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# Is a Talented Employee Happy? Talent and Life Satisfaction Among European Team Workers

Czy utalentowany pracownik jest szczęśliwy?  
Talent i satysfakcja z życia wśród europejskich  
pracowników zespołowych

## Abstract

This article presents a study of employees in small and medium-sized companies, specifically team members, in terms of their talent and life satisfaction. The main objective of the research was to assess the specific links between talent and life satisfaction in employees from five European countries. The study surveyed 298 individuals from Flanders (N = 69), Cyprus (N = 52), the Czech Republic (N = 61), Poland (N = 54), and the UK (N = 62) using the Satisfaction With Life Scale – SWLS and the ComTal-Team Member Scale, an electronic tool that measures the components of talent: competence, commitment, and contribution. Employees of small and medium-sized companies show a positive correlation between talent and life satisfaction. Differences in talent components and dimensions exist among team members from different European countries.

**Keywords:** team member talent, life satisfaction, talent management

## Abstrakt

W artykule przedstawiono badania dotyczące pracowników małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw, a konkretnie członków zespołów, pod kątem ich talentu i zadowolenia z życia. Głównym celem badań była ocena konkretnych powiązań między talentem a zadowoleniem z życia pracowników z pięciu krajów europejskich. W badaniu wzięło udział 298 osób z Flandrii (N = 69), Cypru (N = 52), Czech

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(N = 61), Polski (N = 54) i Wielkiej Brytanii (N = 62). Wykorzystano w nim skalę satysfakcji z życia (Satisfaction With Life Scale – SWLS) oraz skalę ComTal-Team Member Scale, elektroniczne narzędzie mierzące składniki talentu: kompetencje, zaangażowanie i wkład. Pracownicy małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw wykazują pozytywną korelację między talentem a satysfakcją z życia. Istnieją różnice w składnikach i wymiarach talentu wśród członków zespołów z różnych krajów europejskich.

**Słowa kluczowe:** talent członków zespołu, satysfakcja z życia, zarządzanie talentami

## Introduction

Processes associated with globalisation have changed the traditional model of hiring and managing a company to, among other things, searching for experts in a specific field who are located anywhere in the world. This phenomenon, referred to by Jonathan Younger and Norm Smallwood<sup>1</sup> as agile talent, highlights the importance of an employee's talent, i.e., their specific competencies required for the job. Talent management has become one of the core strategies through which an organisations – referred to as branded talent developers – can remain competitive in the marketplace in the era of the “war for talent.”<sup>2</sup>

Employee talent is understood in very different ways. A systematic review of definitions and theoretical concepts of this phenomenon has been carried out by Eva Gallardo-Gallardo, Nicky Dries, and Tomás Gonzales-Cruz.<sup>3</sup> One of the more interesting concepts that emerged from the authors' practical experience is that of Dave Ulrich and Norman Smallwood,<sup>4</sup> where employee talent is understood as the result of competence, commitment and contribution

talent = competence × commitment × contribution.

Competence refers to the knowledge, skills and values that are useful in performing a job. However, if an employee is competent but not engaged, he or she is not effective. A competent and committed employee was considered to be a talented employee. However, Ulrich and Smallwood note that competence (ability to do the job) and commitment (willingness to do the job) without the employee discovering the purpose and meaning of the work (contribution) does not allow one to speak of talent. Employees should feel that their personal needs are met through active participation in the organisation and that the

<sup>1</sup> J. Younger, N. Smallwood, *Managing On-Demand Talent*, “Harvard Business School Cases” 2022, p. 1–1109.

<sup>2</sup> J. Younger, N. Smallwood, D. Ulrich, *Developing Your Organization's Brand as a Talent Developer*, “Human Resource Planning” 2007, no. 30 (2), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> E. Gallardo-Gallardo, N. Dries, T.F. González-Cruz, *What Is the Meaning of ‘Talent’ in the World of Work?*, “Human Resource Management Review” 2013, no. 23 (4), p. 290–300.

<sup>4</sup> D. Ulrich, N. Smallwood, *What is Talent?*, “Leader to Leader” 2012, no. 63, p. 59–60.

time they devote to the organisation is meaningful. The three components of talent – competence, commitment and contribution – are multiplicative, not additive. A talented employee must therefore be qualified, willing and able to see meaning, which is a challenge for management.<sup>5</sup> An employee who feels that the organisation makes use of his or her strengths and competencies is satisfied at work. Therefore, developing and incorporating the talents of employees into management is key in increasing employee satisfaction and productivity. Motivation based on financial rewards is no longer sufficient for effective team management. People need opportunities to show initiative and creativity. In addition, the younger generation of employees (millennials) are used to being independent, quick to find the information they need, confident, flexible and critical of the world around them. The challenge for today's managers is therefore not simply to motivate employees, but to encourage their self-expression so that they can make the most of their talents and achieve results of which they themselves would be proud.<sup>6</sup>

