

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: PERSPECTIVES AND PROGRAMS ON HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING AS BASIS FOR COMPANY-BASED POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

Subjective well-being is an individual's own evaluation of life that includes both affective and cognitive aspects like happiness and satisfaction that are contributory to success. As a trend in the UAE, government and non-government organization now strive to introduce policies related to employee engagement, well-being, and empowerment that will lead to programs that will cater to the organization's happiness and wellness. It is in this context that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) established initiatives such as the National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing, resulting to being in the 20th rank in the UN World's Happiness Report 2018. This study utilized data through exploratory, qualitative-descriptive, case study methods. The impact of happiness on employee well-being was ascertained and the programs expounded, with the aim to be amongst world's top five happiest countries in 2021. Recommendations related to happiness and well-being are also offered in this paper for private organizations to have a more structured policies that will support well-bring programs.

Keywords: Well-being, Perspectives and Programs, Happiness, Well-Being, Company-Based Policies

INTRODUCTION

Subjective Well-Being refers to an individual's cognitive as well as emotional evaluation of his or her life. It sometimes encompasses happiness, life satisfaction, peace in a layman's language (Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2003; Sergio, Dungca, Ormita & Gonzales, 2015; Sergio, Moyalan, Al-Ali, & Al Bannai, 2017; Hoffman & Sergio, 2020).

Subjective well-being among various nations exhibited a considerable difference, according to several studies in the past. Factors such as income, culture, living conditions were considered as the reason for such difference. But some countries didn't exhibit the level of subjective well-being as expected on the basis of those factors (Diener, Scollon, Oishi, Dzokoto & Suh, 2000). For example, Irish citizens exhibited a higher life satisfaction than West Germans, despite being not as wealthy as them (Myers & Diener, 1995).

In reference to the foregoing statements, as a trace of the relationship between happiness and positivity, Maktoum (2017) stated that: "Positivity is a way of thinking, and happiness is a

lifestyle. In other words, it is not what you own or do that makes you happy; it is how you think about things”.

Simple ideas such as happiness and positivity affect our decisions and sense of reason, our interpersonal relations and how we perceive challenges, in an enormous way (Maktoum, 2017). In one descriptive exploratory study, which was conducted in the United Arab Emirates, it was found that the citizens of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recognized that one of the contributors of happiness is presence of good governance (Gernal, Sergio & Shuali, 2013; Raven & Zaidi, 2015; Haladay, Sergio, Makki, Zarim & Ismail, 2017).

In this light, the researchers of the study have conceptualized the importance of the variables such as subjective well-being along with the parameters of happiness and positivity in the line with the UAE’s thrusts.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to explore the following:

1. To present the perspectives on subjective well-being and happiness through the UAE government’s current thrusts.
2. To describe the concrete set of happiness and well-being programs in the UAE.
3. To ascertain how these programs are measured towards the improved subjective well-being of the UAE workforce towards ethical practice.
4. To draw recommendations that will beef up the private organization’s policy making framework that supports employee happiness and well-being.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of literature provides selected studies and some valuable information significant to the variables of the study.

Subjective Well-Being (SWB) encompasses the numerous ways *via* which individuals assess their lives. Subjective well-being involves more than positive feelings (Tov & Diener, 2013; Sergio, Ormita & Dungca, 2015; Sergio, Ormita & Dungca, 2015; Haladay, Sergio, Opulencia & Antiado, 2016; Haladay & Sergio, 2016).

SWB has been at the topmost as the primary index of well-being during the past decade and a half, and most of the research reviewed had termed SWB as a vital outcome variable. At present, the research on well-being has been procured from two broad perspectives: the hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and states well-being in terms of attainment of pleasure and avoidance of pain; and the eudaimonic approach, which focuses on context and self-realization and describes well-being in terms of extent to which a person is fully functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Sergio, Ormita & Dungca, 2015; Sergio & Rylova, 2018).

Happiness in general favors a particular sex. Men were found to have relatively lower happiness and life satisfaction than women. This variation is related to the social roles men and women have (Wood, Rhodes & Whelan, 1989).

Ryff & Singer (1998, 2000) while developing the lifespan theory of human flourishing have explored the question of well-being. Also, studying from Aristotle, they label happiness as not just

attaining from pleasure, but as “Attempting for perfection by realizing one’s true potential,” (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The frequency of positive emotions predicts happiness in a better way than the intensity of positive emotions. So, experiencing positive emotions regularly and negative emotions seldom, leads to an increased report of happiness. Infrequent bouts of immense happiness are not the foundation of a happy life (Diener, 2000).

In fact, the affective intensity of a persistent stimulus, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, reduces when an individual adapts according to it, this process is referred as a hedonic adaptation (Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz, 1999). That’s the reason why lottery winners experience an elevated amount of happiness for only a temporary period of time (Myers, 2000).

On a few global studies, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (1947), states that the highest of all goods achievable by human actions is happiness (Ryff, 1989; Sergio & Rylova, 2018). Happiness research is an important factor in setting up government goals (Bok, 2010). Thinkers such as Socrates to Sigmund Freud have believed that Government policies should focus on happiness. A country with happy citizens’ gains so much from natives, who are healthy, happily married, efficient in their jobs and civic-minded (Bok, 2010). Studies, in lieu of regression analysis have suggested happiness is derived mainly from the extent of free choice a society allows. Economic development, democratization, and increasing social tolerance are examples of the extent the society have gone to emphasize free choice. The result is higher happiness around the world (Inglehart, Foa, Peterson & Welzel, 2008).

