of Europe, Kuperus & Rode (2016) supported the findings of Eagly & Karau (2002), and stated more reasons like balanced work-life, dual role as homemaker or caregiver and employee, career preferences, confidence and lack of developmental and mentoring opportunities as barrier for women to reach in leadership roles throughout their career. It is especially interesting, in view of evidence from the study of Hodson (1989) that found women working in worse jobs than men are happier, as they value different features of employment. Along with that even when they have full time jobs, they must carry out their roles as homemakers. Thus, when they cannot harmonize their work and family life it creates more pressure on them (Gender Issues in Safety and Health at Work , 2003). Recent studies gave clear indication that even though the job demands of female employees are less than male employees they are still more stressed, because work roles take away their time to maintain their traditional family roles (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2010). A later study of Rivera, Araque-Padilla, & Montero-Simó (2013) confirmed that women often have unstable jobs with

unstable work conditions, risky environment and tend to work in the same job longer than men. This is one of the reasons men and women would perceive different types of demands and tensions even when they work in the same sector and same professions. (Rivera, Araque-Padilla, & Montero-Simó, 2013).

It is also evident from another report (Paoli & Merllié, 2001) that, women would be less involved in jobs that are related to learning or problem solving and hence will be more involved in repetitive chores, without settled break time or unforeseen tasks. This is an ongoing phenomena as found by the OECD (2013) report, that gender equality is still an unachieved goal and women's representation is lower when compared to men in many professions. Another recent report further confirmed that heavy workload makes it impossible for women to access higher managerial roles and yet it would prevent men to participate in care roles (Hegewische & Lacarte, 2019).

In the same way, Trzcinski & Holst (2011) suggested that gender differences in wellbeing arise because women have to choose between achievement in employment and their family orientation. However, achieving gender equality is important for both men and women in every aspect of life, as it assures both genders to "enjoy the same rights and opportunities". It is also clear that women's wellbeing is not affected if they excel as homemakers but for men it is the opposite (Trzcinski & Holst, 2011). This is further supported by the OECD (2017) report that in less developed countries it is hard for women to access equal basic human rights. Whereas, in developed countries it is hard to attain because of the discriminatory social institutions and gender roles that decrease their opportunities which obstruct their participation in the economy and thus affecting their wellbeing (OECD, 2017).

While, some previous literature has found job security is less important for female employees (Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999; De Witte, 1999; Rosenblatt, Talmud, & Ruvio, 1999), a few studies found that it is equally important for female employees also who are single or sole earners of their family (Warr P., 1984; De Witte, 1999). When interpreting within the concept of role theory, these findings become different and clear that men become more stressed because they give more importance to their work role while women are protected because family responsibility is more important to them (Gaunt, Benjamin, & Orly, 2007). Male employees will feel more vulnerable in a less secure job in comparison to women as they are expected to be the breadwinners by the standardized actions of the social group they belong in (Bericat, 2016). According to Bericat (2016) these are the reasons for the existence of significant differences in wellbeing between unemployed men and women. Bericat (2016) further reveals employed women scored lower than that of employed men in socio emotional wellbeing. This difference in wellbeing is considerable, as it is the foundation of “women’s motivation, commitment and desire to work” (Bericat, 2016). Lack of job security and fear of unemployment is also found as decreasing factors of socio-emotional wellbeing for both male and female employees (Bericat, 2016). Bericat (2016) suggested that in spite of the cultural change in Europe in the past years, work is less important for women than men. This happens because there are differences in work life balance and life satisfaction relative to peoples’ gender (Fahlen, 2012; Bari & Róbert, 2016).

