
What makes employees happy at work? Evidence from cross-sectional data in India

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Abstract: This study examines the state of happiness of Indian employees, identifies the antecedents of their happiness, and explores the correlates of their workplace happiness. It is based on a sample of 400 public sector employees belonging to the education, health, banking and manufacturing sectors in northern India. SPSS version 23 was used to analyse the collected data using descriptive and inferential statistical tests. Results indicate that most employees are contented with their happiness at work, but their overall happiness level is not very high. The studies' findings reinforce that flow, intrinsic motivation and supportive organisational experiences are important contributors to employee happiness. The study results indicate that the type of family, income and years of experience significantly affect employee happiness. The study highlights the organisational interventions which can contribute to employee workplace happiness. This endeavour would also have important implications for the interpretation of the predictors of employee happiness.

Keywords: workplace; happiness; happiness antecedents; happiness correlates; public sector; India.

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1 Introduction

With the cut-throat competition, business organisations are constantly worried about attracting and retaining the best talent pool. The impending deadlines, inadequate time, limited resources, and the constant pressure of being the best puts the employees through excessive stress and decreases their work-life quality. As a result, most of the organisations, nowadays, are not pleasant places to work for. India has shown tremendous business growth, even though it still faces challenges because of the unbalanced industrial sector, low demand, industrial sickness, regional concentration, lack of institutional organisation and insufficient research. Hence, a paradigm shift is required in its management, funding, recruitment process, rules, regulations, industry interface and research. For sustaining the vision of '*Make in India*' and the growth and expansion of the corporate sector, it is essential to recruit and retain the best talents, which is possible only when the employees are taken care of and are happy. Contemporary research has pointed to the positive impact happiness has on employees' productivity and efficiency at work (Diener, 2009; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004; Zelenski et al., 2008). Previous studies have shown that happy employees are more productive, innovative, and effective at accomplishing tasks (Fisher and Noble, 2004; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004). Due to the profound impact happiness has on overall employee performance and its importance in everyday life, organisations are trying to ensure that they provide a high quality of work-life to their employees (Sandrick, 2003).

A happy employee considers the company's interests as his own and puts in extra efforts to achieve outcomes and accomplish the tasks assigned to him even under challenging circumstances (Gupta, 2012). Happiness is not superficial. Happy individuals can find something positive in a hopeless situation as well. While unhappy employees may get irritated and lose temper at the slightest hindrance, happy ones are more optimistic and easier to deal with (Forgas, 1999). Researchers have also found that happiness increases production, improves decision-making ability, enhances client relations, decreases absenteeism, builds teamwork and improves employee commitment towards work (Seligman et al., 2005). Therefore, organisations must ensure an appropriate work environment for their employees so that they take full interest in their jobs, which in turn will enhance their efficiency, social life and lessen their job stress and, in the long run, benefit the organisations. Because of all the benefits that happiness provides in the organisational context, happiness at work has gained popularity as a research variable (Gupta, 2012). It is only of late that happiness is associated with personal life and work outcomes and is being researched in HRM and organisational behaviour.

Despite the increasing interest in happiness, comprehensive and empirical research on workplace happiness is still lacking. Research on the correlates and antecedents of workplace happiness in the Indian context is in particular scanty. The present study intends to fill this gap by studying happiness in India's organisational context and identifying the antecedents and correlates that significantly contribute to employee happiness at work.

2 Conceptualisation and literature review

Contemporary times are witness to a major shift in researchers' focusing their attention now towards employee wellbeing and happiness instead of paying attention to disorders, disturbances, and negative human emotions. The search for happiness is essential, and understanding what makes employees content with their working lives is of growing importance (Diener, 2000; Klonowicz, 2001; Pavot, 2008; Oishi et al., 2008). Employee happiness is an important concern for contemporary organisations. Accordingly, happiness as a subject of the investigation has gained much attention in the field of organisational studies due to its profound impact on overall employee performance (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000; Shantz et al., 2016), physical health, and psychological wellbeing (Diener and Chan, 2011), besides its importance in everyday life (Singh and Aggarwal, 2018). Employees' daily happiness at work goes beyond the organisational setting and might create a spill-over effect on both their own and their partners' wellbeing (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2014). There is also evidence that happier people are more engaged in their work, earn more money, and have better relationships with colleagues and customers (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000). Some of these studies show that happier workers are more pragmatic, less absent, more cooperative, and friendly (Judge et al., 2001), change their jobs less often, and are more accurate and willing to help others. Employees' unhappiness at work can be seen as an early warning indicator of occupational change and intention to leave. A better understanding of employee happiness at work and its determinants can prevent them from leaving their jobs.

While the interest in the study of happiness is relatively new, the theories of happiness are age-old. Happiness has caught intellectuals' interest since the beginning of written history (McMahon, 2006) but has only recently come to the forefront in psychology research (Fisher, 2010). With the interest of research, the word happiness attained a buzzword in academic spheres, and corporate houses used the same in their taglines to lure their customers (Steger et al., 2006; Veenhoven, 2002). During the 1980s, the number of studies being conducted on happiness, wellbeing, and life-satisfaction started growing, and 780 papers on the subject were published annually (Myers and Diener, 1995).

