

Measuring Employee Happiness: Analyzing the Dimensionality of Employee Engagement

Abdul Kadir Othman¹, Zamalia Mahmud², Sheeren Noranee³, and Fauziah Noordin⁴

^{1,3,4} Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia

² Faculty of Computer Science and Mathematics, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia

Abstract. Employee happiness or well-being is crucial in any organization as happy employees are said to be more committed in their work. In measuring happiness, one of the important aspects that should be considered is the level of employee engagement. A two-phase study was conducted to identify dimensions of employee engagement involving a focus group and a survey. During the focus group, various aspects of work that make them engaged were identified. At a later stage, items were developed based on the identified dimensions and data were collected from 9653 respondents. Using a principle component factor analysis, the results indicate the existence of three factors that explained engagement. The results of regression analysis show that all three factors significantly influence employee happiness. This three-factor engagement model should be used to gauge the levels of employee engagement so that their levels of happiness can be enhanced.

Keywords: Engagement, Happiness, Leadership, Work Process, Satisfaction.

1 Introduction

1.1 Employee Happiness

Happiness is the state of being happy. Happy people are those who experience frequent positive emotions such as joy, interest and pride and infrequent negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety and anger [1]. Happiness is always linked with positive life and work outcomes such as life satisfaction, good health conditions, high work performance and commitment. In a study, using an experimental design, happiness employees are proven to be more productive than their less happy counterparts [2].

Studies have been conducted to measure happiness of population towards the nation [3]. But, limited studies have been undertaken to measure happiness among the employees of higher learning institutions [4]. Measuring happiness in these two contexts might be different in terms of the predictors of happiness and their measurement. Therefore, the issue in research is to identify what factors contribute to happiness and how these factors and happiness can be measured.

Studies have established that several factors might contribute to influencing happiness among those working or studying in higher learning institutions [e.g. 5]. The factors are positive emotions, engagement, relationship, meaning of job, and achievement. The focus of this paper is on engagement as it is the most prevalent factor that is found to be significantly linked with employee happiness.

1.2 Employee Engagement

Employees who feel involved in the organization are willing to exert more effort in performing their job. An engaged employee is considered to be emotionally attached to the organization, passionate about his or her work, and cares about the success of the organization [6]. When employees are deeply engaged with an organization, there will be heightened sense of positive and intense feelings among them to exert their best effort for the success of the organization. It is more than just feeling satisfied with the work-related factors in the organization. Macey and Schneider [7] defined employee engagement as a desirable condition among employees that encompasses the following attributes (1) has an organizational purpose, (2) connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort and energy, and (3) involves both attitude and behavioral components. While work engagement involves employees' optimistic vibes towards their work, employee engagement deals with employees' positive feelings towards the organization.

Past studies have been conducted to establish the dimensions of engagement. Three common factors that have been found to be related to engagement are administrative process, leadership and job satisfaction [8-10]. Administrative process refers to administrative activities that support the main activities in the organization that include budget management, claims management, scholarship, performance evaluation and promotion, and work process and procedures. Administrative process that facilitates task accomplishment will make employees to be engaged [9].

Leadership plays a significant role in ensuring employee happiness. Leadership refers to the leadership styles practiced by the top management of the faculty, department, campus and the university as a whole. It relates to the roles and functions, and the actions of leaders to encourage motivation and creativity among the subordinates, set directions for the faculty, department, campus and the university and be a role model for others [10]. Leaders who are concerned with employees' well-being will see their subordinates perform on their job. Job satisfaction refers to the positive feelings of employees on their achievement, capability to perform the assigned tasks, the flexibility of time allocated to perform the tasks, the work environment and the allocation of tasks. Job satisfaction will also contribute to employee engagement and happiness [8].

2 Methodology

The resent study was divided into two phases; a focus group and a survey. A focus group involved selected participants that represent various campuses and faculties.

They were asked to indicate factors that make them happy or unhappy and also to indicate the degree of importance of these factors. Their inputs were analyzed using content analysis and grouped according to different themes. A group of factors emerged from this exercise and it was known as engagement. Consequently, items were developed based on the identified factors of engagement to be used in the subsequent phase of the study, which is a survey.

During the second phase, a questionnaire was used, and it was distributed to more than 9000 respondents from various campuses and faculties.

2.1 Data Analysis and Findings

Table 1: Results of factor analysis for employee engagement.

	Component		
	1	2	3
Are you happy with the role of your Head of Department / Dean / Rector as a role model?	.857		
Are you happy with communication style in decision making by your Head of Department / Dean / Rector at work?	.839		
Are you happy with the professionalism of your Head of Department / Dean / Rector at work?	.833		
Are you happy with the way the Head of Department / Dean / Rector motivates the staff to work effectively / effectively?	.824		
Are you happy with the way the Head of Department / Dean / Rector practices empowerment among staff?	.822		
Are you happy with the way the Head of Department / Dean / Rector encourages creativity in the workplace?	.811		
Are you happy with the way the Head of Department / Dean / Rector provides transparent 2-way communication at the organization?	.809		
Are you happy with sharing the philosophy of the university's vision, mission and objectives by your Head of Department / Dean / Rector?	.761		
Are you happy with the way the Head of Department / Dean / Rector gives directions to your department / faculty / campus?	.747		
Are you happy with the implementation of the administrator / academic administrator's succession plan by your Head of Department / Dean / Rector?	.678		
Are you happy with the availability of your Head of Department / Dean / Rector at work?	.673		
Are you happy with the role of your boss in giving the same understanding among the staff?	.663		
Are you happy with your boss's role in developing a work team?	.629		
Are you happy with your budget department / faculty / campus budget?		.738	
Are you happy with the process of financial claims?		.690	
Are you happy with the policies implemented on the promotion process of staff?		.687	
Are you happy with administrative procedures and procedures?		.659	
Are you happy with the adequacy of the administrative staff placed in your department / faculty / campus?		.647	