Talent management fosters attachment and rootedness in the company and a willingness to make sacrifices to achieve the company's goals.<sup>7</sup> In addition, employees with high potential have a better perception of relationships within the company.<sup>8</sup> The development of employees' talents and their use within the organisation leads to an increase in their job satisfaction.<sup>9</sup>

Previous research suggests that one's work functioning and leadership style can both positively and negatively impact life satisfaction.<sup>10</sup> This is consistent with spillover theory, which proposes a mutual interaction between job satisfaction and life satisfaction.<sup>11</sup> Life satisfaction is the overall perception of an

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 60; D. Ulrich, N. Smallwood, *Capitalizing on Capabilities*, "Harvard Business Review" 2004, no. 82 (6), p. 119–127.

<sup>6</sup> D. Maruska, J. Perry, *Take Charge of Your Talent: Three Keys to Thriving in Your Career*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., San Francisco 2013.

<sup>7</sup> A. Narayanan, *Talent Management and Employee Retention: Implications of Job Embeddedness – a Research Agenda*, "Journal of Strategic Human Resource Management" 2016, no. 5 (2), p. 34–40.

<sup>8</sup> J. Gelens, J. Hofmans, N. Dries et al., *Talent Management and Organisational Justice: Employee Reactions to High Potential Identification*, "Human Resource Management Journal" 2014, no. 24 (2), p. 159–175.

<sup>9</sup> D. Maruska, J. Perry, *Talent Development for the Twenty-First Century*, "Leader to Leader" 2013, no. 70, p. 290–300.

<sup>10</sup> B. Erdogan, T.N. Bauer, D.M. Truxillo, L.R. Mansfield, *Whistle While You Work: A Review of the Life Satisfaction Literature*, "Journal of Management" 2012, no. 38 (4), p. 1038–1083; R.D. Iverson, C. Maguire, *The Relationship between Job and Life Satisfaction: Evidence from a Remote Mining Community*, "Human Relations" 2000, no. 53 (6), p. 807–839.

<sup>11</sup> A.B. Bakker, E. Demerouti, M.F. Dollard, *How Job Demands Affect Partners' Experience of Exhaustion: Integrating Work-Family Conflict and Crossover Theory*, "Journal of Applied Psychology" 2008, no. 93 (4), p. 901–911; N.A. Bowling, K.J. Eschleman, Q. Wang, *A Meta-Analytic Examination of the Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Subjective Well-Being*, "Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology" 2010, no. 83 (4), p. 915–934; M.S. Schulz, P.A. Cowan, C. Pape Cowan

individual's life, taking into account their talents, productivity, and ability to cope with everyday stressors.<sup>12</sup> It is influenced by satisfaction in various areas of life, such as family, friendships, work, and leisure.<sup>13</sup> Education and the quality of interpersonal relationships are among the determinants of subjective life satisfaction. According to Ma. del Mar Salinas-Jimenez, Joaquin Artes and Javier Salinas-Jimenez,<sup>14</sup> higher education is associated with higher life satisfaction. Christoph Pieh, Teresa O'Rourke, Sanja Budimir and Thomas Probst<sup>15</sup> found that the quality of interpersonal relationships also plays a role in determining life satisfaction. Attention is also drawn to gender differences in the predictors of life satisfaction. According to Mohsen Joshanloo's research,<sup>16</sup> socio-political, employment-related, and education-related variables are generally more important in determining life satisfaction in men, while variables related to marital status and interpersonal relationships are more important in women.

Shigehiro Oishi, Ed Diener, Richard Lucas, and Eunkook Suh<sup>17</sup> conducted a cross-cultural study on the determinants of life satisfaction. In Study 1, which involved 39 nations and N = 54,446 participants, they found that financial satisfaction was more strongly associated with life satisfaction in poorer nations, whereas home life satisfaction was more strongly related to life satisfaction in wealthier nations. Study 2 (39 nations, N = 6,782) found that satisfaction with esteem needs, such as the self and freedom, predicted global life satisfaction more strongly among individuals in individualist nations than those in collectivist nations. These studies suggest the need for research that accounts for both culture-specific and universal predictors of life satisfaction.

Assessing the relationship between employee talent and life satisfaction is an interesting topic, particularly as research in this area is missing. Previous studies

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et al., *Coming Home Upset: Gender, Marital Satisfaction, and the Daily Spillover of Workday Experience Into Couple Interactions*, "Journal of Family Psychology" 2004, no. 18 (1), p. 250–263.

<sup>12</sup> H.P. Dinh, P. Van Nguyen, T.V.A. Trinh et al., *Roles of Religiosity in Enhancing Life Satisfaction, Ethical Judgements and Consumer Loyalty*, "Cogent Business & Management" 2022, no. 9 (1), p. 1–15.

