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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER EQUALITY, EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND WELLBEING IN EU: THE EFFECT OF GENDER AND MANAGEMENT POSITION

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ABSTRACT. We aim to evaluate relationships between gender equality, perceived distributive justice and wellbeing in the European Union (the EU). Further, this study includes an analysis of the moderating effects of gender and management position on the gender equality-distributive justice and distributive justice-wellbeing relationships. European Social Survey (ESS) Round 9 (2018/19) data file edition 3.1 was used for data analysis. Using probability sampling, ESS Round 9 data were collected in 27 European countries through computer-assisted personal (face-to-face) interviewing. The sample of this study consisted of 20 013 respondents (49.3% female) aged 18 and older (mean age – 44.8 years, std. dev. – 12.365) from 23 European Union countries. Results showed that a higher level of gender equality at work was related to higher employees' satisfaction with life. Perceived job opportunities mediated the relationship between gender equality at work and employees' satisfaction with life. Employees' gender and management position moderated the relationship between perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life. However, neither employees' gender nor management position moderated the relationship between gender equality at work and perceived job opportunities.

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Introduction

Wellbeing of employees is crucial for the effective functioning of organizations and societal and economic development in the country (Haddon, 2018). More and more world leaders and scientists support increased emphasis on wellbeing over economic power (Meindl et al., 2019). Therefore, micro and macro level conditions of wellbeing have been receiving extra attention from researchers and practitioners. Justice as a social value phenomenon in society could help to explain those conditions more closely (Liebig, 2016). For example, the Equity theory of J. S. Adams (1965) was a basis for later research explaining how justice at work might affect outcomes for employees and organizations (Virtanen & Elovainio, 2018). Two main research streams could be identified since then: on relationship between justice and productivity (Colquitt et al., 2012) and on association between justice and employee health (Ndjaboue et al., 2012). However, there is still a need for stronger evidence of links between justice and wellbeing, especially from large scale studies (Virtanen & Elovainio, 2018). Additionally, the exogeneity trend of justice research (predictive validity of justice, direct and indirect justice effects on attitudinal, affective, and behavioral variables) should be elaborated on with significant mediators and moderators (Colquitt, 2012). Finally, new theoretical insights could make valuable recommendations for social policy. With reference to Meindl and colleagues (2019), research of justice issues in the context of wellbeing may contribute to the resolution of problems related to the rise of economic inequality and its critical consequences throughout the world.

The research framework of distributive justice and the allocation of social resources (Scherer, 1992; Sabbagh & Schmitt, 2016) is used as a theoretical background of the study: people assess the fairness of the rewards, resources that they and others receive and with reference to this evaluation they experience behavioral and social consequences. Moreover, defined key processes may depend on justice contexts in the society. So, justice is understood as a social value, that is socially determined and acts as a social force (Liebig, 2016). Social conditions at a macro level (gender equality at work) are linked to well-being outcomes in society (peoples' satisfaction with life) through distributive justice attitudes (chances to get a job – perceived job opportunities). Jasso with colleagues (2016) state that accumulation of reliable knowledge about above mentioned processes is a challenge.

Gender equality index helps to see how far countries are from reaching gender equality. “The score is based on the gaps between women and men and levels of achievement in six core domains – work, money, knowledge, time, power and health” (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020, p. 2). So, it is a composite indicator based on statistical data that varies across different European Union (EU) countries (e.g., 52.2 in Greece and 83.8 in Sweden) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020a). Gender equality at work represents macro level social conditions that are related to justice attitudes and positive outcomes (Liebig, 2016). In this research, a particular domain of gender equality at work that measures the extent to which women and men can benefit from equal access to employment and good working conditions is chosen for further analysis.

