Abstract

The article consists of theoretical and empirical parts. The theoretical part presents the most important issues related to such concepts as self-efficacy, dispositional optimism and life satisfaction among fitness industry employees. Reference was made to the most important findings of researchers in the fields of philosophy, psychology and sociology. The aim of the theoretical part was to present the issues studied and discussed in the empirical part as accurately as possible.

The main objective of the presented study was to check whether there were any correlations between the sense of generalized self-efficacy, life satisfaction and dispositional optimism among fitness industry employees. In the process of achieving this goal, Pearson’s r correlation analysis was carried out. The study covered 105 respondents. The level of significance was α = 0.05. The results of the analysis showed a statistically significant, strong positive correlation of the three variables \( r = 0.84 \) and \( r = 0.88 \). It turns out that in the case of people working in the fitness industry, along with the increase in satisfaction with their own lives, the level of dispositional optimism and the level of generalized self-efficacy increased. It was found that three elements are interdependent among corporate employees: the belief that the higher the goals they set, the stronger their commitment to the intended behaviour, even in the face of increasing failures, satisfaction as a relatively permanent assessment of life as wholeness and optimism that inspires motivation, and perseverance and determination to achieve specific goals and make decisions.

Keywords: happiness, well-being, positive psychology, motivation, profession

Introduction

How do you achieve happiness? What actually is happiness? These are questions that ancient philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle pondered over. They searched for the objective nature of happiness, which they saw in good and beauty (the best and most valuable to the individual).

“From Aristotle to the time of St. Thomas Aquinas, and sometimes even later, when defining happiness, its objective and objective character was usually emphasized. This was most clearly seen in the views of Plato, Aristotle and his later disciples, who emphasized that eudaimonia (Greek term for happiness) is the highest good, the goal of human activities, and its measure is the abun-
dance of possessions, and not only material ones” (Łuszczyk, 2017, p. 81).

Hence, Aristotle’s ethics, for example, can be described as eudaimonism in the presented aspect, as it assumes that humans should try to attain and strive for the most precious good, i.e. virtues. No less important was the view of his predecessors on the issue of happiness. Already Socrates had proved that the highest values are not material goods but spiritual ones. Therefore, since we should strive for the good life above all else, we should be guided by virtues in our decisions. This is enough to achieve happiness. Plato, a student of Socrates, believed that

“the soul, which is identical to the person itself, was trapped in the body. Accordingly, the meaning of human life, therefore the way to happiness, consists of freeing oneself from the bonds of the body through virtue and returning, thanks to philosophy, to the true reality, which is the world of ideas, where human happiness is the contemplation of the idea of Good” (Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023).

The views of these philosophers became an inspiration for subsequent generations of thinkers, including contemporary ones.

“In contemporary philosophy and psychology, a lot of attention is paid to issues such as quality of life or satisfaction with life, which are defined as a certain well-being or state of happiness. There are many theories about the quality of life in the literature. Some associate this feeling with the objective conditions of life, others emphasize the role of individual dispositions in their subjective perception, while others focus on transcendental premises, independent of the current living conditions, dispositions and feelings of the individual” (Walczak & Tomczak, 2011, p. 219).

This article is of a theoretical and empirical nature. Its aim is to discuss as fully as possible such issues as life satisfaction, dispositional optimism, and self-efficacy in the case of employees in the fitness industry. As an introduction to the issues of the conducted empirical research, our theoretical assumptions will be presented.

**Satisfaction with life and related concepts**

Life satisfaction is an ambiguous concept, as pointed out by Potoczny (2020, p. 162):

“The issue of life satisfaction has been attracting the attention of researchers for several decades. Despite many analyses and great interest on the part of scientists, life satisfaction remains an ambiguous concept, which is why it is invariably a current topic of research. Life satisfaction is defined as the process by which an individual evaluates the quality of his or her life based on his or her own set of criteria”.

In psychology, satisfaction with life is associated with such elements as mental well-being, happiness, or quality of life (Timoszczyk-Tomczak & Bugajska, 2013; Zielińska-Więczkowska & Kędziora-Kornatowska, 2010). Job satisfaction is one of the most important criteria for defining the quality of life, alongside other elements like satisfactory family life, education, health, interpersonal relationships and ways of spending free time. As Timoszczyk-Tomczak and Bugajska note, the variables of life satisfaction and quality of life are analyzed by researchers in their cognitive and experiential (emotional) aspects.

