

Communal happiness: source of employee happiness in healthcare

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Abstract : The purpose of the present study is to explore the source of happiness for hospital employees. The locus of study was a hospital in Central Java, Indonesia. Although there have been many studies investigating happiness in Western societies, that is relatively unknown in Eastern societies yet, especially with the variety in cultural characteristics. A total of 135 respondents were asked to answer some open-ended questions about the source of happiness. Thematic analysis of responses to the question yielded nine potential themes: family, spiritual sense, money, self-satisfaction, relationships with others, health, achievement, loving and being loved, and leisure time. Then, three main themes emerged: interpersonal relations, self-fulfillment, and relationships with God. These three themes can be referred to as communal happiness.

Keywords: Communal happiness; employee in healthcare; interpersonal relations; relation with God; self-fulfillment

INTRODUCTION

Today, happiness has become the determinant of the meaningfulness of life, especially in the middle of materialism-capitalism, which makes people prey on each other (Hardt et al., 2009), a lot of temptation from digital technology that can alienate our lives (Zimbardo & Coulombe, 2015), and a variety of events that can lead us away from happiness. Since a long time ago, the search for happiness has taken various forms from time to time. As if each generation of humans is trying to interpret and appreciate happiness with all kinds of historicity (Seligman, 2004), however, it is not easy to define happiness (Tiger, 2017). It is because happiness is an abstract concept that is manifested in a variety of ways (Bonniwell & Tunariu, 2019; Cabanas & González-Lamas, 2024). Therefore, the measurement of happiness is always done by humans in the concrete forms of life.

Moreover, culture has its own contribution to make to the formation of the psychological concept of the individual as well as the concept of happiness. Culture has a very central role in perceiving social phenomena (U. Kim et al., 2000, 2006; U. E. Kim & Berry, 1993, 1993; U. Kim & Matsumoto, 2001; Park et al., 2010). Culture has a fundamental role, as does physiology, which is associated with the individual's perception of reality (Yu, 2024). Culture contains language symbols that are used to communicate and make sense of social reality, while the physiology itself contributes a tool to perceive social reality. Thus, it is understandable that the value of individual happiness is certainly influenced by the prevailing cultural context.

Happiness is part of well-being, contentment to do your life satisfaction or equally the absence of psychology distress (Ruggeri et al., 2020; Ryff & Singer, 1996). To add that the concept of happiness is a synonym of life satisfaction or satisfaction with life (Peterson et al., 2005). Diener et.al (2003) also states that satisfaction with life is a real form of happiness where happiness is something that is more of an achievement of the goals which in fact, happiness is always associated with better health, higher creativity, and better workplace.

At the same time, happiness has the same meaning as subjective well-being, which is divided into two components. Both components are affective and cognitive (Diener et al., 2003; Kaufman et al., 2022; Kong et al., 2021; Llamas-Díaz et al., 2022; Pleeging et al., 2021; Sahai & Mahapatra, 2020). The meaning of "happy" is different from that of "pleased". Philosophically, the word "happy" can be interpreted as comfort, spiritual enjoyment, and a sense of satisfaction with no defects in mind to feel calm and peaceful. Happiness is abstract and cannot be touched (Wallace, 2008). Happiness is also closely related to the mental state of a person.

Similar to the above, happiness is a feeling that can be felt in the form of feeling happy and peaceful (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013). While happiness is the overall quality of human life, what makes life good overall is better health, high creativity, or a higher income (Diener et al., 2003). Uchida, et al. (2004), in their research on the cultural construction of happiness, found that there are differences in the meaning of happiness in Western (individualistic) and Eastern (collectivistic) cultures.

Specifically in Western culture and North American contexts, happiness has a tendency to be related to the definition of personal achievement (Kitayama et al., 2009). In that context, individuals act out of motivation to maximize positive affective experiences. Self-esteem is the best predictor of happiness (Daniel-Gonzalez et al., 2023; J. Kim et al., 2019). This is in contrast to the cultural context of East Asia, where happiness has a tendency to be defined as related to the achievement of interpersonal relationships (Reis et al., 2022; Uchida et al., 2022). In that context, the culture of individuals acting as motivated individuals to maintain a balance between positive and negative effects. The best way to predict happiness is to see the attachment of individuals in social relations.

