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**Work Satisfaction, Trauma and Economic Insecurity:
Post-*tsunami* Sri Lanka**

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Abstract

This paper considers the links between the extent of economic security and subjective work satisfaction. Special attention is paid to the effects of individually and collectively traumatizing events as well as relative gains and losses. These are aspects of “well-being” that have attracted relatively little empirical research in developing countries. Individually traumatizing events depress work satisfaction more strongly than collective catastrophes. The data also suggests that the predominant focus on income in developing countries is too narrow. While both absolute and relative income constitute strong predictors, especially for men, there are many less costly ways to increase work satisfaction. Across the gender divide, the ability to perform work in accordance with one’s skills and to develop those skills (skill security) strongly increases work satisfaction. Occupational health and safety (work security) as well as participative measures (voice security) further significantly increases subjective work satisfaction.

Key words:

Sri Lanka, Asia, work satisfaction, trauma, economic security, social policy

1. Introduction

It is easily overlooked that the primary goal of development is to enable people to have more satisfying lives, including more satisfying work. There is also an instrumental reason for arguing that more attention should be given to promoting work satisfaction, which is that there is ample evidence that if workers are satisfied with their working conditions, their work effort improves, productivity goes up and adverse symptoms such as worker absenteeism and labor turnover go down (Clark, Georgellis & Sanfey, 1998; Clegg, 1983; Freeman, 1978).

Dissatisfied workers tend to be less productive than they otherwise would be. More satisfied workers increase work output as a result of more committed job performance, lower absenteeism and a lower probability of quitting a jobⁱ (Warr, 1999). Some studies have also suggested that life expectancy is increased by greater work satisfaction (Rose, 2003). In short, increasing work satisfaction should improve economic and social development, and therefore should be of more concern for development policymakers.

This paper considers the links between the extent of economic security and subjective work satisfaction. Special attention is paid to the effects of individually and collectively traumatizing events, which are aspects of well-being that have attracted relatively little empirical research, particularly in developing countries. Underlying the analysis are two premises – that globalization and economic liberalization involve more

people experiencing more forms of insecurity and that economic insecurity lowers productivity through creating more work dissatisfaction, due to lower morale, commitment and effort (ILO, 2004).ⁱⁱ It will be argued that several types of security have a greater effect on job satisfaction than others, implying that these should be the aspects on which policymakers should concentrate.

The context for the study was apt, in that the globalization era has been characterized by a growing incidence of social, economic and environmental shocks that intensify many forms of insecurity. As the world knows, on December 26, 2004, Sri Lanka was hit by a *tsunami* that killed over 35,000 people, injured many more and left thousands of others homeless. Coincidentally, we were about to launch a People's Security Survey (PSS) examining economic insecurity, work patterns and 'well-being' as part of a global project on economic insecurity being conducted by the ILO. Obviously, fieldwork was postponed. But, fortuitously, when the PSS was conducted later in 2005, it afforded an opportunity to assess the impact of the *tsunami*, seeing it as a systematic *shock*, or an instance of what social scientists regard as an outcome of *covariant risk*, in which whole communities suffer, rather than an instance of *idiosyncratic risk*, in which individuals suffer from adverse 'contingency' events, such as illness or unemployment, for which conventional social insurance policies were designed.

Accordingly, the PSS was refined to collect household and personal information on the impact of the *tsunami*, and fieldwork was conducted in districts affected directly and in others that had been less affected. Much of the analysis of that is being carried out in

other papers and reports. Here, we merely note that the sample consisted of a randomly selected 3,196 households, drawn from seven districts, selected to encompass *tsunami-affected* regions and *non-affected* regions and carried out in June-July 2005.ⁱⁱⁱ From each household, one adult member was randomly selected for a detailed interview on their experience of various forms of socio-economic security, their pattern of work over the previous year, the impact of the *tsunami*, if relevant, and related aspects of ‘well-being’.

With the resultant data, we are able to examine patterns of work satisfaction among households and communities having very different experiences. To do so, we construct a basic model that draws on two perspectives that figure prominently in the psychological literature.

First, drawing on hedonistic psychology, there is the ‘traumatization’ hypothesis, according to which a highly stressful event leads to psychological “scars”, i.e., long-lasting adverse effects on sentiments, behavior and experience (van der Kolk, Mcfarlane & Weisaeth, 2007). Besides psychologists, economists and sociologists have also drawn on the scarring idea in looking at the effects of unemployment and sudden loss of earnings on attitudes and behaviors (Gangl, 2006). But not every setback constitutes a shock likely to have a traumatizing effect, while a shock that happens to an individual or household may have a greater scar effect than one that happens to a wider community, perhaps reflecting a lesser sense of injustice when adversity hits the whole group.

Theoretically, one can argue that a past experience of a ‘bad’ induces feelings of insecurity now. In this respect, experience of a *tsunami* could be expected to leave a person feeling insecure long afterwards, leaving a reduced capacity to be satisfied with whatever he or she was doing months or even years afterwards.

However, behavioral adaptation rarely works in a simple fashion. Experience of a past ‘bad’ may induce greater appreciation for current conditions, as long as those are not as bad as they were during the ‘bad’ experience. Psychologists have found that experience of adversity can serve as a catalyst of commitment (Brickman & Coates, 1987; Cantor & Sanderson, 1999). Among supportive evidence is the finding in the USA that, of those people born during the Great Depression, the worse their experience had been in the 1930s, the more likely they were to report subjective well-being in old age (Elder, 1974). This may have valuable lessons for those dealing with the adjustments following the *tsunami*.

