

Happiness management and workplace well-being: Evolution, key insights, and future directions. A systematic review

Gestión de la felicidad y bienestar en el trabajo: Evolución, hallazgos clave y direcciones futuras. Una revisión sistemática

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Abstract

This study presents a systematic review of the evolution of Happiness Management in workplace contexts from 2010 to 2024, analysing methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and sectoral focuses. A quantitative and descriptive approach was used, selecting peer-reviewed studies from SCOPUS and Web of Science based on predefined inclusion criteria. The PRISMA model guided the review process to ensure methodological rigor. Findings indicate that research is dominated by quantitative, cross-sectional studies, mainly in large organisations in banking, education, and healthcare. Positive Psychology and the Job Demands-Resources Model are the most frequently applied theories. However, limited research exists on SMEs and the gig economy, inconsistencies in measurement methods, and a lack of longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of workplace happiness. Additionally, the effects of COVID-19, digital transformation, and automation on employee well-being remain underexplored. Happiness at work differs from concepts like "work climate" and "job satisfaction". While work climate focuses on organisational perceptions and job satisfaction assesses specific conditions, happiness at work represents a broader, long-term state of well-being, integrating engagement, purpose, and fulfilment. Addressing these gaps requires interdisciplinary research integrating emerging theoretical frameworks, comprehensive measurement tools, and diverse methodological approaches to develop strategies that enhance employee well-being, organisational performance, and resilience in evolving work environments.

Keywords: happiness management, workplace well-being, job satisfaction, digital transformation, organisational psychology.

Resumen

Este estudio presenta una revisión sistemática sobre la evolución de la Gestión de la Felicidad en los entornos laborales entre 2010 y 2024, analizando metodologías, marcos teóricos y sectores de estudio. Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo y descriptivo, seleccionando estudios revisados por pares de SCOPUS y Web of Science, siguiendo criterios de inclusión predefinidos. El proceso de revisión se estructuró conforme al modelo PRISMA para garantizar rigor metodológico. Los resultados indican que la investigación está dominada por estudios cuantitativos y transversales, principalmente en grandes empresas de los sectores bancario, educativo y sanitario. Las teorías más aplicadas son la Psicología Positiva y el Modelo de Demandas y Recursos Laborales. Sin embargo, existen brechas significativas, como la escasa representación de las pymes y la economía gig, inconsistencias en los métodos de medición y la falta de estudios longitudinales sobre el impacto a largo plazo de la felicidad laboral. Además, los efectos del COVID-19, la transformación digital y la automatización en el bienestar de los empleados siguen siendo poco explorados. La felicidad en el trabajo se distingue del "clima organizacional" y la "satisfacción laboral". Mientras que el clima organizacional refleja percepciones colectivas y la satisfacción laboral evalúa condiciones específicas, la felicidad laboral es un estado integral de bienestar que involucra compromiso, propósito y realización profesional. Abordar estas brechas requiere investigaciones interdisciplinarias que integren nuevos marcos teóricos, herramientas de medición más completas y enfoques metodológicos diversos, con el fin de desarrollar estrategias que mejoren el bienestar, el rendimiento organizacional y la resiliencia en entornos laborales en evolución.

Keywords: gestión de la felicidad, bienestar laboral, satisfacción en el trabajo, transformación digital, psicología organizacional.

Summary

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the labour landscape has evolved significantly, shaped by global transformations and unexpected challenges, particularly in the post-pandemic period (Parrey & Kour, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transition to remote and hybrid work models, fostering new discussions around workplace happiness and well-being (Dale *et al.*, 2024). The era post-pandemic has redefined the expectations and experiences of human talent (Beattie *et al.*, 2022), serving as a catalyst for disruptive phenomena like the Great Resignation, where employees across industries left their positions seeking greater satisfaction and well-being (Ravina-Ripoll & Robina-Ramírez, 2023). This shift highlights the growing importance of happiness at work as both a crucial factor for individual well-being and organisational success (Soren & Ryff, 2023). At the same time, digital transformation, automation, and changing employee priorities have reshaped traditional employment models, introducing new challenges and opportunities for workplace well-being (Trenerry *et al.*, 2021).

The concept of happiness at work extends beyond job satisfaction, reflecting a complex and multifaceted nature. Aljumah (2023) emphasizes that this construct includes a wide range of psychological and contextual factors contributing to holistic employee well-being. Supporting research by Guerci *et al.* (2019) and Rando-Cueto *et al.* (2023) identifies environmental and psychosocial factors that influence workplace happiness. However, despite extensive literature, there is a notable gap in studies that address happiness management in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the gig economy (Pattanayak *et al.*, 2023). These work environments often present unique challenges, such as job insecurity, inconsistent income, and lack of structured organisational support, which can significantly impact worker well-being (Saeed *et al.*, 2021).

Additionally, new theoretical perspectives are emerging to explain how workplace happiness interacts with contemporary challenges (Ahmad *et al.*, 2024). Neuroscientific approaches to happiness management, emotional intelligence theories, and hybrid models integrating digital well-being and productivity present promising avenues for further exploration (Dhiman *et al.*, 2025). At the same time, empirical studies, such as those by Khan & Abbas (2022), consistently demonstrate that high levels of workplace happiness contribute to increased productivity, creativity, and organisational commitment, which are crucial for both optimising performance and ensuring sustained employee well-being (Bankins *et al.*, 2023). Despite its recognised importance, the academic literature still faces significant gaps, including inconsistencies in measurement methods (Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2018) and a lack of longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of workplace happiness (Bergsma *et al.*, 2020). This study seeks to bridge these gaps by identifying key research deficiencies and proposing new directions for future investigations.

Moreover, while substantial literature explores happiness at work in sectors such as healthcare and education (Kun & Gadanecz, 2019), there is a notable lack of research on micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Pattanayak *et al.*, 2023), despite their critical role in many national economies (Hossain & Pathak, 2023).

Thus, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach that deepens the understanding of sectoral variations and fosters a more integrated perspective on workplace happiness (McArthur, 2022). This systematic review seeks to analyse and synthesise the scientific development of workplace happiness from 2010 to 2024, a period marked by renewed interest following Cynthia Fisher's influential 2010 article, "Happiness at Work" (Fisher, 2020). Fisher's work revitalised this field and provided a theoretical foundation for exploring the link between working conditions and employee well-being. To fill these gaps and support future advancements, this systematic review addresses the following research questions, which explore and elaborate on the theme of workplace happiness:

RQ1: What is the most commonly used research design to study happiness at work? This question aims to identify the predominant methods in current research, offering insights into the rigour and scope of analytical approaches.

RQ2: In which sectors and company sizes have studies on happiness at work primarily focused? This question seeks to determine the sectoral and organisational scope of studies, providing a view of the most and least explored areas.

RQ3: What theories have been most frequently applied in studying happiness at work? Analysing these theories allows for an understanding of the conceptual frameworks guiding the studies, revealing the prevailing currents of thought and their evolution over time.

RQ4: What dimensions and variables are most commonly used to measure happiness at work? This question aims to explore the components researchers consider essential for capturing the essence of workplace happiness, reflecting both consensus and divergence in the understanding of the concept.