Regarding Adriaans and colleagues (2020) review, structural conditions at the macro level (e.g., gender equality level) should be related to justice attitudes at the micro level. Distributive justice is defined as perceived fairness of the outcomes: what outcomes are allocated to individuals and how are these distributed within a society (Liebig *et al.*, 2018). Besides, distributive justice evaluations involve a self-referential comparison when one's outcomes are compared with those received by others (Dulebohn *et al.*, 2016). Job opportunities as significant outcomes for working individuals represent the perception of social allocations (Liebig *et al.*, 2018). Structural conditions in different countries could influence them significantly. However, perception of job opportunities may differ by sociodemographic

characteristics of employees, too. Job opportunities are an especially sensitive question for female managers. European Institute for Gender Equality (2020a) emphasizes, that although the full-time equivalent employment rate has increased for women, gender segregation in education and the EU labour market is a persistent problem. Moreover, women are underrepresented in leadership positions (with reference to European Commission: in April 2019, women accounted for just 27.8% of board members of the largest publicly listed companies registered in EU countries). It is proved that the business sector presents the greatest challenges, barriers hindering gender equality and inclusion (Kalaitzi *et al.*, 2017). The other side of this inequality issue is about the perception of justice. Research confirmed significant gender differences in justice evaluations based on evidence from fMRI: neural activity was greater for females than males during consideration of distributive justice information (Dulebohn *et al.*, 2016). It means that women react more to (un)fairness. Therefore, gender and management position could moderate the relationship between justice and wellbeing.

Fairness judgments are related to individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions (Greenberg and Colquitt, 2005). Wellbeing and, in particular, life satisfaction is shaped by one's perception of just world (Harding *et al.*, 2020), especially by distributive justice for self (Lucas *et al.*, 2016). However, the question how perception of distributive justice is related to subjective wellbeing of employees, especially female managers, still lacks a clear answer. Previous research (e.g., Harding *et al.*, 2020) showed either no significant effects or very low effect sizes of demographic factors in the analysis of justice beliefs and life satisfaction. But scientists are still disputing about possible significant interactions of demographics with other variables in justice research (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001). Moreover, cultural differences in justice beliefs that should promote wellness need further investigation (Lucas *et al.*, 2016). Justice attitudes and their links with behavior were researched more often in behavioral economics (Clark, Ambrosio, 2015). However, psychological research is needed to focus on the perception of justice (especially in the discriminated groups of people) to predict the consequences of inequalities within societies. For example, prolonged experiences of injustice can lead to psychological and even physiological health problems (Schunck *et al.*, 2015). Besides, it is believed that people perceive inequalities differently according to their subjective position in society, at work (Fatke, 2018). So, it is important to identify factors that generate variations in social justice attitudes.

Therefore, relationships among social conditions (gender equality index), justice attitudes (perceived distributive justice related to job opportunities) and wellbeing outcomes (satisfaction with life) are investigated in this study. Additionally, sociodemographic factors such as gender and management position are included as significant moderators for mentioned relationships. Identification of macro and micro conditions that produce the greatest societal wellbeing in EU countries could propose means of coping with growing inequalities and heterogeneities in society. Moreover, as societies become more economically advanced and powerful, they are more concerned with wellbeing issues (Meindl *et al.*, 2019). However, evidence-based recommendations for the increase of employees' wellbeing are still more focused on individual and organizational factors, e.g., Job demands resources theory (Bakker, Demerouti, 2017). Organizational psychology research of justice in work life is also concentrated on organizational justice and restricted to inside processes (e.g. resource allocation norms in organizations) (Virtanen, Elovainio, 2018; Colquitt, 2012). Therefore, micro and macro level indicators of justice together with significant moderators could propose additional insights for wellbeing theory and suggestions for social policy.

1. Theoretical background and hypotheses

Gender Equality index, employees perceived distributive justice and wellbeing

“Justice is socially determined because whether something is regarded as just depends on the social structures and processes of a society” (Liebig *et al.*, 2018, p. 5). However, previous cross-cultural comparisons (in the USA, Canada, India and China) revealed no mean differences in beliefs about distributive justice for self (Lucas *et al.*, 2016). According to Kossek and Buzzanell (2018), precisely the gender cultural context matters for the support and even impact of initiatives on gender equality outcomes. It should be that smaller gaps between women and men in the country (considering achievements at work, money, knowledge, time, power and health, etc.) are related to higher perceived distributive justice among employees. With reference to Meindl and colleagues (2019), more egalitarian societies value equality/ need based distributions over equity/merit-based distributions. As gender equality gained a marked increase in support for some time in EU, employees’ perceived job opportunities should reflect the real situation of gender equality in the work domain in the country.

H1: We presume that higher gender equality at work is related to higher perceived job opportunities of employees.