“Work is an important part of everyone’s life. It not only has an economic dimension and is related to meeting material needs, but also has a social and psychological dimension. It leaves its mark on the entire life of an individual, determines the achievement and maintenance of a specific place in society, satisfies the need for self-realization and development as well as relationships with other people, builds relational capital” (Biesok & Wyród-Wróbel, 2018, p. 27).

As noted Timoszczyk-Tomczak and Bugajska (2013, pp. 84–85),

“in the cognitive aspect, achieving satisfaction, and thus increasing the quality of life, means: experiencing independence, freedom of choice and unrestricted access to important goods. In the experiential aspect, it is about the individual ability to interpret, evaluate and reflect on one’s own attitude towards people, their actions and the surrounding”.

An important place is occupied in the psychological research on life satisfaction by what is known as positive psychology, which studies such elements as subjective well-being, fortitude, and virtues. This field draws inspiration from Aristotle’s philosophy or Abraham Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs. In positive psychology, an important place is also occupied by the issue of happiness, outlined in the introduction, and representatives of this trend deal with the good life and how to achieve it. In recent years, it has developed dynamically. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), it contributes to the progress of research on the most adaptive forms
in terms of professional and psychosocial functioning. Currently, psychology is again dealing with issues that were described in the theories of the classics, examining elements of personality such as optimism, satisfaction with life, happiness, and sense of effectiveness.

The list above clearly shows that satisfaction with life is an ambiguous and multidimensional concept. At this point, it is worth referring to the views of Ogińska-Bulik, and Pavot and Diener. Ognińska-Bulik (2014) defines life satisfaction as a cognitive aspect of a person’s subjective well-being and the result of long-term reflection. Pavot and Diener (1993) understand satisfaction as a relatively stable assessment of life as a whole. Therefore, we can talk about a certain internal disposition to evaluate one’s own life, which depends on a number of elements, including temperament, personality, upbringing, and health. Hence, the issue of optimism emerges as a certain ability to have a positive attitude towards the world and people.

Michael Scheier and Charles Carver called dispositional optimism a way of perceiving the world based on the expectation of more positive experiences.

“According to them (…) it is rather a constant personality trait than a variable dependent on the current situation. It is an important factor in the selection of the target and in the way it is achieved, determining the effort put into its implementation. Optimism arouses motivation, perseverance and determination in people to achieve specific goals. It also facilitates quick decision-making” (Scheier & Carver, 1985, p. 219).

Ömer Faruk Şimşek (2009) is the author of the subjective model of well-being, i.e. analyzing life in terms of the past, potential future and present. Thus, we are dealing with a certain project of oneself, of who the person was in the past, what the current situation is, and where it is heading.

“The fact that a human being by nature can be passive or active, constructive and engaged or dispassionate, indicates the effect of acting within the framework of individual dispositions or biologically conditioned characteristics when responding to specific environmental or situational factors. All this means that the course of motivational processes, their control and the ability to consciously engage in action are variable in individual people” (Walczak & Tomczak, 2011, pp. 220–221).

Researchers link motivation with self-efficacy. For example Grzegorz Józef Nowicki, Barbara Ślusarska, Bożena Zboina, and Alina Deluga notice a relationship between, for example, a lack of faith in one’s own agency and a decrease in motivation “the perceived lack of self-efficacy can reduce the motivational potential of enticing expectations regarding the outcome of an action to zero. Initiating action requires adequate strength (effort), and maintaining the action taken despite various adversities must be supported by perseverance. The stronger the sense of self-efficacy and the related expectation, the greater the conviction about the possibility of achieving good results, lasting effects and consistency, despite obstacles, maintaining activities leading to the goal” (Nowicki et al., 2017, p. 24).

Self-efficacy differentiates people in terms of thinking, feeling and acting. The stronger the belief in self-efficacy, the higher the goals people set for themselves and the stronger their commitment to the intended behavior, even in the face of mounting failures (Locke & Latham, 1990).