RQ5: What variables have been most frequently explored in relation to happiness at work? This question investigates the variables associated with happiness at work, whether as influencing factors or outcomes, broadening the understanding of its causes and effects.

RQ6: What are the main instruments used in research on happiness at work? This question focuses on the methodological instruments and tools used to measure and analyse happiness at work, which is crucial for assessing the validity and reliability of the findings.

RQ7: What are the most relevant findings in the study of happiness at work? Finally, this question synthesises the main discoveries in the literature, highlighting the most significant contributions and the practical implications of studies on workplace happiness.

We use the systematic review approach, a widely accepted methodology for consolidating and synthesising findings in a specific field (Gough *et al.*, 2012). This approach aims to deepen our understanding of workplace happiness and guide organisational policies that promote a more fulfilling and productive work environment. We hope this study will provide valuable insights for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers looking to enhance both employee well-being and organisational effectiveness.

2. Literature review

2.1. Happiness management or happiness at work

Happiness at work, understood as a multidimensional construct (Ruggeri *et al.*, 2020), has gained prominence in both academic research and organisational strategies due to its significant impact on productivity, employee retention, and organisational climate (Thompson & Bruk-Lee, 2020). While definitions vary, happiness at work is commonly described as the pleasure and satisfaction derived from fulfilling job functions (Węziak-Białowolska *et al.*, 2020). This concept extends beyond positive emotions, encompassing a sense of purpose and personal fulfilment achieved through one's role within the organisation (Aboramadan & Kundi, 2022).

Cynthia Fisher's influential 2010 article, *Happiness at Work*, provides a comprehensive definition that integrates affective, cognitive, and contextual dimensions of workplace well-being. Fisher posits that happiness at work arises from the complex interaction between the work environment, employees' characteristics, and team dynamics. Her theory emphasises that happiness is not merely the absence of dissatisfaction, but an active state of enthusiasm, engagement, and satisfaction (Kocollari *et al.*, 2023).

Building on Fisher's perspective, various studies have identified key factors that shape workplace happiness. For example, Salas-Vallina *et al.* (2020) emphasised the role of inspirational leadership as a key driver of workplace happiness. Rasheed *et al.* (2020) similarly highlighted the impact of professional development opportunities, recognition of achievements, and an organisational culture promoting transparency and mutual support. Additionally, Mert *et al.* (2021) examined how perceived fairness and supervisor support strongly correlate with happiness at work, based on data from 408 Turkish employees across different industries.

However, while happiness at work is often associated with established concepts such as organisational climate and job satisfaction, it is essential to clarify its distinctiveness. Organisational climate refers to shared employee perceptions of workplace policies, practices, and procedures, whereas job satisfaction reflects an individual's evaluation of their specific job conditions, including salary, workload, and career growth opportunities (Hussainy,

2022). In contrast, Happiness Management takes a broader, strategic approach, focusing on the intentional cultivation of well-being within organisations as a long-term goal. Unlike job satisfaction, which can fluctuate based on situational factors, Happiness Management is designed as a sustainable practice, incorporating leadership strategies, cultural interventions, and employee engagement initiatives to foster a resilient and positive work environment (Lee, 2021).

Furthermore, this study contributes to the field by contrasting its findings with previous systematic reviews on workplace happiness. While past reviews have primarily examined job satisfaction determinants or psychological well-being at work (Kun & Gadanecz, 2019), this study provides a broader, interdisciplinary perspective that integrates emerging trends such as digital transformation, hybrid work models, and AI-driven management strategies. Unlike prior studies that focus solely on employee sentiment analysis or managerial strategies, this review incorporates contemporary workplace challenges, offering a more holistic framework for future research (Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2018). This distinction underscores the originality of our contribution and the necessity of re-evaluating traditional approaches to workplace happiness in light of evolving organisational landscapes.

Measuring happiness at work poses challenges due to its subjective nature and the influence of multiple contextual factors, as discussed by Khan & Nasim (2024). Despite these complexities, recent studies such as those by Klug *et al.* (2024) have proposed integrative models that combine qualitative and quantitative methods to better capture the nuances of workplace happiness. However, such integrative approaches remain limited within the field.

3. Methodology

This study employed a systematic review framework with a quantitative and descriptive approach to comprehensively collect and analyse scientific literature on happiness at work (Herring, 2009). To ensure the quality and reliability of the examined resources, reputable databases such as SCOPUS and Web of Science were utilised (Pranckutė, 2021).

The PRISMA model (Moher *et al.*, 2009) was followed to guide the structure and reporting process of this systematic review, ensuring transparency and replicability. PRISMA is widely recognised for its rigour in synthesising research; however, given the broad scope of happiness at work, some adaptations were necessary. Specifically, it was not feasible to fully adhere to the PICO criteria (Participants, Interventions, Comparisons, Outcomes, and Study Designs) typically associated with PRISMA (Moher *et al.*, 2014), as the concept of happiness at work does not always fit within experimental research paradigms. Instead, the study maintained the core principles of PRISMA while applying flexibility to interpret intervention and comparison variables in a workplace context.

To enhance the rigor of the review, a set of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria was established: Inclusion criteria: Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and book chapters published between 2010 and 2024, written in English or Spanish, and directly related to happiness at work, Happiness Management, or workplace well-being. Studies had to present theoretical discussions, empirical analyses, or methodological contributions relevant to the topic.

Exclusion criteria: Studies that were not available in full text, duplicate records, grey literature (such as opinion pieces or non-peer-reviewed sources), and articles that did not directly address workplace happiness or related frameworks.

The literature search was designed to capture as many relevant studies as possible using Boolean operators and keyword variations, search string used: "*Felicidad en el trabajo*" OR "*Happiness at work*" OR "*Felicidad laboral*" OR "*Workplace happiness*" OR "*Felicidad del trabajador*" OR "*Employee happiness*" OR "*Happiness management*" OR "*Gestión de la felicidad*".

The search was conducted in Web of Science and Scopus, two highly regarded international databases selected for their wide representation of high-impact publications (Pranckutė, 2021). To prevent duplication of articles retrieved from both databases, a de-duplication process was conducted. Duplicate records were identified and removed based on matching titles, authors, and DOIs. The final number of unique records included after de-duplication is reported in Figure 1, which outlines the screening and selection process.

From the outset of this systematic review, a deliberate decision was made to include studies from all relevant disciplines, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of the term *happiness at work* (Warr, 2011). This approach aimed to capture a wide range of perspectives, acknowledging that happiness at work is studied across various academic and practical fields.

To embrace the richness and diversity of global research on the topic, studies in multiple languages—English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Turkish—were incorporated. This linguistic inclusion provided access to a broader array of knowledge, encompassing geographically or culturally limited studies that are essential for a more global understanding of workplace happiness.

Table 1. Search results in databases

Database	Language	Results
<i>Web of Science</i>	English	129
	Spanish	8
	Portuguese	8
<i>Scopus</i>	English	134
	Spanish	15
	Portuguese	6
<i>Total</i>		300

Source. Own elaboration.

