

An approach to the design of a scale for measuring happiness at work of Iberian companies

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Abstract

By reviewing bibliography on happiness at work, we may say that from a management perspective, this subject is yet poorly explained. So, main reason to conduct this research was the few number of references on organizational happiness in the field of Business and Economics, despite its increasing importance. More specifically, the non-existence of scales to measure happiness at work in Iberia.

In this article we aim to propose an exploratory scale to measure happiness at work in Portuguese and Spanish organizations. To do that, we look for primary data collection by using a questionnaire with open questions.

The research is qualitative and was conducted applying complementary phases: (1) data collection, (2) storage, (3) coding, (4) indexing system refinement, (5) relational code and (6) identify categories (key concepts). In phases 3, 4, 5, and 6 a content analysis was applied. To analyze the scale robustness in two cultures we have applied Hofstede's model. This model confirms that cultural and social values of Portuguese and Spanish individuals are very similar, allowing homogenizing the scale without significant bias.

The scale proposed is based on: (1) total happiness at work, (2) happiness in the organization, and (3) happiness in the function. At the end, happiness at work was measured by 20 items. We consider this research as a significant first step to develop a consistent tool to measure happiness at work.

Key Words: Happiness at work, Qualitative, Hofstede's model

Introduction

Organizational Happiness is a complex concept that must be considered in the management strategy. Authors like Baker *et al.* (2006) report that happiness is based on organizational behavior (not in emotions) and is the result of a strategic reflection. Some authors define a happy organization as the one where every individual in all hierarchical levels has a number of strengths, work together toward a common objective, get satisfaction from developing new products and / or services and, through these, provide a positive difference in the life of other individuals. Happy employees are so involved with the organization that considers their work as "a happy occupation".

The organizational happiness concept is broader than the concept of job satisfaction. Fisher (2010) refers that organizational happiness considers dimensions such as participation in the organization, job satisfaction, and positive engagement with the organization. Hosie *et al.* (2007) refer that organizational happiness is the sum of affective commitment to the organization, organization welfare, and job satisfaction.

Baker *et al.* (2006), based on case studies, refer that on happy organizations: (1) employees are more creative and able to induce change, (2) are oriented to the "best possible" and not just problem solving, (3) leaders create an environment promoting collaboration, cooperation and responsibility to innovate, (4) teamwork and positive vision is encouraged, and (5) employees look to transform 'possibilities' in real solutions that may contribute to organization sustainability.

The concept of organizational happiness is being studied by several researchers worldwide. In the Iberian Peninsula, even being a current topic, is still poorly treated by researcher. It is important to clearly define the concept, identify factors that most contribute to organizational happiness, and look for relationships between organizational happiness and performance.

Proposals to measure happiness are numerous. Among others, Seligman (: www.authentichappiness.com); specific cases are proposed by Janson & Martin (1982) that also recommends additional items to measure happiness in the workplace; Linz (2003) in addition to direct questions like: For you, what is happiness? propose new questions such as: "Do you recommend your workplace to a friend?", "Would you change your company for a slightly higher salary?". Wright & Largood, (2002) consider direct questions to support research in this field: "What is happiness to you?", "What is happiness to you in the organization?", "What is happiness for you in your workplace?".

Factors defining happiness at work does not vary substantially from other studies. Suh & Koo (2008) propose for happiness "enjoy", "family", "health", "love", "internal stability" and "welfare goal"; to evaluate happiness in business "job security", "rewards", "organizational climate" and "administration"; for happiness in the job: "do a good job", "business unit organizational climate ", "internal motivation" and "task design."

In this research, as result of bibliography reviewing, we propose an exploratory scale aiming to validate and measure the construct "Happiness at work". A Likert scale 1-8 is used.

To develop this exploratory scale a qualitative methodology was applied. We consider that before proceeding to a quantitative analysis, including hypothesis testing, it is fundamental to first identify and define, using a systematic process, the variables and factors contributing for organizational happiness in Iberia. This is more important since no exploratory studies for Portugal and Spain are available. A content analysis methodology was applied, using the statistical program ATLAS / TI V6.0.

Literature review

Happiness is been studied in different areas of knowledge: among others, organizational psychology, clinical psychology, psychiatry, philosophy. But, the study of happiness in management is quite recent and not much research papers are available. Being a happy professional is very important, more, when for most individuals, being happy is the most valuable of their existence.

Being happy is essential for humans. Different authors have different visions: Fineman, (2006) proposes important questions, as "What does it mean exactly for the individuals", "What the areas of life affected", "How can be measured to be useful at a predictive level"; Lyubomirsky (2008) and Boehm & Lyubomirski (2008) consider that 50% of happiness is genetics, 10% depends on the environment and 40% changed according to individual activities. Arvey *et al.* (1989) refer that is only genetics.

