



PRIMARY RESEARCH

The effect of employee happiness on performance of employees in public organization in United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of employee happiness on employee performance in the public sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study operationalized employee happiness into performance appraisal, flexible working hours, promotion, rewards and recognition, income, peer and supervisor support, workload, and workplace environment. The data was collected from 319 employees working in Abu Dhabi and Dubai using a questionnaire "The effect of employee spirituality and emotional wellness toward the relationship between employee happiness and employee performance 2019". The findings were derived using Smart Partial Least Squares (PLS). The findings showed that performance appraisal, income, workplace environment, promotion, reward and recognition, and peer and supervisor support are significant predictors of employee performance. Flexible Working Hours (FWH) and workload have an insignificant effect on employee performance. Findings were discussed, and decision-makers are advised to increase employee happiness among employees in UAE.

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INTRODUCTION

Employees are the most important asset of organizations. Making them happy with their workplace and the work itself will benefit not only the employee but also the organizations as well. Considering the fact that employee happiness became one of the most common corporate objectives recently, it is important to look into the employee's happiness and its outcome for the organization. Since the 2000s, special attention has been devoted to the study of employee happiness, in particular, its causes and relationship with other factors. Happy employees are more productive and have more commitment as well as satisfaction with their jobs (Marescaux, De Winne, & Forrier, 2019; Tanwar et al., 2019; Yusof, Munap, Badrillah, Ab Hamid, & Khir, 2017). Employee happiness in public organization has not received much attention compared with studies of satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment. Few studies investigated the association between the employee's happiness and performance, through a rationale of the individual's level of income, job satisfaction, workplace, and environment. The premise upon which the research was built sug-

gests that a high level of employee's satisfaction at a workplace leads to improved performance (Bakan, Buyukbese, & Ersahan, 2014).

Employee happiness has not been studied well in previous studies and the construct has limited operationalized. Previous studies related happiness to certain variables that are associated with the income and workplace as well as the work characteristics. Variables such as flexible working hours promotion, rewards, recognition, as well as peers and supervisors support, income, workplace environment was considered in previous studies as elements of happiness of employees (Abid & Barech, 2017; Bakan & Buyukbese, 2013; Bangwal & Tiwari, 2019; Saks, 2019). For this study, the employee happiness was operationalized to include happiness with flexible working hours, income, promotion, rewards, recognition, peer and supervisor support, workload, and workplace environment.

Previous studies focused on the employee happiness in private organizations in developed countries. This study investigates the happiness among employees in the public sector in the UAE. UAE was among the first countries in the

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world to establish the ministry of happiness. The ministry aimed to spread happiness among UAE citizens. Nevertheless, the world happiness reports in 2019 showed that UAE is still in the 21st rank (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). For this reason, this study aims to investigate the happiness of employees and their impact on employees performance among public organizations in the UAE. The next section discusses the literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

EP

EP is very important for the organization and it can determine the performance of the organization. This variable is widely being investigated in business or for-profit organization while the studies regarding EP in public organizations are limited. EP refers to the functions and tasks that are done by the individual successful within the time-frame and existing resources (Chong & Lee, 2017; Jamal, 2007). EP is described by being behavioral, dynamic as well as multi-dimensional. Therefore, streams of work-related behavior are characterized by occasions when people adopt behaviors that make a difference regarding organizational goals. The performance of employees can be determined by several factors. These includes the factors that are related to the work (income, supervision, workload, relationships with co-workers) performance appraisal, and workplace environment (Alaarj, Zainal, & Bustamam, 2015; Alaarj, Abidin-Mohamed, & Bustamam, 2016; Cheng, 2013; Kanij, Grundy, & Merkel, 2014; Olson, Slater, Hult, & Olson, 2018; Palaiologos, Papazekos, & Panayotopoulou, 2011; Rusu, Avasilcăi, & Huțu, 2016; Yaemjamuang, 2017). These variables could also be the components of employee happiness. In this study, the effect of components of employee's happiness on performance is investigated.