A second hypothesis derived from psychology is that feelings about work and living standards are partly a reflection of “status frustration”. The extent of satisfaction reflects one’s current position relative to a perceived peer group, which may be others in the neighborhood or in the occupation group to which the person feels he or she belongs. Status frustration may also arise as a result of being worse off than at some previous period.

These two complementary perspectives – trauma and status frustration – have different implications for assessing the effects of economic insecurity and the tsunami. While the scar view would predict a lasting decline in wellbeing, the relative status hypothesis suggests this need not be so. Thus in the context of this study, if a person's relative position were to be better at the time of being interviewed than used to be the case, the adverse effect of the tsunami might be cancelled out.

With these hypotheses in mind, this paper develops a model of *work satisfaction* that focuses on the effects of a *trauma* and various forms of economic insecurity. It considers the effect of the individual's position compared with peer groups, associated with *status frustration* and *relative deprivation*. Although we cannot deal with all the implications of a dynamic model of satisfaction, we believe this is the first study to look at links between insecurity and satisfaction in a developing country, even though it has long been recognized that better working conditions foster well-being and economic development.

2. What is work satisfaction?

Although the literature on 'work satisfaction' is voluminous, having been addressed by sociologists, psychologists and economists, in particular, the concept and the interpretations remain complex. For a start, 'work' is not the same as 'job'. As an economist, one might like the work involved in being an economist. However, one might

be in a *job* that one did not like, even though the work was doing economics. Most studies focus on job satisfaction.

As for the notion of ‘satisfaction’, this is often regarded as synonymous with ‘happiness’ and ‘well-being’. It should not be treated that way (Radcliff et al., 2000).^{iv} One might be ‘happy’ but not find the work one is doing very satisfying, perhaps simply because in one’s lifestyle the type of work or labor one does is not very significant.^v Or one might be unhappy in general but find one’s work reasonably satisfying. One should also differentiate between satisfaction and *fulfillment*. Finally, we should recognize that dissatisfaction is not necessarily the opposite of satisfaction.

For our purposes, we focus on perceptions of satisfaction with the income-earning work that a person was doing. To do so, individuals were asked about their attitude to several aspects of their work – income, degree of autonomy, nature of work, working conditions, non-wage benefits and opportunities for skill development. From these responses, it was also possible to create a composite index of satisfaction, a Likert-scale index with five values – very satisfied, satisfied, unsure, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied.

As with most survey responses on attitudinal issues, problems abound. Asking individuals how happy or satisfied they are raises familiar problems of interpretation, in particular those associated with the tendency to rationalize and the tendency to adapt to actual pressures (Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999). Self-reported job satisfaction may also be biased by overall happiness level (Warr, 1999). Rose discussed the problem of treating

the “*affective coloration of job satisfaction statements*” as randomly distributed, concluding that statements about job satisfaction “*embody a substantial core of rationality, providing scope for interlocking contributions of labor economists and sociologists*” rather than just reflecting affective disposition and thus only being an object for psychological investigation (Rose, 2003). Others have concluded that there are good reasons for presuming that notions of job satisfaction are applicable cross-culturally (Deiner & Suh, 1999). So, although one should always be cautious about interpreting attitudinal data, the measures used in this paper do seem reasonably valid.

3. The seven dimensions of economic security: Security effects on work satisfaction

Insecurity induces feelings of anxiety and stress, lowering levels of well-being and satisfaction. We postulate that basic socio-economic security is conducive to work satisfaction. But, besides the difficulty of identifying the forms of security that matter most, it is evident that possessing basic security could induce people to become more dissatisfied with jobs that deviate from their aspirations, whereas feeling insecure could lead them to tolerate more onerous work. For instance, labor market insecurity could increase job satisfaction if those in jobs feel privileged to have work. Thus, the link between some forms of insecurity and job dissatisfaction could be positive or negative.

Briefly, there are seven forms of work-related security, which are defined and operationalized elsewhere (Standing, 2002; ILO, 2005). These are *income security, voice security work security, employment security, labor market security, skill security and job*

security. From an individual point of view, each may be seen in terms of current level, recent change and relative status, i.e., one's security compared with some identifiable peer group.

Of all forms of economic security, the most complex is *income security*. It is usually argued that job satisfaction will be greater the higher the level of earned income. But the trend and the demands placed on the income also affect satisfaction, so several aspects must be taken into account. In terms of level, income security may be measured by earned income and entitlement to non-monetary benefits, should the need for them arise. In terms of trend, it can be measured by whether the level is stable and improving, or irregular and declining. In terms of relative status, a sense of income security could be expected to be greater if a person's income was high relative to an identifiable peer group, such as those in similar occupations or social class. In terms of 'scar' or 'trauma' effect, income insecurity could be expected to reflect experience of a financial crisis in the recent past, leaving a person worried about the need for more income now.^{vi}

Box 1: Forms of Socio-Economic Security linked to Work

Labor market security – Adequate income-earning opportunities;

Employment security – Protection against arbitrary dismissal, regulations on hiring and firing, imposition of costs on employers for failing to adhere to rules, etc.;

Job security – Ability and opportunity to retain a niche, an occupation or “career”, plus barriers to skill dilution, and opportunities for ‘upward’ mobility in terms of status and income, etc.;

Work security – Protection against accidents and illness at work, through, e.g., safety and health regulations, limits on working time, unsociable hours, night work for women, etc.;

Skill reproduction security – Good opportunity to gain and retain skills, through apprenticeships, employment training, etc.;

Income security – Assurance of an adequate and stable income, protection of income through, e.g., minimum wage machinery, wage indexation, comprehensive social security, progressive taxation to reduce inequality and to supplement those with low incomes, etc.;

Representation security – Possessing a collective voice in the labor market, through, e.g., independent trade unions, with a right to strike, etc.