Furthermore, previous research indicates that distributive justice is related to subjective wellbeing. The subjective dimension of wellbeing relates to a person’s experience of the quality of their life (Hupert *et al.*, 2005). Believing that the world is fair significantly contributes to more positive experiences of ones’ life (Harding *et al.*, 2020). Di Martino and Prilleltensky (2020) confirmed that social justice was highly related to life satisfaction. Moreover, satisfaction with life represents a cognitive aspect of the personal hedonic approach of wellbeing (Hupert *et al.*, 2005). Evaluation of justice is a cognitive task as well (Dulebohn *et al.*, 2016). Finally, recent organizational research noted that fair job opportunities and organizational justice were important antecedents of employees’ wellbeing (Majumdar, Kumar, 2022; Ahmed, Ishak, Kamil, 2021). Contrary, the lack of organizational justice was related to work stress and health impairment (Perez-Rodriguez, Topa & Belendez, 2019). With reference to Silla *et al.* (2008), job insecurity was related to poor wellbeing. Moreover, perceived employability moderated the relationship between job insecurity and life satisfaction (Silla *et al.*, 2008).

H2: We presume that higher perceived job opportunities are related to higher satisfaction with life in the employees’ sample.

Subsequently, it should be noted that gender equality at work could be related to employees’ satisfaction with life directly and through perceived job opportunities. As Ciziceno and Travaglino (2019) illustrated, perceived corruption had an indirect effect on life satisfaction through institutional trust. Macro contextual factors act through micro individual ones. For example, the effect of gender equality on wellbeing is explained using need fulfilment as an intermediate structure (Batz and Tay, 2018).

H3: We presume that higher gender equality at work is directly related to higher satisfaction with life and through a mediator – employees’ perceived job opportunities.

Gender and management position as moderators of justice effects to employees’ wellbeing

It is approved that research on women’s career equality and leadership can advance social justice, equal employment opportunity and even global and national economic goals (Kossek & Buzzanell, 2018). However, we still have inconclusive results about gender as a moderator in the relationship between justice and attitudinal, affective, or behavioral outcomes

(Dulebohn *et al.*, 2016). Besides, the influence of management position is more often analyzed in the context of procedural justice (Dulebohn *et al.*, 2016). Moderation analysis that includes sociodemographic factors could propose a richer perspective for justice research (Nowakowski and Conlon, 2005). Therefore, we add gender and management position into our research as significant factors that could moderate the relationship between gender equality index, perceived distributive justice and wellbeing. Dulebohn *et al.* (2016) stated that females reacted more to distributive (un)fairness. So, the links between gender equality, perceived distributive justice and wellbeing should be stronger for females, especially for female managers who have already had an experience of challenging way to leadership career.

H4: The final presumption is that management position and gender moderate the relationship between gender equality at work and perceived job opportunities as well as perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life, so that the positive relationship between gender equality at work, perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life is stronger for females versus males (H4a), and so that positive relationship between gender equality at work, perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life is stronger for managers versus nonmanagers (H4b).

To put it in the frames of the moderated mediation model, we presumed that gender and management position moderated the strength of the indirect links between gender equality at work and satisfaction with life via perceived job opportunities, in such a way that the relationships of mediation were stronger (or weaker) where gender and possession of management position were different. A conceptual diagram of the model that represents the elaborated links between justice and wellbeing is proposed in Figure 1.