Throughout history, philosophers and researchers have given contradictory and conflicting ideas about happiness. While people usually categorise happiness as feeling good (Alipour et al., 2012), such a definition of happiness is too narrow a conceptualisation (Clark et al., 2008). According to Di Tella and MacCulloch (2006), happiness is not limited to doing and feeling good; it is much more profound. It amounts to identifying desirable virtues, developing them, and then living according to those virtues. The most important attribute of happiness is gratitude, and a grateful individual may indulge in practices that will make his or her gratitude evident. Happiness itself is a by-product of this gratitude (Frey and Stutzer, 2002). Happiness, conceptualised as wellbeing, good moods, positive attitudes, and emotions, has garnered psychological researchers' attention. Happiness at work is represented by various proxies such as job satisfaction, work engagement, subjective wellbeing, and work stress (Orsila et al., 2011). In a broad sense, happiness includes positive emotions such as joy, pride and contentment, sensory pleasantness, and amusement (Durán et al., 2017). Dolan et al. (2008) suggested seven groups of potential influences on happiness: income, personal characteristics; socially developed characteristics; how we spend our time; attitudes and beliefs towards self/others/life; relationships, and the wider economic, social, and

political environment. While researching happiness at the workplace (HAW), some researchers have used wellbeing, higher positive emotions and increased positive affect synonymously for describing happiness (Sheldon et al., 2013). In organisational research, workplace happiness has been operationalised as job satisfaction though it is not considered a satisfactory proxy (Brief and Weiss, 2002). Even though job satisfaction has been used both as a dependent and independent variable in organisational research, contemporary organisational research has identified new constructs that are more representative of happiness at work, and exclusively conceptualising happiness at work in terms of job satisfaction will be wrong (Bowling et al., 2010). These constructs collectively represent positive attitudes, feelings, and experiences at work.

Happiness is a positive state of mind that consists of three essential elements interconnected and influence each other- physical health, mental health and social health (McMahon, 2006). According to the World Health Organization (1948), these three elements are vital for wellbeing and happiness. The characteristics of the environment in which individuals live or work also play a critical role in influencing wellbeing and happiness (Larson, 1996). For example, variables such as noise, air pollution, climate, and environmental attitude have impacted a person's wellbeing and happiness (Van Praag et al., 2003). Thus, happiness is a positive and subjective sense of welfare and a blend of fulfilling and positive feelings that eventually lead to happiness (Schiffman and Nelson, 2010).

Happiness levels vary across cultures and countries. Cultural values are "belief systems that a society is committed to and that are handed down from one generation to the next" (Hassan, 2011, p.111). Previous research has shown that individual and country-level predictors impact an individual's happiness levels (Bonini, 2008). Country specific characteristics play a vital role in determining the differences in national subjective wellbeing levels; for example, national wealth and GDP is one of the crucial determinants of happiness (Diener et al., 2003). Previous research has also shown that people living in wealthier nations tend to have a higher degree of life satisfaction than those living in poorer countries (Di Tella et al., 2003). Wealthier nations also tend to have lower crime rates, increased political freedom, good governance and low social inequality, which contribute to individual happiness (Ott, 2011). Besides the socio-economic and political differences, the cultural dimensions have also been found to impact happiness and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 2003). Amongst the cultural dimensions, individualism, collectivism and uncertainty avoidance have shown steady links with happiness (Stavrova, 2019). Comparisons between individualistic and collectivistic countries have shown that people belonging to individualistic cultures tend to be happier (Diener and Suh, 2000). Past research has attributed this to the fact that individualistic nations tend to be wealthier, more autonomous and have freedom of choice (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Similarly, people living in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to have lower happiness levels than those living in cultures more tolerant of uncertainty (Stavrova, 2019).

Even though studies have tried to identify the contribution of culture towards happiness and subjective wellbeing, it is unclear whether the impact is at the micro-level or the macro-level (Stavrova, 2019). Studying the effects of cultural orientations like uncertainty avoidance and individualistic and collectivistic orientations will help understand these processes better (Stavrova, 2019). Previous studies have also found that more trusting cultures (Tokuda et al., 2017); level of education (Florida et al., 2013) and national IQ (Veenhoven and Choi, 2012) share a positive correlation with happiness

while national levels of neuroticism (Rentfrow et al., 2008) have a negative association with happiness and life satisfaction. Researchers have also tried to compare the differences in life satisfaction between the East and the West, although daily reports do not reveal any significant differences (Oishi, 2002). It was found that the cross-cultural differences in mean levels might be because of the cultural differences in memory bias and self-enhancement (Oishi, 2002). Correlates of happiness like income, social relationships, employment, work activities, etc., have a varying impact on employee happiness based on the cultural environment as people from different cultures value different things (Lu et al., 2001). While the cross-cultural differences in happiness and subjective wellbeing can be attributed to the countries socio-economic, political and cultural differences, not much evidence is available in its support (Stavrova, 2019).

Contemporary research suggests that happiness at the macro level is instrumental in the economic progress of a nation and at the micro-level; it is a dominant indicator of growth within the organisations as happier employees are more productive and contribute significantly to the growth of the organisation (Fredrickson, 2001). Mental health plays a vital role in ensuring whether an individual is happy or not, and happier people are more productive, successful and have a longer lifespan. Hence, nations to flourish need to focus on the citizens' wellbeing (Helliwell et al., 2012). Boehm and Lyubomirsky (2008) attributed other organisational outcome variables to happiness at work like greater career success, earning, job performance, and support to the colleagues at the workplace. Similarly, Pryce-Jones and Lindsay (2014) claim that happy workers are more productive, more energised, and do not intend to leave the organisation as compared to their unhappy counterparts. It has also been observed that happier and contented employees have more successful careers than unhappy ones (Biswas-Diener, 2008). A happy organisational environment for employees is characterised by favourable assessments by the supervisor (Cropanzano and Wright, 1999), assisting colleagues (George, 1991), and supportive supervisors and co-workers (Iverson et al., 1998). These pointers' presence ensures that an individual is happy at his workplace, which leads researchers to assume that happiness and positive moods and emotions are requisites for an individual to have a successful career (Diener et al., 1991). Despite the availability of substantial research on the subject, there is still much ambiguity as to whether, indeed, happy workers are more productive (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004). Researchers often attribute the inconsistency in findings linking workplace happiness with productivity to unreliable measurement models (Brief and Weiss, 2002; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004).