We also hypothesize that income has a non-linear effect on work satisfaction, being strongly positive up to some threshold, perhaps at some subsistence point, and then

becoming less influential above one or more subsequent thresholds. This would accord with macro-economic comparisons that have suggested that as countries become richer beyond some level, the impact of further increases in per capita income has a diminishing effect on societal happiness, and may cease to have any positive effect at all. This is known as the Easterlin Paradox (Brickman & Campbell, 1971; Dutt, 2001; Easterlin, 2002; Gasper, 2004).^{vii}

In addition, in developing countries in particular, increases in income tend to bring increases in obligatory expenditures, usually to relatives or the local community in order to maintain status or to provide higher-standard schooling to their children. This is why some Indian village studies, in Tamil Nadu, for example, have found well-being stagnated as incomes rose, whereas in other villages well-being rose despite declining money incomes (Jadha, 1989; Janakarajan & Seabright, 1999).

Finally, and crucially, it seems that the greater the extent of inequality within a community, the more individual income becomes a determinant of overall work satisfaction. Although income level and income security should be positively related to work satisfaction, a *relative income* model would hypothesize that it is one's income relative to one's peer groups that most determines satisfaction (Clark & Oswald, 1996).

Individuals view their own position relative to others around them. Positive hedonic states are contingent upon a person's perceived relative position in society (Layard, 2005, 42).^{viii} Large inequalities are linked to lower subjective well-being (Veenhoven, 2002). A

sense of injustice derives from the feeling that one is doing a similar job but receiving a lower income. This is the basis of the relative status effect on job satisfaction.^{ix} In this study, as in others, the peer group against which to assess relative deprivation is the occupational group.

Other forms of economic security are also complex. *Voice representation security* arises from being in a work status where one has some control over what happens, and can bargain or resist pressures from others. There are two forms of Voice: individual and collective. For our purposes, even though there are reservations about their strength and role, we postulate that, for someone doing wage labor, belonging to a trade union should provide representation security and having a job in which there is a health and safety committee provides more representation security than if they did not have that safeguard.

Work security refers to the existence of safe working conditions, in which a worker has either work that is intrinsically safe, with little exposure to chemicals or dangerous equipment, or has protective measures that prevent potentially dangerous conditions being so. Ultimately, this will depend on proper legislative protection and the existence of mechanisms to provide occupational health and safety. For this study, proxies for work security are days off due to ill-health and entitlement to paid medical leave.

Employment security may be defined as having protection against loss of employment, which is not the same as the actual job a person is doing within an enterprise. Many economists and politicians have claimed that ‘excessive’ employment

protection has been a cause of high unemployment and ‘jobless growth’ (a preoccupation in Sri Lanka, as in India), on the grounds that employers are fearful that if they hire somebody, they will not be able to lay him off if the need arises. While the alleged affect on job creation may be exaggerated, there is undoubtedly a segmented labor market in most developing countries, in which a small minority have strong employment security while the vast majority have none at all. Thus one would expect that such security, in the form of a ‘permanent’ (sic) contract or in the form of proxies such long job tenure or public sector employment, would provide a source of job satisfaction for the favored minority. There is also evidence that employment security lessens the tendency to seek help from others on diverse matters (Cattanao, Rook & Dooley, 1996).

Labor market security may be defined in terms of the availability of adequate income-earning opportunities, apart from the person’s current activity, and feeling that such opportunities were improving or worsening. Scar effects might include past experience of unemployment. Relative security might be measured in terms of the unemployment rate in the area.

As for scar effects, and the resultant fears, one might anticipate that those who had been unemployed for a substantial period in the past could be *either* more satisfied with their work now, because they appreciate it more, *or* more dissatisfied because they had been demotivated or demoralized. One study based on a longitudinal survey suggested that people’s subjective well-being, after being hit by unemployment, adjusted back to

some extent, but those affected still experienced a long-term adverse effect (Clark et al., 2003; Lucas et al., 2002).

Skill security arises from having acquired usable competences, through school or college, and through formal or informal job-related training. One would expect that skill security should be positively related to work satisfaction. However, those with relatively high education who are doing jobs that provide a relatively low status for their level of education will be more dissatisfied than those who have little education. This has been called the relative skill-status effect (Cassidy & Warren, 1991; Rose, 2003).^x Skill security also arises from what has been called ‘socio-expressive’ opportunities that come with the developed ability to achieve ‘self-actualization’. We may measure that by ascertaining if a person uses their perceived skills and qualifications in their job and was able to develop them further, perhaps via training.