Employee Happiness

Employees happiness is achieved when there is trusting culture, pride and enjoyment in doing the work with other co-workers (Alaarj & Mohamed, 2017). The source of trusting relationship between the employee and employers comes from respect, fair treatment, and credibility (Abid & Barech, 2017; Alaarj et al., 2015). To large extent, researchers believe that these factors produce a happy working environment and a happy employee (Ng, 2014). Most of previous research on the causes of happiness in organizations have referred to the impact of job stability on the attitude of employees toward their works (Lowry & Gaskin, 2014).

Accordingly, characteristic of the work itself has been identified as important predictor of the happiness and can explain half of the variance of happiness at work. This was shown in a meta-analysis and typology of happiness in the workplace, which indicated that trust, fairness, good relationship with the employees and their employers as well as convenient and comfortable workplace and work are the key indicators for happiness of employees (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2012). Other research showed that in addition to the characteristic of work, there are other traits that includes the income, supervision, as well as the career issues as can determine the happiness of employees (Samson, Waiganjo, & Koima, 2015). In this research employee happiness is operationalized to include the characteristic of the job such as workplace environment, workload, performance appraisal, income, peer and supervisor support, and flexible working hours, and promotion, rewards, and recognition.

Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Development

This study operationalized employee happiness into seven elements that include performance appraisal, flexible working hours, promotion, rewards, and recognition, income, peers and supervisor support, workload, workplace environment. The study proposes that the employee happiness has a positive and significant effect on EP. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of this study.

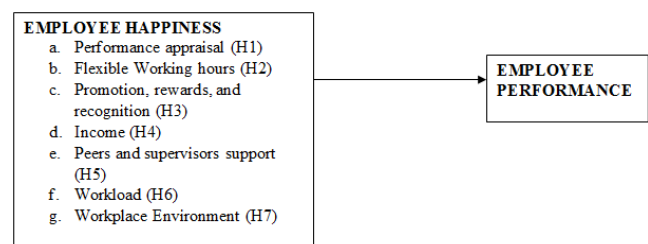


FIGURE 1. Conceptual model

PS and EP

Satisfaction with performance appraisal is essential to improve the performance and happiness in the workplace (Boswell & Boudreau, 2000). Previous studies that have investigated the effect of performance appraisal on EP found that the effect is positive and significant. For example, Jouda, Ahmad, and Dahleez (2016) found that performance appraisal affects the EP positively. Similarly, Hassna and Raza (2011) found that the appraisal system has a significant effect on job performance. Similar findings were derived from other studies (Türk, 2008; Turk, 2010).

Therefore, in this study, it is proposed that satisfaction with performance appraisal will have a positive significant effect

on EP in the UAE. Accordingly, it is hypothesized.

H1: Satisfaction with performance appraisal has a positive relationship with EP.

FWH and EP

FWH have a significant effect on employee's performance and productivity in several studies (Abid & Barech, 2017; Hashim, Ullah, & Khan, 2017; Lahti et al., 2017; Mungania, Waiganjo, Kihoro, et al., 2016). A study was conducted by Ahmad, Idris, and Hashim (2013) found that flexible working hours have a significant effect on the performance of the executive. However, the authors cautioned that the perception of the flexibility of working hours is subjective to the level of employment. Employees at the middle management and lower management are not affect same as the employees at the executive level. In this study, it is assumed that the flexible working hours have a significant effect on EP in the UAE.

H2: Satisfaction with flexible working hours has a positive relationship with EP.

Promotion, Rewards and Recognition (PRR) and EP

Satisfaction with promotion, reward, and recognition is vital for the employees' wellbeing and performance. The Employees gets a fair promotion, reward and recognition from their superiors are more motivated and perform well in their job (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). These rewards and recognition motivate the employees and improve their performance (Shahzadi, Javed, Pirzada, Nasreen, & Khanam, 2014). Previous studies found that promotion, rewards, and recognition has a significant effect on the EP (Day, Holladay, Johnson, & Barron, 2014; Njanja, Maina, Kibet, & Njagi, 2013; Orpen, 1982; Sarwar & Abugre, 2013). Accordingly, in this study, it is proposed that promotion, rewards, and recognition have a significant effect on EP. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H3: Satisfaction with promotion, rewards, and recognition, has a positive relationship with EP.