Interest in happiness has also stretched to interactions and relationships at the workplace (Fisher, 2010). Happiness at the workplace (HAW), as a variable in organisational research, has gained popularity among researchers as it is believed to offer a wide range of dividends to both employees and organisations (Fisher, 2010). Knowing the contribution workplace happiness makes towards enhancing employee productivity has significant implications for business organisations of all types and sizes. Previous research has linked happiness at work to numerous correlates such as friendship, employment status, socio-economic level, occupation, task requirements (Wesarat et al., 2014). According to Mohanty (2009), full-time employees are happier than those working part-time or on a voluntary basis. Another research has linked the level of income to employee happiness at work (Campbell, 2013). Friendships and positive social relationships have also contributed positively to employees' subjective wellbeing and happiness at work (Snow, 2013). While previous studies have tried to understand and measure the concept of HAW, limited information is available about its correlates and

determinants (Bhatia and Mohsin, 2020). Since the correlates of happiness vary with respect to the context and culture, it is not clear which correlates and determinants of workplace happiness, as understood from previous studies, hold a significant value for employees working in India. This paper looks at the empirical evidence from India about what makes workers happy at work.

2.1 Theoretical framework

Conceptualising happiness has always been an uphill task for researchers. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Positive Psychology started gaining a lot of attention. Since happiness follows a positive psychological state notion, it was considered as an optimal psychological experience and functioning, distinguished into two states or levels (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Aristotle conceptualised happiness in terms of hedonism, where it results from an individual's experience of pain vs. pleasure, and eudaimonia, which involves living a virtuous life and utilising one's potential (Tomer, 2011). Later on, Seligman (2002) introduced similar concepts like momentary happiness and enduring happiness. While momentary happiness is related to pleasure, enduring happiness includes gratification and a state of flow. While researchers have suggested these two conceptualisations, laypeople usually relate happiness to the pleasure associated with new accomplishments and feeling good (Seligman, 2002). Adam Smith, while focussing on employee productivity, suggested that employees would be more efficient and productive if the work assigned to them were divided into small and specialised tasks (Smith, 2010). Following Hawthorn studies, researchers started recognising the significance of studying emotional, cultural aspects, personal aspirations, and physical working conditions (Brannigan and Zwerman, 2001), and the impact of emotional factors on productivity (Bagtasos, 2011). These studies helped in measuring how employees feel about their work (Sender et al., 2021).

Fisher (2010) introduced a family of happiness related constructs comprising job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job involvement, employee engagement, subjective wellbeing and motivation. More recently, workplace happiness has evolved as a construct in itself (Singh and Aggarwal, 2018; Salas-Vallina et al., 2017, 2018). Because of the similarities between happiness and work and subjective wellbeing, the terms are often used synonymously by researchers (Demo and Paschoal, 2016). Happiness at work is considered as a positive psychological state that an individual perceives, and its presence is influenced by some factors and antecedents and it influences individual behaviour at the workplace and serves as an incentive for employees to perform well (Sender et al., 2021). Many studies have tried to identify the antecedents of happiness at work by focussing on situational factors (Ilies and Judge, 2002). Three elements influence happiness at work, including individual characteristics, job characteristics and organisational characteristics (Sender et al., 2021). Traditionally, happiness at work has been conceptualised by researchers keeping various theories in mind. Theories like the hierarchy of needs (McLeod, 2007), the two-factor theory (Alshmemri et al., 2017), and positive psychology (Diener and Seligman, 2002) support the antecedents related to the work environment. The study of Psychodynamics of Work and the Economics of Happiness has also helped in understanding happiness at work better by going beyond financial retribution (Sender et al., 2020). Employees consider perceived organisational support as a measure of how much an organisation cares and values their contribution at work (Sender et al., 2020). It comprises of compensation,

incentives, working conditions, health, comfort, wellbeing, communication, etc. (De Oliveira-Castro et al., 1999). Another concept that has helped in understanding happiness at work better is the quality of work-life, which highlights the importance of adopting an employee-centric approach while still focusing on productivity (Singh and Srivastav, 2012). Similarly, the job characteristics theory and job demand-control model focussed on job characteristics, work demand and its impact on employee wellbeing (Sender et al., 2020).

Happiness at work is a critical measure for enhancing scientific knowledge, but it has not received much attention of researchers (Sender et al., 2020). According to studies conducted by Fisher (2010), Sousa and Porto (2015) and Sender and Fleck (2017), happiness at work is a broad concept that comprises of other happiness related constructs like job satisfaction, organisation commitment, employee engagement, etc. While these related concepts can be considered a part of the umbrella of workplace happiness, they cannot be used synonymously (Sender et al., 2021). Researchers have developed several conceptualisations based on Fishers' (2010) literature review.