A fascinating study by Bruno Grey & Alois Stutzer has compared significant variations in happiness in different towns. Further proving, more influence a citizen has on the local government process, more perceived free choice, higher is the level of individual happiness (Bok, 2010; Sergio & Rylova, 2018).

In the studies of Diener & Fujita (1999); Zarim, Mohamad, Rahman, Zaki, Sergio & Haladay (2017) have unveiled that having resources that are related to achieving the set goals, e.g., money, physical attractiveness, social skills, are an extremely important predictor of happiness (Diener, 2000). It’s been recorded that wealthy nations are happier. This might come from the fact that they fulfill basic human needs for food, shelter and adhere to basic human rights (Diener, 2000). SWB is accounted for by the wealth of nations, but culture and political turmoil also have an influence. The subjective wellbeing is considered by the wealth of the nations, but culture and political disturbance also put an emphasis on the matter (Diener, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

The study explores the variables through the use of data based on the government’s mandate on existing programs on happiness and positivity. In this light, the qualitative-descriptive research design has been used through the secondary source of data through public documents, government forecasts, and news publications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following data of information relates to the results and discussion based on the research objectives of the study.

The UAE'S Thrust on Happiness

The UAE government aimed to make the country amongst the happiest countries in the world by 2021. With the support of cohesive society and Preserved Identity of National Agenda, the Happiness Index has been introduced. A conglomerate indicator, which measures an individual's valuation of his standards of living and quality of life by using surveys as indicators in this regard. In February 2016, her Excellency Ohood Bint Khalfan Al Roumi was appointed as the minister of State for Happiness to oversee the government plans, programmes and policies to achieve a happier society as a whole. In turn, public and private companies in the country have started to launch relevant happiness and positivity programs as supported by the government.

The UAE's Specific Initiatives on Happiness and Well-Being

In keeping the country in mind, his highness Sheikh Muhammad introduced a number of initiatives for the federal government.

Appointing CEOs

The duty of appointing a CEO will be entrusted on a component minister or the board chairman, keeping in hindsight the main view of enhancing the culture of happiness and positivity. The CEO will be commended with the duty of managing and coordination the initiated and projects as well as launching programs that work week keeping in line with the aim of happiness in the work environment, public and private.

Establishing Councils for Happiness and Positivity at Federal Entities

To ensure unified approach towards all the sectors, the council for happiness and positivity will include representatives of various sectors and areas. Communication on the importance of happiness programs are in place.

Allotting Time for Happiness Related Programs and Actives at Federal Government

These activities aim to ensure community happiness by instilling a happy and positive culture inside government entities. Regular schedule of programs are provided.

Annual Indexes, Surveys, and Reports

It has been part of the standards that companies must include a method to measure happiness in all community segments. This includes documented programs that capture employees' well-being and happiness.

Labor Happiness Programme

MoHRE launched several initiatives under it such as Happiness SIM (providing free SIM to laborer), Best Labor Accommodation (to comply with the Manual of General Criteria for the Workers' Accommodation), Happiest Bus, and Happiest Work Environment.

Training for Chief Happiness and Positivity Officers

In July 2016, the UAE Government declared that 60 Chief Happiness and Positivity Officers who were part of the federal and local government entities would experience the training to understand the 'science of happiness' and enable it. The training programme conforms to the main five pillars which are:

- the science of happiness and positivity
- mindfulness
- leading a happy team
- happiness and policies in government work
- Measuring happiness.

Happiness Research Institute

On March 2017, The UAE University (UAEU) collaborating with the National Programme for Happiness and Positivity introduced Emirates Centre for Happiness Research, a unique, first of its kind in the country and the Middle East. The Centre aims to achieve the objectives of the National Programme for Happiness and Positivity and regulate specially designed scientific studies related to the science of happiness and calculating and grading happiness indexes. It also targets to improve UAE's inputs on enriching the scientific content of happiness at the global level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Towards improved policy development framework, in view of the foregoing results, the following recommendations to the Ministry of State f Happiness are hereby forwarded:

1. Continue to evaluate the current happiness and well-being programs of the government and start gathering data related to the private sectors that run related programs.
2. Design and introduce recommendatory guidelines for conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation, of positivity programs for both private and public institutions.
3. Utilize emerging technology to evaluate the monitoring of employees' happiness and well-being to intensify the research institutes in the academic and business sectors. The data on happiness and well-being can then serve as baseline information for development and policy development.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:

1. As mandated by the UAE government's Ministry of State and Happiness, its thrust on well-being serves as a moving ground or public organizations that have led to a number of programs that support the different nationalities' needs for employee engagement and empowerment.
2. The UAE's specific programs for happiness and well-being captures appointing CEOs to spearhead programs, establishing councils for happiness and positivity at federal entities, allotting time for happiness related programs and actives at federal government, annual indexes, surveys, and reports, labor

- happiness programme, training for Chief Happiness and Positivity Officers, and establishing the Happiness Research Institute.
3. It has been recommended in this paper that different industries, whether private or public to beef up happiness and wellness programs by formulating related policies.

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