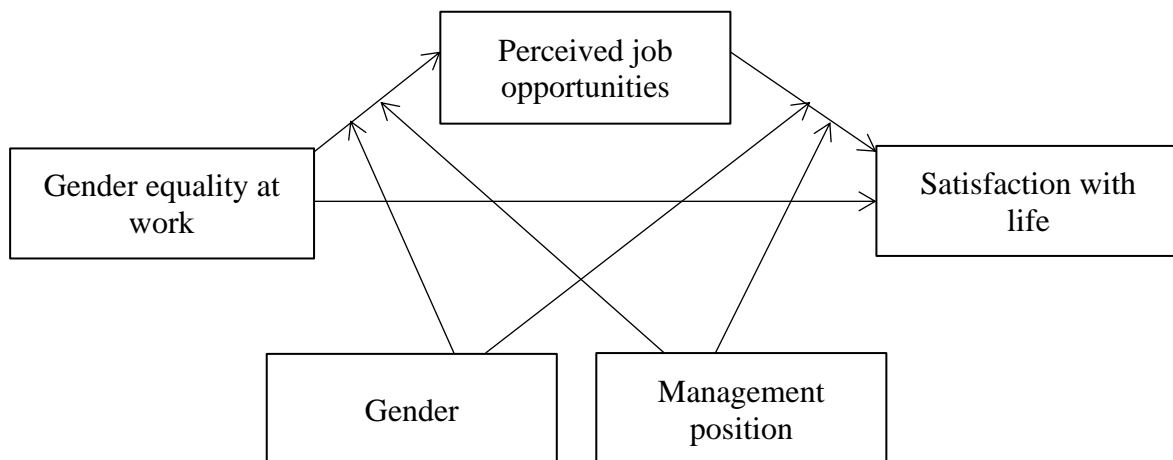


Figure 1. A diagram of the conceptual model

Source: *own compilation*

2. Methodological approach

2.1. Data collection and sample

The European Social Survey (ESS) Round 9 data (3.1 edition) (European Social Survey, 2018b) was used to analyze relationships between gender equality index, employees' perception of distributive justice and their wellbeing in EU countries. ESS is a cross-national survey that has been conducted in Europe every two years since 2001. It provides high-quality comparative data on Europeans' attitudes, beliefs and behavior. ESS Round 9 data were

collected during late 2018 and early 2019 through computer-assisted personal (face-to-face) interviewing. Respondents were selected by using strict random probability methods.

According to the aim of this study, the sample consisted of 20 013 respondents (49.3% female) aged 18 and older (mean age – 44.8 years, std. dev. – 12.365) from 23 EU countries that participated in ESS round 9. Less than a third (29.6%) of the respondents reported holding a management position at different types of organizations: central or local government – 10.1%; other public sector – 11.8; a state-owned enterprise – 5.7%; a private firm – 60.5%; self-employed – 10.1% and other – 1.8%. Respondents reported being responsible for supervising from 1 to 500 people (mean – 15.0, std. dev. – 40.886).

2.2. Measures and variables

Perceived distributive justice related to job opportunities was measured by asking participants to evaluate how fair, compared to other people in their country, are their personal chances to get a job they seek by using a Likert scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely). Using the content of the ESS questionnaire, we have chosen to measure respondents' satisfaction with life as a representation of their subjective well-being. Thus, respondents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with their life as a whole on an 11-point Likert scale, where 0 meant *extremely dissatisfied* and 10 – *extremely satisfied*. Management position was measured by asking each respondent if they are responsible for supervising other employees in their current job (yes/no).

While the above-mentioned items were included in the ESS questionnaire, gender equality at work was not. Thus, in this study, we used the domain of work of the Gender Equality index, developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which was acknowledged as a reliable tool to measure gender equality in the EU (European Institute for Gender, 2020b). The work domain of Gender Equality index measures women's and men's equality in accessing employment and good working conditions. It consists of 2 sub-domains: segregation and quality of work, and participation. Each country was given a score from 0 to 100. A higher score means higher gender equality in the work area. According to the period of ESS round 9 data collection (2018/2019), we used scores of the 2020 Gender equality index that was mostly collected in 2018 for the analysis. The overall score of equality at work for the EU in 2018 was 72.2. More information about the Gender equality index and its domains can be found at <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020>.

2.3. Data analysis

The ESS data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 and Hayes' PROCESS macro (version 3.5) for testing moderated mediation (Hayes, 2018). Normality tests showed that data related to the evaluation of gender equality at work, perceived job opportunities, and satisfaction with life were close to a normal distribution, based on the assessment of skewness and kurtosis for large samples (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012; Gravettwer & Wallnau, 2014; Islam, 2019; Kim, 2013).

We treated the variables of perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life as continuous variables because the study sample is big; Likert scales have many categories and meet other assumptions of chosen analysis methods (Norman, 2010; Awang, Afthanorhan & Mamt, 2016; Wu & Leung, 2017). Gender equality at work was originally a continuous variable, and gender and management position were dichotomous. Pearson correlation was used to test the relationships between all study variables before the analysis of moderated mediation. When testing moderated mediation, a dummy variable was created for dichotomous moderators

(gender, management position). All other independent variables were mean centered to alleviate multicollinearity and to improve the interpretation of regression coefficients (Iacobucci et al., 2016). The mean-centering procedure was chosen instead of standardization because it is more common in moderated mediation models and is integrated into Hayes' PROCESS macro, which helps to avoid technical errors when applying the procedure in a dataset with missing values.