Finally, *job security* is the possession of a job that allows for the prospect of steady improvement, perhaps leading to promotion or an enhancement of skills and status. This could be measured by the occupational group in which the person is working, given that so-called ‘white-collar’ jobs typically allow for greater autonomy and control over work tasks and pacing than do ‘blue-collar’ jobs. It could also be seen in terms of recent experience of upward or downward mobility. We hypothesize that recent upward mobility, such as a promotion, is associated with higher work satisfaction, other factors considered.

Skill and job security relate most to what have been called “intrinsic” or “motivational” factors in job satisfaction, as distinctive from “extrinsic” or “hygiene” factors, a perspective drawn from the seminal work of Herzberg and his colleagues in the 1950s (Herzberg, Mausner & Synderman, 1959). However, we postulate that there are two *meta-securities*, income and Voice, the rationale for which is developed elsewhere (Standing, 2002). Essentially, if someone has a secure adequate income, he or she can be in a position to make rational choices. But without representation security such a person would be vulnerable to loss of all other forms of security, including income. As such, Voice representation security, in both collective and individual senses, should be positively related to work satisfaction.

4. The Sri Lanka tsunami

The *tsunami* had devastating effects in Sri Lanka, being responsible for over 35,000 deaths. Ironically, drought is normally regarded as the main natural disaster to hit Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe, 2008). The *tsunami* affected huge swathes of the country. Besides the hypotheses outlined earlier, we would expect that in communities affected by a sharp downturn in living conditions due to the tsunami, work satisfaction would be lower than in communities that had not been hit. In the case of Sri Lanka, this could be tested by comparing those living in *tsunami*-affected areas and those in other areas, and those hit in some way compared with those who had not been directly affected.

In the sample, 4.8% of households reported having lost a member (dying or disappearing, presumed dead) in the *tsunami*. Some 10.7% reported at least one member as having been injured; 5.6% stated that at least one household member had suffered a psychological adverse effect; 12.8% reported having lost household possessions, and 5.2% reported losing equipment used in their income-earning work. Of those who had lost property or assets, 95% had no insurance cover. Some 10.4% of households reported that someone had lost a 'main job', 1% had lost a 'secondary job', and 2.9% had lost income but not their job. A few (0.6%) said they had increased their income-earning work as a result of the *tsunami*, a few (4.5%) said they had been receiving income or material support from relatives or friends, and a few (2.2%) said that they were providing income or material support to relatives or other households.

Obviously, there were other *tsunami*-related issues that the survey could have explored, and the percentages cannot be used to indicate the actual distribution of effects in the country. However, the data do provide a reasonable picture of how individuals and households were affected, allowing us to differentiate between *tsunami-affected* and *tsunami-unaffected* households.

Turning to job satisfaction, respondents were asked about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with respect to nine aspects of their main job. As shown in Table 1, the overall degree of satisfaction (adding the Very Satisfied (relatively few in each case) to those who said they were Satisfied) tended to be much higher for the nature of work and

their independence than for incomes and benefits. Of course, the low level of satisfaction with non-wage benefits reflects the fact that many workers were not in wage jobs.

Table 1: Percent satisfied with dimensions of work, Sri Lanka, 2005

INSERT ABOUT HERE

5. The Demographics of work satisfaction

To examine the impact of economic insecurity and relative deprivation, we need to control for other ‘contextual’ influences. Fortunately, there is widespread consensus that most ascriptive characteristics play only a minor or secondary influence.

First, research in industrialized countries has generally found that gender differences in work satisfaction are not substantial. Some studies have suggested that women are, if anything, more likely to be satisfied, perhaps because they have lower expectations or place more emphasis on non-labor aspects of life, *and* more likely to be very dissatisfied. Other studies have suggested that women in those jobs predominantly taken by men are relatively likely to be dissatisfied with their work (Geigner & Crow, 2004).

In developing countries, empirical research has also suggested that women are more likely to *express* satisfaction with life than men, even when their health or social status is clearly worse (Sen, 1985).^{xi} Presumably, this is not so much a genetic tendency as a

social habituation one, women coming to have much lower expectations. In any case, in Sri Lanka, drawing on the data from the PSS, simple correlations do suggest that women might be slightly more likely to be satisfied with their work, particularly with the nature of the work that they are doing. But, as considered later, this could be due to the influence of factors other than gender per se.

A second demographic relationship relates to age and job satisfaction. Are younger or older workers more likely to be satisfied with their income-earning activity? The empirical literature from other parts of the world is clearer in this respect. Generally, older people report themselves as more satisfied with their work than younger workers. It appears that older workers have lower job aspirations, and the so-called goal-achievement gap tends to be smaller (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976). Other studies have found that men become happier as they grow older, but women do not.

Third, marital status has been linked to work satisfaction, the empirical literature tending to find that married people are more likely to be satisfied than those who are single, widowed or divorced, although this has not been found for black men in the USA (Glenn & Weaver, 1981).

Although other demographic factors may influence work satisfaction, this study will simply control for five factors: sex, age, marital status, ethnicity and education. In most respects, the simple correlations do not suggest that they are very significant, as can be seen in Table 2. On all aspects, women seemed slightly more likely than men to be

satisfied in their work, non-married people more than married, and urban residents more satisfied than rural, on average. At this stage, we merely surmise that the latter reflects the type of work being done in the respective areas.

It is also widely recognized that the nature of the workplace makes a difference to job satisfaction. For our purposes, we can control for the influence of standard characteristics. Table 3 suggests that people working for the public sector in Sri Lanka are more likely to be satisfied with all aspects of their work than those working in the private sector. But what is it about the public sector that makes for the apparently substantial difference?