The inclusive methodology not only enriched the understanding of the phenomenon but also ensured a more equitable and comprehensive representation of the available research. This allowed for a more holistic evaluation of the literature on happiness at work, capturing variations influenced by cultural and regional factors.

The filtering process applied to database searches was crucial in narrowing the scope of the review to studies directly relevant to the research objectives. Filters included publication date, document type, language, and full-text availability. Studies published from 2010 to May 2024 were selected, justified by the significant rise in research on happiness at work following Cynthia Fisher's influential study, which set a benchmark for further research in the field.

Only full-text studies were considered to ensure thorough analysis, and the language filter included English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Turkish documents. This selection acknowledged the global nature of workplace happiness as a phenomenon crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries.

In the review design, meticulous inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to refine search results and ensure relevance. Following best practices recommended by Moher *et al.* (2009), these criteria were designed to select studies providing well-founded insights into happiness at work while excluding those that did not meet the required methodological or thematic standards. Studies were excluded if they only mentioned happiness at work without focusing on it, were purely descriptive without empirical or theoretical analysis, or were not available in full text. Editorials, commentaries, or correspondence without peer review were also excluded due to their insufficient level of evidence for a rigorous academic synthesis.

Once the inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined, a thorough manual review of the title, abstract, and full content of each study was conducted to ensure relevance. This process ensured that selected studies directly addressed the topic of happiness at work.

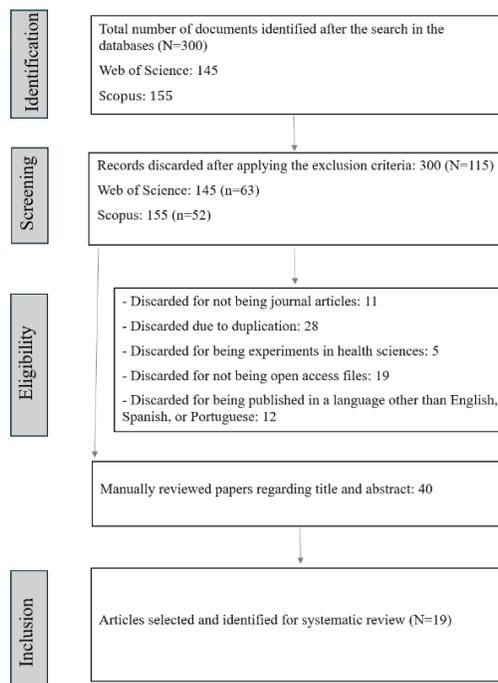
Figure 1 illustrates the filtering process, starting with an initial retrieval of 300 potential results. After applying the eligibility criteria, which included time range, thematic relevance, language, and full-text accessibility, and conducting a manual review, the final number of documents included in the study was 19.

Beyond simple data collection, the use of journals, books, and scientific information platforms was crucial for ensuring the historical and theoretical contextualisation of the field. As argued by Currie *et al.* (2010), mastering

advanced search techniques and critically evaluating sources are essential for accessing highly reliable research that meaningfully contributes to scientific progress. This methodological approach was key to minimising biases and enhancing the robustness of the study's findings.

In line with Currie *et al.* (2010), advanced document analysis techniques were employed to examine the theoretical development and contextual depth of happiness at work. The analysis focused on identifying thematic patterns, conceptual relationships, and methodological trends, allowing for a structured categorisation of the literature. Studies were organised based on their theoretical foundations, research methods, and sectoral applications, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how workplace happiness has evolved over time.

Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram



Source. Own elaboration.

4. Results

After outlining the selection process for the studies relevant to our systematic review, we now proceed to examine the empirical evidence gathered. The body of evidence, meticulously filtered for relevance and methodological quality, offers a comprehensive overview of advancements in the understanding of happiness at work.

We begin by presenting the 19 included studies, summarising their objectives, methodologies, findings, and theoretical contributions, before moving into a more detailed thematic analysis. The thematic analysis aims to identify emerging patterns, discrepancies, and gaps within the research. By doing so, we hope to illuminate the current state of the field and suggest potential avenues for future research.

The range of studies selected, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, provides a holistic perspective on the complex factors influencing workplace happiness. Thus, the results section goes beyond the scope of a traditional literature review, offering a deeper and more applied interpretation of the collected data. Through the analysis of these 19 selected studies, we have achieved a more detailed and comprehensive evaluation of each (see Table 2).

Table 2. General characteristics of selected studies

Article Code	Research Title	Author(s) and Year	Country	Publication Source	Keywords	DOI	Number of Citations
1	Happiness at Work	Fisher, 2010	Australia	WILEY	Person-Organization Fit; Self-Determination Theory; Job-Satisfaction; Positive Affect; Employee Satisfaction; Citizenship Behaviour; Dispositional Approach; Affective Experiences; Negative Affectivity; Climate Perceptions	10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00270.x	270
2	Innovation and happiness management enhancing transcendence at work in the banking sector in Spain	Sánchez-Hernández <i>et al.</i> , 2023	Spain	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	Banking sector; Happiness at work; Human resources management; Innovation management; Moral competencies; Transcendence at work	10.1108/EJIM-07-2023-0615	165
3	The HRM-performance relationship revisited: Inspirational motivation, participative decision making and happiness at work (HAW)	Salas-Vallina <i>et al.</i> , 2017	Spain	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	Human resource management; Inspirational leadership; Happiness at work; Participative decision making	10.1108/ER-12-2016-0245	130
4	The Impact of Job Insecurity on Employee Happiness at Work: A Case of Robotised Production Line Operators in Furniture Industry in Lithuania	Stankeviciute <i>et al.</i> , 2021	Lithuania	MDPI	Job insecurity; Happiness at work; Job satisfaction; Work engagement; Affective commitment; Furniture industry	10.3390/su13031563	129
5	What makes employees happy at work? Evidence from cross-sectional data in India	Zaffar & Gani, 2022	India	INDERSCIENCE ENTERPRISES LTD	Workplace; Happiness; Happiness antecedents; Happiness correlates; Public sector; India	10.1504/IJHD.2022.124165	127
6	The human side of leadership: Inspirational leadership effects on follower characteristics and happiness at work (HAW)	Salas-Vallina <i>et al.</i> , 2020	Spain	ELSEVIER SCIENCE INC	Inspirational leadership; Follower characteristics; Happiness at work	10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.10.044	119
7	Antecedents of happiness at work: The moderating role of gender	Moyassar Al-Taie, 2023	United Arab Emirates	TAYLOR & FRANCIS AS	N/A	10.1080/23311975.2023.2283927	115
8	HRM and organisational learning in knowledge economy: investigating the impact of happiness at work (HAW) on organisational learning capability (OLC)	El-Sharkawy <i>et al.</i> , 2023	Egypt	SPRINGER	HAW; Work-life balance; OLC; Total reward management; Knowledge management	10.1186/s43093-023-00188-2	104
9	Happiness at Work and Motivation for a Sustainable Workforce: Evidence from Female Hotel Employees	Atan <i>et al.</i> , 2021	Cyprus	MDPI	N/A	https://doi.org/10.3390/su13147778	95
10	Emotional culture of joy and happiness at work as a facet of wellbeing: a mediation of psychological safety and relational attachment	Aboramadan & Kundi, 2023	Pakistan	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	Emotional culture of joy; Relational attachment; Psychological safety; Happiness at work; Wellbeing	10.1108/PR-04-2021-0285	83