Income and EP

Income is one of the most important factors that can determine the performance and happiness of employees with their job (Helliwell et al., 2012). Life satisfaction is strongly affected by the income of employees (Türk, 2008). Previous studies found a significant effect of income on EP (Van den Berghe et al., 2011; Safiullah, 2014; Sopiiah, 2013; Tessema, Ready, & Embaye, 2013). Thus, in this study, it is expected that income will have a significant effect on the EP.

H4: Satisfaction with income has a positive relationship with EP.

Peers and Supervisor Support (PSS) and EP

Individuals who have peer and supervisor support are more committed to the organization and produce higher performance (Jamal, 2007). Several studies found a positive effect of peer and supervisor support and EP and transfer knowledge as well as training which all ultimately lead to better EP (Hua, 2013; Martin, 2010; Ng, 2014; Novillo, 2015; Tamer & Dereli, 2014). Thus, in this study, it is expected that peer and supervisor support will lead to better EP. Accordingly, it is hypothesized:

H5: Satisfaction with peers and supervisors support has a positive relationship with EP.

WL and EP

The workload is subjective. Some employees might feel the challenge and give them a sense of importance if they have a high workload while others feel exhausted and being used by their employer (Marescaux et al., 2019). Thus, the happiness and performance of employees might be affected by their perception about their workload (Kanij et al., 2014). The meaning of the work might affect the perception of the employees toward their work and as a result the performance of employees (Kanij et al., 2014; Mungania et al., 2016). Kayali, Safie, and Mukhtar (2016b) indicated that the effect of workload on performance is positive because employees need to be challenged to achieve better performance. The performance of employees is dependent on the workload. Low workload leads to low performance while high workload increases the performance of employees (Kayali, Safie, & Mukhtar, 2016a; Samson et al., 2015). While in the findings of Samson et al. (2015) the workload leads to a reduction in job performance (Samson et al., 2015). In this study, it is expected that satisfaction with workload will have a significant effect on EP.

H6: Satisfaction with workload has a positive relationship with EP.

Workplace environment and EP

The workplace environment is critical for EP. A happy and convenient workplace makes the employees more comfortable and potentially more able to perform better (Brown, McHardy, McNabb, & Taylor, 2011). Previous studies examined the effect of the workplace environment and EP. The findings indicate that satisfaction with the workplace environment has a significant effect on EP (Lankeshwara, 2016; Riyanto, Sutrisno, & Ali, 2017; Samson et al., 2015). Accordingly, it is hypothesized:

H7: Satisfaction with the workplace environment has a positive relationship with EP.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population of this study is the entire governmental employees in the UAE. However, due to the fact that all the ministries are located in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the two cities are chosen as the target population of this study. Almost a total of 60,000 thousand governmental employees are working in the two cities (The National, 2019). Consequently, a random sampling technique is used and based on the suggestion of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size of a population of 60,000 with a margin error of 0.05 and confidence level of 0.95 in 382 respondents. To account for a low response rate, a percentage of 10 to 30% were added to the sample size. This has made the sample size 500.

The data was collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted from previous studies. PS consists of seven adopted from Tanwar et al. (2019), flexible working hours with eight items adopted from AAbid and Barech (2017), promotion, rewards and recognition with ten items adopted from Saks (2019), peers and supervisor support with eight items, and it was adopted from Saks (2019), income has four items adopted from Bakan and Buyukbese (2013), workplace environment with five items adopted from Bangwal and Tiwari (2019), workload dimension was adapted from citeAbangwal2019workplace. The dependent variable is EP and it includes 20 items and it was adopted from Hassna and Raza (2011). A validity process was conducted and three experts provided their feedback and comments regarding the validity of the measurement. Further, a pilot study was

conducted to ensure that the measurements are reliable. A total of 500 questionnaires was distributed. After follow up, a total of 334 responses were collected. This made the response rate is 66.8%. Nevertheless, 334 responses are sufficient for the purpose of the analysis using Smart Partial Least Square (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016; Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). Missing value, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity were conducted and this has reduced the data to 319 due to the existence of 15 outliers.

RESULTS

This section presents and discusses the findings of this study. Mainly, the profile of respondents, results of PLS and results of testing the hypotheses are discussed.