**Occupation and life satisfaction**

With regard to one’s own subjective feelings related to life satisfaction, work is of great importance. Currently, strong dynamics of change are specific to the market in Poland, which forces people to become more mobile and can lead to stress and unpleasant emotions.

“Work is one of the basic and most important spheres of human life. Despite the fact that it often requires a huge time and emotional commitment, it allows for self-realization, which is very important for the proper functioning of a human being in society. It allows for the development of competences, the scope of knowledge and skills, and also provides the means to pursue interests or satisfy basic needs in life. Work is an important factor in shaping social bonds” (Klimkowicz, 2021, p. 115).

The lack of sense of stability, constant changes, and the need for further education increasingly cause strong, negative feelings. Stress may be experience even when a job that suits the interests of the individual or their personal competencies is found. As Ogińska-Bulik and Kaflik-Pieróg noted (2003, p. 37):

“research on stress experienced by humans in the workplace has been conducted for many years. It includes stress-inducing factors, determinants of stress reactions, ways of coping with stress and the consequences of its occurrence. Deterioration of work efficiency and health, excessive absenteeism and fluctuation, decreasing motivation to work or an increase in suicide attempts are just some of the effects of occupational stress”.
Stress can appear as early as at the choosing a career path. A young person entering adulthood is often faced with the need to find a job, which may be associated with difficulty due to the range of possible scenarios for further life. As Łeśniewska (2017, p. 20) notes,

“research in the field of occupational psychology and career counseling shows that the motives for choosing and practicing a particular profession may be predispositions and talents, preferences and interests (structural concepts of Holland, Kuder, Strong, Prediger, etc.), the personality profile of the individual, professed values (development theories of Gottfredson, Ginzberg, Super), perception of the profession (market attractiveness, earnings prospects, the prestige of the profession, etc.), chosen direction of education, influence of a social group or family, or current family/private situation”.

Fitness industry

Sport is an area of life that can be understood as a part of social life and an element of the culture of a given society.

“Sport understood in this way is not some alienated and autonomous reality, but an integral and complementary segment of the life of both traditional and (post)modern societies. Sport is an extremely complex and complicated phenomenon, but also ambiguous. (...) Using socio-demographic, axiological and teleological criteria, it is possible to distinguish common, mass, recreational, children and youth, elderly, health, preventive, school, academic, Catholic, Protestant, elite, plebeian, working-class, competitive, amateur, professional, spectator, people with physical and mental disabilities. Each of the above-mentioned varieties of sport has common features characteristic of sport in general, but also distinguishing features assigned to a specific type” (Dziubiński, 2022, pp. 20–21).

One of the most dynamic industries is the market of fitness services, which is still developing,

“as evidenced by the huge increase in the number of fitness clubs filling up with more and more members attending physical activities, visible in the media, the trend of being ‘fit’, supported by the silhouettes of famous faces in the world of show business and sport, as well as high awareness of the society about the determinants of good health and long life” (Łeśniewska, 2017, p. 19).

The fitness industry seems to be an interesting alternative for some young people entering the labor market who need to choose a profession. Some choose this career path due to a certain prestige, others count on high earnings. Regardless of their motives, they believe that they will have the opportunity for personal development and fit into a certain value system of the modern world. Youth, beauty and health are goods that receive a lot of attention in contemporary society. Therefore, it is unsurprising that young people are interested in professional work as personal trainers and fitness instructors. Not without significance are media messages and instructional videos posted by YouTubers or influencers on the internet. In social media, a certain image of the world is built in which wellness and so-called pleasure come first.

The level of well-being of employees in the fitness industry also translates into the level of services they provide and care for the environment (organizational culture) in which they work (Alexandris et al., 2004; Bodet, 2006; Chang & Lee, 2004; Chelladurai et al.; Chang, 2000; Chelladurai et al., 1987; Howat et al., 1996; Howat et al., 1999; Huset-McGuire et al., 2003; D. Kim, S. Kim, 1995; Lam et al., 2005; Lentell, 2000; Papadimitriou & Karteliotis, 2000). The broadly understood literature on the subject suggests that organizational culture may be another aspect influencing the attitudes of consumers towards the industry itself (Hatchi & Schultz, 1997). Organizational culture is commonly known as the values, beliefs, and basic assumptions of functioning in a given organization (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005; Schein, 1991). Its elements, which can be observed with the “naked eye”, determine artifacts and symbols, such as staff attire or standards of customer care, posters or pictures around the club, the company logo or a visible motto (Smith & Shilbury, 2004). These things reflect what is valued in the organization. The organizational culture of the fitness industry translates directly into its quantitative and qualitative results (Smith & Shilbury, 2004).

