

Workplace Happiness and influencing factors-A review of literature

Shyla.s* ; Aisha M.Sheriff**

*Research Scholar, B N Bahadur Institute of Management Sciences, University of Mysore, Manasa Gangothri, Mysuru.

** Professor & Chairman, B N Bahadur Institute of Management Sciences, University of Mysore, Manasa Gangothri, Mysuru

Abstract

Research shows that people who are happy at work perform better and productive than those who are not. The concept of happiness is associated with individual's subjective well-being. Workplace happiness is decisive for improving productivity in any organization. Happy people are productive people while those who are not may not pay full attention to any assignment. It is allied with positive constructs such as pleasure, satisfaction and well-being. The present paper is about in-depth search for influencing factors on workplace happiness based on the review of literature. It is clearly evident that positive work engagement, work environment. Income, freedom and work-life balance plays a major role in workplace happiness.

Key words: workplace happiness, work engagement, income, work environment.

Introduction

The concept of happiness has acknowledged considerable attention from psychology and philosophy. Researchers confirm that individuals feel happy if they exhibit higher emotional intelligence (Carm, yit, wies 2009). Xanthopoulou et al. (2012) state that the concept of workplace happiness is still underdeveloped. Happy and healthy individuals reflect happiness in everything they perform and articulate. Employees who wake up in a fresh, inspired, and happy mood are capable of having their brain run at full pace and ability, which in turn allows them to be more productive and work better (Seetubtim 2015). Happiness at work is relatively a new concept, less treated by human resources management specialists and more related to the component of managerial psychology or psychology of the employer and the employee. There are numerous factors which influence workplace happiness directly and indirectly.

Objective

To analyse the factors influencing workplace happiness based on the review of literature.

Review of Literature

According to Fisher (2010), workplace happiness reflects an attitudinal construct comprised of three dimensions: engagement, job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. Moreover, happiness at work is often

derived from personal experiences the employee had, witnessed or heard about. Zelenski et al. (2008) and Erdogan et al. (2012) consider that workplace happiness is largely based on leadership style, workplace justice, communication policies, organizational culture and more. It is no surprise therefore that Weimann et al. (2015) state that workplace happiness is not fixed but may change as a response to changes in work conditions (development opportunities, financial remuneration, promotion, assessment, etc.). Accordingly, Fisher (2010) perceives workplace happiness as healthy positive feelings an employee maintains towards the job itself (work atmosphere, feeling at work, job title), job characteristics (pay, development opportunities and assessment) and the organization as a whole.

Ever since a group of scientists switched the lights on and off at the Hawthorne factory in the mid-1920s, scholars and executives alike have been obsessed with increasing their employees' productivity. In particular, happiness as a way to boost productivity seems to have gained increased traction in corporate circles as of late. Firms spend money on happiness coaches, team-building exercises, gameplays, funsultants, and Chief Happiness Officers (yes, you'll find one of those at Google). These activities and titles may appear jovial, or even bizarre, but companies are taking them extremely seriously. Should they?

Measuring happiness is about as easy as taking the temperature of the soul or determining the exact color of love. As Darrin M. McMahon shows in his illuminating study *Happiness: A History*, ever since the 6th Century B.C., when Croesus is said to have quipped "No one who lives is happy," we have seen this slippery concept being a proxy for all sorts of other concepts, from pleasure and joy to plenitude and contentment. Transient, individual and unit level happiness are the three levels at which concept of happiness is measured. Transient is the variation of happiness within an individual at different points in time, individual is the variation of happiness among different individuals at one point in time, and the unit is the variation in happiness among different working units within an organization at one point in time (Fisher, 2010).

A positive psychologist, Dr. Barbara Fredrickson defines happiness as, "the fuel to thrive and to flourish, and to leave this world in better shape than you found it". Feeling positive emotions, feeling meaningful and engaged are the characteristics that help to define a happy person (Gupta, 2012). At organizational end, workplace happiness results in higher productivity, profitability, performance, commitment and teamwork. At employees' end it helps to focus on work (Gupta, 2012). Employee happiness and positive organizational and employee outcomes are positively related to one another. It is also significantly related to employee and organizational performance, commitment and organizational survival (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007).

