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## Impact of Worker Motivation and Work Environment on Job Happiness: Case Study of An Organization That Develops Social Support Activities

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### Abstract

The last decades have witnessed an intensification of research on positive affective experiences in the workplace. Happiness in the workplace is paramount to improve productivity in any organization since happy people are naturally people who care about the quality of the work they develop and therefore, they are more productive and more efficient. The aim of this study was to measure the impact of the factors *motivation at work* and *work environment* on happiness in the workplace. The study population involved collaborators from various professional categories from an institution for social solidarity, located in the municipal district of Bragança, Portugal. Among a total of 353 workers, 186 were selected randomly and a response rate of 52.7% was obtained. The results showed that *motivation at work* and *work environment* are both predictors of happiness at work. However, it is *motivation at work* that most contributes to happiness at work. Within this context, keeping work environments that promote positive and healthy relationships among professionals and investing in workers' motivation and wellbeing improves their professional performance, thus contributing to the success of the organization.

**Keywords:** Happiness at work, Predictors, Worker motivation, Workplace.

### Introduction

Workers' wellbeing, positive attitude, job satisfaction, involvement, engagement and happiness are topics which have become an increasing focus of interest in research in the fields of management and human resources (Kolodinsky, Ritchie & Kuna, 2017; Lee, Park & Baker, 2017; Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2018). In general, happiness is defined as the way people experience and assess their lives as a whole. Happiness is usually explained as the experiencing of positive feelings and a sense of satisfaction with life as a whole (Myers & Diener; 1995; Neve & Ward, 2017; Stoia, 2016). It is a totally subjective feeling of wellbeing experienced by someone which is characterized by generating positive emotions. Since work is an integrating part of a person's identity, the professional role assumed is frequently the means by which a

person feels most valued and reaches satisfactory levels of self-esteem (Gini, 1998). Work is crucial to individuals' life and happiness in that it provides them the essential material, social, psychological and emotional resources that will meet their needs (Rego, Souto & Cunha, 2009). According to Maenapothi (2007), being happy at work is a fundamental element to a person's sense of life satisfaction. Not only does experiencing happiness at work enable the attainment of personal goals, but it also contributes to organizational success (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Gupta, 2012; Tasnim, 2016; Veld & Alfes, 2017). Happiness at work not only implies but also represents much more than job satisfaction. A broader definition includes engagement at work, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which in turn is directly connected to motivation at work (Fisher, 2010). Satisfaction is determined by factors such as the salary, work environment and other perks. Meanwhile, happiness is part of the job satisfaction, but it comprises what the collaborator can control and influence (Lusty, 2007). The main difference between job satisfaction and happiness at work is control. Happiness at work is connected to the achievements and success reached in someone's career and professional life, and it is something that truly gives pleasure. Having a job means a lot more than earning a salary. Other non-financial factors related to work, such as social status, social relations, personal and professional goals, among others, also have a strong influence in individuals' happiness (Gavin & Manson, 2004). According to Safarzadeh, Soloukdar, Alipour and Parpanchi (2012), when workers are happy and enjoy the job they do, even the most difficult situations can be handled and solved easily. Happy workers are more creative, innovative, provide clients a better service and are ultimately more productive (Januwarsono, 2015; Wesarat, Sharif & Majid, 2015). When workers identify with the organization they work for, they function within it, adapt to it and share its values (Pepey, Jesus, Rubino, Morote & Perry, 2016).

## Methods

This is a quantitative, cross-sectional, observational and analytical research work, whose aim was to determine the impact of motivation at work and work environment on happiness at work. The data were collected randomly among the 353 collaborators of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Bragança (SCMB), a private institution for social solidarity, which provides services to 892 users in the municipal district of Bragança, Portugal. The mission of this institution is to act in a coordinated and integrated manner in order to respond to the needs diagnosed within the community, providing a set of resources which may contribute to local development and to the protection of more vulnerable social groups. The fields of action comprise the following:

- Elderly Care
  - Three Residential Homes for Senior Citizens
  - Home Support Services
- Childhood and Youth
  - Three Child Care Centers with Nursery and Kindergarten
  - Family Nursery
  - After School Activity Center
- Education
  - Primary School
- Disability
  - Bragança Center for Children with Special Needs
  - Residential Home
  - Day Care Center
- Social Service and Support
  - Local Network of Social Intervention
  - Office for Social Inclusion
- Social Action
  - Social Canteen
  - Social Housing Quarter
- Health
  - Mid-term Continued Care and Rehabilitation Unit
  - Long-term Continued Care and Maintenance Unit
  - Centre of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

- Culture
  - Ethnographic Museum Dr. Belarmino Afonso

Among a total of 353 collaborators, 186 answers were obtained from December 2018 to February 2019 (response rate of 52.7%). The self-administered questionnaire was handed out in paper format to all the collaborators from the various areas so as to enable the obtainment of answers from a diversified group and therefore, enable the results to be generalized to the broad population group. The questionnaire was composed of 3 sections: the first section comprised sociodemographic questions; the second one contained questions regarding happiness at work; and the last section (Table 1) contained questions about *happiness at work* assessed on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (none) to 5 (a lot) and questions about *motivation at work* and *work environment* using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

**Table 1: Happiness at work, motivation at work and work environment: items assessed**

Variables	Items
0. Happiness work	I feel satisfied in my job. I consider myself happy within the organization I work for. I feel happy with the post I hold.
1. Motivation at work	Currently, I have a job that fulfils me. Most days, I wake up willing to go to work. When I am working, I feel motivated and energetic most of the day. I feel proud to talk about my job when asked what I do. When I am working, I feel useful and fulfilled. I feel happy with the post I hold in the company where I work.
2. Work environment	I have a good work environment. There is a good team spirit within the organization. Communication within the organization is easy. I have good working conditions (facilities, hygiene, IT equipment, among others). The work environment contributes to my performance. I have the necessary resources to the performance of my duties.