The constructs of happiness in the present study have been drawn from Singh and Aggarwal's (2018) conceptualisation which draws inspiration from Fisher's (2010) review. Based on this conceptualisation, happiness at work is defined as an experience of subjective wellbeing at work that involves interaction between individual employee experiences as well as organisational experiences. For the purpose of this study HAW is defined as an experience of subjective wellbeing at work reflected through a high amount of positive individual (e.g., highly valuing one's work, feeling engaged to work) and organisational (e.g., providing supportive work environment) experiences and low amount of negative individual and organisational experiences (Singh and Aggarwal, 2018, p.2). Studying happiness at work is incomplete without its antecedents and consequences (Ozkara San, 2015) conceptualisation. Select antecedents were included in the present study based on a framework developed by Diener et al. (2009) which incorporates the genetic, circumstantial and demographic determinants of happiness at work like age, gender, personality, health, marriage, children, intelligence, religion, social relationships, goals, etc.

2.1.1 Objectives of the study

The study has been conducted with the following specific objectives:

- 1 to assess the state of happiness of employees working in various sectors in India
- 2 to explore the antecedents of happiness of employees at the workplace
- 3 to identify the socio-economic determinants of workplace happiness of employees.

3 Data and methodology

3.1 Population and the sampling design

The study population comprised full-time employees working in the education, health, banking, and manufacturing sectors in northern India. Of the total 480 questionnaires distributed, 400 responses were considered suitable for analysis (response rate 83.4%). Based on Yamane's (1967) formula, the study sample was selected using the stratified

proportionate sampling method. To ensure an adequate response rate, questionnaires were administered as per the respondents' convenience. Incomplete questionnaires, outliers, and unengaged responses were not included. For supplementing the field study results, online surveys and interviews were conducted.

As depicted in Table 1, out of the 400 respondents, 54.5% were male. The majority of the respondents (55.8%) were within the age group of 21–30 years, whereas about 9% of the sample comprised people above 40. About 56% of the respondents were married, and most of them (66%) resided in nuclear families. In all, 60% of the respondents had a master's degree, 20.3% held above a master's degree, and 18% possess a bachelor's degree. A vast majority of the respondents had up to 3 years of work experience, whereas 26.3% of respondents had 3–7 years of experience. Around 35% of the respondents fall in the income group of Rs 10,000–30,000, followed by 26.8% of respondents who belonged to the income group of Rs 30,000–50,000. About 25% of the respondents belonged to the banking, education, health, and manufacturing sectors each.

3.2 Instrument

The study is descriptive and cross-sectional in nature. A structured questionnaire based on Singh and Aggarwal's (2018) study was adopted for studying workplace happiness. This scale identifies four workplace happiness dimensions: supportive organisational experiences, unsupportive organisational experiences, work repulsive feelings, flow, and intrinsic motivation. This model was preferred because it includes the major components of workplace happiness and has been validated in the Indian context. It also confirmed reliability for each scale, i.e., supportive organisational experiences ($\alpha=0.787$), unsupportive organisational experiences ($\alpha=0.674$), work repulsive feelings ($\alpha=0.675$) and flow and intrinsic motivation ($\alpha=0.762$). One item (*I continue doing task till it is perfectly done*) was deleted from the dimension flow, and intrinsic motivation to improve the reliability of the scale since a Chronbach's alpha value of less than 0.60 indicates low internal consistency (Hair et al., 2006). As Chronbach's alpha value for each dimension and the entire scale ($\alpha = 0.619$) is more than 0.60, it confirms the scale's internal consistency.

The instrument was pre-tested before collecting the primary data for the main study to investigate the feasibility of the research and to determine objectivity, clarity, and any possible flaws in the questionnaire such as time, length, ambiguity, etc. The pilot test was performed on a sample of 40 respondents who were later not included in the main study. The outcome of the pilot test led to some modifications in the questionnaire, which improved its efficacy. The questionnaire's language was reviewed and modified wherever it was felt necessary, and some statements were refined on language adeptness to avoid workplace, gender, and cultural sensitivity.

3.3 Tools of analysis

The data collected through a questionnaire were analysed using SPSS version 23. Normality was measured using skewness and kurtosis. A frequency test was done to identify missing variables, though no missing responses were found. For screening outliers, the minimum and maximum values in item-to-item outliers were examined. KMO & Bartlett's test of Sphericity was performed as a prerequisite before conducting exploratory factor analysis (EFA). EFA was performed to determine the correlation

among the dataset variables and for identifying problematic variables. Mean and standard deviation was computed to describe the characteristics of the respondents and construct items. For analysing the current state of HAW and the divergence in employees' perception of working in different sectors concerning select demographic factors, an independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA were used.

Table 1 Demographic profile of respondents

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Male	218	54.5
	Female	182	45.5
Age	Up to 20 years	12	3.0
	21–30 years	223	55.8
	30–40 years	126	31.5
	40–50 years	16	4.0
	50 years and above	23	5.8
Marital Status	Unmarried	225	56.3
	Married	171	42.8
	Divorced	2	0.50
	Widow	2	0.50
Type of Family	Nuclear	264	66.0
	Extended/ Joint	136	34.0
Education Qualification	Up to Higher Secondary	6	1.5
	Diploma	2	0.5
	Bachelor's Degree	72	18.0
	Master's Degree	239	59.8
	Above Master's Degree	81	20.3
Work Experience	Up to 3 years	170	42.5
	3–7 years	105	26.3
	7–11 years	62	15.5
	11–15 years	24	6.0
	15 years and above	39	9.8
Monthly Income	Less than Rs 10,000	43	10.8
	Rs 10,000–30,000	138	34.5
	Rs 30,000–50,000	107	26.8
	Rs 50,000–1,00,000	74	18.5
	Rs 1,00,000 or above	38	9.5
Sector of employment	Banking	120	30.0
	Education	100	25.0
	Health	100	25.0
	Manufacturing	80	20.0

The constructs used in the study were approximately normally distributed, with skewness of -0.537 ($SE = 0.122$) and a Kurtosis of 1.576 ($SE = 0.243$). At the same time, kurtosis scores were found within the acceptable range (i.e., threshold mesokurtic normal value + 3), which also established the data's normal distribution. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was conducted to signify the data's appropriateness for factor analysis. The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test (see Table 2 for details) suggest that workplace happiness explains 85% of the variance, which is within the acceptable range. The sample is thus adequate for conducting further statistical analysis.