<sup>13</sup> W. Pavot, E. Diener, *The Satisfaction With Life Scale and the Emerging Construct of Life Satisfaction*, "Journal of Positive Psychology" 2008, no. 3 (2), p. 137–152.

<sup>14</sup> M. del Mar Salinas-Jimenez, J. Artes, J. Salinas-Jimenez, *Education as a Positional Good: A Life Satisfaction Approach*, "Social Indicators Research" 2011, vol. 103, p. 409–426.

<sup>15</sup> C. Pieh, T. O'Rourke, S. Budimir, T. Probst, *Relationship Quality and Mental Health During COVID-19 Lockdown*, "PLOS ONE" 2020, no. 15 (9), DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0257118.

<sup>16</sup> M. Joshanloo, *Gender Differences in the Predictors of Life Satisfaction across 150 Nations*, "Personality and Individual Differences" 2018, vol. 135, p. 312–315.

<sup>17</sup> S. Oishi, E. Diener, R.E. Lucas, E.M. Suh, *Cross-Cultural Variations in Predictors of Life Satisfaction: Perspectives from Needs and Values*, in: *Culture and Well-Being: The Collected Works of Ed Diener*, ed. E. Diener, Social Indicators Research Series, vol. 38, Springer Science + Business Media, Dordrecht 2009, p. 109–127, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2352-0\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2352-0_6) (accessed: 29.05.2025).

have focused on talent in relation to work-life balance<sup>18</sup> or have examined the link between talent and job satisfaction.<sup>19</sup>

The research aimed to establish a relationship between employee team members' talent in small and medium-sized companies and their overall life satisfaction, rather than job satisfaction as in previous studies. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate cross-cultural differences in the relationship between talent dimensions and life satisfaction among employees from Flanders, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland, and the United Kingdom. The study also aims to explore potential differences in the variables studied among team members from these countries.

The study posited three hypotheses:

H1: There are statistically significant differences in talent and life satisfaction dimensions among employees and team members from Flanders, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland, and the UK.

H2: The level of life satisfaction among employees and team members of small and medium-sized companies is positively correlated with their level of talent.

H3: The correlation pattern between talent dimensions and life satisfaction varies among Flanders, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland, and the UK.

## Materials and Method

### Participants and procedures

The study was conducted using electronic means. A total of 298 individuals participated in the survey, with 58.1% of them being female. Of these individuals, 69 (23.2%) were from Flanders (FL), 52 (17.4%) from Cyprus (CY), 61 (20.5%) from the Czech Republic (CZ), 54 (18.1%) from Poland (PL), and 62 (20.8%) from the United Kingdom (UK). Table 1 presents the specific characteristics of the study group. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the

<sup>18</sup> M. Deery, L. Jago, *Revisiting Talent Management, Work-Life Balance and Retention Strategies*, "International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management" 2015, no. 27 (3), p. 453–472; E. Wahyudi, M. Djamil, N. Kemalasari et al., *Effect of Talent Management, Work Life Balance and Organizational Commitment on Employee Performance and Job Satisfaction as Intervening Variables in PT. Tuv Nord Indonesia*, "Dinasti International Journal of Management Science" 2022, no. 3 (6), p. 1032–1046.

<sup>19</sup> N.E. Barkhuizen, B. Gumede, *The Relationship between Talent Management, Job Satisfaction and Voluntary Turnover Intentions of Employees in a Selected Government Institution*, "South African Journal of Human Resource Management" 2021, no. 19 (1), p. 1–12; M.Y. Kamal, Z.M. Lukman, *The Influence of Talent Management Practices on Job Satisfaction*, "International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences" 2017, no. 7 (7), p. 859–864.

institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual adult participants included in the study.