R² change (extra variance explained) was calculated to get a moderation effect and an effect size. To explore the nature of the interactions, simple slope tests were calculated; significant interactions were also plotted. Bootstrap samples of 10 000 and a confidence interval of 95 % were selected for analysis. The chosen statistical significance level was 0.05. Indices of the indirect effect of moderated mediation were considered statistically significant if the 95% CI, estimated using the bootstrap method, did not include zero.

All data were weighted by post-stratification weight in combination with population sign weight. This procedure "corrects for differential selection probabilities within each country as specified by sample design, for nonresponse, for noncoverage, and sampling error related to the four post-stratification variables (gender, age, education, geographical region), and takes into account differences in population size across countries" (Kaminska, 2020, p.4).

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive statistics and primary analysis

Means, standard deviations, and Pearson's correlations of the dependent, independent variable, and mediator were calculated (see Table I).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables

	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Gender equality at work	71.245	4.485	1		
2. Perceived job opportunities	6.29	2.627	0.212***	1	
3. Satisfaction with life	7.29	1.927	0.118***	0.293***	1

Note: ***p<0.001

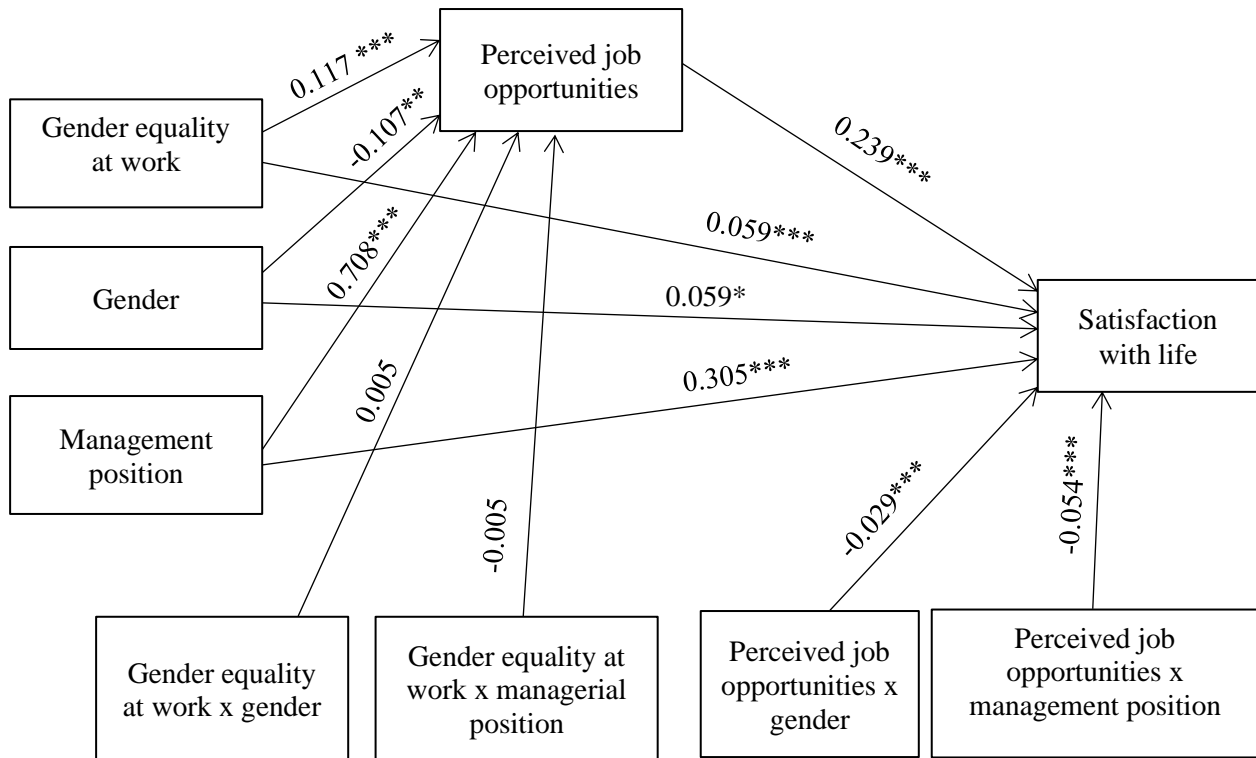
Source: own calculation

As expected, gender equality at work positively correlated with perceived job opportunities, satisfaction with life positively correlated with gender equality at work, and perceived job opportunities. It means that the higher gender equality at work in a country, the higher employees' perceived job opportunities are. Additionally, the higher employees' perceived job opportunities and gender equality at work, the higher their satisfaction with life is. All bivariate correlations were statistically significant (p<0.001).