Employee Happiness at the Workplace

Almost everyone wants happiness (Argyle, 2021), because happiness is an important thing (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) and is an indicator of the quality of life (Haller & Hadler, 2006). The claim was reinforced by research conducted by Garces-Ozanne and Sullivan (2014), which states that people will be more satisfied with their lives if they can accept the distance between expectations and reality and have better performance. On the other hand, happy people in workplace will be more prone to depression, suicide, anxiety, poor work performance, and a bad relationship (Kessler et al., 2006).

Many people interpret that happiness as a goal (Lu & Gilmour, 2004). Most people also hope that their lives will have a happy ending (Kok et al., 2015). Everyone will at least think about happiness once daily (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005, 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Increased interest in studying happiness in the last two decades, psychologists began to cultivate his interest to examine scientifically happiness (Easterlin, 2003, 2013). The flow of research with happiness as the topic has been done since the 1960s (Argyle, 2021). For example, in 1965, an American survey organization, The Pattern Human Concern - an international survey organization, conducted a survey with 23 875 respondents. In 1969, Structure of Psychology of Well-Being, using the NORC survey to study happiness. In 1976 Campbell, Converse, and Rogers, to study the quality of life of the American people by conducting surveys at the Research Center at the University of Michigan. In 1967, Wilson published a review of literature on happiness in Psychology Bulletin, and in 1984, Diener also conduct the same review and updated until 1999 (Lomas et al., 2021). Until 1967, publications related to the study of happiness are relatively limited (Compton & Hoffman, 2019).

Elaboration above shows that happiness is an interesting thing to study. There are various ways for an individual to obtain happiness. Some arguments about happiness of being have been a source of debate among experts. For instance, usual argument states that most people would be happier if they were rich (Sgroi et al., 2017). However, happiness is not only associated with wealth and the property has no correlation with the level of happiness (Drakopoulos, 2008). In other hand, people with levels higher spirituality would be happier (Dolan et al., 2008), while in other research found no correlation between happiness and spirituality (Abecia et al., 2014). Apart from the debate, there are some things that can make people happy like friendship (Anderson & Fowers, 2020), health (Kushlev et al., 2020), forgiveness (Wulandari & Megawati, 2020), and other psychological factors (Oishi & Westgate, 2022).

Some publication assesses sources of happiness by connecting it to the stage of development of the individual. The source of happiness of parents in their social needs (Nakajima et al., 2024) whereas happiness in adults ranging from health, family, and relationship (Buijs et al., 2021). While it is a source of happiness to children affected by love and kindness (Calp, 2020). Growing up, happiness is also seen from the quality of relationships with other people. Relationships with parents, friends, and partners are predictors of adult happiness (Ramos et al., 2022).

From economic capital perspective, financial conditions also contribute to happiness (López-Ruiz et al., 2021). There is a positive relationship between salary and happiness, salary and life satisfaction, salary and financial satisfaction, financial satisfaction and life satisfaction, and financial satisfaction and happiness. To get this financial stability, adults must work. Work is also a way to develop oneself, where a person will feel more grateful when he is able to use his potential in various activities (Mureşan et al., 2021).

Lately too, happiness at work has become complicated issue. Much literature showed ignorance behavior about impact of work stress on work performance (Essén et al., 2022; Lopez-Valeiras et al., 2024; Tamunomiebi & Ukwuije, 2021). In fact, happiness at work is not only limited by financial aspects. Every employee has a different concept of happiness in their workplace. However, the concept of happiness in workplace can be said to be a condition of positive emotions and positive activity that is felt by individuals subjectively in assessing themselves as individuals who are happy or not in carrying out work activities at work and in their lives (Charles-Leijla et al., 2023; Ching & Chan, 2020; Titova & Sheldon, 2022).