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's test

<i>KMO and Bartlett's test</i>		<i>Happiness at workplace</i>
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		0.853
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1655.203
	Df	105
	Sig.	0.000

3.3.1 Factor analysis

To identify the antecedents of employee HAW, factor analysis was conducted using SPSS. The principal component method and Varimax rotation were used. The factor loadings had a value of 0.50 or above on each factor. As shown in Table 3, HAW accounts for 44.54% of the total variance. There were no cross-loadings, no item loaded poorly, and so, no item was deleted.

Table 3 Factor analysis of happiness at workplace

<i>Constructs/ Factors</i>	<i>No. of items (15)</i>	<i>Item (label) Code</i>	<i>Rotated factor loading</i>			<i>Eigen value</i>	<i>Variance extracted</i>
			<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Div</i>			
(Factor I) Flow and Intrinsic Motivation	4	I enjoy what I do at work	0.729	4.0811	0.86212	3.083	19.040
		I feel intrinsically driven to do great things at work	0.777	4.1081	0.90627		
		I remain inspired at work and strive to inspire others, as well	0.695	3.8919	1.12506		
		I forget everything when I start doing my work	0.685	3.9189	1.18740		
(Factor II) Work Repulsive Feelings	4	I hate people here for being around the boss	0.641	3.3784	1.36120	2.799	15.241
		I am not very comfortable approaching my boss	0.751	2.4054	1.32202		
		I feel stressed at work	0.665	2.4865	1.34622		
		Often I feel like quitting my job	0.702	3.3243	1.33446		

Table 3 Factor analysis of happiness at workplace (continued)

<i>Constructs/ Factors</i>	<i>No. of items (15)</i>	<i>Item (label) Code</i>	<i>Rotated factor loading</i>			<i>Eigen value</i>	<i>Variance extracted</i>
			<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Div</i>			
(Factor III) Supportive Organisation Experiences	4	The decision-making process in my company is fair and just	0.601	3.4865	1.09599	2.055	14.744
		My organisation provides the requisite training and information for completing work on time	0.859	3.5676	1.21428		
		We celebrate and cheer each other at the accomplishment of targets	0.732	3.6757	1.15600		
		Top leaders of my organisation have a clear vision and focus	0.741	3.4595	1.23816		
(Factor IV) Unsupportive Organisation Experiences	3	My organisation does not have proper guidelines for regulating team behaviour and work that require a collective effort	0.712	3.0541	1.45193	1.594	14.519
		I never get enough credit for my contributions	0.687	3.1081	1.26455		
		My company does not have a proper interface that allows us to work for a social cause	0.598	2.8919	1.04838		

Rotation sums of squared loadings (cumulative % of variance) 63.544%.

4 Analysis and discussion

The data analysis was done by first examining the significant factors affecting employees’ happiness at work using mean and standard deviation followed by inferential statistical techniques like independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA to identify the difference in employees’ happiness difference in the demographic variables.

4.1 Determinants of happiness at workplace

The details about the significant factors affecting employee workplace happiness are contained in Table 4.

Table 4 Determinants of happiness at workplace

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. deviation</i>
1.	Supportive organisation experiences	3.3800	0.90250
2.	Unsupportive organisation experiences	3.0654	0.93531
3.	Flow and intrinsic motivation	3.8956	0.79858
4.	Work repulsive feelings	3.2129	0.83108
Total		3.3884	0.47806

4.1.1 *Flow and intrinsic motivation*

The most important factor contributing to HAW is flow, and intrinsic motivation ($M = 3.8956$), which indicates that a high level of employee workplace happiness is mirrored in an employee's motivation and inner drive to do extraordinary things at work, and how engrossed the employees feel in their work and how much they enjoy it. Having an interesting job and good relationships at work, especially with management, are the strongest positive predictors of how happy employees are with their jobs, along with wages. Happiness is dependent on physical or environmental circumstances. If employees have enjoyed and felt proud of work experiences over a period of time, they are more likely to feel happy at work. Pfeffer (2018) also draws attention to adverse work conditions and underlines that work is the fifth leading cause of death. Unhappy employees are more likely to have poor attendance and experience more burnout and stress.

4.1.2 *Supportive organisation experiences*

Stressful or hazardous jobs and those that interfere with family life have the strongest negative correlation with employee happiness. Supportive organisation experience ($M = 3.3800$) is the second key contributing factor in the respondent's current state of happiness at work. This implies that employees who are provided social support positively evaluate the organisations' experiences and are more likely to learn new skills and undergo training programs for the same. Moreover, they hold a positive evaluation concerning the organisation's vision, mission, and decision-making process. These employees encourage peers and colleagues and rejoice in the team accomplishments. All this eventually positively affects their state of happiness at work.