Table 1. Characteristics of the studied group of team members

| Total                                  |                         | Country            |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                                        |                         | Total              | FL                | CY                | CZ                | PL                | UK                |
| Sex                                    | Female                  | N = 173<br>(58.1%) | N = 36<br>(52.2%) | N = 18<br>(34.6%) | N = 42<br>(68.9%) | N = 35<br>(64.8%) | N = 42<br>(67.7%) |
|                                        | Male                    | N = 125<br>(41.9%) | N = 33<br>(47.8%) | N = 34<br>(65.4%) | N = 19<br>(31.1%) | N = 19<br>(35.2%) | N = 20<br>(32.3%) |
| Age (years) – average                  |                         | 36,61              | 37.15             | 31.81             | 36.97             | 35.65             | 40.52             |
| Work experience (years) – average      |                         | 14,45              | 15.17             | 8.40              | 13.49             | 13.04             | 20.90             |
| Team work experience (years) – average |                         | 12,09              | 14.12             | 7.46              | 8.46              | 11.65             | 17.68             |
| Education                              | High School             | N = 107<br>(36.4%) | N = 25<br>(36.8%) | N = 10<br>(19.2%) | N = 11<br>(19.0%) | N = 29<br>(53.7%) | N = 32<br>(51.6%) |
|                                        | Bachelor's degree       | N = 89<br>(30.3%)  | N = 31<br>(45.6%) | N = 21<br>(40.4%) | N = 11<br>(19.0%) | N = 4<br>(7.4%)   | N = 22<br>(35.5%) |
|                                        | Master's degree         | N = 95<br>(32.3%)  | N = 12<br>(17.6%) | N = 21<br>(40.4%) | N = 34<br>(58.6%) | N = 21<br>(38.9%) | N = 7<br>(11.3%)  |
|                                        | PhD                     | N = 3<br>(1.0%)    | N = 0<br>(0%)     | N = 0<br>(0%)     | N = 2<br>(3.4%)   | N = 0<br>(0%)     | N = 1<br>(1.6%)   |
| Position in a team                     | Team manager            | N = 50<br>(17.1%)  | N = 11<br>(16.2%) | N = 7<br>(13.5%)  | N = 11<br>(18.3%) | N = 6<br>(11.1%)  | N = 15<br>(25.9%) |
|                                        | Non-managerial employee | N = 242<br>(82.9%) | N = 57<br>(83.8%) | N = 45<br>(86.5%) | N = 49<br>(81.7%) | N = 48<br>(88.9%) | N = 43<br>(74.1%) |

Source: Authors' own research.

The mean age was similar across all countries, ranging from 31.81 years in Cyprus to 40.52 years in the United Kingdom. The UK had the longest average work experience at 20.90, while CY had the shortest. The majority of respondents had a high school degree (36.4%) and were non-managerial employees (82.9%). The team managers were mostly from the UK.

## Measures

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS<sup>20</sup>) was used to assess employees' current satisfaction with their life in general. The SWLS consists of five questions, which are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. High scores indicate a high level of life satisfaction. The scale has high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .87$ ) and high test-retest reliability ( $r = .82$ ). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is .87, the highest in Poland ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

The Com-Tal Team Member Scale<sup>21</sup> was used to evaluate the talent of employees and team members. The method consists of 107 statements prepared in five different languages (English, Czech, Dutch, Greek, and Polish). The tool is an electronic questionnaire, and each individual is expected to evaluate each statement on a six-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The results are automatically calculated as a raw score, which is then transformed into a standardized scale. A detailed report is then generated for each participant. The tool enables the measurement of three general components and eighteen specific dimensions that describe team member talent. These components are competence, commitment, and contribution. Competence includes skills such as team working, problem-solving, coping with stress, leadership, lifelong learning, creativity, persistence, communication, and analytical thinking. Commitment includes persistence, self-confidence, responsibility, achievement orientation, proactivity, and motivation. Finally, contribution includes the meaningfulness of work, passion, and loyalty. The reliability coefficients of the scales ranged from .76 to .97 across the different language versions of the questionnaire. The Flemish version had coefficients ranging from .79 to .95, the Cypriot version from .77 to .94, the Czech version from .76 to .95, the Polish version from .87 to .97, and the British version from .77 to .95. The theoretical validity of the ComTal-Team Member was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis.

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<sup>20</sup> E. Diener, R.A. Emmons, R.J. Larsen et al., *The Satisfaction With Life Scale*, "Journal of Personality Assessment" 1985, no. 49 (1), p. 71–75.

<sup>21</sup> W. Talik, M. Wiechetek, A. Dean, *Jak mierzyć talent pracowników – członków zespołów? Metoda ComTal-Team Member*, "Organizacja i Kierowanie" 2018, no. 4, p. 199–214.

## Statistical analysis

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, percentage, and standard deviation, were used along with one-way ANOVA and Scheffe post hoc tests to determine effect size for independent samples. Additionally, *r*-Pearson correlation coefficients were used to assess differences between country groups. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ .

## Results

The analysis of the results is divided into two parts. The first part presents the differences in measured variables between countries. The second studies the relationship between life satisfaction and individual talent measures, and examines whether the strength of the correlation varies between employees from different countries. The resulting analyses revealed that the study groups differed in both life satisfaction and almost all talent dimensions (see Table 2). No statistically significant difference was noted in the dimensions of communication and coping with stress.