Fahlen (2012) analyzed envisioned work-to-home and home-to-work conflict using the capability approach of Sen & Nussbaum (1993) and found work and home demands decrease the capacity to gain work-life balance. The evidence from Fahlens’ (2012) study indicates that expected conflict is different between genders and related to the arrangement that emerges from traditional home and work circles. The already introduced conflicts can be interpreted as

lengthier, unsocial working hours and overtime without prior arrangement for male employees, while household responsibilities are left to women (Fahlen, 2012). This study (Fahlen, 2012) also indicates the two referenced directions of conflict being similar for female employees because of their multiple roles as caretaker, the uneven or inflexible work time and lack of job security. Bari & Róbert (2016) identified stability between work and other parts of life have remarkable impact on life satisfaction and it was more substantial for women than men. Though, a recent study has found that it is equally important for both men in the sense that they will feel more satisfied and will have better developmental outcomes for children (Portegijs, Perez, & Brakel, 2018). The recent OECD (2019) report stated that, to reduce the difference of work hours in the paid jobs in the Dutch labor market, the traditional roles should be shifted. And men should take more responsibility for “childcare, elder care, cooking and chores” (OECD, 2019).

From the above discussion it becomes clear that job features such as heavy workload and job security would have different effects on the employees wellbeing because of their gender. Apparently, for female employees, even though the working conditions are not good (Hodson, 1989; Rivera et al., 2013;) yet provides them with the opportunity to attune their work and family responsibility and promise of a better work life balance will be more preferable (Fahlen, 2012; Bericat, 2016) than a secured job. Whereas for male employees a secured job is more important because the traditional role theory compel (Fahlen, 2012) them to be more responsible to be the breadwinners of the family thus, cutting their family time and being distant from the upbringing of their children, still jobs with heavy workload will be less preferable to them (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2010).

Therefore, the third and fourth hypotheses of the study are:

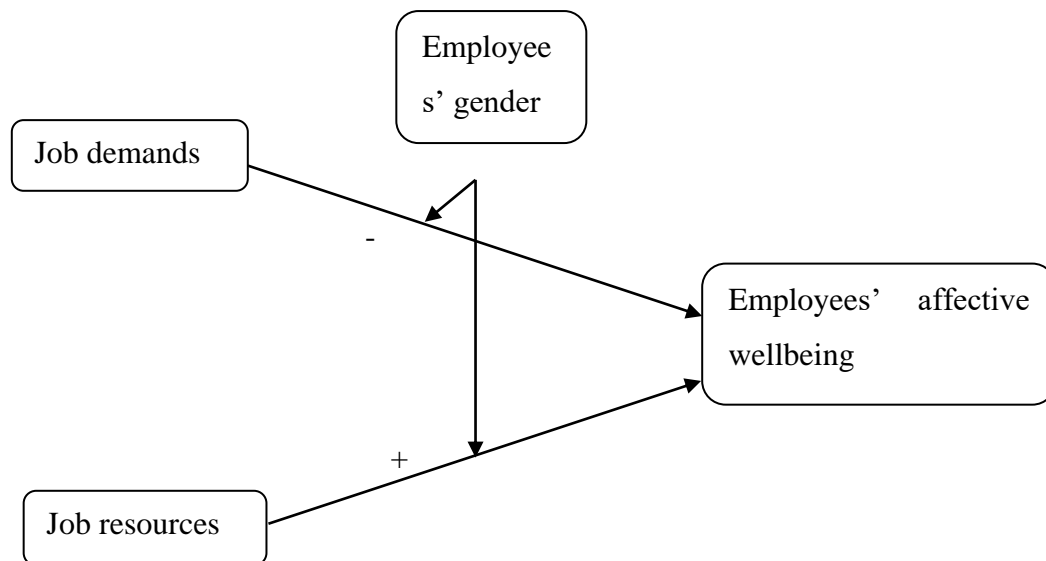
H3: The negative relationship between job demands and employees' wellbeing will be higher for female employees than male employees.

H4: The positive relationship between job resources and employees' wellbeing will be lower for female employees than male employees.

The proposed hypotheses that resulted from the above literature review are illustrated as a conceptual model in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Conceptual model showing the effect of job demands and resources on employees' affective wellbeing, moderated by employees' gender.



Methods

Data

The data of the study came from the fifth round of European Social Survey (European Social Survey, 2010) an academically guided cross sectional and cross-national data survey directed every 2 years. The respondents were residents of 28 European countries. The number of total respondents from all the countries was 52,458. The target response rate was 70%. This was an appropriate dataset to study because it provides an opportunity to analyze major theoretical claims about the factors that affect work and employee wellbeing.