Continuation of Table 2

Article Code	Research Title	Author(s) and Year	Country	Publication Source	Keywords	DOI	Number of Citations
11	Unlocking the secret to happiness at work: the power of inclusive leadership, organisational justice and workplace inclusion	Jha <i>et al.</i> , 2023	India	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	Inclusive leadership; Workplace inclusion; Happiness at work; Organisational justice	10.1108/JMD-04-2023-0136	80
12	Emotional wage, happiness at work and organisational justice as triggers for happiness management	Ravina-Ripoll <i>et al.</i> , 2024	Costa Rica	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	Emotional wage; Happiness at work; Organisational justice; Human capital	10.1108/JMD-02-2023-0046	73
13	Happiness at work: a systematic literature review	Farooq <i>et al.</i> , 2024	India and England	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	Happiness at work; Workplace happiness; Work happiness; Employee happiness	10.1108/IJOA-08-2023-3902	72
14	Towards Enhancing Happiness at Work with the Lenses of Positive Organisational Behaviour: the Roles of Psychological Capital, Social Capital and Organisational Trust	Tastan <i>et al.</i> , 2020	Turkey	LUMEN PUBLISHING HOUSE	Happiness at workplace; Psychological capital; Social capital; Organisational trust; Positive organisational behaviour	10.18662/po/1.2/170	71
15	Happiness at Work among Public Relations Practitioners in Spain	Muñiz-Velázquez <i>et al.</i> , 2022	Spain	MDPI	Happiness; Well-being at work; Public relations; Corporate communication; Purpose; Job satisfaction; Communication consultants; Engagement at work; Organisational development	10.3390/ijerph19073987	48
16	Psychological capital and happiness at the workplace: The mediating role of flow experience	Kawalya <i>et al.</i> , 2019	Uganda	TAYLOR & FRANCIS AS	Psychological capital; Happiness at work; Professional nurses; Health services; Flow experience; Positive emotions	10.1080/23311975.2019.1685060	42
17	Empowerment and support of senior management in promoting happiness at work	Galvan-Vela <i>et al.</i> , 2022	Mexico	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	Support; Happiness at work; Autonomy; Happiness business	10.1108/CG-05-2021-0200	39
18	New corporate management strategies: the visual culture as a component of internal communication and happiness at work	Castro-Martínez <i>et al.</i> , 2022	Spain	METHAODOS-REVISTA DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES	Strategic communication; Branding; Well-being; Happiness at work; Internal communication	10.17502/mrcs.v10i2.605	39
19	Factors of feelings of happiness at work among staff in geriatric care facilities	Tei-tominaga & Nakanishi, 2021	Japan	WILEY	Dementia; Happiness; Professionalism; Work environment; Workplace	10.1111/ggi.14247	30

Source. Own elaboration.

Below is a synthesis of the main findings from the systematic review on happiness at work, as reflected in the most cited and relevant documents in the field. These selected studies provide a comprehensive view of the various approaches and significant insights related to this topic.

The most cited study, conducted by Fisher in 2010, is notable for its thorough analysis of how self-determination theory and person-organisation fit affect happiness at work, with 270 citations. This study emphasises the role of positive affect and citizenship behaviour in the Australian work context, establishing a theoretical framework that has been widely referenced and marking a pivotal moment in happiness at work research.

In Spain, Sánchez-Hernández *et al.* (2023) examined happiness management and its impact on transcendence in the banking sector, accumulating 165 citations. This study explores how innovation management and moral competencies foster a happier and more productive work environment.

Similarly, Salas-Vallina *et al.* (2017), also from Spain, contributed to the literature by exploring the relationship between human resource management and workplace happiness, receiving 130 citations. They highlight inspirational motivation and participative decision-making as key elements in enhancing workplace happiness.

From Lithuania, Stankeviciute *et al.* (2021) investigated the impact of job insecurity on happiness in robotised jobs, a study with 129 citations. This research reveals how job satisfaction and affective commitment can help mitigate the negative effects of job insecurity, specifically in the furniture industry.

Lastly, research from India and other countries, such as Zaffar & Gani (2022) and Jha *et al.* (2023), provides broader perspectives on the antecedents of happiness at work. These studies explore topics ranging from motivation to the impact of inclusive leadership and organisational justice on workplace happiness.

In conclusion, these selected studies encompass a wide range of methodological and thematic approaches, from empirical research to theoretical reviews, forming a solid foundation for understanding the many factors that contribute to happiness at work. The diversity of contexts and approaches highlights the universal importance of workplace happiness and its impact on productivity and organisational well-being.

Table 3. Characteristics of studies and sociodemographic information.

Article Code	Approach	Type and Design	Sample Size (n)	Population	Age	Gender	Company or Organisation Sector	Company Size
1	Qualitative	Literature review and theoretical	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Quantitative	Exploratory, cross-sectional based on surveys, non-probabilistic, convenience	354	Employees from Spanish banks	N/A	N/A	Banking	Large
3	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, surveys through the official website of the Spanish Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (SEAC)	167	Spanish allergist doctors	8.82% over 50 years old, 91.18% 29 to 49 years old	58.12% women, 41.88% men	Healthcare	Large
4	Quantitative	Descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional, surveys, convenience	350	Robotised production line operators in the furniture sector	N/A	215 men and 135 women	Furniture industry	Large
5	Quantitative	Descriptive and cross-sectional, proportional stratified sampling	400	Full-time teachers, bank employees, and manufacturing workers	21 to 50 years	Male: 54.5%, Female: 45.5%	Education, banking, and manufacturing	Large
6	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, quasi-experimental, electronic questionnaire distributed to employees of the 5 largest banks in Spain and Italy	389	Employees in financial services in Italy and Spain	26 to 45 years	N/A	Banking	Large