Numerous studies refers the origin of happiness in individual personality (Diener & Lucas, 1999; Furham *et al.* 2002; Heller *et al.* 2002; Judge *et al.*, 2002; Christofer *et al.* 2009).

Conclusion is that is very difficult to find a consensus.

Finding a definition for happiness is not easy, depends on the approach. Kiesebir & Diener (2008) refers that philosophers and social scientists have defined happiness in different ways. Happiness is definitely an imprecise term (Veenhoven, 1991). This issue arises mainly due to the difference between the Eudaimonic and Hedonist approaches (Ryam & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Hedonistic approach has its origin in the Epicurus school where happiness is the result of pleasure and the avoidance of what is unpleasant.

Eudaimonic approach has its origin in the Aristotle school. Consider that happiness depends on the development of activities being consistent with most intimate personal values, promoting personal growth and self-realization.

At this stage we may say that scientific approaches of happiness seem to converge on three phenomena (Wright & Larwood, 2002):

- Happiness is a subjective experience.
- Happiness includes the relative presence of positive moods but excludes the presence of negative moods.
- Happiness is a global mood, stable over time.

Except for the basics, seems there is no consensus on the happiness concept. Same with happiness word semantics. The current psychology literature use, often, happiness being synonymous of: subjective well-being, psychological well-being and satisfaction with life (Diener *et al.* 2003). Alarcon (2006) considers that the English language must be more precautions on applying those synonymous to happiness. The author refers that the word happiness is semantically much more complex and rich in content than “well-being”, which alone express the basic components of a happy life.

Alarcon (2006) proposes a definition for happiness: "A state of complete satisfaction subjectively experienced by the individual in possession of a coveted". Then, properties of the happy construct would be: a) individual feeling of satisfaction with life b) temporal stability, c) possession of something and d) different type of possessions (material, ethical, aesthetic, psychological, religious, social, others).

Happiness at work

Warr (2007) asks: Why some people are happier than others at work? In fact, some individuals are happier than others in the workplace, team, organization and job. Linz & Semykina (2010) conclude that:

- Happiness at job is, in part, explained by a combination of **job characteristics** (salary, working hours, opportunities for promotion, danger at work, monotony, how interesting it can be, others.), **workplace characteristics** (environment, risk, average wage, company size, others) and **worker characteristics** (age, gender, education, level of education, marital status, others). However the reality may differ when considering job specifics, the workplace, and the worker. Also, may differ when analyzing specific economy sectors (Clark *et al.* 2009, Theodossiou & Zangelidis, 2009).
- The actual and expected rewards are related to job happiness (Hamermesh, 2001, Origo & Pagani, 2009). This association depends on whether the reward is intrinsic: work-related (learn new skills, have more empowerment) or extrinsic (financial benefits, receive greeting from a superior) (Finkelstien 2009; Fraser & Hedge, 2000; Porfeli & Maortymer, 2010).

Most of the studies reviewed do not present unanimous arguments regarding the positive effect of income on happiness (Panos & Theodossiou 2006). Authors like Clark *et al.* (2009) believe that colleagues' higher incomes may contribute to individual happiness at work. Sloan & Williams (2000) argue that income influence on job happiness differs depending on gender and workers believe to be well rewarded.

Grooz & Brink (1999) refer that happiness at work appears to be higher in younger and older professionals. Fargher & Kesting (2008) consider that happiness at work is influenced by the importance given to work and beliefs. Long (2005) suggests that happiness at work is positively affected by formation, being higher when professionals have more training and are more qualified.

To Paschoal *et al.* (2010) current literature on organizations individuals' positive aspects has led to happiness. Hosie & Sevastos (2009) consider that new concerns on organizational happiness are been discovered within the limits of economy and psychology. The authors' report that these two "worlds" are coming together on the organizational happiness research since Kahneman, a Princeton psychology professor, award in 2002 the Nobel Prize in Economics.

Layard (2005) demonstrates the increasing evidence on the relationship between more wealth and less happiness in the more developed world. States that the "economic growth does not automatically increase social harmony". Hosie & Sevastos (2009) refer the possibility that professionals are not always motivated by increasing financial incentives at work, considering that in some cases that may even reduce motivation, especially when that originates more responsibility or work.

For Baker *et al.* (2006) the bases of professional happiness are emotions and organizational behaviors. Authors refer that on happy organizations both collaborators and directors have a strong emotional involvement with the organization, considering work as a "Happy occupation". They consider that on happy organizations individuals have a positive attitude, the willingness to go work every day, and the organization is appreciated and respected by the community.