Due to the fact that the development of the fitness industry is increasingly dynamic in Poland, we found it advisable and important to examine such elements as self-efficacy, dispositional optimism, and life satisfaction. Thanks to this analysis, it is possible to adapt working conditions (not only in the fitness industry but also in related fields) in such a way as to strengthen the discussed resources, as well as to eliminate emerging difficulties and monitor potential threats.

Aim of the work, research questions and hypotheses

The main objective of the presented study was to check possible relationships between the sense of generalized
self-efficacy, life satisfaction and dispositional optimism among fitness industry employees.

For the purpose of the research, as a result of adopting our theoretical assumptions, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Are there positive associations between generalized self-efficacy and life satisfaction among employees of the fitness industry?
2. Are there any positive associations between generalized self-efficacy and dispositional optimism among employees of the fitness industry?
3. Are there any positive relationships between life satisfaction and dispositional optimism among fitness industry employees?

Bearing in mind the implementation of the research objective and obtaining answers to such research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1. There are positive associations between generalized self-efficacy and life satisfaction among employees in the fitness industry.
H2. There are positive associations between generalized self-efficacy and dispositional optimism among employees of the fitness industry.
H3. There are positive relationships between satisfaction with life and the availability optimism of employees in the fitness industry.

Method and research tools

The research was carried out using the diagnostic survey method with the use of a psychological research questionnaire. Four research tools were used in the research.

1. Imprint – contained questions about the age, gender and economic situation of the respondents.
2. GSES – Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Juczyński, 2012) consists of 10 statements included in one factor. It measures the strength of an individual’s general belief in the effectiveness of coping with difficult situations and obstacles. The reliability of the scale assessed by the test-retest method (after five weeks) was 0.78. The scale has a uniform structure, confirmed by the results of factor analysis.
3. LOT-R – Life Orientation Test (Juczyński, 2012) contains 10 statements, 6 of which have diagnostic value for dispositional optimism. The internal consistency of the LOT-R determined on the basis of Cronbach’s alpha is 0.76. The theoretical validity of the LOT-R was assessed by analyzing the relationships between optimism and other variables that coexist with it: high self-esteem, tendency to experience positive emotions, concentration in stressful situations on problems rather than emotions. The results are satisfactory.
4. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Juczyński, 2012) consists of five items. For each of them, the tested person determines to what extent the given statement applies to his/her life so far, using a seven-point scale for this purpose. The reliability index of Cronbach’s alpha SWLS established in a study of 371 people turned out to be satisfactory (0.81). The SWLS scores correlate negatively with the intensity of perceived stress measured by the PSS (Perceived Stress Scale) and the emotional control of anger, depression and anxiety measured by the CECS (Emotional Control Scale).

Tested persons, test site, test procedure

The research covered a random sample of 105 fitness industry employees working in Warsaw. The study was conducted in fitness clubs in the form of an auditorium with the use of psychological questionnaires. 101 participants answered all of the questions. The sampling frame was made up of employees employed in fitness clubs. In the first part of the analysis conducted using the IBM SPSS package, attention was focused on socio-demographic variables.

The average age of the respondents was 31 years (M = 31.25, SD = 5.12). The sample consisted of 48.5% women and 51.5% men. The third socio-demographic variable was the economic situation of the study participants. Over 46% of respondents consider their economic situation to be good, almost 49.5% consider it average, and only 4 respondents consider it bad, which may indicate relatively high earnings in the fitness industry.

Results

After analysis of socio-demographic variables, the second part of the analysis was started, in which the distribution of quantitative variables was checked. For this purpose, the basic descriptive statistics were calculated together with the Shapiro-Wilk test, examining the normality of the distribution. Details of the conducted analysis are presented in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test indicate an abnormal dispensation of distributions. However, given the central limit theorem, which assumes that a trait is normally distributed when at least 30 people are surveyed and that no measure of skewness for most variables exceeds the critical absolute value of 2 (George & Mallery, 2016), it can be assumed that the examined variables have a normal distribution. Therefore, it was decided to use parametric analysis for
hypotheses in which other assumptions were also met, such as the equality of the studied groups or the homogeneity of variance.