Among the few relevant studies, it has been suggested that “*a more participatory managerial style from public managers*” is a factor (DeSantis & Durst, 1996; Steijn, 2004). Whether or not this would hold in a country such as Sri Lanka is unclear, although it has been reported that young workers, in particular, want to work in the public sector, and have an aversion to working for wages in private firms (Hettige & Mayer, 2002).^{xiii} We shall return to this when presenting the multivariate findings in the next section.

Table 2: Percent satisfied with dimensions of work, by personal characteristics, Sri Lanka, 2005

INSERT ABOUT HERE

Table 3. Percent satisfied with dimensions of work, by work place type, Sri Lanka, 2005

INSERT ABOUT HERE

Table 4: Percent satisfied with dimensions of work, by employment status, Sri Lanka, 2005

INSERT ABOUT HERE

Table 4 suggests that, except with respect to income, those doing own-account work – most of those in informal work activity – were more likely to be satisfied with their work. But again these simple correlations may conceal actual relationships, to which we will return.

6. A Security model of work satisfaction

To test the security, trauma and status effects on work satisfaction in Sri Lanka, several models were estimated. The basic one postulates that satisfaction is a positive function of various forms of socio-economic security controlling for the influence of demographic factors, such as age, sex, marital status and race, and by scar or trauma effects of recent personal crises, primarily those associated with the *tsunami*.

The dependent variables are defined as (i) overall work satisfaction, which is an unweighted combination of the seven aspects of work, (ii) satisfaction with income from the main job, and (iii) satisfaction with the nature of work in that job. In standard

parlance, income satisfaction may be described as the ‘extrinsic’ factor, and nature-of-work may be called ‘intrinsic’.

Although the following focuses on the composite index of satisfaction, one could question the additivity of the aspects of work satisfaction, since some may be more significant than others. However, this is what is usually done. As for the ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ distinction, we saw earlier that in Sri Lanka people were more likely to express satisfaction with *intrinsic* aspects of their jobs than with *extrinsic* factors. If people choose their jobs, rather than be merely allocated to them, there may be a trade-off between income and nature of work, whereby a lower income is accepted in return for a preferable type of work. This raises questions about the appropriateness of a composite index created by adding the intrinsic and extrinsic factors together, although this is the standard approach. The caveat should be borne in mind in assessing the findings.

As for the independent variables, the *trauma effect* is measured by three variables, by whether the person’s earned income job suffered as a result of the *tsunami*, by whether the person was living in an area affected by the *tsunami*, and by whether the household had a financial crisis in the past year apart from that attributable directly to the *tsunami*.

For all seven forms of security, sets of proxy variables were derived from the survey data. *Income security* is defined as follows. First, level of income from work is measured by income received in the past month from the person’s main job. Second, the trend is measured by whether or not the person reported that his or her earned income had

risen in the past 12 months. Third, relative income is measured by the ratio of the person's earned income divided by the mean average income of all those in the same occupational group, the hypothesis being that the higher the ratio the more likely the person would be satisfied.

Voice security is measured by whether or not the person was working in a firm or organization with a health and safety department and by whether or not he or she was a member of a trade union. *Job security* is measured by whether or not the person was in an unskilled manual job, in which there is relatively little opportunity for mobility, by whether the person's status in the job had improved in the past 12 months and by whether or not hours of work had been stable in that period. *Employment security* was measured by whether or not the person had experienced unemployment in the past year and by whether or not they had a 'permanent' (long-term) employment contract. *Skill security* was measured by whether or not the person was using the skills or qualification he/she had obtained in the job, by whether or not the skills had improved and by whether or not training had been received in the past year. *Work security* was measured by the number of days the person had taken off work due to ill-health or injury in the past year and by whether or not the person had entitlement to paid medical leave. Finally, *labor market security* was measured by whether or not the unemployment rate was below the average for the country.

The models were tested using STATA 8 software (StataCorp 2003) and SPSS (release 10.1, SPSS Inc.). A multivariate ordinal probit model of degree of expressed satisfaction was

estimated, this being regarded as the appropriate approach when the dependent variable is categorical and deemed to express an underlying continuous variable.

7. The Results

Table 5 presents the results for overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with income and satisfaction with the nature of work in the job. The coefficients are standardized so as to identify which factors had the most effect. Considering overall job satisfaction, it is notable that socio-demographic influences were minor, with the expected positive association of satisfaction with age being the main result. Education seems to make little difference to job satisfaction, probably due to the positive effect coming via the improved opportunity to obtain better jobs. Women seemed slightly more likely to be satisfied, perhaps because women are culturally induced to expect less from their jobs, which is the usual interpretation.

More interesting is consideration of the scar or trauma effects. The statistical results suggest that the shock of the *tsunami* had a relatively weak effect, although it was significant. The reason for that may be that this was a collective shock, with everybody being affected and with those directly hit seeing themselves as part of a collective struggle to recover. It is also notable that experience of unemployment in the past had only a weak negative effect on current satisfaction with work.

The impact of insecurity was rather stronger. While most forms of socio-economic security were statistically significant, level of income during the past month was the single strongest predictor of overall satisfaction, followed by having an above-average income relative to the person's occupational group. But several intrinsic aspects of work were also significant, most notably the perceived opportunity to improve skill and status.