Case Selection. The Fifth-round dataset (Countries by Round: Round 5, 2010) with respondents from the Netherlands will be included in this study. The Netherlands was selected to be the country of analysis because compared to other northern European countries, the Netherlands has a higher rate of women participating in the labor market (OECD, 2019). Moreover, the people of the Netherlands report the highest levels of subjective wellbeing (OECD, 2017). The analysis included respondents employed in the Dutch public sector. This study will focus significantly on wellbeing differences of male and female employees. The total numbers of valid respondents from the Netherlands were 1829, with a response rate of 60% of total respondents. Among them Dutch public-sector employees and the cases with missing value were filtered. It resulted in a sample size of 333.

Operationalization of Key Variables of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how employees' gender could differ the effect of job demands and resources on employees' affective wellbeing. The variables of the study are described below.

Employees' affective wellbeing. Employees' affective wellbeing is the dependent variable of the study. The concept is operationalized in three sub components, discontented-contended, anxious-comfortable, actively pleased- depressed. They were measured by the statements, "How often have you felt like this over the last two weeks?", the statements were, "I have felt cheerful and in good spirits", "I have felt calm and relaxed" and "I have felt active and vigorous". The respondents answered on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 refers to *all of the time*, 2 refers to *most of the time*, 3 refers to *more than half of the time*, 4 refers to *less than half of the time*, 5 refers to *some of the time* and 6 refers to *at no time*. The items form a single factor with a Cronbach's alpha 0.81. In this thesis, the items were recoded on a scale of 0 to 5, 5 being the highest score and 0 being the lowest score. 0 refers to at no time and 5 refers to all of the time. The values of the three items were added and divided by 3 to make one latent variable, *wellbeing*.

Job demands and resources. In the ESS module 5, job demand was referred to as work intensity and is measured on subscales hard work and time pressure. And measured with the statements, "*my job requires I work very hard*" and "*I never seem to have enough time to get everything done in my job*". The respondents answered on a scale of 1 to 5. Every increase in the scale is a positive increase. Where, 1 refers to *agree strongly*, 2 refers to *agree*, 3 refers to *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 refers to *disagree* and 5 refers to *strongly disagree*. In the ESS survey, the sub concepts were expected to be related, as someone reporting *hard work* will likely report *heavy time pressure*. An exploratory factor analysis with the sub concepts shows sharp decrease in the scree plot and only time pressure having eigenvalue, >1. The item scores can be found in Appendix A and the scree plot can be found in Appendix B. Therefore, only sub concept time pressure was used in this study for measuring the effect of job demands on employee wellbeing.

Such time pressure was conceptualized as heavy workload in previous studies (Bolino & Turnley, 2005; Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). Time pressure is thus conceptualized as heavy workload in this thesis. This variable is mean centered to reduce the multicollinearity problem of independent variables for regression.

Independent variable job resource is conceptualized as job security in this study. In the ESS module 5, job security refers to an individual employees' perception about the opportunity of working in the organization in the long run or being forced to leave. This was measured on a scale of 1 to 4 and employees were asked to give a score for the statement "*my job is secure*". Every increase in the scale means a positive increase. Where, 1 refers to *not at all true*, 2 refers to *a little true*, 3 refers to *quite true* and 4 refers to *very true*. This variable was also mean centered to reduce multicollinearity problem.

Employees' gender. Gender is hypothesized in this study to have a moderating effect on the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Moderator variable functions for changing the causal relationships of independent and dependent variables. ESS module 5 explains that traditional gender roles separate gendered spheres which will in turn cause differences in wellbeing of working men and women. Moderator variable gender was measured nominally as "*Male*" and "*Female*" where male was coded 1, and female was coded 2. The categorical moderator variable gender is recoded into a dummy variable "gender", keeping female as the reference category to carry out the assumption test for regression. In the new variable male was coded 1 and female was coded 0.