Profile of Respondents

A total of 319 has participated in this study. The majority of the respondents are males (61.1%) and are younger than 40 years (66%) with a bachelor's degree (52.7%) working as sub-ordinate and other managerial levels with experience of fewer than 15 years (80.3%).

Measurement Model

Researchers and statisticians have agreed that the measurement model is evaluated by examining five criteria. These includes are given with their accepted values in Table 1. The criteria were determined based on the suggestions of Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser (2014), Hair Jr et al. (2016).

TABLE 1. Factor loading, CA, CR, and AVE of constructs

Variable	CA > 0.70	CR > 0.70	AVE > 0.50
EP	0.981	0.982	0.755
FWH	0.950	0.959	0.770
Income	0.919	0.942	0.803
PS	0.925	0.941	0.726
PRR	0.935	0.941	0.683
PSS	0.940	0.951	0.736
Workplace Environment	0.864	0.901	0.647
WL	0.960	0.968	0.836

The discriminant validity occurred when the indicator loading is larger than the cross loading of other variables. Once achieving this condition, the data deemed to achieve the dis-

criminant validity. Table 2 shows that the root square of AVE in bold is greater than the cross loading indicating that the discriminant validity is achieved.

TABLE 2. Discriminant validity

	EP	FWH	INC	PSS	PA	PRR	WL	WE
EP	0.869							
FWH	0.699	0.877						
Income (INC)	0.741	0.746	0.896					
PSS	0.689	0.577	0.561	0.858				

TABLE 2. Continue..

	EP	FWH	INC	PSS	PA	PRR	WL	WE
PS	0.656	0.494	0.461	0.721	0.852			
PRR	0.753	0.628	0.730	0.680	0.600	0.827		
WL	0.258	0.218	0.256	0.207	0.192	0.219	0.914	
Workplace Environment (WE)	0.735	0.692	0.633	0.556	0.482	0.726	0.179	0.805

Structural Model

There are four criteria to be assessed when examining the structural model. The R^2 of this study is 0.727, which considered moderate indicating that 72.7% of the variation in EP can be explained by employee happiness. A blindfolding was conducted to assess the predictive relevance. The findings showed that Q^2 for EP is 0.508. Since the value is greater than zero it is accepted and leads to the conclusion that the independent variable has the power to predict the

dependent variables. For the effect size, all the effect sizes were acceptable except for the effect size of workload and flexible working hours which has an insignificant effect on employee's performance.

Hypotheses Testing

The Findings of testing the hypotheses are presented in Table 3. The number of hypothesis, path, coefficient, standard deviation, t -statistics, p -value, and remark are given.

TABLE 3. Results of testing the hypotheses

H	Path	Coefficient	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics (t /STDEV)	p Values	Remark
H1	PS -> EP	0.221	0.040	5.548	0.000	Supported
H2	FWH -> EP	0.073	0.070	1.056	0.291	Rejected
H3	PRR -> EP	0.148	0.068	2.185	0.029	Supported
H4	Income -> EP	0.214	0.051	4.170	0.000	Supported
H5	PSS -> EP	0.145	0.056	2.599	0.009	Supported
H6	WL -> EP	0.045	0.029	1.565	0.118	Rejected
H7	WE -> EP	0.202	0.068	2.968	0.003	Supported

Satisfaction with performance appraisal was expected to have a significant effect with the EP. The findings in Table 3 showed that the effect of performance appraisal on EP is positive and significant (Coefficient = 0.221, t -statistics = 5.548, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H1 is supported. The satisfaction with flexible working hours was proposed to have a significant positive effect on EP. Findings of hypothesis testing in Table 3 showed that the effect is positive but not significant (Coefficient = 0.073, t -statistics = 1.056, $p = 0.291$). Therefore, H2 is rejected.