Table 2. Differences for Talent scores and Satisfaction with life among employees from five European countries

|                            | FL    |      | CY    |      | CZ    |      | PL    |      | UK    |      | F    | Df | p    | Eta2 | Post hoc                   |
|----------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|------|----|------|------|----------------------------|
|                            | M     | SD   | M     | SD   | M     | SD   | M     | SD   | M     | SD   |      |    |      |      |                            |
| Satisfaction with life     | 26.03 | 3.85 | 26.04 | 4.14 | 24.18 | 5.27 | 21.69 | 6.41 | 23.65 | 5.12 | 7.55 | 4  | .001 | .09  | FL:PL;<br>CY:PL            |
| Team working               | 30.81 | 2.78 | 31.48 | 3.26 | 29.69 | 3.19 | 29.30 | 4.26 | 31.21 | 2.90 | 4.80 | 4  | .001 | .06  | CY:PL;<br>PL:UK            |
| Problem-solving            | 28.99 | 2.70 | 29.65 | 3.31 | 27.59 | 3.87 | 27.52 | 3.88 | 29.18 | 2.97 | 4.76 | 4  | .001 | .06  | CY:CZ;<br>CY:PL            |
| Coping with stress         | 27.09 | 4.19 | 27.73 | 3.13 | 25.93 | 4.09 | 26.61 | 5.63 | 27.37 | 4.72 | 1.44 | 4  | .220 | .02  |                            |
| Leadership                 | 26.51 | 4.32 | 28.81 | 3.67 | 25.93 | 4.16 | 26.67 | 4.10 | 28.65 | 3.68 | 6.35 | 4  | .001 | .08  | BY:CY;<br>CY:CZ;<br>CZ:UK  |
| Lifelong learning          | 30.16 | 2.77 | 30.25 | 3.22 | 28.77 | 3.11 | 28.69 | 4.83 | 29.21 | 3.36 | 2.70 | 4  | .031 | .04  |                            |
| Creativity                 | 25.32 | 4.60 | 27.15 | 3.86 | 23.75 | 5.86 | 26.52 | 4.31 | 26.35 | 4.56 | 4.65 | 4  | .001 | .06  | CY:CZ;<br>CZ:PL            |
| Flexibility                | 29.45 | 2.91 | 29.56 | 3.13 | 28.80 | 2.94 | 29.19 | 3.88 | 31.27 | 3.10 | 5.46 | 4  | .001 | .07  | FL:UK;<br>CZ:UK;<br>PL:UK  |
| Communication              | 28.84 | 3.16 | 28.35 | 3.47 | 27.84 | 3.27 | 28.33 | 3.92 | 29.52 | 2.92 | 2.21 | 4  | .068 | .03  |                            |
| Analytical thinking        | 27.38 | 3.59 | 28.92 | 3.58 | 26.15 | 4.09 | 27.76 | 3.98 | 28.84 | 2.92 | 5.85 | 4  | .001 | .07  | CY:CZ;<br>CZ:UK;           |
| Competences (global score) | 28.28 | 2.10 | 29.10 | 2.53 | 27.16 | 2.63 | 27.84 | 3.26 | 29.07 | 2.21 | 6.15 | 4  | .001 | .08  | CY:CZ;<br>CZ:UK            |
| Persistence                | 30.14 | 3.26 | 30.04 | 3.69 | 27.48 | 4.19 | 29.07 | 4.06 | 29.77 | 3.16 | 5.51 | 4  | .001 | .07  | FL:CZ;<br>CY:CZ;<br>CZ:UK; |