Continuation of Table 3

Article Code	Approach	Type and Design	Sample Size (n)	Population	Age	Gender	Company or Organisation Sector	Company Size
7	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, causal, online questionnaire, stratified convenience sample	359	University professors	N/A	67% men, 33% women	Education	Large
8	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, survey, non-probabilistic, using convenience and snowball sampling techniques	207	Academic staff from private universities	30 to 60 years	70% women, 30% men	Education	Large
9	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, non-probabilistic	271	Female employees from 4 and 5-star hotels	25 to 46 years	100% women	Hospitality	Large
10	Quantitative	Three-wave longitudinal, non-probabilistic convenience sampling	340	Full-time employees from various organisations	Average age 35.3 years	127 women (37.4%) and 213 men (62.6%)	Textiles, IT, manufacturing, automotive	Large
11	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, snowball sampling	311	Employees working in IT companies in India	Minimum age criterion was 21 years	148 women and 163 men	IT	Large
12	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, descriptive and correlational, non-probabilistic, non-random convenience sampling	502	Employees in the education sector	18 to 51 years	65.9% women, 34.1% men	Education	Large
13	Qualitative and Quantitative	Systematic literature review	41	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
14	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, convenience sampling, online and paper surveys	222	Employees from various sectors in Turkey	21 to 56 years	48.2% women, 51.4% men	Sales, marketing, healthcare, banking, finance, and education	Various
15	Quantitative	Exploratory, online questionnaire	256	Public relations professionals	22 to 59 years	68.3% women, 31.7% men	Communications and public relations	Large
16	Quantitative	Exploratory, cross-sectional, purposive sampling, self-report questionnaires	800	Nurses from public hospitals	31 to 40 years	77% women, 23% men	Healthcare	Large
17	Quantitative	Non-experimental and cross-sectional, non-probabilistic sample	603	Workers in companies from various sectors	20 to 73 years	54.9% women, 45.1% men	Industrial, services, commercial, education, and primary sector	Various
18	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews with experts and content analysis	10	Organisations, public and private	N/A	N/A	Education, insurance and finance, consulting, communications and design, retail	Medium and large
19	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, convenience sampling, self-reported questionnaires	632	Geriatric care staff	28 to 58 years	N/A	Healthcare	Large

Source. Own elaboration.

The following section presents the main findings from the analysis of the 19 studies included in our systematic review on happiness at work. Table 3 summarises the key characteristics of each study, such as the methodological approach, research design, sample size and composition, the population studied, and the sector and size of the organisations involved.

Among the studies analysed, most adopted a quantitative and cross-sectional approach, utilising surveys to investigate various dimensions of workplace happiness in large companies. For instance, the study by Sánchez-Hernández *et al.* (2023) focused on Spanish bank employees, using an exploratory cross-sectional design to measure the impact of innovation management and moral competencies on workplace happiness.

A notable aspect of the reviewed studies is the diversity of sectors examined, including banking, education, and healthcare. For example, Salas-Vallina *et al.* (2017) explored the relationship between inspirational leadership, participative decision-making, and workplace happiness among allergist doctors in Spain. This study also employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design, collecting data via the Spanish Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology's official website. However, despite this diversity, it is important to highlight a sectoral concentration on healthcare, education, and banking, limiting broader sectoral representation.

Regarding sample sizes, there was considerable variation across studies. Some involved large samples, such as Kawalya *et al.* (2019) who surveyed over 800 nurses in public hospitals. Others utilised smaller, more focused qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews with a limited number of experts across different organisations.

Overall, this review provides a comprehensive overview of the methodologies and theoretical approaches used to investigate workplace happiness, revealing a clear preference for quantitative, cross-sectional designs, particularly in large organisations. These insights are valuable for understanding current research trends in this area and identifying opportunities for methodological improvements in future studies.

Table 4. Characteristics of objectives, statistical procedures, variables, and instruments of the studies

Article Code	Approach	Type and Design	Sample Size (n)	Population	Age	Gender	Company or Organisation Sector	Company Size
1	Qualitative	Literature review and theoretical	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Quantitative	Exploratory, cross-sectional based on surveys, non-probabilistic, convenience	354	Employees from Spanish banks	N/A	N/A	Banking	Large
3	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, surveys through the official website of the Spanish Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (SEAIC)	167	Spanish allergist doctors	8.82% over 50 years old, 91.18% 29 to 49 years old	58.12% women, 41.88% men	Healthcare	Large
4	Quantitative	Descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional, surveys, convenience	350	Robotised production line operators in the furniture sector	N/A	215 men and 135 women	Furniture industry	Large
5	Quantitative	Descriptive and cross-sectional, proportional stratified sampling	400	Full-time teachers, bank employees, and manufacturing workers	21 to 50 years	Male: 54.5%, Female: 45.5%	Education, banking, and manufacturing	Large
6	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, quasi-experimental, electronic questionnaire distributed to employees of the 5 largest banks in Spain and Italy	389	Employees in financial services in Italy and Spain	26 to 45 years	N/A	Banking	Large
7	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, causal, online questionnaire, stratified convenience sample	359	University professors	N/A	67% men, 33% women	Education	Large
8	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, survey, non-probabilistic, using convenience and snowball sampling techniques	207	Academic staff from private universities	30 to 60 years	70% women, 30% men	Education	Large
9	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, non-probabilistic	271	Female employees from 4 and 5-star hotels	25 to 46 years	100% women	Hospitality	Large
10	Quantitative	Three-wave longitudinal, non-probabilistic convenience sampling	340	Full-time employees from various organisations	Average age 35.3 years	127 women (37.4%) and 213 men (62.6%)	Textiles, IT, manufacturing, automotive	Large
11	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, snowball sampling	311	Employees working in IT companies in India	Minimum age criterion was 21 years	148 women and 163 men	IT	Large
12	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, descriptive and correlational, non-probabilistic, non-random convenience sampling	502	Employees in the education sector	18 to 51 years	65.9% women, 34.1% men	Education	Large
13	Qualitative and Quantitative	Systematic literature review	41	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Continuation of Table 4

Article Code	Approach	Type and Design	Sample Size (n)	Population	Age	Gender	Company or Organisation Sector	Company Size
14	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, convenience sampling, online and paper surveys	222	Employees from various sectors in Turkey	21 to 56 years	48.2% women, 51.4% men	Various sectors including sales, marketing, healthcare, banking, finance, and education	Various
15	Quantitative	Exploratory, online questionnaire	256	Public relations professionals	22 to 59 years	68.3% women, 31.7% men	Communications and public relations	Large
16	Quantitative	Exploratory, cross-sectional, purposive sampling, self-report questionnaires	800	Nurses from public hospitals	31 to 40 years	77% women, 23% men	Healthcare	Large
17	Quantitative	Non-experimental and cross-sectional, non-probabilistic sample	603	Workers in companies from various sectors	20 to 73 years	54.9% women, 45.1% men	Various sectors including industrial, services, commercial, education, and primary sector	Various
18	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews with experts and content analysis	10	Organisations, public and private	N/A	N/A	Education, insurance and finance, consulting, communications and design, and retail	Medium and large
19	Quantitative	Cross-sectional, convenience sampling, self-reported questionnaires	632	Geriatric care staff	28 to 58 years	N/A	Healthcare	Large

Source. Own elaboration.

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the key characteristics of the studies included in our systematic review, detailing the primary objectives, statistical procedures, related variables, and instruments used. This structure offers a clear understanding of the methodologies and theoretical frameworks shaping current research on happiness at work.

The objectives of the studies show considerable variation, ranging from examining the components and nature of happiness at work, as seen in Study 1, to analysing the complex interactions between organisational and personal factors and their effects on happiness, such as in Study 7. The statistical methods employed are equally diverse, including regression analyses, correlations, and structural equation modelling (SEM), which reflects the multidimensional nature of research in this area.

For example, Study 2 utilises structural equation modelling with partial least squares (PLS-SEM) to explore the effects of innovation and happiness management on employee performance within the banking sector. This sophisticated method enables a detailed analysis of the complex relationships between variables and their influence on workplace happiness.

