

DOES WORK MAKE YOU HAPPY? JOB SATISFACTION AND HAPPINESS IN THE MODERN WORLD

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Abstract

Methodologically, a qualitative research was undertaken, resorting to descriptive and exploratory literature review. I analysed the concepts of happiness and job satisfaction and I also explained the impact of these concepts on the employees and how the workspace and quality of life directly influence their productivity. In the end I named some instruments which are used by the researchers for measuring the facets of job satisfaction, happiness, and satisfaction at the workplace in general. This paper focuses on reviewing existing opinions and finding the best scales to measure job satisfaction, happiness, and quality of life at work environment.

Keywords: *Happiness, Job Satisfaction, Quality of Life, Work Environments*

JEL classification: *J28, J81*

1. Introduction

Given that a large part of our lives is dedicated to work, job satisfaction and happiness have become a very important aspect of professional activity, having a great impact on a personal level, but also on the organization in which the activity is carried out.

The scientific literature emphasizes the vital role of the employees' well-being in the working environment, and a job in corporations creates new challenges for management concerning the employees' satisfaction and happiness in the working environment. Motivating and monitoring employees' well-being has become an increasingly discussed topic among the human resource department, as well as at the company's management level. Not dealing with these factors could collapse one's productivity and happiness.

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It is important to consider that companies have begun to increase the attention given to the work-life balance concept, which means a pleasant and relaxing work environment, from the design of the offices, to the activities dedicated to employees and the efficient management of time, which allows them to invest time in their families, hobbies and personal passions. The dynamic design of the offices aims to encourage creativity and includes relaxation spaces where employees can take breaks.

Elizabeth Gilbert said that we seek happiness everywhere, but we are like the beggar in Tolstoy's story, who spent his life asking passers-by for a few pennies, unaware that he had always been staying above a treasure. Our treasure, our perfection, already exists in us, but in order to attain it, we must set aside the continual agitation of the mind, give up the desires of the ego, and enter into the silence of our hearts (Gilbert, 2009).

The theme of happiness has pervaded religion and philosophy since their inception, generally being conceptualized into two paradigms (each paradigm with several competing theories): the hedonic paradigm (happiness as pleasure) and the eudaimonic paradigm (happiness as virtue). Happiness can manifest as pleasure (pleasant life), contentment (good life - hedonic and eudaimonic happiness) and / or wisdom (meaningful life) (Seligman, 2002).

Job satisfaction is the combination of psychological and environmental circumstances that causes a person to say honestly that he or she is satisfied with his or her job (Hoppock, 1935). Although external components have direct impact on the satisfaction towards the job, there are still some internal factors which are related to the employees' feelings. This means that the satisfaction towards the job contains a number of elements that cause a sense of fulfilment. Vroom in his interpretation on job satisfaction emphasizes the employees' role in the workplace. Hence, he characterizes job satisfaction as affective adaptation on the part of individuals toward work roles which they are currently holding (Vroom, 1964).

By analysing the specialized literature regarding the description offered for the satisfaction towards the job, we can deduce that it is affected by both intrinsic elements like: personal desire, responsibility, success or recognition, but also other personal extrinsic factors such as: salary, the climate within the organization, the relationships between colleagues and the safety offered by the workplace.

Because in any national economy the progress of the respective society is desired, another important factor is the quality of life at work. Quality of life as a concept has been described as the degree to which the

experience of an individual's life satisfies that individual's wishes and desires: psychological as well as physical (Rice, 1984).

The notion of quality of life in the workplace is understood as being a set of factors that together can favourably influence the health and well-being of the employee, but also the motivation for performance. It can be evaluated on at least two identified dimensions: a physical and a psycho-social one.

2. Quality of working life and productivity

In the current situation we need a different perspective in terms of quality of life and productivity. This means that it requires continuous adaptation, both on the part of the employees and on the part of the company. Given that we spend so much time working and this is usually the main activity in our lives, it is perfectly logical that if we are not happy at work, we will not be happy in our personal lives, and for this reason we must pay attention to our needs and those around us.

To improve the quality of life, it is required to be aware of the components which influence productivity at work, to later find intelligent solutions. The first factor is the relationship between income and performance. When organizations practice payroll, methods based on employee performance, fair and equitable, the employee's perception of the workplace will increase (Chang & Hahn, 2006). Such a system would allow employees to evaluate their own work in a short time, so that they can be motivated to increase their performance and productivity. A high income can drive an employee up to a certain point, and after this point it is necessary to add other elements such as: work recognition, personal development and responsibility, which are necessary to maintain motivation towards the organization and the work itself.

Another factor is the relationship between reward, incentive, and performance, where the literature recommends that employers provide significant financial rewards for outstanding employee performance (Trahant & Yearout, 2005). This employee reward system is a means of motivation with good long-term results, especially if the rewards are fair and are directly proportional to the employee's efforts and value.