Silverblatt (2010) refers that due to the actual economic crisis is complex to quantify the emotional impact of the unhappy workers on the economy. The author states that unhappy employees cost millions of dollars to the United States economy, mainly through loss of productivity. Current research suggests that increase happiness level is not as difficult as it may seem. Experts suggest that the workers themselves may implement small changes originating more professional happiness: find some peace of mind, list the good things that happened, think that work is something attractive rather than just work. Also by setting effective objectives and establish good relationships with colleagues.

Methodology and objectives of the work

The research is qualitative. Methodology was (1) Data collection, (2) Data storage, (3) Coding, (4) Indexing system refinement, (5) Code relationship and (6) Identify Categories (key concepts). For stages 3, 4, 5 and 6 was applied a content analysis, which according to Berelson (1952:18), "is a research technique applied with the objective to systemize on a quantitative way the content of communication". The content analysis components to be considered in a research work are:

1. Analyze and identify variables.
2. Determine the encoding rules.
3. Determine the category system.
4. Check the reliability of the coding system-categorization.
5. Inferences.

Stages 3, 4 and 5, were solved using the statistical software Atlas. Ti V6.0

The target population of Portuguese and Spanish professionals consisting in a total of 1.338 professionals (750 men and 638 women) covering the following

sectors: 20 in the primary sector, 100 in the secondary sector, 40 in the knowledge sector and 140 in services.

According to theoretical review, this investigation has three objectives:

1. **Define what is happiness?** The vagueness of the term happiness (Veenhoven, 1991), and the term happiness being semantically more complex and richer in content than any other words being used as synonymous (Alarcon, 2006; Baker & Demerouti, 2008), leads us try to define what is happiness for respondents.

2. **Define what is happiness in the organization?** Authors such as Linz & Semykina (2010), Fisher (2010), Hosie *et al.* (2007) underline the importance of being happy in the organization. An organization is happier according to the sum of their employee's happiness within the organization.

3. **Define what is happiness with the job?** Wright & Larwood (2002), Long (2005), Fisher (2010) and Hosie *et al.* (2007) refers that for an organization to be happy, their employees should be happy, also, in the job done.

These questions were asked to professionals' sample. By analyzing these open questions with a content analysis methodology, an exploratory questionnaire on organizational happiness for Iberia could be proposed. This is the output of this work.

Results

In Content Analysis we encode each word, or group of words, summarizing the set of quotes. For that was used the "ATLAS/TI 6.0 Scientific Software Development" software, since combines a friendly use and a major ability to encoding and draw conclusions (Miles & Huberman 1994).

The process was: citation evaluation, highlight the words of each open responses being representative for each of the issues, encoding, interpret codes and codify categories. This process follows the recommendations of Miles & Huberman (1994).

For the encoding process, key in data analysis, we have first created a list with the initial based code, as on the scheme recommended by Miles & Huberman (1994), being used in the interactive process of analysis. The codes facilitated the identification, the occurrence of patterns, bias control, and alternative or opposite directions and level of consistency. After identifying the codes, we proceeded to evaluate relationships between the different codes, looking for the frequency of their occurrence, and the number of relationships with other codes. This allowed establishing the importance and strength of each code.

After applying the qualitative analysis, Spanish results are:

 Insert Table 1 about here

 Insert Table 2 about here

 Insert Table 3 about here

After applying the qualitative analysis Portuguese results are:

What is for you to be happy?

Have a good family

Have good health

Be happy with life up to now

I have already obtained what I believe is the most important in life

What is for you to be happy in the organization?

Internal Environment: Good work environment, the energy of my peers, involvement and professionalism, good team spirit, humor, easy communication, adequate working tools, effective conflict management, peers as friends.

Recognition and Trust: Recognition of merit, respect as individual and professional, confidence in the organization and my job, fair and honest organization.

Personal Development: Ability to develop as individual and professional, new challenges, autonomy and responsibility to contribute to the strategy of the organization, be entrepreneur and proactive, time for evaluate professional decisions, job rotation.

Remuneration: Financial conditions (salary + other benefits) in the organization are fair.

Work engagement: I do what I like, I feel useful for the organization, every day I like working.

Sustainability and Innovation: Have work, have ambitious and exciting new projects, well organized work processes without bureaucracy, stability and security, innovation oriented organization.

Engagement with Managers and Organization: Employees know and are involved with the organization's vision, organization communicates the objectives, proximity between management and employees, managers encourage the well-being of its employees, be involved with the organization's values, I have pride in working for the organization, leadership is inspiring and true, feel management support.

Goals: Make a difference through excellence in my work, help with my goals for the organization to achieve their own, be clear goals.

Work-Life Balance: Balance work / family / individual, organization allow my mission as an individual (family and society), organization has social responsibility projects.

What is for you to be happy at job?