|                             | FL       |         | CY       |         | CZ       |         | PL       |         | UK       |         | F    | Df | p    | Eta2 | Post hoc                            |
|-----------------------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|------|----|------|------|-------------------------------------|
|                             | M        | SD      | M        | SD      | M        | SD      | M        | SD      | M        | SD      |      |    |      |      |                                     |
| Self-confidence             | 28.03    | 3.43    | 30.44    | 3.03    | 27.61    | 3.93    | 28.30    | 5.51    | 28.03    | 4.97    | 3.78 | 4  | .005 | .05  | CY:CZ;                              |
| Responsibility              | 31.88    | 2.59    | 32.33    | 2.88    | 30.82    | 2.78    | 30.04    | 5.01    | 31.48    | 3.44    | 3.90 | 4  | .004 | .05  | CY:PL;                              |
| Achievement orientation     | 29.38    | 3.26    | 30.67    | 2.92    | 27.77    | 3.57    | 28.50    | 4.56    | 29.68    | 2.87    | 5.81 | 4  | .001 | .07  | CY:CZ;<br>CY:PL                     |
| Proactive                   | 27.87    | 3.45    | 30.21    | 2.82    | 26.54    | 3.90    | 28.56    | 4.19    | 29.10    | 2.93    | 8.84 | 4  | .001 | .11  | FL:CY;<br>CY:CZ;<br>CZ:UK;          |
| Motivation                  | 24.33    | 2.90    | 25.15    | 2.79    | 23.10    | 2.98    | 24.33    | 3.61    | 24.56    | 2.79    | 3.57 | 4  | .007 | .05  | CY:CZ;                              |
| Commitment (global score)   | 28.61    | 2.15    | 29.81    | 2.49    | 27.22    | 2.82    | 28.13    | 3.63    | 28.77    | 2.48    | 6.78 | 4  | .001 | .09  | CY:CZ;<br>CY:PL;<br>CZ:UK           |
| Meaningfulness of work      | 30.55    | 3.69    | 29.81    | 3.64    | 27.57    | 3.85    | 27.52    | 5.88    | 29.94    | 3.52    | 7.09 | 4  | .001 | .09  | FL:CZ;<br>FL:PL;<br>CZ:UK;<br>PL:UK |
| Passion                     | 26.83    | 4.76    | 27.08    | 6.06    | 25.67    | 3.83    | 23.65    | 7.56    | 26.50    | 4.68    | 3.62 | 4  | .007 | .05  | FL:PL;<br>CY:PL                     |
| Loyalty                     | 29.81    | 3.14    | 30.31    | 3.27    | 29.34    | 2.94    | 27.67    | 4.83    | 29.50    | 2.91    | 4.56 | 4  | .001 | .06  | FL:PL;<br>CY:PL;                    |
| Contribution (global score) | 29.06    | 3.16    | 29.06    | 3.61    | 27.53    | 2.86    | 26.28    | 5.51    | 28.65    | 3.02    | 6.02 | 4  | .001 | .08  | FL:PL;<br>CY:PL;<br>PL:UK           |
| Talent (total score)        | 23806.00 | 5135.31 | 25629.42 | 6664.55 | 20724.98 | 5193.31 | 21444.02 | 8210.43 | 24307.38 | 5530.82 | 6.25 | 4  | .001 | .08  | CY:CZ;<br>CY:PL;<br>CZ:UK;          |

Source: Authors' own research.

According to the data, Cypriots report the highest level of life satisfaction ( $M = 26.04$ ;  $SD = 4.14$ ), while Poles report the lowest ( $M = 21.69$ ;  $SD = 6.41$ ). Additionally, employees from Cyprus scored the highest on the global talent index, while those from the Czech Republic scored relatively lower. The score of Cypriots was statistically different from that of both Czechs and Poles. Furthermore, there was a statistical difference in this dimension between employees from the Czech Republic and the UK. Regarding the individual components and dimensions of talent, Cypriots have the highest average score ( $M = 29.81$ ) in competences and differ significantly from the Czechs, Brits, and Poles. In the dimensions of commitment, Cyprus scores significantly higher in satisfaction with life, team working, problem-solving, leadership, lifelong learning, creativity, and analytical thinking. Only in the flexibility dimension do British employees score significantly higher ( $M = 31.27$ ) than employees from the Czech Republic, Flanders, and Poland. The second component of talent, commitment, also characterises Cypriot employees to the highest degree – Cypriots' scores are statistically different from those of the Czechs, Poles and Brits. With the exception of the persistence dimension, Cypriots score highest on all commitment components. On the third component of talent, contribution, Cypriots' scores are identical to those of the Flemish ( $M = 29.06$ ) and significantly different from those of the Poles ( $M = 26.28$ ). The largest differences between countries were found for Cyprus-Czech Republic (9 differences), Cyprus-Poland (5 differences) – in both cases, Cypriots scored significantly higher than Czechs and Poles in all talent dimensions, except for Communication and Coping with stress, where no significant differences were found. This confirms H1: Flemish, Cypriot, Czech, Polish and British employees, team members, are statistically significantly different on the dimensions of talent and life satisfaction.

The correlations between the different dimensions of talent and life satisfaction are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Interplay between dimensions of talent and satisfaction with life among employees from five European countries (Pearson's correlation)

| Talent          | Satisfaction with Life |      |       |       |       |     | Significant differences between correlation coefficients |
|-----------------|------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------|
|                 | Total                  | FL   | CY    | CZ    | PL    | UK  |                                                          |
| Team working    | .33**                  | .29* | .21   | .34** | .43** | .12 | PL:UK                                                    |
| Problem-solving | .36**                  | .10  | .44** | .33** | .59** | .08 | FL:CY; FL:PL;<br>CY:UK; CZ:PL;<br>PL:UK                  |