Workplace happiness is the key that influences motivation, customer care, profitability and productivity (Bellet et al., 2024; Salas-Vallina et al., 2020; Uka & Prendi, 2021). Workplace happiness makes a person feel at home and want to continue working. Happy employees can manage stress well, will also be more creative, helpful, and loyal. Happy employees will create a happy company too. Thus, happiness employee can increase productivity, quality, sales, customer satisfaction, creativity, innovation, adaptation, and flexibility (Addi Muqit,

2022; Celestin et al., 2024; Kustiawan et al., 2022). In short, hypothetically, finding sources of happiness at work and maintaining a long-term of happiness at the workplace will have both positive impact on the company and subject of happiness, individual and organization.

Therefore, these studies investigated the source of happiness in another context, that is focusing on the employees in one of the hospitals in Central Java, where most of them belong to the adult age. This study seeks to answer the questions "What makes employees happy?"

The theoretical advantage of this research is to find the description of the source of happiness in a particular context, so the indigenous nature of employee happiness. In addition, the practical advantages can be recommendations to the hospital to raise future program for the employees. Moreover, this study can be expanded into other cultural contours. In fact, it can test the continuity of the development and appreciation of the subject within a certain timeframe. This study aims to explore what makes employees –in work environment context– to feel happy with point on different personal and cultural space to another, which will minimize cultural bias in its application.

METHOD

The participants of this study reached a total of 135 employees, with 97 women and 38 men in the range of 20–61 years old, at one of the hospitals in Central Java. Most of all live in Javanese culture. Qualitative design is compatible with this study which exploratory with an open-ended question about the source of happiness in an indigenous context. Cultural and linguistic validation is done before and followed by discussion groups to ensure that participants get a major understanding of the question. The type of initial data collected by the instrument of an open-ended question. The central question is: What is the most makes you happy? Give your reason! (apa yang paling membuatmu Bahagia? Berikan alasannya!).

This study is analyzed by using thematic category with sense of indigenous psychology approach. The most common of analysis from follow follows a six-step process: familiarization, initial coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up is done sequentially (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2012). Familiarization is to get to know our data. It's important to get a thorough overview of all the data collected before we start analyzing individual items. Coding means highlighting sections of our text and coming up with shorthand labels or "codes" to describe their content. Initial themes involved identify patterns among them, and start coming up with themes. Themes are generally broader than codes. Most of the time, we combined several codes into a single theme. In reviewing themes processes, if we encounter problems with our themes, it might be split them up, combine them, discard them or create new ones: whatever makes them more useful and accurate. Defining themes involves formulating exactly what we mean by each theme and figuring out how it helps us understand the data. Naming themes involves coming up with a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data category, there are nine categories that include the source of happiness for employees in the workplace. From a total of 135 respondents, 43 (31.85%) stated that the source of happiness in the family, 24 (17.78%) stated that the source of their happiness comes from spirituality. 23 (17.04%) expressed that their happiness comes from money; 14 (10.37%) stated that the source of happiness comes from self-satisfaction; 13 (9.63%) stated that their happiness comes from relationships with others that include friends, neighbors, and officemates; and 9 (6.67%) expressed that their happiness comes from health. In addition, 5 (3.70%) lean toward achievement as a source of happiness, 3 (2.22%) declare that their happiness comes from loving and loving events, and 1 (0.74%) state that happiness comes from spending leisure time. Here is the data presented in the table 2.

From the data above, based on primary sources that there are three main sources of happiness, including: 1) Inter-personal relationships that include family, relationships with others, and events love and be loved. 2) Fulfillment of the self that includes money, self-satisfaction, health, accomplishments, and leisure. 3) Relationship with God (spirituality). Here are the main sources of happiness that have been mapped in table 1.

Table 1. The Main Sources of Happiness

<i>Main Sources</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Inter-Personal Relations	59	43.70
Self-Fulfillment	52	38.52
Relation with God	24	17.78
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>100.00</i>

The family remains the source of the greatest happiness to the hospital employees. From data driven, it is because of the interpersonal relations or emotional attachment to the child, husband, mother, father, and other family members can bring to good mood and security in workplace. Happiness can be felt when gathering with husband and children, to share joy and sorrow with the spouse and designing the future with concrete plans and

expectations. Emotional attachment to family member endorse greater happiness in workplace (Izzo et al., 2024; Lee, 2021; Mielly et al., 2023).