The variables studied also span a wide range, from individual psychological factors like subjective well-being and engagement to organisational aspects such as human resource practices and perceived organisational support. This diversity underscores the importance of considering both personal and workplace dynamics when investigating happiness at work.

In terms of instruments, the tools used to measure these variables vary across studies and are tailored to the specific objectives of each. For instance, Study 3 employs a shortened version of the Happiness at Work (HAW) scale, alongside instruments measuring inspirational leadership and organisational learning capability. This combination provides valuable insights into the links between leadership, participative decision-making, and workplace happiness.

Table 5. Theoretical characteristics and findings of the studies

Article Code	Definition of Happiness at Work	Theory(ies)	Main Findings
1	A positive psychological state resulting from self-evaluation and work experiences	Subjective Well-Being Theory (Diener) and Cognitive Evaluation Theory (Deci and Ryan)	Identifies three key components: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Emphasises that happy employees are more productive and engaged. Highlights the interaction between internal and external factors in happiness at work and stresses the crucial role of effective management in enhancing well-being and staff retention
2	A harmonious state where an individual's physiological and psychological needs are satisfied in the past, present, and future, leading them to live a meaningful and content life at work	Happiness Management Theory, Moral Competencies Theory, Transcendence at Work Theory by Khari and Sinha (2020)	Moral Competencies show a significant relationship with Employee Performance and all dimensions of Transcendence at Work. These competencies positively impact group cohesion, personal connection, and the perception of work as service, which is positively associated with job performance
3	Happiness at work is understood as 'happy feelings towards the work itself, the characteristics of the job, and the organisation as a whole.' It is a broad concept that measures employees' quality of life at work	Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, HRM-Performance Model	Inspirational leadership positively affects happiness at work. Participative decision-making mediates the relationship between inspirational leadership and happiness at work
4	Happiness at work is understood as a state that integrates three dimensions: job satisfaction, affective organisational commitment, and work engagement, but as a higher-order construct, it serves as a general attitude measure allowing for compatibility when linking job insecurity with employee attitudes	Stress Theory (based on the hindrance stressor dimension of the stress model), Conservation of Resources Theory, Psychological Contract Theory	Job insecurity has a significant negative impact on happiness at work and all its dimensions (job satisfaction, affective organisational commitment, and work engagement), with a significant negative relationship between job insecurity and feeling happy at work
5	Happiness at work is defined as a subjective well-being experience at work, involving an interaction between individual and organisational experiences of employees, highlighting both positive individual and organisational experiences as well as reducing negative experiences	Positive Psychology, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Seligman's Enduring Happiness Theory, Subjective Well-Being Theory	Employees generally feel content with the state of happiness at their workplaces, although the overall average happiness score is not very high. It is recommended to improve supportive organisational environments and reduce feelings of aversion to work to enhance employee satisfaction and well-being
6	A three-dimensional construct that measures the work itself, job characteristics, and feelings of belonging to the organisation, capturing both hedonism and eudaimonia, and activation and pleasure	Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, Job Fit Theory	Inspirational leadership has a direct positive effect on happiness at work, and follower characteristics partially mediate this relationship, improving the explanation of happiness at work
7	Passion for work (PFW) is defined as the degree to which individuals 'love' working and derive joy and pleasure from their investment in work-related activities	Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) Theory, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory	The study found significant positive relationships between perceived organisational support (POS), human resource practices (HRPs), and psychological capital (PsyCap) with happiness at work (HAW). However, no significant relationship was found between organisational respect for non-work (ORN) and HAW. Gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between the investigated variables and HAW
8	Happiness at work is defined as the degree to which an employee can experience acceptable levels of satisfaction and positive affections in the workplace	Social Exchange Theory by Blau (1964)	Happiness at work (HAW) partially mediated the relationship between recognition, work-life balance (WLB), and organisational learning capability (OLC). A significant positive effect of recognition and WLB on HAW was found, and in turn, a positive impact of HAW on OLC
9	Happiness at work is based on Fisher's (2010) conceptualisation of engagement, job satisfaction, and affective organisational commitment	Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory	Motivational dimensions affect the dimensions of happiness at work

Continuation of Table 5

Article Code	Definition of Happiness at Work	Theory(ies)	Main Findings
10	Includes well-being, healthy behaviours, good spirits, and positive feelings at work	Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, Broaden-and-Build (BnB) Theory, Self-Determination Theory, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model	Emotional culture of joy significantly predicts happiness at work. Additionally, emotional culture of joy significantly and positively influences both psychological safety and relational attachment. The relationship between emotional culture of joy and happiness at work is mediated by both relational attachment and psychological safety
11	Conceptualised through the HAW scale, measuring engagement, satisfaction, and affective commitment	Social Identity Theory (SIT), Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT), Self-Determination Theory (SDT)	WI partially mediates the relationship between OJ and HAW and fully mediates the relationship between IL and HAW. IL and OJ significantly impact WI, which in turn significantly impacts HAW
12	Related to positive emotional experiences in professional performance	Organisational Justice Theory, Emotional Wage Theory	Emotional wage has a positive impact on happiness at work. Emotional wage positively mediates between organisational justice and happiness at work
13	Although the document reviews various conceptualisations of HAW, it recognises that there is no consensus on a single definition, but mentions that terms like well-being, job satisfaction, and subjective well-being are used interchangeably with happiness at work	Positive Psychology Theory, Positive Intelligence Theory, Stress and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, Psychological Contract Theory	The majority of the reviewed studies (95.12%) are empirical, while a minority (4.88%) are literature reviews. Most studies use surveys as the data collection method, with both cross-sectional and longitudinal designs. A diversity of professionals is included, from bank employees to healthcare and education professionals. Studies include participants from different cultures and countries, with a significant presence of research conducted in Spain and India. Identification of six main research themes on HAW, heterogeneity in the operationalisation of HAW, and a predominance of studies in service sectors
14	Described as the positive emotional state resulting from one's perception of satisfaction, engagement, and well-being in the workplace	Psychological Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, Positive Psychology Theory	Psychological capital and social capital have significant positive impacts on happiness at work. Organisational trust does not play a significant moderating role in the relationship between psychological capital and happiness at work, although it has a direct positive impact
15	Based on the PERMA model which includes positive relationships, engagement, positive emotions, meaning/purpose, and achievement	Diener's Subjective Well-Being Theory, Seligman's PERMA Model, Fisher's Happiness at Work Theory	A notable level of happiness among the surveyed professionals, especially among women
16	A positive emotional state resulting from an individual's perception of their work experiences	Broaden-and-Build (BBT) Theory, Psychology of Flow Theory (PsyFT)	Flow experience mediates the relationship between psychological capital and happiness at work among professional nurses in public hospitals in Uganda. Additionally, it highlights the importance of happiness at work for employee productivity and overall well-being
17	Understood as the desired state of satisfaction and life purpose, or as a state of subjective well-being. From a business perspective, it can be understood as the perceived degree to which organisations and managers provide a work environment that is enjoyable for employees	N/A	Autonomy and senior management support positively and significantly influence levels of happiness at work. The regression model indicates that both autonomy and senior management support are significant predictors of happiness at work. The model explains 13% of the variance in happiness at work, suggesting a moderate effect of these independent variables on the dependent variable
18	Visual culture within internal communication strategies significantly contributes to organisational well-being and happiness	N/A	Visual culture plays a significant role in internal communication, positively impacting organisational well-being and happiness through enhanced cohesion, brand identity, and sense of belonging
19	Happiness at work focuses on positive emotions and beliefs about work	Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory, Job Engagement, Job Satisfaction and Affective Organisational Commitment Theory	Professionalism in dementia care significantly influenced feelings of happiness at work for geriatric care staff, regardless of gender and occupation. Additionally, social capital in the workplace and ethical leadership were important for nurses and professional caregivers, while the perception of wage adequacy was relevant for male professional caregivers

Source. Own elaboration.