3.2. Moderated mediation effects

The results of moderated mediation model are presented in Figure 2. The results showed the significant direct positive effect of gender equality at work to satisfaction with life ($\beta = 0.059$, S.E.= 0.0029, CI = [0.0534; 0.0649], p<0.001). As gender equality at work on the country level increases, employees' life satisfaction increases as well. Besides, employees' perceived job opportunities mediated the relationship between gender equality at work and satisfaction with life. As gender equality at work increases, so do employees' perceived job opportunities ($\beta = 0.117$, S.E.= 0.0063, CI= [0.1050; 0.1297], p<0.001), and as perceived job

opportunities increase, so does employees' life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.239$, S.E.= 0.0081, CI=[0.2226; 0.2543], $p < 0.001$) (see Figure 2 and Table 2).



Notes: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Figure 2. The effect of employees' gender and management position on the relationship between gender equality at work and satisfaction with life via perceived job opportunities

Source: own compilation

With reference to results, gender and management position had a direct relationship with perceived job opportunities. Males perceive their job opportunities as higher compared to other people in a country ($\beta = -0.107$, S.E.= 0.0367, CI = [-0.1788; -0.0348], $p = 0.0036$) than females. Managers also perceive their job opportunities more positively than people without management positions ($\beta = 0.708$, S.E.= 0.0408, CI = [0.6278; 0.7877], $p < 0.001$). However, gender and management position did not moderate the relationship between gender equality at work and perceived job opportunities.

Both gender and management position had a direct relationship to satisfaction with life. It means, that females and managers are more satisfied with life than males ($\beta = 0.059$, S.E.= 0.0262, CI = [0.0072; 0.1098], $p = 0.0254$) and employees without management positions ($\beta = 0.305$, S.E.= 0.0294, CI = [0.2474; 0.3626], $p < 0.001$). Moreover, gender and management position moderated the relationship between perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life ($\beta = -0.029$, S.E.= 0.0100, CI = [-0.0483; -0.0093], $p = 0.0038$ and $\beta = -0.054$, S.E.= 0.0113, CI = [-0.0763; -0.0319], $p < 0.001$ respectively).

Table 2. The effect of gender and management position on the relationship between gender equality at work and satisfaction with life via perceived job opportunities

Predictors	β	Est./S.E.	t	95% CI	p value
Perceived job opportunities					
Gender equality at work	0.117	0.0063	18.5967	[0.1050; 0.1297]	<0.001
Gender	-0.107	0.0367	-2.9075	[-0.1788; -0.0348]	0.0036
Gender equality at work x gender	0.005	0.0080	0.6650	[-0.0140; 0.0211]	0.5061
Management position	0.708	0.0408	17.3448	[0.6278; 0.7877]	<0.001
Gender equality at work x management position	-0.005	0.0090	-0.5821	[-0.0230; 0.0124]	0.5605
F	271.1381***				
R ²	0.0655				
Satisfaction with life					
Gender equality at work	0.059	0.0029	20.2482	[0.0534; 0.0649]	<0.001
Perceived job opportunities	0.239	0.0081	29.4368	[0.2226; 0.2543]	<0.001
Gender	0.059	0.0262	2.2356	[0.0072; 0.1098]	0.0254
Perceived job opportunities x gender	-0.029	0.0100	-2.8911	[-0.0483; -0.0093]	0.0038
Managerial position	0.305	0.0294	10.3844	[0.2474; 0.3626]	<0.001
Perceived job opportunities x management position	-0.054	0.0113	-4.7715	[-0.0763; -0.0319]	<0.001
F	486.7866***				
R ²	0.1312				

Notes: CI – Confidence Interval; 95% CI also presented for unstandardised coefficients

Source: own calculation

Simple slope tests indicated that the relationship between perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life was weaker for females than males and managers than non-managers (see Figure 3 and Figure 4.) However, the effect size of interactions was small, though significant (see Table 3).