Job Development: Perform my job with enthusiasm, have autonomy and responsibility, have the resources, have physical condition, develop a function in my area of training (knowledge).

Personal Development: Being respected as individual and professional, have continuous learning, being involved in the organization strategy, have intellectual stimulation.

Recognition and respect: Get merit recognition as individual and in the job.

Work Environment: Good team spirit within the organization, good working environment that aids in the development of my job, my colleagues are motivated with their jobs, is good integration between the different departments of the organization.

Compensation: Financial conditions are fair for my function.

Job Objectives: The objectives are fair, clear and specific, look to achieve the objectives.

Sustainability and Security: The organization has new projects that can guarantee my job, developing well my job is important for the organization to achieve their goals, my role is important for the organization, my role can give me stability in the organization.

Manager Support: I feel trust from my chief, when necessary I have the support of my boss, I think the leadership of managers is inspiring for the development of my role.

Balance between Work and Personal Life: This function allows the right balance between my professional and personal life.

Being Entrepreneur: I can be entrepreneur and creative in my job, I may develop my job without bureaucracies.

Conclusion

This research allows proposing a first and exploratory questionnaire to measure Organizational Happiness:

From 1 (totally unhappy) to 8 (totally happy) how do you feel about your job:

 Insert Table 4 about here

This questionnaire is a first and exploratory approach only based on content analysis. Its validity and liability are not confirmed.

Next step is to develop a quantitative research, applying the questionnaire in Portugal and Spain, in order to verify its liability through Chronbach Alpha and validate factors by applying Factorial Analysis.

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Table 1. What is for you to be happy?

	Needs Covered	Quality of life
Enjoy	Accomplishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilling dreams and objectives • Feeling accomplished • Having aspirations • Perform Illusions • Personal fulfillment • Accepting yourself • Feel satisfaction in various areas of life
	Job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tranquility in the job
	Money	
	Dwelling	
	Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility to study
	Absence of problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not suffer • Do not have complications in life
	Enjoy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure • Hobbies
	Family	Family
Family and friends		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be well with the loved ones
Health		

Love		
Subjective well	Live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always be happy • Have a good day • Joy • Pleasant moments
	Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make (see) others happy
	Optimism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy the day to day • Joy and satisfaction • Positive things
	Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment
Internal Stability	Feel at easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have peace, tranquility, serenity, wellness • Feel in peace with myself • Feel satisfied • Be well with others
	Feeling loved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling valued
	Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance • Harmony • Tranquility • Security • Peace • Getting along with people

Table 2. What is for you to be happy in the organization?

Professional stability	Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security • Have job • Have a long term contract
	Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible journey • Balance job-family
Rewards	Professional advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good sales • Achieve objectives • Good Job • Good results • Success • Progress
	Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Salary
	Ascend	
	Good post	
Organizational climate	Fellowship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being comfortable • Good ambience • Good communication with the director
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be recognized • Feel valued

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel heard • Feel respected • Feel confident • Feel useful
	Enjoy job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love the job • Enjoy • Work without problems • Perform work comfortably • Feeling good on working
	Be integrated	
	Self-realization	
	Vocation	
	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with enthusiasm • Be happy with my job • Feeling good • Have hope
	Learn	
	Tranquility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work seamlessly
	Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To respect my decisions
	Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom
Administration	Dynamism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New things • Rotation
	Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good organization
	Get it right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet obligations • Improve
	Involve	
	Labor rights	
	Improve the resources available	

Table 3. What is for you to be happy doing your job?

Do it right	Get it right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End it right • End it all • Do it with love • Efficiency • Being comfortable with the work done • Improve
	Effective	
	Responsibility	
	Having happy customers	
	Meet objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplishment • Optimal results

	Absence of problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not promote problems at work Troubleshooting
Monetary reward		
Good organizational climate in the work unit	Good atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tranquility Be comfortable
	Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect the needs
	Fellowship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good atmosphere Have good communication with the boss and peers
	Enjoy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoy
Internal motivation	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be happy Be good Have hope Wanting to do
	Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evolution Innovate Develop knowledge
	Flexibility	
	Autonomy	
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling useful, recognized...
	Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overcoming
Task Design	Have the necessary resources	
	Have well-defined tasks	
	Leadership	
	Dedication	
	Have enough time	
	Have work	
	Dynamism	

Table 4. Questionnaire

I enjoy my work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
The family brings me happiness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I have good health	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Remuneration is fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
In my life love plays an important role	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I have professional stability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Objectively I am feeling well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I have professional stability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
At work I get the just rewards	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

The company's organizational climate is good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
The type of leadership is adequate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I may be entrepreneur	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I enjoy doing my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
The organizational climate in my unit is good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
The internal motivation for my job is high	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
My objectives are well designed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I am extrovert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8