Results

SPSS advanced module 25 was used to analyze the study data. Descriptive statistics were investigated for data abnormalities, and Spearman's correlation was calculated to test the presence of correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

Data Inspection

Descriptive statistics. All descriptive statistics of the study variables are shown in Table 1 below. The higher scores of standard deviation of the variables with the mean show high level of variance among the study population.

The moderating variable of the study gender is measured as percentage showing higher representation of female employees in public sector organizations. The higher the mean score of the variables the higher employees perceive job demand, job resource and wellbeing.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the independent and dependent variables of the study.

Variables	Minimum	Mean	Maximum	Std. Deviation	N
Job demand	1	2.91	5	1.181	333
Job resource	1	3.02	4	.969	333
Wellbeing	0	3.41	5	.862	333
Variables	Categories	%	N		
Gender	Female=0	31.2	104		
	Male=1	68.8	229		

Spearman's correlation. A Spearman's rank order correlation was done to determine the relation between the values of independent and dependent variables of the study. It was the most appropriate measure to understand the strength and direction between two variables when they are continuous or ordinal in nature (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

The moderating variable gender has a weak positive association with independent variable heavy workload which is statistically significant, $r_s = .182$, $p < .001$. Thus, male employees perceive their jobs to be less hard than female employees. Gender of employees also has a weak positive correlation with employees' affective wellbeing, $r_s = .114$, $p < .05$. That means male employees tend to experience more affective wellbeing than female employees. As presumed, employees affective wellbeing increase when heavy workload is decreased which is statistically significant $r_s = .152$, $p < .001$. All results of the spearman's rank order correlation are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Correlations between the independent and dependent variables of the study.

		1	2	3
Gender	Correlation coefficient			
	N			
Job demand	Correlation coefficient	.182**		
	N	333		
Job resource	Correlation coefficient	.085	.065	
	N	333	333	
Wellbeing	Correlation coefficient	.114*	.152**	.093
	N	333	333	333

Note. * $p < .05$ (two tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two tailed).

Multiple regression analysis. A standard multiple regression analysis was run to assess the increase in variation explained by the addition of interaction term between the independent variables and the moderator variable of the study.

Prior to the regression analysis, the independent variables were centralized to reduce the multicollinearity issues and the categorical moderator was already dummy coded keeping female as the reference category. The interaction terms were created by multiplying the dummy variable “gender” and centralized independent variables, which resulted into the creation of two new variables, “devjobdemand” and “devjobresource”. The assumptions for the multiple regressions were tested along with moderation analysis. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson static of 1.766, a test value of 1.5 to 2.5 is relatively normal (Stephanie, 2016). There was homoscedasticity as assessed by the visual inspection of a plot of studentized residuals and versus unstandardized predicted values. The homoscedasticity can be found in Appendix C. Low VIF (<10) and high tolerance level (>.1) showed no multicollinearity among the independent variables of the study. There was no high leverage value greater than 0.2 and values for Cooks distance above 1. The test of normality also met as assessed by a Q-Q plot. This is presented in Appendix D.

The regression coefficients and standard deviations can be found in table 3.

In the first model, the independent variables statistically significantly predicted employees’ affective wellbeing, $F(3, 329) = 4.770$, $p < .005$. Employees’ gender and job security added statistically significantly to the prediction, $< .05$. That means an increase in the score of job security is associated with .106 increases in employees’ affective wellbeing. And male employees tend to feel .209 unit more affective wellbeing than female employees. Other independent variables, job demand did not predict the dependent variable significantly. Thus, “*H1: Employees with higher job demands will likely have lower wellbeing*”- is rejected. And “*H2: Employees with higher job security will likely have higher wellbeing*”- is corroborated.

In the second model, employees' gender did not moderate the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable, as evidenced by increase in variation explained of .4%, $F(2, 327) = .715, p = .490$, a non significant effect. Thus, both hypotheses 3 and 4, "*H3: The negative relationship between job demands and employees' wellbeing will be higher for female employees than male employees*" and "*H4: The positive relationship between job security and employees' wellbeing will be lower for female employees than male employees*"- is rejected. Although, the low R^2 indicated a low variance in the dependent variable which means that possible other factors can explain variance in wellbeing better than the included factors.