4.1.3 *Unsupportive organisation experiences*

It is not common to find unhappy employees in organisations, which are less participative in teams, have faced unfavourable evaluations by team workers, complain about workplace politics and stolen credit, and are looking for an opportunity to leave the job. These unsupportive organisation experiences ($M = 3.0654$) can be reduced by providing a supportive work environment with opportunities to grow, ensuring social support, and regulating team behaviour. Employees reporting having strong friendships at work were more likely to be happy and motivated at work. Feeling understood and valued by co-workers can significantly increase their daily happiness at work. Employees seriously want to know how they are doing. When employees' performance levels are pointed out

and given suggestions about how they can do better, they welcome the feedback and work to become better. No one likes feeling incompetent in the job.

4.1.4 Work repulsive feelings

Work repulsive feelings ($M = 3.2129$) are mirrored in an employee’s reluctance to approach the boss, dysfunctional behaviour at work, and perceived negative behaviour of the boss like bullying, poor listening, negative past experiences, micromanaging, etc., as echoed by Singh and Aggarwal (2018). Employees take company interests to heart when they feel that the company takes their interests to heart. Chahal and Poonam (2015) also found a very high prevalence of work repulsive feelings in public sector organisations in India (almost up to 80%), giving rise to unhappiness, disengagement, and lack of embeddedness. These increase an employee’s propensity to quit the job (Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008).

4.2 Correlates of happiness at workplace

To study the deviation in the workplace happiness of employees, descriptive statistics and independent-sample t-test were performed for selected demographic factors (gender and employment), and one-way ANOVA was performed for other socio-economic factors (age, income, education, marital status, work experience, and sector of employment). Results of the study in this regard are presented in Tables 5 and 6, respectively.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics and independent t-test for happiness at workplace

Demographics	Categories	N	Happiness at workplace			
			Mean	Std. dev.	t-test	Sig.
Gender	Male	218	3.4080	0.49574	0.887	0.376
	Female	182	3.3654	0.45627		
Type of family	Nuclear	264	3.3093	0.55359	2.38	0.017
	Joint	136	3.4295	0.42952		

*At 5% level of significance.

4.2.1 Gender

The study results (Table 5) showed no difference ($t = 0.887, p = 0.376$) in the happiness of male and female employees, though the level of happiness among the male employees ($M = 3.4080; SD = 0.49574$) is reported to be slightly higher than that of female employees ($M = 3.3654; SD = 0.45627$). This can be attributed to the fact that female employees are overburdened and struggle to juggle both the home and the workplace’s responsibilities, including work overload, lack of support networks, time management, dependent care issues, etc., which eventually affects their quality of work and home life (Mathew and Panchanatham, 2011). In some cases, female workers give up their jobs for the sake of the family (Whittenberg-Cox, 2017). In comparison, men give much importance to their careers at their families’ cost and thus tend to be happier and have improved work-life quality (Carlson et al., 2021). Numerous studies have found that gender is a significant variable about happiness, wellbeing, and work-life balance

(Alesina et al., 2005; Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter, 2014). Lu et al., (1997) found gender had indirect effects on happiness through social support. Many studies have found only small differences between men and women in happiness and satisfaction with life in general (Argyle, 1986; Diener and Diener, 1996). However, Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) and Arita et al. (2005), contradicted this view and found that gender does not impact happiness. The declining levels of happiness among women (compared to men), termed as ‘the happiness gender paradox’, are surprising and quite paradoxical given the celebrated progress in women’s status in India over the last couple of decades (Stevenson and Wolfers, 2009).

Table 6 Descriptive statistics and ANOVA for happiness at workplace

<i>Demographic variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Age	Up to 20 years	12	3.3368	0.434	0.784
	21–30 years	223	3.3820		
	30–40 years	126	3.3986		
	40–50 years	16	3.5195		
	50 years or above	23	3.3333		
Education	Up to Higher Secondary	6	3.7813	0.446	0.776
	Diploma	2	3.3976		
	Bachelor’s degree	72	3.3958		
	Master’s degree	239	3.3955		
	Above Master’s degree	81	3.3537		
Income	Less than 10,000	43	3.2510	20.454	0.045*
	10,000–30,000	138	3.4047		
	30,000–50,000	107	3.4782		
	50,000–100,000	74	3.3063		
	100,000 and above	38	3.3936		
Experience	Up to 3 years	170	3.2907	3.348	0.010*
	3–7 years	105	3.3632		
	7–11 years	62	3.4085		
	11–15 years	24	3.4140		
	Above 15 years	39	3.6927		
Marital Status	Unmarried	225	3.3721	0.211	0.888
	Married	171	3.4589		
	Divorced	2	3.4375		
	Widowed	2	3.4083		
Sector of Employment	Bank	120	3.3391	2.601	0.052
	Manufacturing	80	3.3570		
	Education	100	3.4977		
	Health	100	3.3642		

*At 5% level of significance.

4.2.2 Type of family

From the independent sample t-test, it is evident that there is a significant difference between the levels of HAW as far as the type of family is concerned, as the p-value is less than 0.05. Overall, the respondents have rated their HAW as moderately good. However, the level of happiness among respondents living in joint families is slightly higher ($M = 3.4295$, $SD = 0.42952$) compared to the respondents living in nuclear families. The findings are in line with those of Rim (1993), who found that men and women, having larger families and siblings, exhibit higher levels of happiness. They demonstrated a higher degree of restrictive conformity, maturity, self-direction and were more ambitious. A larger family provides an employee more time and energy to indulge in activities that help him advance his personal growth and wellbeing, eventually resulting in his higher level of happiness and improved job performance.