Both variables capturing work security were highly significant determinants of overall satisfaction, with paid medical care entitlement being especially important. Voice security also featured strongly. A health and safety department, where all workers can voice their concerns, was more predictive of overall work satisfaction than being in a trade union. The low impact of the conventional Voice mechanism highlights the failure of unions to be a means of improving work satisfaction.

In the light of the numerous claims about their importance, it is interesting that neither employment security nor labor market security had a strong positive effect on overall job satisfaction. Having a permanent employment contract made no difference at all. Longer job tenure was actually associated with less overall satisfaction, perhaps because boredom sets in with any task after a number of years. And being a public sector employee, often viewed as a good indicator of employment security, was likewise insignificant.

These results correspond to a view expressed elsewhere that employment security *per se* should not be given the high priority that it was long given by trade unionists and

policy makers (Standing, 2002). It is an instrumental need. As long as income security exists, and as long as a person feels he or she has voice in their work, having employment security is not that important.

The labor market security finding was also negative. A low unemployment rate in the district was associated with lower overall satisfaction. Rather than being happy to have any work at all, employees may be more critical about their job in the light of other options.

The statistical results for satisfaction with earned income, shown in the second column of Table 5, are mainly similar to those for job satisfaction in general. Among the differences is that, once income factors are taken into account, being in a public sector job is associated with lower satisfaction. The conventional presumption about being in public sector jobs needs to be re-considered. As for the effects on satisfaction with the nature of work, it is apparent that the security model performs less well in explaining variations in degree of satisfaction. We are aware that one reason may be that this dependent variable is vaguer than in the case of income, although many other studies have used this variable.

We also examined the impact of insecurity on overall job satisfaction among men and women separately. The results, shown in Table 6, suggest that men in Sri Lanka attach more significance to their paid jobs than women, although this is surely a matter of habituation rather than a gendered one.

The most significant difference between men and women concerns the relative status effect. Both in regard to the past and to others, relative income was significant for men but not for women. Improvements in skills and status, however, are highly significant for both men and women. What is striking is that voice and work security factors mainly affected men's job satisfaction, perhaps reflecting the fact the men more often perform physically more directly endangering work. Another possible explanation for the differences is that jobs are not the only or main form of work-giving identity for women. After all, women do much of their work outside the conventionally-defined labor market.

Table 5: Satisfaction with Job, Income from Job, and Nature of work in job, Sri Lanka, 2006

Ordered probit regression (Standardized coefficients)

INSERT ABOUT HERE

Table 6: Overall Job Satisfaction, by Men and Women, Sri Lanka, 2005

Ordered probit regression (Standardized coefficients)

INSERT ABOUT HERE

8. What are the lessons for policymaking?

In several respects, this is an exploratory study of a topic that has received little attention in development studies. Although the findings are constrained by the type of data at our disposal, there are several conclusions one can draw. First of all, although some forms are not as important as commonly believed, socio-economic security does strongly influence job satisfaction. And if that is a key to individual and communal well-being, then policymakers should wish to reduce the sense of insecurity for instrumental as well as human development reasons.

The trauma of the *tsunami* will surely affect Sri Lanka as a society for many years. However, while the many calls for ‘counseling’ in the aftermath of the disaster had a sound rationale, what is encouraging is that workers who suffered in one way or another were able to adjust to new forms of work opportunity that arose in the wake of the extensive destruction of economic resources and distress caused to their personal lives. Intriguingly, it appears that an individualized shock has a more lasting effect on satisfaction than a collective shock. A policy lesson from this insight is that remedial policy interventions that reproduce or accentuate individual differences in income or jobs may actually intensify the scar effect. A more collective intervention emphasizing equality and universalistic entitlements would be preferable.

Can we identify the modal type of person with the greatest likelihood of work satisfaction? One might imagine that it would be someone with a high education doing a

high-status occupation, with considerable control over the type and duration of work, earning an income at or above the average for someone doing similar work. To a large extent the Sri Lanka data bear that out. They suggest that the person most likely to be satisfied was someone earning an income at or above the level of his peers, in a safe working environment, and who could use the skills he or she has obtained to a reasonable extent. The data also suggest how important a sense of improvement is, in terms of both income and skills.

While both level of income and relative income are strong predictors of satisfaction, especially for men, there are also other ways to increase job satisfaction. For both men and women, the opportunity to perform work in accordance with one's skills and to develop skills strongly increased job satisfaction. Elementary safety and participative measures likewise have a strong effect.

In this paper, the focus has been on the impact of *current* and *past* levels of security on job satisfaction. An obvious derivative question is: What role does the *vision* of the future that we hold have on current satisfaction? We could only look at this schematically through the Sri Lanka survey. Nevertheless, it is worth presenting a tantalizing finding by way of a conclusion. Bear in mind that much has been said and speculated about the long-term *trauma* effects of such a horrific experience as the *tsunami*. But does the effect of a collective trauma outweigh the effect of a vision of future well-being due to a perceived sense of sound policies and institutions?

The finding is that if one thinks life and work in the future are going to be secure, one is more likely to be satisfied with one's current lot. Positive expectations about the long-term future should produce more positive satisfaction with one's current situation. This is what the Sri Lanka data show, in that those who anticipated having income security in old age had a higher probability of expressing job satisfaction than those who were worried about it.