Just because we have more advanced technology today doesn't mean we're any closer to pinning down a definition, as Will Davies reminds us in his new book 'The Happiness Industry'. He concludes that even as we have developed more advanced techniques for measuring emotions and predicting behaviors, we have also adopted increasingly simplified notions of what it means to be human, let alone what it means to pursue

happiness. A brain scan that lights up may seem like it's telling us something concrete about an elusive emotion, for example, when it actually isn't.

We rarely think of workplaces as places where people go to seek happiness. Instead, we perceive them as places where we provide our skills and time in exchange for money to help us lead comfortable life. We humans generally pursue happiness in our personal lives, either by maintaining our relationships or fulfilling our wants and aspirations. But happiness in life also can be achieved at work. And contrary to popular belief, work doesn't have to be boring and unfulfilling.

Factors influencing workplace happiness

Income

The wage and salary earned by an individual is termed as 'Income' (Mathur, 2012). A study of income and happiness by Caporale, Georgellis, Tsitsianis and Yin (2009) confirms that there is a strong relationship between an individual's income and life satisfaction. This is because people with higher income have more opportunities to buy desired commodities and services (Frey & Stutzer, 2002; Schnittker, 2008). Even though people who earn higher income seem to be happy, their happiness level is influenced by working hours (Binswanger, 2006; Paul & Guilbert, 2013). People may not be satisfied with their jobs if they have long working hours (Georgellis, Lange, & Tabvuma, 2012).

Employees are likely to be happy when they observe income equality (De Prycker, 2010). Oshio and Kobayashi (2011) contend that individuals with income disparity are less happy. In contrast, Hopkins (2008) states that income disparity can positively have an effect on happiness of some competitive employees who earn more income than others. This is because competitive people compare their own rewards and others' (Brody, 2010). They may be happy with higher income even if it is not equal to others (Hopkins, 2008). People try to compare their own income with others (Lembregts & Pandelaere, 2014; Oshio & Kobayashi, 2011)

Work engagement

Robin, R.N., Kralj, A., Solt, D.J., Goh, E. and Callan, V. (2014) rejects the notion of happiness as pleasure and positive affect alone and he states that much more is required to be authentically happy. He proposes that pleasure, frequent positive emotions, engagement with others and activity such as work and meaning in life are required for fulfillment. This engagement should involve the use of an individual's signature vigor. He advises refocusing on both engagement and meaning in life even as recognizing the importance of pleasure which he sees it as least important.

Work environment

Happiness is determined by environmental factors such as regular work, income and relaxation activities. But some researchers have claimed that personality is the main determinant of happiness rather than social class,

money, relationships, works, recreation religion or other external factor. Researchers have found that there is a relationship between the personality traits and happiness. One of the study states that the sustainable happiness model emphasizes on SWB (subjective well-being) which is determined by three factors: genetics, individual circumstances, and activities. Dogl, C. and Holtbrügge, D. (2014). Why some people at work are happier or unhappier than others? A complete answer is that individuals at work are happier if their work contains pleasing features. Individual's characteristics and mental processes encourage the presence of happiness.

Gender and workplace happiness

According to Fisher (2010), workplace happiness constantly derived from the employee's experience of dealing with his or her employer. As a result, this attitudinal construct shapes employee behaviour and positive feelings towards work ambiance, contemporaries and employer. Erdogan et al. (2012) states that workplace happiness can be seen as a result of employee satisfaction with their leadership, work atmosphere, job description, job specification, career development and more. This view is shared also by other authors such as (Kahn, 1990; Harter et al. 2002; Hels et al., 2001; Wu et al., 2017; Brun et al., 2014)