Because employees allocate a lot of their time indoors, I think we need to focus on the relationship between work environment and performance. Several studies show that the introduction of the air-conditioning units in the offices has increased the comfort and productivity levels by 5-15 percent because employees can focus more on their work (Vischer & Jacqueline,

1989). Another critical element that ensures the efficiency at the workplace are the colours present in the surrounding environment. Considering that each and every one of us is different, the way we perceive and be influenced by colour will differ as well. (Kamarulzaman, et. al., 2011). Garris and Monroe (2005) declare that not only the mood is determined by colours, but the productivity and wellness of individuals as well. Thus, it will have to be adapted both in terms of intensity and colour temperature, to determine how team members work throughout the day. It is important to remember that in order to ensure that an employee is concentrated and delivers quality results, a satisfying work environment is essential. This ensures a high level of quality of life in the office, along with increasing the performance of the organisation.

Another factor that must be taken seriously is the relationship between personality traits and performance. Conscientiousness predicts performance at work, extraversion indicates sales performance, and agreeableness correlates with group performance (Gunkel, et. al., 2010). One last factor that affects productivity at work is leadership style. The leadership style of the leader directly affects the performance of the company. This may explain why some companies are closing, while others are living and thriving even in times of crisis.

We live in the age of technology, and access to information has become easier through gadget technology - phone, tablet, laptop, or even smart watches that remind us to hydrate properly. Continued technological evolution has made organizations face a constant need for change, learning and innovation. Since employee happiness has become an essential factor in increasing productivity, it has also become a guarantee of the organization's success. In addition to the competitive salary, companies use specialized services to maintain the mood of employees and help them better understand each other. They invest in the health and well-being of employees, support long-term development, and encourage work-life balance.

The traditional office design maintains a routine and a rigid structure where there is no room for creativity, and for this reason we want an improvement of office spaces. Researchers determined that if the surrounding conditions in the office, like lighting, sound and temperature levels, along with furniture comfort, architectural elements and aesthetics are being managed accordingly to the performed tasks, there is positive influence on the employees productivity and morale (Vischer & Fischer, 2005).

The happiness and motivation of people is increased by having a natural lit workspace (Hameed & Amjad, 2009). Research from Harvard

Business Review shows that a workplace with natural lighting makes employees more productive. This study concluded that employee experience can be harmed by lacking natural lighting and views to the outside. More than a third of the employees being questioned felt that there is too little natural lighting in their office. Almost a half of the employees say that they feel tired or exhausted from the lack of natural light or not having an office with a window, and 43% said that they feel gloomy due to the fact that light is missing in the office (Meister, 2018).

Comfortable furniture can boost productivity. According to research discussed by HR Magazine, a quarter (25%) of office workers said that the discomfort of working from their desks obstructs their productivity. A similar amount confirmed that sitting at their desks is uncomfortable, and 25% said that their working environment has a negative impact on the productivity (Frith, 2017). Although the work schedule provided in the contract is generally eight hours a day for most companies, the concentration ability is directly proportionate to the comfort levels, an employee's ability to focus decreasing as his or hers comfort decreases, which is why investing in professional ergonomic office chairs is the best solution.

A decisive influence on mental weariness and curative value can be achieved with natural details, such as nature sights and indoor vegetation (Kaplan, 1995). Every office needs a good break area where employees can escape and restore. An office interior that includes attractive break areas signals to employees that it is okay to take time away from their desks. In return, you get a team of more productive, creative professionals that do not struggle to meet deadlines. Also, office needs an anything-goes space that allows free expression and creative thought. That is why workplaces need distraction-free, silent spaces where employees can sit down, think deeply, and explore ideas (MindSPACE, 2019).

3. Measuring job satisfaction and happiness

Not pursuing employee satisfaction and happiness at work from a managerial point of view is like running a business with your eyes closed. It is possible to have a general idea about employee satisfaction and happiness at work, but without the possibility of seeing exact figures, we do not know when it is time to intervene to change something for the better.

Firstly, we have to make the distinction between happiness and satisfaction. Happiness can be characterized as a state of mind while satisfaction is the absence of want or desire. Although both are in relation with

one another; someone can be satisfied even if they are not happy and can be happy without being satisfied (Shawkat, n.d.). This means that satisfaction results from the way we think about our work, what we want to get from a job in terms of tangible benefits. Happiness, on the other hand, comes from the way we feel about our work and those little things that make us happy to come to the office. It gives us an extra reason to give our best.

Job satisfaction quantification has often been in the center of attention of organizational management and researchers implicated in pinpointing the determinants of job satisfaction (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). The most used scales are:

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) is a questionnaire which covers nine dimensions of job satisfaction. Participants are asked to answer 36 items or 4 items for each of the nine sub-scales. For each item, there are options between "strong disagreement" and "strong agreement" (Spector, 1997).

The Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) was created by Hackman and Oldham in 1975 (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). This survey measures the overall and specific sides of job satisfaction. General satisfaction, internal work motivation, and growth satisfaction are the there are three dimensions of overall job satisfaction which are combined into a single measure.

Job Satisfaction Index was developed by Schriesheim and Tsue in 1980. It is composed by six items which form an index what determines overall job satisfaction. The items are promotion opportunities, supervision, work, payment, co-workers, and the job in general (Fields, 2002).

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire measures ability, achievement, action, growth, authority, company policies and practices, creativity, independence, moral values, recognition, responsibility, security, social status, supervision-human relations, working conditions and many more (Fields, 2002).

Job Satisfaction Relative to Expectations was developed by Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley. The scale measures the perceived quality of a workplace and the employee expectations (Bacharach, et. al., 1991). It is most effective in determining how job stresses, role conflicts, or role ambiguities can hinder an employee from meeting job expectations (Fields, 2002).

Global Job Satisfaction, developed by Warr, Cook, and Wall in 1979 measure overall job satisfaction (Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979).

Job Descriptive Index was initially created in 1969 by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin. It contains 72 items which assess five facets of job satisfaction

including: coworkers, work, promotions, payment, and supervision. A composite measure of job satisfaction is found out by connecting the facets with the ratings of satisfaction (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969).

To find out a more accurate answer about employee happiness at work, the scales found that measure job satisfaction can be joined by those that measure happiness. Happiness is a deeply subjective topic, and for this reason there are different tools that measure happiness in different ways, considering different factors that contribute to happiness. The most common method by which researchers measure happiness is self-assessment. The self-assessment questionnaires are scientifically designed through research, testing and monitoring, and in the following I will present the most known and used scales that measure happiness.

Happy Life Expectancy Scale (HLE) from Quality of Life Index (QLI) and QALY (Quality Adjusted Years). The scale created by Ruut Veenhoven in 1996 measures the degree to which people live happily in each country. (Veenhoven, 1996).

A scale that measures subjective happiness is *Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)*. It contains a four-element scale that measures global subjective happiness. The participants are asked to use absolute ratings to characterize themselves as unhappy or happy individuals and to what extent they identify with the descriptions of unhappy or happy individuals (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). It consists of 4 items: two items require respondents to characterize themselves using a rating system, with the latter providing brief descriptions of happy and unhappy people, and respondents being asked to what extent they would describe each characterization.

As stated by Lyubomirsky, happiness consists of well-being, joy and contentment. These three values are combined with a feeling that one's life is meaningful and good. However, happiness is a subjective feeling and each of us defines happiness differently. To measure this subjective happiness, a 4-item happiness scale is used in which respondents answer questions with answer options ranging from Not at all (marked as 1) to Completely (marked as 7) (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

Lyubomirsky's book "The How of Happiness" is a useful tool which allows everyone to boost their happiness level by learning strategies. Its purpose is to show that each of us can do certain activities to increase our happiness and that happiness in life is determined only by ourselves. The first step is to find out your happiness level, this being the starting point of the Subjective Ladder of Happiness (SHS). Using certain strategies, the sensation

of happiness can be stimulated, hence people will learn to let the sensation of happiness go on for much longer (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

NEO Psychological Inventory (NEO PI-R). This report helps to better understand the personality characteristics of the evaluated person. The description will be based on the five key dimensions of the Big Five personality model. The questionnaire consists of 240 items, grouped into 5 super-factors, each with six distinct facets, characteristic of the Big Five theory of human personality (Costa & McCrae, 2008). The scale assesses the tendency to feel positive emotions such as joy, happiness, love, and exaltation. People who get high scores on this scale laugh easily and often. They are cheerful and optimistic.

4. Conclusions

Employee satisfaction at work is one of the most challenging areas that managers face nowadays concerning employee management. It has long been believed that a satisfactory salary also means higher productivity for employees, but it has been shown that there is a much closer relationship between productivity at work and employee happiness. Because a happy employee will be more productive, and customers will be happier, and for this reason I believe that the employee's happiness at work is the responsibility of the manager.

There is, however, a connection between a positive self-image and a happy feeling. A more positive outlook on life is considered a trait of happy people. However, it can fade again as people get used to it. The process is called hedonistic adaptation. Studies have shown that employee satisfaction is essential to a company's success, which is why it is important to provide incentives to encourage and inspire staff, and motivational methods can be of many kinds - internal, external, material or intangible.

Often stress is also caused by the feeling of uselessness, so an employer who keeps his employees motivated by reaffirming their merits at the successful completion of the work task, will have happier and more motivated employees. Keep in mind that a high stress environment can lead to increased insomnia, reduced job performance, depression, anxiety and decreased organizational commitment (Woo & Postolache, 2008).

In conclusion, this review of the literature represents a starting point in studying the satisfaction and happiness at work, providing a starting point for future research using the scales presented to find the answer to the question "Does work make you happy?".

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