Table 2. The Main Sources of Happiness

<i>Category</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Family	43	31.85
Spiritual	24	17.78
Money	23	17.04
Self-satisfaction	14	10.37
Relation with others	13	9.63
Health	9	6.67
Achievement	5	3.70
Loving and be loved	3	2.22
Leisure time	1	0.74
<i>Grand total/N</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>100</i>

In the context of Javanese culture, collective values and interpersonal relationships that are deeply ingrained in this society (Nugraha, 2023). Javanese culture places a strong emphasis on familial bonds, which is reflected in the high percentage of respondents (31.85%) who cite family as the primary source of happiness. In Javanese communities, family ties are not just important; they are foundational to social structure, influencing everything from decision-making to emotional support (Pudjiati et al., 2021). This collective orientation fosters a sense of belonging and security, which are essential for individual well-being (Waller, 2020). Happiness at home will bring happiness at work.

The other important theme in study, spirituality as the source of happiness for employees because they feel gratitude for blessings that have been given by God, feel sincere, trust (Garg et al., 2022; Kong et al., 2021), and feel *qona'ah* for what given by God. Spirituality also be interpreted as a form of gratitude for the love, family harmony (Selamet, 2021). The significance of spirituality (17.78%) also resonates deeply with Javanese beliefs. Spirituality in this context often intertwines with cultural practices and traditional values, such as gratitude (*sukerta*) and harmony (*rukun*) (Sulaksono et al., 2021).

These beliefs emphasize living in accordance with moral and ethical principles, which enhances personal and communal happiness. Many Javanese individuals find solace and joy in their spiritual practices reinforcing the idea that a harmonious relationship with oneself and the divine contributes significantly to overall happiness in workplace. Workplace openness to provide space for worship in the office, can give employees the pleasure of worshipping anywhere, worship security (Kaemingk & Willson, 2020; Paul et al., 2020).

Next, money is a source of happiness for employees (Atan et al., 2021; Mureşan et al., 2021; Roy & Konwar, 2020; Singh et al., 2022). According them, money can be used to meet daily needs, to socialize, and to design the future of their children (Ullah & Yusheng, 2020). In addition, self-satisfaction is also a source of happiness (Kun & Gadanez, 2022; Mendoza-Ocasal et al., 2022), which is formed from a desire of satisfaction that is achieved, can fix the secondary needs, and self-care. The role of money (17.04%) as a source of happiness reflects a practical understanding of well-being within Javanese society. While material wealth is important, it is often viewed through the lens of its ability to support family and community well-being. Economic stability allows individuals to fulfill their familial responsibilities (Hadiati et al., 2024), such as providing for children's education and ensuring the health of family members, thereby aligning with the collectivist ethos prevalent in Javanese culture.

Another source is the social relationship (Alshurideh et al., 2023; Marinho et al., 2021). Being connected with other people like to work together, teammates, and patients make the employees happier. This is reflected as how happy they are when interacting directly with the friends work together in an atmosphere of liquid, helping to ease the burden of patients with a smile and a warm interaction, gathered together with neighbors and others in the vicinity. Javanese culture values community and cooperation, suggesting that employees derive happiness not just from individual accomplishments but also from their contributions to communal well-being (Abdullah et al., 2023). This aligns with the Javanese concept of "gotong royong," or mutual assistance, which is essential for fostering strong interpersonal relationships.

It is interesting when health becomes one of the sources are considered by the employees (Alameeri et al., 2021). This is in contrast with a study of adolescent themselves health that category is not a special category. This can be answered with the data the age and status of employees. Regarding health is always associated with himself, child, husband/ wife, parents as well as their views as a hospital employee who daily interacts with patients. Health (6.67%) is recognized as an important factor, reflecting the Javanese understanding of well-being as holistic, encompassing physical, mental, and social health. This perspective is critical in a healthcare setting, where employees interact with patients and their families daily, reinforcing the idea that personal health is intertwined with the health of the community.