Organization's shared value

Mohit, M.A.(2013) argued that to achieve the "happy life" people must work in good organizations. Numerous researchers have demonstrated that aspects of organizations and work are the determinants of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and other types of happiness at work. Researchers have studied the environmental contributors to the happiness, at the organizational, work and event level. Environmental contributors of happiness at the organizational level claim that it is necessary to consider characteristics of culture and HR practices as determinants of employee happiness .Hall-Kenyon,Bullough, MacKay. and Marshall, (2014)

Purposeful work

Ryff and Keyes (1995): Described "workplace happiness" as one's belief about their work being purposeful and meaningful" where they nurture a sense of autonomy, acknowledge work-related and individual feedback positively, develop productive relationships with organizational members, and keep developing self and others.

Joy&Sinosh(2016): The study found two dimensions of "psychological well-being" (i.e. happiness), viz. "pleasure" and "purpose", were positively interrelated with each other, and that "employee engagement" had a relatively higher degree of impact on "pleasure" dimension in comparison to the 'purpose' dimension of "psychological well-being".

Social status

Warr (2007) has explained that the basic features associated with happiness, includes the opportunity for personal control, using skills, externally generated goals, variety, environmental clarity, contact with others, availability of wealth, physical safety, and an esteemed social position.

Work life balance

According to Rego and Cunha (2008), work family conflict reduces both career and life satisfaction and increases discontent and stress. So the lack of work-family conciliation will lead to less productivity as the workers may see the workplace as less meaningful. When they perceive conciliation between both roles, they engage more strongly in work and family roles, meet their needs in both of them, experience less stress when participating in both roles, and obtain high self-esteem from the competence they achieve in their family and professional lives (Marks & MacDermid, 1996)

Autonomy

Happiness results from an individual's autonomy power or the ability to personally take decisions. Individuals who choose working as a choice are happy. Authorities should assign the roles to individuals with discretion depending on their level of autonomy.

Discussion

Many studies (e.g. Gebremariam, Gebremedhin, & Schaeffer, 2010) show the link between employment and income growth. Employment can be considered as an important source of earnings (Zuvekas & Hill, 2000). People who have better employment status (i.e. stable employment) earn higher income (Shlay, Weinraub, Harmon, & Tran, 2004). They may be happier than those who have lower employment status and earn lower income (Caporale et al., 2009). Moreover, it should be noted that self-employed people seem to be more satisfied with work than those who are employed in organizations (Benz&Frey,2008).

In the corporate workplace culture, happiness plays an important role in determining the productivity and satisfaction of a workforce. It also enhances the goodwill of a company and improves its ability to retain its employees for the long duration. So, it can be said that happiness at work is indispensable.

The concept of workplace happiness has only started to gain prominence in the past couple of decades. Earlier employers primarily focused on their business, trade relations, profits, and so on. Of late researchers started realizing the benefits of nurturing employee happiness and as a result, employers also started giving importance to it. Lot of institutions provides "happiness" courses for people. The courses, like "The Science of Happiness" by edX, teach people to find happiness in their lives.

Is it possible to associate happiness and work with each other?

Our traditions have made us to work in order to support ourselves financially and become a responsible citizen. That is why most of us go to work because we feel obliged to do so, not because we feel happy at working. We seldom think of workplaces as places where people go to seek happiness. Instead, we perceive them as places where we provide our skills and time in exchange for money to help us lead comfortable life. Humans generally pursue happiness in their personal lives, either by maintaining their relationships or fulfilling their wants and aspirations. Contrary to popular belief, work doesn't have to be tedious and unsatisfactory.

Conclusion

Being happier at work is connected with improved health, better creativity, more productive, and lots more. Happy workers can help create a pleasant and encouraging work environment. Moreover such people are more committed to work and are eager to put in effort beyond their job descriptions. Employers need to keep in mind that conducting brainstorming sessions, wellness programmes, training and mentoring sessions among employees will increase interest, creativity and innovation. Recreation and refreshment facilities, team outing, providing flexible working hours will definitely help to create a sense of motivation and happiness at the workplace.

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