Table 3

Summary of multiple regression analysis.

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
(Constant)	3.341	.056		3.337	.057	
Gender	.209	.102	.112*	.193	.104	.104
Mean_jobresource	.106	.048	.119*	.092	.057	.104
Mean_jobdemand	.076	.040	.104	.048	.048	.066
Devjobresource				.047	.109	.027
Devjobdemand				.095	.089	.071
R^2		.042			.046	
F		4.770*			.715	
ΔR^2		.033			.031	

Note. * $P = .05$

Discussion

This chapter evaluates the findings as reported under results. Firstly, the findings of the study will be placed in the theoretical framework as elaborated on under Literature Review. Secondly, this chapter explains the strength of the current study. Thirdly, the limitation of the research is explained, and future research recommendations are made. And finally, the findings are converted to policy suggestions.

This thesis was conducted to contribute in the field of public management research through examining the effect of job features on employees' affective wellbeing, moderated by employees' gender in the public sector organizations. The aim of the study is to answer the question, *“to what extent does gender of employees moderate the effect of job features on the affective wellbeing of Dutch public sector employees?”*

Findings

Not all the study hypotheses were supported by the study results. Statistical significance was achieved for only Hypotheses 2, *“H2: Employees with higher job security will likely have higher wellbeing”*- by the results of multiple regression analysis. The 3rd and 4th hypothesis of the study was to analyze whether gender moderates the effect of job features on the affective wellbeing of the Dutch public sector employees. Again statistical significance was not achieved for any of them and thus, it is clear that gender does not moderate the effect of job features on employees' affective wellbeing.

Job demand operationalized as heavy workload did not have any significant effect on employees' affective wellbeing. This contradicts the previous literature of the JDR model by Bakker & Demerouti (2009) who argued job demands would cause burnout and exhaustion and have negative effect on employees wellbeing (Lawson et al., 2009). One of the possible reasons

the study result is not in line with previous research because JD-R model consists of more than one such demands, for instance, “unfavorable physical environment and emotionally demanding interaction with clients” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) that can cause exhaustion and burnout of employees along with heavy workload. Additionally, this non-significant result can also be explained by the claim of Karasek (1979) that high job demands can be mitigated by employees’ efficient performance during their working hours. A recent study of Ha (2018) also confirmed that the quantitative job demand heavy workload does not affect job related affective wellbeing

Job resource, on the other hand was found to have a significant effect on employees’ wellbeing. This is in line with previous literatures, which argued that employees’ perceiving higher job security would feel safe and this, in turn, would improve their wellbeing (Daud et al., 2017).

Heavy workload was found to be dealt differently by employees’ gender by Vagg, Spielberger, & Wasala (2002), as female employees will feel severe stress because of the work family life conflict while male employees will be stressed because of their organizational role, which was contradicted by the results of this thesis. The reason the effect of heavy workload was not significantly moderated by employees’ gender, can be associated with the selection of the sample population of the study (OECD, 2017). The respondents were employees of the Dutch public sector organizations because the Dutch society has better social policy and work-life balance. In the Netherlands, only 0.5% people work very long hours which might cause stress (OECD, 2017). As previously discussed, traditional breadwinner model makes employment more important for men than women (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly A. H., 2005), in the case of our sample population, work responsibilities are shared in the Netherlands and most women with children work part time (OECD, 2017). Although, the findings of this study is in line with the

study of Rivera et al. (2013), who argued that quantitative job demands will be the same way stressful for both men and women.

Another study found that lack of job security and fear of losing their job affect the socio-emotional wellbeing like “security, vitality, happiness and pride”, of both male and female employees’ (Bericat, 2016). They also argued that the wellbeing of both male and female employees’ is affected by the lack of job security and fear of unemployment (Bericat, 2016). Thus, the evidence found in the present study, that, male and female employees will have the same reaction towards a less secured job is in line with the study of Bericat (2016). It happens because of the growing popularity of the dual bread earner model signifies the participation of both men and women in the labor market (Helgeson, 2012).