Then, achievement is also a source of happiness (Sokolova, 2024; Veenhoven, 2023). It is not in the sense of promotion, rewards. However, it refers to the dedication and their success in carrying out his profession well. This is interesting, given the shape of this achievement is associated with the profession. In addition, the in love and being loved also the source of happiness (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021; Roy & Konwar, 2020). This is because some employees who still not married, but their age has entered the age of marriage. This event is sensed love them to continue to pursue a serious, loving for the future. The last time was also a concern; it occupies the lowest position in the research. It can be explained that this shows loyalty and comfort level in working at the hospital. While achievement and feelings of love and being loved are valued, their lower percentages may indicate that in Javanese culture, personal success is often seen as secondary to communal harmony and familial relationships. Leisure time, noted at 0.74%, may also reflect cultural priorities (Liu & Da, 2020); while relaxation is appreciated, it is frequently overshadowed by responsibilities toward family and community.

Overall, the findings highlight that happiness among employees in a Javanese context is deeply rooted in family, spirituality, and social relationships, illustrating a holistic view of well-being that prioritizes collective harmony and support over individual pursuits. This cultural framework provides valuable insights for organizations looking to enhance employee well-being, emphasizing the need to foster supportive environments that align with these values.

The nine themes above can be abstracting in three main sources of happiness, including: 1). Interpersonal relationships that include family, relationships with others, and events love and be loved. 2) Fulfillment of the self that includes money, self-satisfaction, health, accomplishments, and leisure. 3) Relationship with God (spirituality). Results of the study showed that interpersonal relations replication is the largest source for employees in hospital. This strengthens previous research concerning collective happiness in eastern culture (Argyle, 2021; J. Kim et al., 2019; Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Ruggeri et al., 2020; Uchida et al., 2004). It showed the eastern cultures, it is more likely to be happy together collectively.

In determining the final code based on the raw data on the tabulation, discussion fellow team members. As for the difficulties in determining the final category is the raw data was ambiguous. For example, the inclusion of more than one source of happiness. It is difficult for data analysis and interpretation requires a complicated syntax. Sometimes the research team had to refer back to a questionnaire by the respondent to get a look at the history of psycholinguistics meaning of narrative writing.

This study showed that the bond between family remains the primary source and the priority for employees at the workplace, especially hospital. This strengthening the research with other indigenous approach, that the eastern tradition indeed prefers the happiness in the deep relation of togetherness. Happiness is always interpreted 'to be happy with' which requires 'others' to be involved and build the happiness together. Particularly, in the hospitals, the relationship with God becomes the smallest in major source categories. This, of course, can be a concern for the Hospital stakeholders to preplan the next program.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that employees derive their greatest happiness from interpersonal relationships, particularly with family and loved ones, which underscores the significance of emotional bonds in the workplace. This aligns with existing research highlighting the importance of collective happiness in Eastern cultures, suggesting that social connectivity is a fundamental component of well-being. Additionally, the findings indicate that other factors such as spirituality, financial stability, personal achievements, and health also contribute to overall happiness, albeit to varying degrees. Happiness in Javanese society, generally in Indonesia, can be categorized as communal happiness.

Importantly, the research highlights a nuanced understanding of happiness, illustrating how interconnected these sources are; for instance, health influences relationships and job performance, thereby affecting economic stability. The complexity of categorizing happiness sources was noted, reflecting the multifaceted nature of human emotions and the need for careful qualitative analysis in future studies. Overall, this underscores the necessity for organizations, especially in healthcare, to foster supportive relationships and environments that enhance employee well-being.

The study on happiness in the workplace has several limitations, including the use of open-ended questionnaires, which can lead to variability in responses and complicate analysis. The narrow respondent pool may restrict the generalizability of the findings, as a lack of diversity in demographics and job roles could result in an incomplete understanding of employee happiness. Additionally, the variability in geographic locations of respondents may overlook important cultural differences that influence perceptions of happiness. Overall, these factors suggest that while the study offers valuable insights, its robustness and applicability are limited, indicating a need for more structured approaches and broader samples in future research.

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