|                                 | Satisfaction with Life |       |       |       |       |       | Significant differences between correlation coefficients |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Talent                          | Total                  | FL    | CY    | CZ    | PL    | UK    |                                                          |
| Coping with stress              | .42**                  | .55** | .22   | .25   | .55** | .43** | FL:CY; FL:CZ; CY:PL; CZ:PL;                              |
| Leadership                      | .19**                  | .10   | .20   | .32*  | .28*  | .04   |                                                          |
| Lifelong learning               | .24**                  | .20   | .34*  | .13   | .25   | .10   |                                                          |
| Creativity                      | .14*                   | .05   | .12   | .20   | .44** | -.09  | FL:PL; CY:PL; PL:UK                                      |
| Flexibility                     | .27**                  | .26*  | .36** | .31*  | .31*  | .28*  |                                                          |
| Communication                   | .23**                  | .31** | .21   | .07   | .42** | .15   | CZ:PL;                                                   |
| Analytical thinking             | .20**                  | .17   | .35*  | .15   | .29*  | .17   |                                                          |
| Competences (global score)      | .37**                  | .37** | .36** | .34** | .53** | .23   | PL:UK                                                    |
| Persistence                     | .29**                  | .07   | .45** | .42** | .32*  | .10   | FL:CY; FL:CZ; CY:UK; CZ:UK;                              |
| Self-confidence                 | .47**                  | .35** | .43** | .53** | .65** | .36** | FL:PL; PL:UK                                             |
| Responsibility                  | .35**                  | .19   | .19   | .30*  | .55** | .10   | FL:PL; CY:PL; PL:UK                                      |
| Achievement orientation         | .35**                  | .15   | .47** | .39** | .47** | .11   | FL:CY; FL:PL; CY:UK; PL:UK                               |
| Proactive                       | .21**                  | .06   | .25   | .44** | .25   | .05   | FL:CZ; CZ:UK;                                            |
| Motivation                      | .32**                  | .48** | .54** | .22   | .35** | .14   | FL:UK; CY:CZ; CY:UK;                                     |
| Commitment (global score)       | .43**                  | .31*  | .48   | .50** | .55** | .22   | CZ:UK; PL:UK                                             |
| Meaningfulness of work          | .39**                  | .17   | .29*  | .38** | .55** | .19   | FL:PL; PL:UK                                             |
| Passion                         | .35**                  | .29*  | .34*  | .35** | .34*  | .25   |                                                          |
| Loyalty                         | .39**                  | .13   | .33*  | .41** | .54** | .17   | FL:PL; PL:UK                                             |
| Contribution (global score)     | .43**                  | .25*  | .39** | .46** | .51** | .26*  |                                                          |
| Talent (total score)            | .48**                  | .36** | .46** | .51** | .63** | .28*  | FL:PL; PL:UK                                             |
| Team working experience (years) | .07                    | .02   | .26^  | .16   | .12   | .07   |                                                          |
| Rewards                         | -.17**                 | -.07  | .02   | .16   | -.30* | -.21  | CZ:UK; CZ:PL                                             |

\* p &lt; 0.05; \*\* p &lt; 0.01

Source: Authors' own research.

There is a statistically significant, positive, moderate correlation between talent (total score) and life satisfaction – the higher the talent (and all its components), the higher the life satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 was confirmed. The strongest correlation was found between life satisfaction and the self-con-

fidence dimension ( $r = .47$ ;  $p < .01$ ), while the weakest, but still significant correlation, was found for the leadership dimension ( $r = .19$ ;  $p < .01$ ). In terms of cross-country differences, the correlation between talent and satisfaction is significantly higher among Poles ( $r = .63$ ;  $p < .01$ ) compared to Flemish ( $r = .48$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and the Brits ( $r = .28$ ;  $p < .01$ ). No significant correlations were observed in the relationship between life satisfaction and teamwork experience in either country. There was a negative correlation between life satisfaction and rewards, but only for the Flemish ( $r = -.17$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and the Poles ( $r = -.30$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Hypothesis 3: There is a different pattern of correlation between talent dimensions and life satisfaction in Flanders, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland and the UK was partially confirmed: a positive relationship between life satisfaction and talent was observed in all countries, with different components/dimensions of talent being significantly associated with life satisfaction in each country, e.g., for all countries, the competence and contribution dimensions are significant and positively correlated with life satisfaction. The second component, commitment, is not significant for the Cypriots and the British.

## Discussion

The main objective of the presented research was to assess the specifics of the links between talent and life satisfaction among employees from five European countries. The research problem is in line with the new model of company management, which pays more attention to the employee and his specific competencies required for the job (the so-called agile talent<sup>22</sup>). Talent management has become one of the basic strategies for a company to remain competitive in the market.

Talent – in the present research – was understood as the result of competence, commitment and contribution (competence  $\times$  commitment  $\times$  contribution).<sup>23</sup> Thus, it is a complex, multidimensional construct, including the assessment of specific 1) competence (e.g. team working, problem solving, coping with stress), commitment (persistence, self-confidence, responsibility) and 3) contribution (meaningfulness of work, passion, loyalty). The employee's talent, understood in this way, was found to be significantly and positively related to life satisfaction – the higher the talent, the higher the life satisfaction. The strongest relationship was found between life satisfaction and the self-confidence dimension. It is interesting to note that across countries, different components/dimensions of

<sup>22</sup> J. Younger, N. Smallwood, *Managing On-Demand Talent*, p. 1–1109.