Thus, if the politicians and leaders of communities in a country such as Sri Lanka could convey a convincing view that the future offered stronger economic security, current levels of job satisfaction would improve. With that would come stronger productivity growth and thus a higher probability of realization of that positive vision of development. One might see this as an important *soft* aspect of development, since confidence breeds many of the behavioral phenomena that ultimately contribute to social and economic development.

NOTES

ⁱ For a good review of the psychological studies in industrialized countries, see Warr (1999).

ⁱⁱ On the effects of ‘globalization’, or economic liberalization, on socio-economic insecurity see ILO (2004).

ⁱⁱⁱ The sample was selected from a sampling frame drawn up by the national statistical office. The districts covered were Ampara, Battitacola, Colombo, Hambantota, Kurunegela, Mullaitivu and Nuwara Eliya. Three of the districts were *tsunami*-affected, and the samples were drawn to ensure a sufficient sample size from those areas. During the course of the fieldwork, the security situation deteriorated in Mullaitivu, making it prudent to discontinue there; accordingly, the sample size was increased in Ampala.

^{iv} On the differences between satisfaction and happiness see Radcliff et al. (2000).

^v It is well-established that ‘happiness’, as perceived throughout the ages, breaks into two types, *hedonic* and *eudemonic*. Most empirical studies have focused on hedonic happiness.

^{vi} Conversely, thinking about the future positively, or about security in old age, for example, could be expected to result in greater current satisfaction.

^{vii} The World Values Survey has also shown that beyond a certain level, there is virtually no relationship between subjective well-being and per capita GNP (Easterlin, 2002, Dutt, 2001). This has also been called the Hedonic Treadmill. Gasper, 2004. But the Hedonic Treadmill is more commonly used to describe the tendency for gains in well-being to be followed by adaptation back to a baseline level (Brickman & Campbell, 1971).

^{viii} “*People care greatly about their relative income, and they would be willing to accept a significant fall in living standards if they could move up compared to other people.*” (Layard, 2005, p. 42).

^{ix} Although, as shown by several studies, if the disparities become too burdensome psychologically, people can rationalise by changing their perceived reference group.

^x For further detail see Rose (2003, 525). This is linked to the notion of ‘status consistency’. (Cassidy & Warren, 1991).

^{xi} See, among others, Sen (1985). For a sceptical view, see Agarwal (1997).

^{xii} There is an aversion towards private-sector wage labor in Sri Lanka, particularly among youth, as demonstrated in a special Youth Survey conducted in 2000 (Hettige & Mayer, 2002, particularly the chapters by W.D.Lakshman and L.Fernando).

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TABLES

Table 1: Percent satisfied with dimensions of work, Sri Lanka, 2005

Dimension of satisfaction	Degree of satisfaction (%)		
	(Very) Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	(Very) Dissatisfied
Income or Pay	39.1	2.1	58.3
Non-Wage Benefits	20.6	29.4	48.6
Nature of Work	59.4	4.9	34.7
Independence	65.6	3.7	29.6
Skill Development	41.3	30.2	27.6
Promotion	24.4	49.3	25.3
Work Environment	64.0	8.5	26.8
Weekly Hours	63.6	6.8	28.7
Benefits	33.0	18.8	47.3

Table 2: Percent satisfied with dimensions of work, by personal characteristics, Sri Lanka, 2005

	Wage level/income	Non-wage benefits	Skill development	Promotion Prospects	Extent of autonomy	Work environment	Nature of Work	Wkly Hours Worked	Benefits
Male	39.9	30.8	59.1	49.6	68.3	69.4	62.1	67.7	41.0
Female	41.9	32.3	64.7	51.3	71.9	75.1	68.4	73.9	44.0
Married	38.7	30.3	59.2	48.9	68.9	70.3	62.6	68.6	40.4
Not Married	49.3	36.1	66.3	55.7	71.0	73.4	68.6	71.6	48.4
Rural	37.5	28.3	62.0	52.7	71.3	71.3	63.8	69.4	41.4
Urban	52.0	38.8	60.6	47.0	70.7	74.3	66.9	74.0	44.0
Estate	26.3	27.0	45.9	37.3	45.1	53.4	49.8	51.1	37.9
Tsunami affected	33.5	28.7	61.2	55.0	69.3	62.4	64.7	64.1	39.7
Not Tsunami affected	42.6	32.0	60.2	48.5	69.1	73.3	60.0	70.8	42.4
Sinhalese	39.4	29.9	56.8	47.1	70.9	75.6	63.9	71.9	36.8
Sri Lankan Tamil	58.9	38.6	75.9	65.2	79.1	77.9	75.4	81.2	67.9
Indian Tamil	26.6	26.8	46.1	33.7	50.3	55.6	51.6	52.0	30.1
Sri Lankan moor	36.5	31.4	61.1	50.0	68.2	63.4	60.6	63.8	35.8
Other	35.0	33.3	54.5	33.3	80.0	76.2	68.4	80.0	46.2

Table 3. Percent satisfied with dimensions of work, by work place type, Sri Lanka, 2005

	Wage level/income	Non-wage benefits	Skill development	Promotion prospects	Extent of autonomy	Work environment	Nature of Work	Wkly Hours Worked	Benefits
Public	58.1	43.4	72.7	66.4	76.9	79.5	79.2	79.2	58.5
Private (> 5 employees)	35.0	29.9	50.1	37.8	51.3	58.9	50.8	56.6	36.0
Private (< 5 employees)	27.4	21.5	44.5	27.7	60.6	60.5	49.8	57.0	24.9
Coop .(> 5 employees)	58.8	40.0	68.8	75.0	87.5	93.3	75.0	70.6	75.0
Coop. (<5 employees)	25.0	0.0	50.0	33.3	75.0	75.0	50.0	50.0	25.0