Strengths

Along with the strong point that this study was done using quantitative methods with a reliable survey data set which measured various dimensions of employment and wellbeing, the study also consists of many theories extracted from different fields of social science, For instance, public administration, organizational science, psychology and gender studies. The theoretical concepts could not have been obtained from literature from only one of these sources.

Consequently, this study also makes contributions to the separate fields of study. In the field of public administration, knowledge of the recent labor market trend would help in formulating effective policies that would ensure a suitable balance for work and life, especially for working parents. As an efficient “combination of work, commitment towards family and personal life” ensure wellbeing of a family (OECD, 2017).

In the field of organizational science, the evidence of thesis would help employers in other countries to generate organizational policies similar to the Dutch public sector

organizations to ensure a happier workforce and less wellbeing difference between employees relative to their gender.

Along with that this study contributes in other fields like psychology and gender studies, in the sense that, at present gender roles are expected to be reorganized (Eagly A. H., 2005; OECD, 2019) and unemployment is distressing for both male and female employees (Bericat, 2016).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The current study has limitations which gives direction towards future research in this topic. Firstly, this study includes respondents from only the Dutch public sector organizations and the Dutch society have social policies to improve work life balance. Also, as public sector organizations always tend to be role models for the private sector, they will definitely have better job features to promote employees' wellbeing. Secondly, the hypothesized moderating effect of gender on job demands and resources does not have any significant effect on employees' wellbeing. The reason must be that female representation is higher in the study sample due to the lower gender norms (Fahlen, 2012) and supportive social policies in the Dutch society to enhance female representation in the workforce (Rijksoverheid, 2013). Thirdly, the Netherlands have a strong family support model in which parents of small children can request to work fewer hours, which makes employees' happier. Thus, future research can extend the study by including respondents' age, social status, partner's occupation, working hours and number of children, in the analysis. Specially, the number of children is a factor that should be critically considered. Because in the last few years, the employment rate of women increased, but on a part time basis and working mothers of more than one children earned half of what women without less children or no children earned (OECD, 2017). Future studies could also focus on another country with

less social support and higher gender norms to analyze the effect of job demands and resources for male or female employees on employees' wellbeing.

Respondents' level of employment functions, level of education and growth opportunity should also be analyzed as previous literature have evidence that even less attractive employment conditions female employees tend to be happier than male employees (Hodson, 1989).

Also, the analysis was done to examine if employees' gender moderates the effect of job features distinguished into job demands and resources on employees' wellbeing. The interaction effect of the moderator variable with both job demands and resources was not included. It would be interesting to observe as well. Because the JDR model assumed that job resources omit the effect of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

In addition to that, the study data was taken from the fifth round of European Social Survey which was conducted in 2010. Future studies could examine recent data to find any difference with the result of this study.

Variable selection. The assumed job demand and resource in this study are respectively heavy workload and job security. While the JDR model consists of many other job demands and resources, such as, "unfavorable physical environment and emotionally demanding interaction with clients" as job demands and "autonomy, participation in decision making, pay and career growth" as job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009). This study considered the variables stated as job demands and resources in ESS social survey round 5 (Data and documentation: European social survey, 2010). After the factor analysis, hard work was excluded. Future research should consider including the variables mentioned in the JDR model to find any significant effect on employees' affective wellbeing. This should be critically considered in future studies because the

low explained variance in wellbeing means some other factors that are not included in this thesis explains variance in wellbeing better than the included factors.

Policy Suggestions.

Though, the results of this study did not find significant wellbeing differences between male and female employees. It is also evident from literatures that multiple functions along with employment (Hodson, 1989) compel female employees to work part time which limits their “career progression, underutilizes their education and skills” (OECD, 2017). These issues should be considered for policy formulation by making a better balance between work and life and as well as supporting women for career progression.

Though, it is evident from the OECD (2017) that only 0.5% employees work extra-long hours. However, working extra hours cause “health problems and stress”. Government should resolve this issue by developing “supportive and flexible work practices” (OECD, 2017).