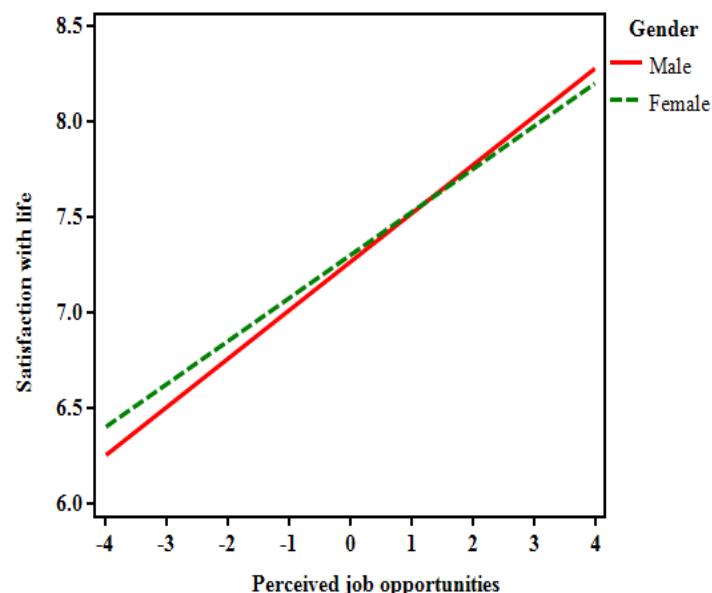


Figure 3. The effect of employees' gender for the relationship between perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life



Figure 4. The effect of possession of management position for the relationship between employees' perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life

Table 3. The effect size and significance of moderation effects on the relationship between perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life

<i>Unconditional interactions</i>	ΔR^2	F	P
Perceived job opportunities x gender	0.0004	8.3585	0.0038
Perceived job opportunities x managerial position	0.0010	22.7672	<0.001
Both	0.0013	14.2586	<0.001

Source: *own calculation*

So, the moderation effect of gender and management position was significant only on the second part of the moderated mediation model, i.e., employees' gender and management position moderated the mediating effect of perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life. Conditional effects were significant on different moderator values ($p < 0.001$).

Conditional indirect effects of the gender equality index on satisfaction with life for different moderator values are presented in Table 4. As we can see from the table, the conditional indirect effect as well as the total effect was the strongest for males without management position, and weakest for females with management position.

Table 4. The total, direct and conditional indirect effects of gender equality at work on employees' satisfaction with life for different moderator values

	Effect	SE	CI	
<i>Direct effect</i>	0.0592	0.0029	[0.0534; 0.0649]	
<i>Indirect effects</i>	Effect	BootSE	BootCI	Total effect
Males without management position	0.0280	0.0018	[0.0246; 0.0316]	0.0872
Males with management position	0.0207	0.0019	[0.0172; 0.0243]	0.0799
Females without management position	0.0257	0.0017	[0.0225; 0.0291]	0.0849
Females with management position	0.0183	0.0020	[0.0145; 0.0222]	0.0775

Note: CI – Confidence Interval

Source: *own calculation*

Conclusions and discussion

This article evaluated what micro and macro factors related to justice are important for employees' wellbeing. Relationships among gender equality at work on the country level, employees' perceived job opportunities and their satisfaction with life were investigated. It was presumed that perceived job opportunities should mediate the relationship between gender equality at work and employees' satisfaction with life. Additionally, employees' gender and management position were included in the analysis as factors that could significantly affect mentioned relationships. Data from a large-scale study were used to verify elaborated model of relationships between justice and wellbeing.

Our results on relationships among the main research variables are broadly consistent with other scientific studies (e.g., Di Martino and Prilleltensky, 2020; Harding *et al.*, 2020; Kossek and Buzzanell, 2018). As gender equality at work increases, so do employees' perceived job opportunities, and as perceived job opportunities increase, so does employees' life satisfaction. A more thorough analysis of data allows the conclusion that employees' perceived job opportunities mediate the relationship between gender equality at work and their satisfaction with life. Macro context acts through the micro level justice factor. This is similar to Ciziceno and Travaglino's (2019) research that provided evidence for the hypothesized indirect effect of perceived corruption on life satisfaction through institutional trust. In addition, our findings indicate the direct effect of gender equality at work on employees' life satisfaction. As gender equality at work on the country level increases, employees' life satisfaction increases as well. De Looze *et al.* (2017) confirmed that even adolescents had a higher life satisfaction when living in countries with high levels of gender equality. All this may be considered a promising explanation of employees' satisfaction with life using both contextual (country-specific) and individual factors related to justice.