Table 4: Percent satisfied with dimensions of work, by employment status, Sri Lanka, 2005

	Income	Non-wage benefits	Skill development	Promotion prospects	Extent of autonomy	Work environment	Nature of Work	Wkly Hours Worked	Benefits
Employee	41.5	33.5	57.9	50.2	63.8	66.7	61.2	65.5	41.5
Employer	60.8	57.9	71.9	57.1	75.9	88.2	75.5	90.2	56.9
Own-account	38.1	26.8	64.2	48.4	76.8	76.2	66.6	73.9	41.6

Table 5: Satisfaction with Job, Income from Job, and Nature of work in job, Sri Lanka, 2006
Ordered probit regression (Standardized coefficients)

	Overall	Income from job	Nature of work
<i>Income Security</i>			
Net individual income during previous month (logged)	0.29***	0.43***	0.14*
Income improved over the last 12 months	0.08**	0.14***	0.07*
Income relative to occupational group	0.11***	0.17***	0.04
<i>Voice Security</i>			
Health and safety department	0.09***	0.11***	0.10**
Trade union membership	0.05*	0.07*	0.04
<i>Work Security</i>			
Days off work due to ill health	-0.08**	-0.12***	-0.06*
Paid medical care entitlement	0.10***	0.09**	0.04
<i>Employment Security</i>			
Permanent contract	0.04	-0.03	0.07*
Public employment	-0.03	-0.09**	0.01
Work duration in years	-0.09***	-0.04	-0.08*
<i>Labor Market Security</i>			
Low unemployment rate in district	-0.06**	-0.04+	-0.03
<i>Skill Security</i>			
Used skills and qualifications	0.11***	0.13***	0.07*
Skills improved in last 3 years	0.16***	0.07*	0.15***
Wanted and received skill training	0.05+	0.05+	0.02
<i>Job Security</i>			
Manual labor job	-0.06*	0.01	-0.10**
Job status improved in last 12 months	0.11***	0.07*	0.08*
Hours worked stayed the same in last 12 months	0.10***	0.06*	0.10***
<i>Scar effects</i>			
Job lost from tsunami	-0.05+	-0.06+	-0.03
Living in Tsunami-affected area	0.00	-0.07*	0.03
Previously unemployed	-0.02	-0.07**	-0.05*
<i>Socio-Demographic Characteristics</i>			
Married	-0.07**	-0.10	-0.05
Age	0.08**	0.06	0.10**
Education	0.01	-0.03	0.03
Female	0.04+	0.05	0.05*
Singalese	-0.06*	-0.06	-0.04
Cut 1	2.88	5.61	1.11
Cut 2	2.95	7.29	2.48
Cut 3	2.98	7.32	2.58
Cut 4	3.15	9.092	4.59
Wald Chi-Sq	598.95***	339.74***	309.31
N	1090	1208	1197

+ Statistically sign. at p<.1., * Statistically sign. at p<.05., ** Statistically sign. at p<.01., *** Statistically sign. at p<.001
Data: Sri Lanka People's Security Survey, 2005.

Table 6: Overall Job Satisfaction, by Men and Women, Sri Lanka, 2005
Ordered probit regression (Standardized coefficients)

	Male	Female
<i>Income Security</i>		
Net individual income during previous month (logged)	0.28***	0.32**
Income improved over the last 12 months	0.09*	0.04
Income relative to occupational group	0.11***	0.12
<i>Voice Security</i>		
Health and safety department	0.11***	0.04
Trade union membership	0.08*	-0.04
<i>Work Security</i>		
Days off work due to ill health	0.11***	0.07
Paid medical care entitlement	-0.07**	-0.09
<i>Employment Security</i>		
Permanent contract	0.06*	-0.07
Public employment	-0.03	0.03
Work duration in years	-0.11***	0.01
<i>Labor Market Security</i>		
Low unemployment rate in district	-0.07**	-0.08*
<i>Skill Security</i>		
Used skills and qualifications	0.10***	0.16**
Skills improved in last 3 years	0.15***	0.19**
Wanted and received skill training	0.06*	0.01
<i>Job Security</i>		
Manual labor job	-0.06+	-0.10
Job status improved in last 12 months	0.09*	0.16*
Hours worked stayed the same in last 12 months	0.11***	0.08
<i>Scar effects</i>		
Job lost by tsunami	-0.07*	-0.01
Living in Tsunami-affected area	0.01	-0.01
Previously unemployed	-0.03	-0.02
<i>Socio-Demographic Characteristics</i>		
Married	-0.05+	-0.09
Age	0.08*	0.09
Education	-0.01	0.00
Female	-0.11***	0.11*
Singalese		
Cut 1	2.70	3.35
Cut 2	2.79	3.63
Cut 3	2.84	3.74
Cut 4	2.98	4.17
Wald Chi-Sq	479.90***	161.08***
N	851	239

+ Statistically sign. at p<.1., * Statistically sign. at p<.05., ** Statistically sign. at p<.01., *** Statistically sign. at p<.001
Data: Sri Lanka People's Security Survey, 2005.