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Appendix A

Table 4

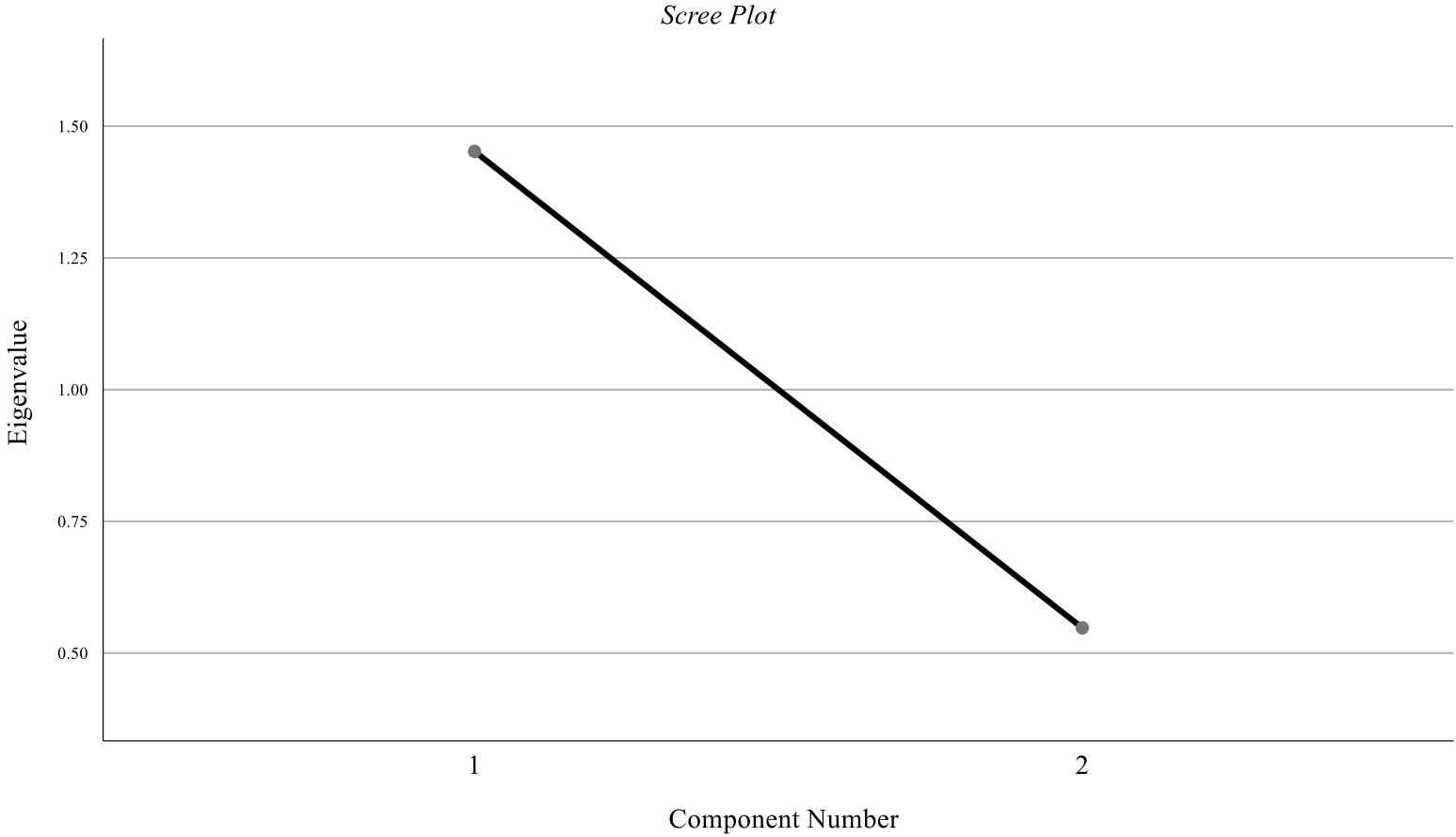
Exploratory factor analysis of Job demands

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Explained variance
Job Demands			
Heavy workload	1	1.452	72.608
Hardwork	.452	.548	27.392

Appendix B

Figure 2

Scree plot for the exploratory factor analysis of job demands.