4.2.3 Age

The comparison of mean scores of HAW with the respondents' age reveals that as the employees' age increases, their happiness level also increases; though, the results showed no significant difference. However, the happiness of employees at work with respect to their age since $p > 0.05$. Respondents belonging to the age group of 40–50 years exhibited the maximum overall happiness at work ($M = 3.5192$). This can presumably be because the employees who have been recently appointed have limited knowledge about their jobs. However, as they advance in age and experience, their happiness increases as their persistence, hard work, and diligence start bringing them the rewards. However, as the respondents' inch towards the end of their careers, i.e., above 50 years, their happiness at work ($M = 3.3333$) starts diminishing as they struggle to adjust to their impending retirement and do not find incentives alluring. Older people have a closer fit between their ideals and self-perceptions than the young (Diener et al., 1999). Some find a U-shaped correlation between age and happiness, with a minimum around the age of 45 (Sanfey and Teksoz, 2005). However, according to Giancola (2006), the factors that motivate employees and impact their happiness do not vary and are similar across ages. Wong et al. (2008) and Hervas (2009) also suggest that age has little or no influence on an employee's happiness at work.

4.2.4 Education

Our study results indicate that the employees' education level does not have a significant relationship with their workplace happiness ($p > 0.05$). However, the employees having higher secondary ($M = 3.7813$) and diploma ($M = 3.3976$) as educational qualification had overall higher workplace happiness in comparison to those having bachelors ($M = 3.3958$), masters ($M = 3.3955$), and above masters degrees ($M = 3.3537$) as educational qualification. As the level of education among the employees' increases, their expectations also increase. When these expectations are left unfulfilled, it decreases their overall happiness at work (Oswald, 2002). Highly educated people are continually evaluating improper work context and are concerned about its impact on their wellbeing and job performance compared to those with lower education levels (Okpara, 2006). Other researchers have attributed higher qualifications with higher job security, higher wages, quicker promotions, and high benefit jobs and attributed lower educational qualifications with unhappiness at work, low productivity, and an unhealthy lifestyle

(Michalos, 2008). For many, education has an intrinsic value since it provides an opportunity for self-improvement and broadening one's interests and understanding of the social world. There is also some tentative evidence pointing to a positive relationship between education and happiness (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004; Cuñado and de Gracia, 2012). However, some studies find no significant effect of education on happiness (e.g., Flouri, 2004) or even a negative one (Caner, 2016). This might be because education often correlates positively with income levels. As a result of this, controlling for income levels might make any positive significant statistical relationship between education and happiness disappear (Graham and Pettinato, 2001).

4.2.5 *Income*

While money encourages self-serving short-term behaviours, to instill lasting happiness and motivation amongst the workforce, it is essential to provide them more than just money like good working conditions, enriched jobs, autonomy and recognition. Our results (see Table 6) reveal that the income of the employees has a significant relationship with their HAW ($p < 0.05$). The mean scores of happiness at work show a gradual increase from respondents earning less than Rs. 10,000 ($M = 3.2510$) compared to the respondents belonging to the income group of Rs. 30,000–50,000 ($M = 3.4782$), beyond which the mean score decreases. The results suggest that an increase in income contributes to an employee's happiness up to a certain limit, beyond which the employee reaches the plateau, and income does not matter. Some research conducted by Easterlin (2010) and Graham (2012) suggest no substantial evidence to support a significant relationship between employees' income and their workplace happiness. As long as people can afford necessities, income does not contribute much to happiness (Myers, 2000). Several empirical analyses argue that increased income does indeed 'buy happiness', although at a diminishing rate, i.e., there is a positive but dipped relationship between happiness and income (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004; Easterlin and Angelescu, 2012; di Tella and MacCulloch, 2008). The relationship between happiness and average income flattens out for sufficiently high levels of economic development (Easterlin, 2015). While studies indicate that an increase in individual income leads to greater happiness, Easterlin (1995) found no effect of income on happiness at the country level in the long run.

4.2.6 *Work experience*

Results reveal that work experience influences happiness at workplace as $p < 0.05$. Happiness increases with the increase in work experience, as the mean score of happiness ($M = 3.2907$) in the initial years of job experience (up to 3 years) is low and is the maximum in case of employees having over 15 years of job experience ($M = 3.6927$). This suggests that employees are not well acquainted with the organisation's policies during the early years of their careers, have high expectations, and tend to be unhappy compared to colleagues having more experience and established positions. As employees gain experience and get acquainted with the work environment, their opportunities for promotion and growth also increase, which positively affects their happiness at workplace, as is reflected by the increase in mean scores of this group. In the initial years of service, the employees' responsibilities are limited, and the circle of people they

interact with is also narrow. As this circle increases, employees experience an increase in unsupportive organisational climate and work repulsive feelings.

4.2.7 Marital status

The results show that the employees who are married and stay married have a higher probability of being happy than unmarried, divorced, and widowed ones. However, the employees' marital status on their happiness at work is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). According to a study conducted by Stack and Eshleman (1998), married people are three times happier than their unmarried counterparts, and that marriage equally increases the happiness of both men and women. Married employees have improved financial wellbeing and job performance. Marriage has also been linked to improved health, lower suicide rates and decreased mortality rates (Stack and Wasserman, 1995), which, taken together, point to the employees' workplace happiness. In Abdel-Khalek (2007), males had significantly higher mean scores than their female counterparts. Married people are happier than never married, divorced, or separated (Myers and Diener, 1995). Myers (2000), however, found that gender does not correlate strongly with life satisfaction.