Table 5 provides a comprehensive summary of the theoretical frameworks and main findings of research on happiness at work, encompassing definitions, underlying theories, and significant results from each study. This synthesis is critical for understanding the various theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature on this important topic.

Each study in the table offers a distinct perspective on happiness at work, showcasing the diversity of definitions and the lack of consensus on a single conceptualisation. Theoretical frameworks range from Positive Psychology and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory to more specific approaches like Subjective Well-Being Theory and Cognitive Evaluation Theory. For example, Article 1 defines happiness at work as a positive psychological state resulting from self-evaluation and work experiences, drawing on subjective well-being and cognitive evaluation theories to explain the interaction between internal and external factors in shaping workplace happiness.

The main findings from these studies reveal critical insights into workplace dynamics. Study 2 demonstrates how moral competencies and innovation management not only enrich employees' work experiences in the banking sector but also significantly enhance their performance. Such findings provide valuable strategies for organisations aiming to boost workplace happiness and, consequently, productivity.

Across the studies, there is a recurring emphasis on the importance of effective management and the design of organisational policies that foster a work environment conducive to both subjective well-being and enhanced organisational performance. For instance, Article 4 highlights that perceptions of job insecurity directly negatively impact workplace happiness, underscoring the necessity for organisations to implement strategies to alleviate such stressors.

Additionally, the majority of studies included in the table employ advanced methodologies, such as structural equation modelling, to investigate the complex relationships between variables that influence happiness at work. This not only strengthens the reliability of the findings but also provides a replicable model for future research.

Overall, Table 5 offers a valuable synthesis of current research on happiness at work, clarifying how different theoretical and methodological approaches contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon. These findings enrich the academic knowledge base and provide practical guidelines for professionals in human resources and organisational development.

5. Discussion

In this discussion section, we address the answers to the research questions posed in our systematic review, based on a thorough analysis of the data extracted from the tables and reviewed literature.

RQ1: What is the most used research design for studying happiness at work? Most of the studies analysed employ a quantitative, cross-sectional design, using surveys and questionnaires as primary data collection methods. This approach allows researchers to evaluate large samples and generalise findings, contributing to the comparability of workplace happiness research. However, this prevalent design highlights a research gap: the need for mixed-method and longitudinal studies that could provide a more comprehensive understanding of happiness at work, given its complex and evolving nature. Existing cross-sectional studies fail to capture the long-term effects of workplace happiness interventions, limiting their practical applicability for organisations. Future research should integrate longitudinal methods to assess how employee well-being evolves over time and under different workplace conditions.

RQ2: In which sectors and company sizes has most of the research on happiness at work been concentrated? Research has predominantly focused on large companies in sectors such as banking, healthcare, and education. These industries have been at the forefront of workplace happiness studies due to their structured environments and access to corporate well-being programs. However, a major limitation in existing studies is the lack of empirical evidence on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and gig economy workers. While some research highlights the benefits of workplace happiness for large organisations, SMEs and freelance workers often lack access to structured well-being policies, leaving a significant gap in the literature (Hossain & Pathak, 2023).

To bridge this gap, future research should focus on developing scalable well-being models that can be adapted to different organisational structures, particularly those with fewer resources. Additionally, policy

recommendations should be developed to support independent workers in securing access to well-being initiatives, ensuring that workplace happiness strategies are inclusive across all employment sectors.

RQ3: What theories have been most frequently applied in the study of happiness at work? Traditional theories such as Positive Psychology and the Job Demands-Resources Model continue to be widely used. These frameworks have provided valuable insights into how workplace conditions and personal resources influence employee well-being. However, existing theoretical models do not fully capture contemporary workplace challenges, such as the impact of digital transformation, automation, and remote work on employee happiness.

Emerging frameworks, such as neuroscience-based models of well-being and emotional intelligence theories, offer new perspectives on happiness at work, particularly in digitised and flexible work environments (Klug *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, research exploring the intersection of digitalisation, automation, and workplace happiness is increasingly relevant, given the rise of AI-driven work environments.

Future studies should integrate these emerging perspectives to create more adaptive theoretical models, ensuring that frameworks reflect the realities of the modern workplace, where technology, remote collaboration, and digital well-being play critical roles.

RQ4: What are the most commonly used dimensions to measure happiness at work? Commonly evaluated dimensions include engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional well-being. While these elements are vital, existing measurement instruments fail to account for contemporary changes in employee expectations, such as the need for purpose-driven work and psychological safety. The analysis suggests a need to develop and validate instruments that capture broader and more nuanced aspects of workplace happiness, ensuring that research reflects the evolving dynamics of employee well-being.

RQ5: What variables have been most frequently explored in relation to happiness at work? Variables frequently examined include internal factors like resilience and psychological capital, and external organisational factors such as managerial support and human resource practices. However, few studies explore the impact of hybrid work environments, virtual teamwork, and algorithmic management on workplace happiness. Future research should integrate new work arrangements as critical variables, examining how emerging workplace structures—such as gig platforms, remote collaboration tools, and AI-driven management systems— affect happiness at work in both traditional and non-traditional work settings.

RQ6: What are the main instruments used in research on happiness at work? The instruments used reflect solid methodological foundations but reveal potential for innovation. Existing tools could be updated to reflect evolving perceptions and expectations of work, especially in increasingly flexible and digitised environments. Furthermore, there is a lack of consensus regarding how workplace happiness should be measured, underlining the need for more robust and standardised instruments that can be used across different organisational contexts.

Future research should aim to establish a validated, interdisciplinary measurement framework that integrates insights from psychology, organisational behaviour, and digital well-being studies, ensuring that tools remain relevant in modern workplaces.

RQ7: What are the most relevant findings obtained from the study of happiness at work? Key findings indicate that leadership styles, organisational culture, and job autonomy significantly influence workplace happiness. Employees who experience autonomy, meaningful work, and strong social connections report higher levels of well-being and job satisfaction. However, a significant gap exists in research on the impact of technology and digitalisation on workplace happiness, especially in contexts of automation and remote work.

Additionally, while large corporations have invested in well-being initiatives, SMEs and gig workers often lack access to similar resources, which creates disparities in workplace happiness. More research is needed on the implementation and perception of well-being policies across different cultural and economic contexts to ensure inclusive and effective strategies for diverse workforces.