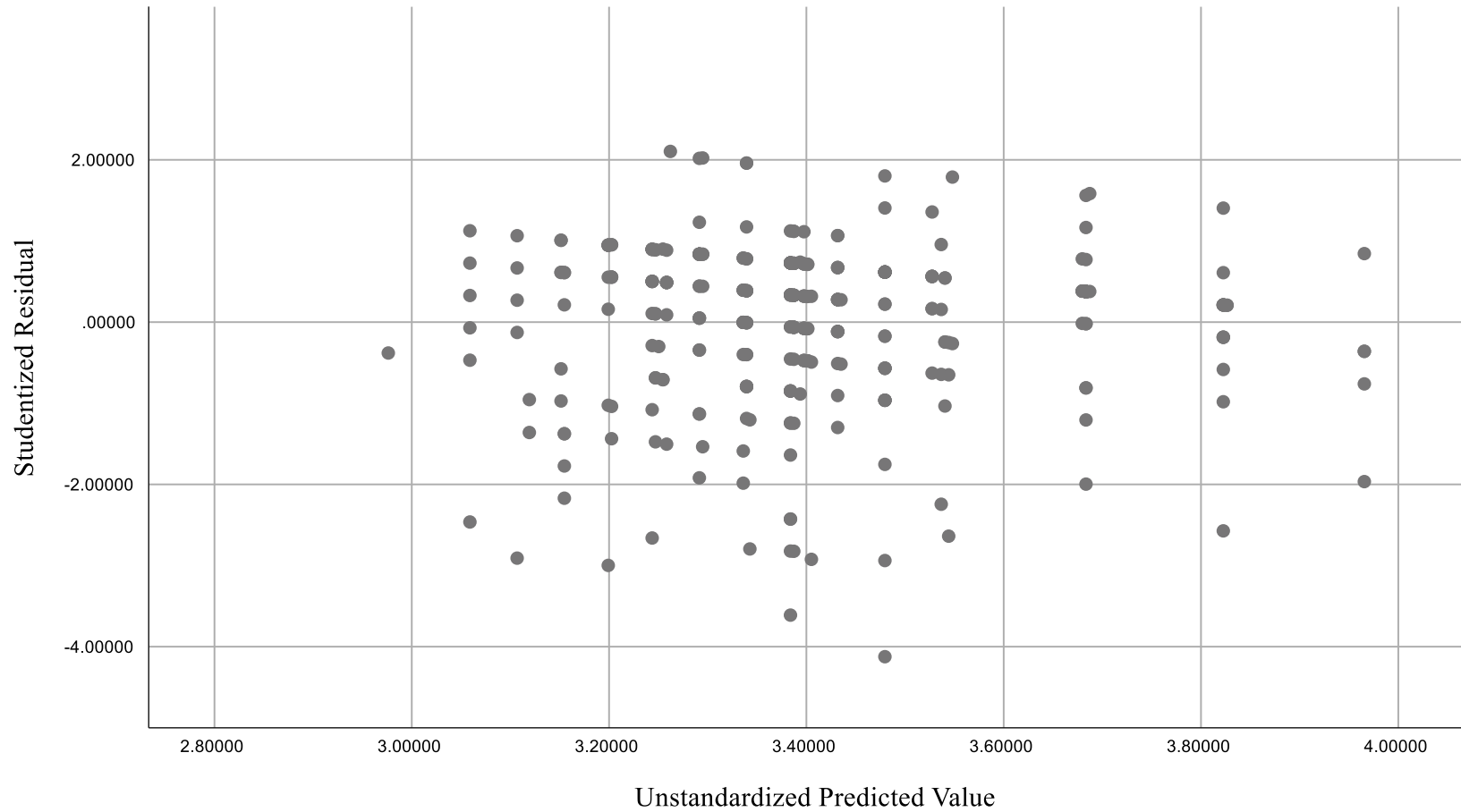


Appendix C

Figure 3

Testing for Homoscedasticity.

Simple Scatter of Studentized Residual by Unstandardized Predicted Value



Appendix D

Figure 4

Normal QQ plot of Studentized Residuals.