Are you happy with the adequacy of the academic staff placed in your department / faculty / campus?	.609
Are you happy with staff relocation processes and procedures?	.609
Are you happy with the scholarship offered?	.539
Are you happy with the process and procedure of the complaint?	.520
Are you happy with your work achievement?	.723
Are you happy with your ability to perform a given job?	.718
Are you happy with the level of self motivation to work efficiently?	.692
Are you happy with the time given to complete your task?	.679
Are you happy with the work instructions given?	.607
Are you happy with the flexibility of working hours?	.594
Are you happy with the current working environment?	.576
Are you happy with the distribution of work in your department / faculty / campus?	.573
% of variance explained (60.5%)	29.1% 16.4% 15.0%
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.969
Approx. Chi-Square	148961.372
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df 435
Sig.	.000
MSA	.940-.985

A principle component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on 33 items measuring employee engagement. The KMO value of .969 indicates the suitability of factor analysis to be conducted. The MSA values are in the range of .940 and .985. The results of factor analysis indicate the emergence of three factors that explain 60.5% of the total variance in the model. The first factor contains 13 items with loadings ranged from .629 to .857, representing leadership; therefore, the name is used. A total of nine items loaded under the second component with loadings ranged from .520 to .738 that reflects job satisfaction; thus, the name is adopted. The third component has eight items loaded under it with values in the range of .573 and .723, representing administrative process; therefore, the name is applied.

Table 2: Results of factor analysis for employee happiness

	Component 1
I am happy working t the university	.781
I am happy with my work that gives meaning to my life	.777
I am happy with the way I work that helps me achieve my life goals	.763
I am happy with the university's administration	.756
I am happy with the good relationship between people around me	.745
I am happy with my superior	.710
I am happy with the facilities and infrastructure at the university	.642
% of variance explained	54.8%
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.837

	Approx. Chi-Square	30660.2
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	10
	Sig.	.000
		.757-
MSA		.918

A principle component factor analysis was performed on seven items measuring employee happiness. The KMO value of .837 indicates the suitability of factor analysis to be conducted. The MSA values are in the range of .757 and .918. The results of factor analysis indicate the emergence of one factor that explains 54.8% of the total variance in the model. The factor contains seven items with loadings in the range of .642 and .781.

Table 3: Results of correlation analysis and reliability analysis

No	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Administrative process	3.10	.68	(.887)			
2	Leadership	3.49	.78	.619**	(.966)		
3	Job satisfaction	3.71	.60	.640**	.660**	(.882)	
4	Happiness	3.92	.59	.588**	.602**	.669**	(.857)

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). N=9653; Cronbach's alphas in the parentheses along the diagonal.

Table 4: Results of regression analysis

Variables	Standardized Coefficients
Administrative process	.200**
Leadership	.214**
Job satisfaction	.400**
R	.717
R ²	.514
F values	3386.559
Sig. F values	.000
Durbin Watson	1.896

To confirm the results of correlation analysis, a multiple regression analysis was performed. The R value of .514 indicates that 51.4% of the variance in the model is explained by the three independent variables and the model is significant ($F(3, 9615) = 3386.559, p = .000$). Durbin Watson of 1.896 signifies that there is no problem of autocorrelation in the model. Looking at the contribution of each independent variable in explaining the variance in happiness, all three factors are found to be significant predictors; administrative process ($\beta = .200, p < .01$), leadership ($\beta = .214, p < .01$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = .400, p < .01$).

3 Discussion

The findings of the present study show that all three dimensions of engagement; administrative process, leadership and job satisfaction are significant in influencing employee happiness. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies [8, 9, 10]. Therefore, the management of the organization must give considerable attention to these factors so that employees' happiness can be enhanced.

Administrative process must be clear and made known to all employees. Guidelines, process flows, and timelines must be established. All these aspects of administrative process are meant to facilitate the execution of roles and responsibilities of the employees. Therefore, administrative process must be created to assist employees rather than hindering them from moving forward.

Leadership style must be contingent on the situation. In a public higher educational institution, autocratic leadership style is not suitable where the subordinates are educated and having an option not to follow the instructions. A combination of employee oriented and change oriented leadership styles is preferred.

Job satisfaction reflects the job environment where the employees are working including the job itself, the capability of the employees to perform the job and the timeframe for the accomplishment of the job. Here, person-environment fit theory is definitely applied where the employees' capability, values, and expectations must be matched with the job being performed by those employees.

4 Conclusion

Employee happiness is important to ensure high productivity. One of the predictors of happiness is employee engagement. This paper is meant to examine the dimensionality of engagement construct and to investigate its influence on employee happiness. The results of factor analysis show that engagement constitutes three dimensions namely administrative process, leadership, and job satisfaction. These factors are found to significantly contribute to employee happiness. Therefore, management should highly consider these factors in ensuring that employees are happy and are able to execute their roles and responsibilities effectively in providing excellent services to their prime customers, which are the students. Future studies should use this measure of engagement in evaluating the levels of employee happiness in conjunction with other existing measures in order to further establish its validity.

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