The third hypothesis of this study predicted that the effect of promotion, rewards, and recognition on EP is significant. The findings of hypotheses testing showed that the effect is positive and significant (Coefficient = 0.148, t -statistics = 2.185, $p = 0.029$). Therefore, H3 is supported. The fourth hypothesis of this study proposed that satisfaction with income will lead to a positive increase in the EP. The findings in Table 3 indicates that effect is positive and significant (Coefficient = 0.214, t -statistics = 4.170, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H4 is supported. The fifth hypothesis of this study predicted that the peer and supervisor support have a significant effect on the EP. The findings of hypothesis testing in Table 3 showed that the peer and supervisor support has a significant posi-

tive effect on EP (Coefficient = 0.145, t -statistics = 2.599, $p = 0.009$). Thus, H5 is supported. Workload has a positive effect on EP. However, this effect is not statistically significant (Coefficient = 0.045, t -statistics = 1.565, $p = 0.118$). Accordingly, H6 is rejected. The findings in Table 3 indicate that the effect of workplace environment on EP is positive and significant (Coefficient = 0.202, t -statistics = 2.968, $p = 0.003$). Accordingly, H7 is supported.

DISCUSSION

Seven hypotheses in this study were examined. The findings of this study showed that the effect performance appraisal, promotion, rewards, and recognition, income, peer and supervisor support, and workplace environment. The most important variable is the performance appraisal followed by income, workplace environment, promotion, reward, and recognition, and peer and supervisor support. The effect of workload and flexible working hours are not significant. Findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of previous studies (Day et al., 2014; Njanja et al., 2013; Orpen, 1982; Sarwar & Abugre, 2013; Shahzadi et al., 2014; Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019; Türk, 2008; Turk, 2010).

The insignificant effect of flexible working hours contradicts with the findings of previous studies that found the flexible working hours has a significant positive effect on EP such as in the study of [Abid and Barech \(2017\)](#), and in the study of [Hashim et al. \(2017\)](#). However, the insignificant effect in this study could be related to the nature of the respondents. The study examined the EP of governmental employees in public organizations which has a structure and system that is rigged compared with a private organization. In addition, the study of [Ahmad et al. \(2013\)](#) found that flexible working hours is important for employees at the executive level while the importance reduced for middle management and operational management. The majority of respondents in this study are sub-ordinate who conduct a typical work and flexibility might not be the main driver of their happiness with work. Workload has no relationship or effect on the EP. This finding contradicts with the findings of previous studies. The majority of previous studies showed that the workload has a significant effect on EP ([Ahmad et al., 2013](#); [Kayali et al., 2016a, 2016b](#)). Nevertheless, taking into account that nature of this study and the fact that this study investigates public servant who performs duties that can have an impact on the society, the high workload might be interpreted by governmental employees as a sense of importance. In addition, findings of this study indicated that employees are satisfied with their income, rewards, recognition, and promotion which makes them not consider the workload compared with a private organization where the load must be associated with increase in the income. This could explain the insignificant effect of the workload with the performance of governmental employees in the UAE. This study is of use to the decision makers in UAE as it investigated the effect of employee happiness and its components on EP. Decision makers are advised to increase the happiness of employees because once happiness increased, the performance of employees will increase and this will result in overall increase in the organizational performance. Happiness can be increased in several ways. One of which

is to conduct a survey periodically to ask employees about their concerns and needs and wants. It also can be arranged round table discussion in public organization in which employees have the opportunity to discuss with their managers and top management the issues that things that make them happier.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the impact of employee happiness on EP. The study collected data from respondents in public organizations in the UAE. A total of 319 respondents participated in this study. The findings indicated that the most important component of employee happiness is performance appraisal followed by income, workplace environment, promotion, rewards, and recognition, and peer and supervisor support. Workload and flexible working hours have insignificant effect on EP. Decision makers are advised to increase the employee happiness.

IMPLICATIONS

The study focused on employee happiness among governmental employees in the UAE. Thus, the findings can be generalized on this type of employees and cannot be generalized on private sector employees. Future researchers are advised to investigate the employee happiness and its impact on EP using different population such as to examine these variables in the context of other states in the UAE or in the private organization. In addition, future studies are suggested to replicate the findings of this study in other developing countries. Future are recommended to increase the sample size so that the findings can be more generalizable. This can be done by deploying a stratified sampling where each group can be represented sufficiently. Since the concept of happiness is still emerging, future researchers are recommended to conduct a qualitative study to identify the component of employee happiness. This can be done using an interview approach or a focus group studies where a panel of experts can be interviewed.

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