<sup>23</sup> D. Ulrich, N. Smallwood, *Capitalizing on Capabilities*, p. 119–127; eidem, *What is Talent?*, p. 59–60.

talent were significantly associated with life satisfaction, e.g., for all countries, the dimensions of competence and contribution were found to be significant and positively correlated with life satisfaction. The second component, commitment, is not significant for Cypriots and Brits.

In addition, significant differences were found between representatives of different countries on almost all dimensions of talent, with the exception of communication and coping with stress. Interestingly, Cypriots scored highest on individual components of talent and some of its dimensions (e.g., competence – team working; commitment – responsibility; contribution – loyalty) and differed significantly from participants from the Czech Republic and Poland (most differences), as well as those from Flanders and the UK. Similarly, when it comes to life satisfaction, representatives of different countries differ from each other in terms of life satisfaction, with the highest level again recorded by the Cypriots, who differ significantly from the Poles, who achieve the lowest results out of the whole group.

The relatively low level of life satisfaction observed among Poles may be culturally determined and can be linked to the concept known in psychological literature as the culture of complaining.<sup>24</sup> This cultural pattern is characterized by key components such as a norm of negativity toward one's own emotional states, a norm of negativity toward the social world, and specific behavioral scripts of complaining–ritualized forms of expressing dissatisfaction. Functioning within such a cultural framework may foster beliefs that experiencing life satisfaction or openly displaying one's competencies or talents is socially inappropriate and may result in social rejection. Consequently, expressing dissatisfaction is perceived as a safer and more socially acceptable behavior than expressing contentment with one's life. Perhaps the relatively low scores obtained by Poles on talent measures can be explained in the same way.

A second way to interpret the differences observed in the relationship between talent and life satisfaction may involve referencing Hofstede's cultural value dimensions.<sup>25</sup> According to this framework, the United Kingdom and Flanders are among the most individualistic countries included in the study, whereas Poland, the Czech Republic, and Cyprus exhibit a comparable, moderate level of individualism. This distribution of results suggests that in more collectivist-oriented cultures, possessing social skills in the workplace may contribute more significantly to life satisfaction. In contrast, in strongly individualistic societies, life satisfaction may depend more heavily on non-interpersonal factors.

<sup>24</sup> B. Wojciszke, *The Negative Social World: The Polish Culture of Complaining*, "International Journal of Sociology" 2004, no. 34 (4), p. 38–59; G. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills 1980.

<sup>25</sup> G. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills 1980.

In conclusion, the answer to the question in the title of the publication: is a talented employee happy? Yes, the higher the talent, the higher the life satisfaction. This may be due to the fact that a talented employee is the one who is engaged and motivated in his or her work, and in turn this translates directly into the level of their life satisfaction.

## Strengths and Limitations

This study offers several notable strengths, however it is not without limitations. A key advantage is its innovative character. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first empirical study to apply the concept of talent as defined by Ulrich and Smallwood. The research was also cross-cultural in nature and conducted within the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), contributing to its practical relevance and broader applicability. Another strength lies in the use of a novel methodological tool, which has demonstrated both validity and reliability in prior assessments. This enhances the credibility of the findings and supports the robustness of the research design.

Nevertheless, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The most significant of these is the relatively small number of participants within each country, which may constrain the generalizability of the results. Moreover, the sampling strategy was purposive rather than random, which may introduce selection bias. Additionally, only fundamental sociodemographic variables were taken into consideration in this study, which limits the ability to account for other potentially influential factors. Despite these constraints, the findings provide a valuable foundation for future research on organizational talent, job satisfaction, and the factors that may mediate or moderate this relationship. Further studies with larger and more diverse samples, as well as more comprehensive control variables, are encouraged to validate and extend the current results.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the research presented, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Flemish, Cypriot, Czech, Polish and British employees differ statistically significantly on the dimensions of talent and life satisfaction. Cypriots are the most satisfied with their lives, and they are also characterised by a higher intensity of the three components of talent and most of its dimensions.

2. A significant positive correlation was found between life satisfaction and talent: The higher the level of talent, the higher the level of life satisfaction of employees, team members of small and medium-sized enterprises.
3. The pattern of correlation between the dimensions of talent and life satisfaction in Flanders, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland and the United Kingdom at the level of overall dimensions is quite similar: a positive relationship between life satisfaction and talent was observed in all countries, with different components/dimensions of talent being significantly associated with life satisfaction in each country.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

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The study was approved by the ethics committee of OIC Poland Foundation – the study was performed in accordance with the ethical standards as laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments. The participants were informed of the aims of the study and that they were free to leave at anytime. Individual rights of participants were not infringed.

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