In the next step, descriptive statistics were analyzed: dispositional optimism, generalized self-efficacy and life satisfaction among fitness industry employees. The results of the analysis showed a statistically significant, strong correlation of the studied variables. It turns out that in the case of people working in the fitness industry, dispositional optimism increased — the higher the level of dispositional optimism, the higher the level of generalized self-efficacy \((r = 0.84; \ p < 0.001)\) and satisfaction with one’s own life \((r = 0.84; \ p < 0.001)\).

The results of the analysis showed a statistically significant, strong correlation of the studied variables. It follows that in the case of people working in the fitness industry, along with the increase in the level of generalized self-efficacy, the level of dispositional optimism and satisfaction with life also increased.

The results of the analysis showed a statistically significant, strong correlation of the studied variables. Along with the increase in satisfaction with one’s own life, the level of dispositional optimism and the level of generalized self-efficacy also increased.

## Discussion

As part of the research, an attempt was made to characterize employees in the fitness industry in terms of relationships between the level of generalized self-efficacy, dispositional optimism and satisfaction with their own life. The conducted research aimed to find answers to the research questions. The first research question concerned the relationship between generalized self-efficacy and life satisfaction in fitness industry employees. The research showed a statistically significant, strong positive correlation of the studied variables. Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed. The second research question concerned the relationship between generalized self-efficacy and dispositional optimism in fitness industry employees. The obtained results showed a statistically significant, strong positive correlation of the examined variables. Thus, the second hypothesis was also confirmed. The third research question concerned the relationship between life satisfaction and dispositional optimism in fitness industry employees. The research showed a statistically significant, strong positive correlation of the studied variables. Thus, the third hypothesis was confirmed.

The results obtained can serve as a guideline for the fitness industry employees themselves, as well as for those motivating and supporting their activities. The increase in knowledge about such elements as self-efficacy, life satisfaction and availability optimism is important in helping to develop personal professional competences. Thanks to the conducted research, people who work professionally with staff employed in fitness clubs (psychologists, coaches, etc.) have a ready and helpful study. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that this article is a compendium of knowledge on such variables as self-efficacy, life satisfaction and dispositional optimism, and thus broadens the reader’s knowledge of the most important elements of broadly understood well-being. Future research should be extended to include other professional groups in order to give a more complete picture of Polish society.

## Conclusions

The research results indicate that three areas are interdependent among fitness professionals: beliefs about self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 1990), satisfaction as a relatively stable assessment of life as a whole (Pavot & Diener, 1993) and optimism that inspires motivation, perseverance and determination to achieve specific goals and make decisions (Scheier & Carver, 1985). When analyzing the results in detail, they were compared to the scalene results for each of the measurement techniques: GSES – 7 sten (high score), SWLS – 6 sten (average result), LOT – R – 6 sten (average result). A person strives for happiness in life and makes various decisions to achieve it. A lot depends on individual character traits, but you can always work on your innate dispositions. The modern world is faced with the task of helping people achieve mental well-being in the most effective way. Depending on the work performed, it is possible to develop individual skills.

### Table 1. Basic descriptive statistics of the examined variables along with the Shapiro-Wilk test

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>(M)</th>
<th>(Me)</th>
<th>(SD)</th>
<th>(Sk.)</th>
<th>(Kurt.)</th>
<th>(Min.)</th>
<th>(Maks.)</th>
<th>(W)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispositional optimism</td>
<td>15.63</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized self-efficacy</td>
<td>30.46</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>8.44</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td>23.03</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is worth conducting research that serves to increase knowledge about various types of individual dispositions.

Summarizing the references of raw research results to normalized results, we can conclude that the average self-efficacy scores of fitness industry employees are high compared to the Polish population, and that life satisfaction and dispositional optimism do not differ significantly from the average results in the population.

The obtained results increase knowledge about such elements as self-efficacy, life satisfaction and availability optimism and can be important in helping to develop personal and professional competencies. The can also serve as a guide not only for employees of this industry, but also for those who motivate and support their activities.

References