4.2.8 Sector of employment

ANOVA results reflect that the sector of employment does not have a significant relationship with the happiness of employees at work, as the $p > 0.05$. However, the results obtained from the comparison of mean scores across all the sectors suggest that the respondents belonging to the banking ($M = 3.3391$) and manufacturing sectors ($M = 3.3570$) rank low on happiness at work, followed by the health ($M = 3.3642$) and manufacturing sectors ($M = 3.3570$). It can be attributed to the fact that employees belonging to banking and manufacturing sectors have comparatively monotonous jobs to perform, lesser autonomy, flexibility, and challenge which causes boredom and disinterest and significantly impacts their happiness at work (Heston, 2019; Martin, 2017).

5 Conclusion and suggestions

Overall, employees under this study are contended with the state of happiness at their workplaces, but the overall mean score of happiness is not very high. The findings indicate that the highly-rated aspects of workplace happiness are flow and intrinsic motivation, and supportive organisational experiences. The employees have rated work repulsive feelings and unsupportive organisation experiences slightly less than other workplace happiness dimensions. These are areas of dissatisfaction, and measures need to be undertaken to improve them and ensure an employee's satisfactory performance and wellbeing at work.

The type of family, income and years of experience significantly affect employee happiness at work. To improve the overall happiness of individuals at work, organisations need to develop their understanding about their employees and their work-life, provide

them with a supportive environment to work, reduce negative organisational experiences like stealing work credit, harassment and bullying at work, etc., and improve employee engagement and motivation by increasing workplace transparency, providing feedback proactively, clarifying goals and encouraging flexibility. As employees frequently encounter an unsupportive work environment, organisations should create conducive working conditions as these have a positive impact on employee happiness. The senior management, in particular, should have an empathetic attitude towards the employees. Employees should feel that their presence and work are valued in the organisation by acknowledging, appreciating, and celebrating their achievements. Employees should not be micromanaged but be empowered by giving them a certain level of autonomy. This will help build trust between the employees and the organisations.

The work repulsive feelings record low happiness mean scores. Since these feelings negatively affect employees' happiness at work, organisations should conduct frequent 'how happy am I at work' surveys and ask for anonymous feedback to take remedial measures. To reduce repulsive feelings at work, organisations should provide a safe environment where employees do not experience harassment or discriminatory practices. The senior management should ensure that positive social relationships are formed amongst the employees and a proper mechanism is in place for dealing with instances of harassment and bullying at work. Special attention should be paid to the women workers, as women under study have reported lower happiness levels than the men. Organisations should adopt Gender-sensitive policies, and it should be ensured that there is no workplace discrimination based on gender. Alternatives like career breaks, flexible working arrangements, flexitime, telecommuting, expanded leaves for child care, maternity benefits, sabbaticals, and medical care need to be worked out.

Employees should take charge of their growth by investing in their personal and professional development. One of the most serious causes of unhappiness is failing to keep commitments. To minimise unhappiness at work, employees should create a system to track their commitments and manage their schedules. Stay organised enough to judge quickly and accurately whether you can commit to a request or a new assignment.

The studies' findings reinforce the argument that income has a significant effect on an employee's happiness. Organisations should ensure that jobs are evaluated fairly, and the employees are paid adequately and on time. To supplement the income of such employees' other financial incentives can be considered. A large talent pool can be attracted and retained by providing an attractive salary. Employees working in the banking and manufacturing sectors under study reported the lowest happiness levels, mostly due to their jobs' monotonous nature. This monotony can be reduced by broadening the scope of the duties assigned to them and by following job rotation. Employees at the initial stages of their careers exhibit lower levels of happiness because they are usually overburdened, paid less, their expectations are not fulfilled and are pressurised to increase productivity. Strategies are required to be put in place to meet their needs in mentoring and developing professional and personal networks. Employees having higher qualifications have also reported low levels of HAW. For enhancing their happiness, organisations should provide adequate opportunities for advancement, on-time promotions following very clear and transparent policy, opportunities to share their knowledge and expertise, and enrichment of their jobs.

6 Limitations and directions for future research

This study was restricted to organisations from the health, education, manufacturing, and banking sector of northern India, which causes problems of predictive value and generalisation of its results for organisations in different cultural settings outside India. Future researchers could extend the study to other parts of the country, facilitating comparing the results with the present study. Besides, the questionnaires were collected from a single source, i.e., employees using a cross-sectional design, which creates common method variance. Future studies can collect data from multiple sources (e.g., employers) using a longitudinal design or a different scale type to solve this predicament. Future studies could also examine the effect of employee happiness at work on organisational outcomes like involvement, performance, turnover intention, motivation, commitment, etc. Besides, we have not included some variables found to impact workplace happiness significantly due to data limitations. There is a need for exploring the issues that affect employee happiness, such as work-family conflict, health conditions, workaholism, job autonomy, emotional stability, gratitude etc.

When interpreting these statistical relationships, some problems of interpretation will appear more intricate. As this study dealt with self-reported characteristics, the correlations with self-reported happiness can easily be inflated by parallel mood-bias or parallel desirability bias. How happy one is can influence things such as one's longings, self-esteem, and aptness to face reality. It would be interesting for future research to determine the extent to which these variables may affect happiness in other cultures and contexts. Future researchers are suggested to replicate this study using multiple methods, contexts and data sources to increase the findings' generalisability. The assessment of employee happiness from the perspective of peers, superiors and subordinates, etc., can make an important contribution to this area of research.

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