Apart from this, research results confirmed that employees' gender and management position had a direct effect on perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life. Managers perceive their job opportunities more positively and are more satisfied with life in comparison with nonmanagers. Zimmermann and Wanzenried (2019, p. 51) discuss that "management jobs are generally associated with an above-average amount of responsibilities, interesting work duties with decision power, financial benefits, and social prestige." Their research showed that management position had a positive effect on life satisfaction, and it was stronger for males than females. Our study also confirms gender differences: males perceive their job opportunities as higher than other people in a country than females, but females are more satisfied with their lives than males. With reference to Einarsdottir *et al.*'s (2018) qualitative study, despite different actions on gender equality, women are not very confident about their career, especially about a chance of a top-management position. Nevertheless, they are satisfied with life, and this conclusion is consistent with the research across 166 countries (Joshanloo & Jovanović, 2020).

Furthermore, our results showed that employees' gender and management position acted as moderators in the relationship between perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life. Contrary to our expectations, this relationship was weaker for females than males and managers than non-managers. It could be that women emphasize other determinants of their life satisfaction than job opportunities. Besides, managers have already experienced success in making a career; therefore, job opportunities are less important to their life satisfaction. This moderation effect of gender and management position is significant only on the second part of the moderated mediation model, i.e., employees' gender and management position moderate the mediating effect of perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life. However, gender and management position do not moderate the relationship between gender equality at work and perceived job opportunities. It means that sociodemographic characteristics of employees are more important when analysing the relationship between individual-level constructs:

perceived job opportunities and satisfaction with life. Whereas Tominc *et al.* (2017) found that perceived gender equality in organizations positively affected perceived satisfaction with employment position and career both among women and male managers.

The paper concludes by arguing that both higher equal opportunities at work on the country level and higher employees' perceived job opportunities relate to higher satisfaction with life. Further, employees' gender and management position should be included as significant factors when analyzing these relationships and suggesting practical implications.

The paper suggests three significant theoretical contributions. First of all, employees' wellbeing is explained by justice phenomenon, also adding insights to exogeneity trend of justice research. Evidence how justice might affect employees' wellbeing is provided using large scale study – European Social Survey. Secondly, different sources for justice evaluation are applied: gender equality at work from 2020 Gender equality index on the country level and perceived job opportunities from ESS on the individual level. Finally, elaborated model with micro and macro factors of justice related to employees' wellbeing and significant sociodemographic moderators is investigated.

Research results provide a basis for practical recommendations, as well. Firstly, EU countries should continue to elaborate formal documents about gender equality at work and also take particular actions for their implementation. Perceived job opportunities and life satisfaction are higher in countries with higher gender equality at work index. The extent to which women and men can benefit from equal access to employment and good working conditions really matters. Moreover, distributive justice related to job opportunities is significant for employees' satisfaction with life. According to Dulebohn and colleagues (2016), managers need to take into account that distributive justice can be achieved both by adhering to fairness rules and conveying accurate information about others' outcomes. When individuals can use this information in their social comparison and evaluation processes, uncertainty regarding the appropriateness of their received outcome reduces. As research results proved, perceived job opportunities were even more crucial for males' and nonmanagers' satisfaction with life than females' and managers'. Therefore, both country-level actions and organizational interventions related to justice are welcomed in order to cope with the rise of economic inequality and produce greater societal wellbeing in EU countries

The current study also comes with limitations, several of which offer opportunities for future work. We had a high standard deviation between the number of employees for whom the respondent is supervising. Besides, moderation effect sizes of this moderated mediation model were quite low. One item measure was used for distributive justice and employees' wellbeing. Research should be repeated using multidimensional instruments, as well. Moreover, only one aspect of wellbeing – life satisfaction, was analyzed in the research, so, further studies could be performed to explain eudemonic side of wellbeing. Finally, the analysis was made using sample of EU countries, so our findings may not be generalizable in other cultural and geographical contexts (e.g., African, Asian or Middle Eastern contexts).

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