Therefore, this systematic review not only confirms certain established understandings of workplace happiness but also identifies significant gaps in the literature. The need for further research in diverse sectors and companies of different sizes, along with the development of new theories and measurement tools, is crucial for advancing our understanding of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

To ensure practical application, future studies should focus on integrating actionable recommendations for organisations, including leadership development programs, digital well-being policies, and strategies for fostering work-life balance in hybrid and remote work environments. This will not only enrich the theoretical

base but also guide the implementation of more effective management practices that are adapted to the contemporary realities of the workplace environment.

6. Conclusion

This study has consolidated the understanding of happiness management in workplace contexts while identifying critical research gaps. The post-pandemic shift to remote and hybrid work, the underrepresentation of SMEs and gig workers, and the rise of digitalisation demand a re-evaluation of current frameworks. Future research should integrate interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate neuroscientific, emotional intelligence, and digital well-being theories to address the evolving nature of workplace happiness. By expanding methodological designs and sectoral representation, this field can offer more applicable insights for diverse organisational environments, ultimately improving employee well-being and performance. Addressing these gaps will be essential for developing holistic workplace well-being strategies that accommodate both traditional and emerging work environments.

The methodological approaches in the literature are predominantly quantitative and cross-sectional, with a preference for surveys and questionnaires. These methods enable data collection from large samples and some generalisation of findings, but they also have limitations in capturing the evolving nature of workplace well-being and its complexity over time. We suggest future research integrates qualitative and mixed-methodologies, along with longitudinal studies, to gain a richer, more detailed understanding of how perceptions of happiness at work evolve and interact.

From a theoretical perspective, research frequently employs Positive Psychology and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, which are vital for understanding how personal and professional resources can be optimised to enhance well-being at work. However, future studies should consider integrating new theories that address shifts in the nature of work, particularly in light of technological advancements and global changes in labour practices.

Despite the extensive research conducted, there are significant gaps, particularly in studies focused on micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and emerging economic sectors. Additionally, the growing prevalence of remote work and digital work environments represents a critical area that requires immediate attention. Exploring these gaps presents an opportunity to expand the applicability of existing findings to innovative and dynamic contexts.

From a practical standpoint, the review underscores the importance of inspirational leadership and organisational cultures that foster well-being and inclusion. Implementing practices that enhance these aspects can increase productivity, engagement, retention, and employee satisfaction. Therefore, leaders and policymakers should prioritise these factors when crafting effective human resource strategies.

In conclusion, this systematic review has consolidated the understanding of happiness at work as a multifaceted and dynamic field. By addressing the limitations identified and pursuing new theoretical and methodological directions, significant progress can be made in both theory and practice, ultimately improving the quality of working life across a broader range of organisational contexts.

7. Implications: theoretical, practical, and social

This study provides a comprehensive systematic review of Happiness Management in the workplace, identifying key research gaps and offering insights for future research, organisational practices, and social policy development. The findings have significant implications at the theoretical, practical, and social levels, contributing to both academic literature and workplace strategies aimed at improving employee well-being.

From a theoretical perspective, this research highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches to better understand workplace happiness. While traditional models such as Positive Psychology and the Job Demands-Resources Model have provided valuable insights, they do not fully address contemporary challenges, such as the role of technology, digitalisation, and remote work in employee well-being. The integration of neuroscientific approaches, emotional intelligence theories, and digital well-being frameworks could enhance the explanatory power of workplace happiness models. Furthermore, the study reinforces the necessity of

expanding methodological designs beyond cross-sectional quantitative studies, advocating for longitudinal and mixed-method research to capture the evolving nature of workplace happiness over time.

The practical implications of this study are particularly relevant for organisations seeking to enhance employee well-being and productivity. Companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and gig economy platforms, often lack access to structured well-being programs. The findings suggest that customised well-being initiatives should be developed to accommodate diverse work environments, ensuring that employees in non-traditional sectors receive the necessary support. Additionally, the study underscores the critical role of leadership in fostering a positive work culture. Leaders who prioritise autonomy, meaningful work, and social connection can significantly impact employee happiness and engagement. As remote and hybrid work models become more prevalent, organisations must also adapt their well-being strategies to align with digital collaboration and flexible work arrangements, ensuring that happiness management is not limited to physical office spaces.

Beyond theoretical and organisational considerations, this study also carries important social implications. In an era where mental health and well-being are increasingly recognised as societal priorities, workplace happiness plays a crucial role in shaping public policy and labour market regulations. Governments and policymakers should develop frameworks that promote inclusive well-being programs, ensuring that happiness management extends beyond large corporations and reaches small businesses, independent workers, and remote employees. Additionally, public institutions could collaborate with organisations to implement evidence-based well-being initiatives, fostering a more sustainable and balanced work environment across industries.

Overall, the implications of this study suggest a pressing need for multi-stakeholder engagement, where researchers, organisations, and policymakers collaborate to bridge existing gaps in workplace happiness management. By incorporating interdisciplinary theories, adapting workplace strategies, and designing supportive policy frameworks, the long-term goal of fostering happier and more productive work environments can be effectively pursued.

8. Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the evolution of Happiness Management in the workplace, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting its findings. These limitations primarily relate to the scope of the review, the lack of primary empirical data, and the reliance on existing theoretical frameworks. Recognising these constraints allows for a more nuanced understanding of the study's contributions and highlights areas for future research.

One of the primary limitations of this study is its scope and selection criteria. The review is based on peer-reviewed literature published between 2010 and 2024, primarily sourced from reputable databases such as SCOPUS and Web of Science. While this approach ensures the inclusion of high-quality studies, it may exclude emerging perspectives from grey literature, industry reports, or unpublished studies that could offer alternative insights into workplace happiness. Additionally, the study is limited to research published in English and Spanish, potentially overlooking findings from other linguistic and cultural contexts. Future research should seek to incorporate a more diverse range of sources and languages to develop a more globally representative understanding of workplace happiness.

Another significant limitation is the lack of primary data collection. As a systematic review, this study synthesises existing findings rather than conducting original empirical research. While this approach allows for a broad analysis of trends, theories, and methodologies, it does not provide firsthand insights into workplace happiness dynamics in real-time organisational settings. Future research should prioritise longitudinal and mixed-method studies to examine how workplace happiness evolves over time and to capture the complexities of individual and organisational factors influencing well-being. Empirical studies focusing on specific interventions, leadership styles, and employee engagement strategies would further validate and expand upon the insights provided in this review.

Furthermore, the study primarily critiques existing theoretical models, such as Positive Psychology and the Job Demands-Resources Model, which have been widely used in workplace happiness research. While these frameworks offer valuable perspectives, they do not fully address contemporary workplace challenges, including the impact of digitalisation, automation, and remote work on employee happiness. Future research

should develop and test new theoretical models that better account for modern workplace transformations, integrating insights from fields such as neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and digital well-being.

Despite these limitations, this study provides a strong foundation for future research by identifying key gaps in the literature, methodological challenges, and underexplored areas in workplace happiness management. Addressing these constraints in subsequent studies will be essential for advancing theoretical, empirical, and practical knowledge in the field, ensuring that workplace happiness strategies remain relevant in an increasingly dynamic and digitised work environment.

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