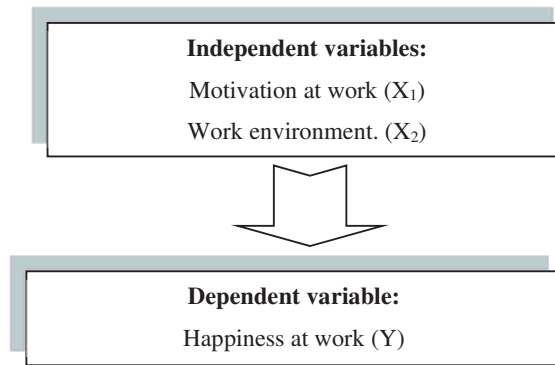
Source: Coutinho, 2014

The statistical data treatment was conducted using the software IBM SPSS version 25.0. Initially, the data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics, namely the calculation of absolute and relative frequencies, as well as the calculation of measures of central tendency (mean, mode and median) and measures of dispersion (maximum, minimum and standard deviation) (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014; Maroco, 2018).

For the analysis of the questionnaire's reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used. The value must be positive, ranging from 0 to 1; values higher than 0.9 mean that consistency is very good; between 0.8 and 0.9 mean it is good; between 0.7 and 0.8 correspond to reasonable; between 0.6 and 0.7 to weak; and values below 0.6 are not admissible (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The R-Pearson correlation test was used in the bivariate analysis. It tests the null hypothesis  $H_0$ : *happiness at work is not correlated with motivation at work and work environment* against the alternative hypothesis  $H_1$ : *happiness at work correlated with motivation at work and work environment*. This test allows to calculate the correlation coefficient R that varies between -1 (perfect inverted or negative correlation) and 1 (perfect direct or positive correlation). Values close to zero indicate a weak correlation is weak and values close to 1 indicate a strong a correlation (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014).

Finally, as shown in Figure 1, a multiple linear regression model was estimated so as to determine whether factors such as motivation at work ( $X_1$ ) and work environment ( $X_2$ ) are predictors of happiness at work (Y) (Maroco, 2018).



**Fig. 1: Impact of motivation at work and work environment on happiness at work**

The multiple linear regression model used is as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

- Y – Happiness at work
- X<sub>1</sub> – Motivation at work
- X<sub>2</sub> – Work environment
- β<sub>0</sub> – Constant
- β<sub>1</sub> – Parameter of motivation at work variable
- β<sub>2</sub> – Parameter of work environment variable
- ε – Errors or residuals

Estimates for the parameters β<sub>0</sub>, β<sub>1</sub> and β<sub>2</sub> were calculated by the method of least squares. In this method, estimates of regression coefficients are obtained such that errors or residuals of deviations are minimal (Maroco, 2018).

Durbin-Watson test was used to detect the presence of autocorrelation (dependence) on the regression analysis residuals. Durbin-Watson statistic values range from zero (positive autocorrelation) to four (negative autocorrelation). It tests the null hypothesis *H<sub>0</sub>: There is no serial correlation of the residuals* against the alternative hypothesis *H<sub>1</sub>: There is a serial correlation of the residuals*.

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was calculated to diagnose Multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is a model fit problem that can impact parameter estimation. Generally, the VIF is indicative of multicollinearity problems if VIF > 10. The Tolerance Index was also calculated for the same purpose. Tolerance < 1 reveals no multicollinearity, from 1 to 0.10 indicates acceptable multicollinearity and below 0.10 indicates problematic multicollinearity.

To verify whether the model is significant, the analysis of variance was used to verify whether or not any of the independent variables can influence the dependent variable, that is, whether or not the adjusted model is significant. According to Maroco (2018), analysis of variance tests the null hypothesis of the parameters being null (*H<sub>0</sub>: β<sub>0</sub> = β<sub>1</sub> = β<sub>2</sub> = 0*) against the alternative hypothesis of not all being equal (*H<sub>1</sub>: ∃ i: β<sub>i</sub> ≠ 0*). The rejection of the null hypothesis only allows to conclude that at least one β<sub>i</sub> is nonzero. To find out which parameter is nonzero, multiple tests must be performed. For this, *t* test was used to test the null hypothesis of Y not vary linearly with X (*H<sub>0</sub>: β<sub>i</sub> = 0*) against the alternative hypothesis of Y vary linearly with X (*H<sub>1</sub>: β<sub>i</sub> ≠ 0*). Thus, the influence of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable is tested.

The quality of the model fit was measured by calculating the adjusted coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ). Basically, this coefficient indicates to what extent the model was able to explain the collected data (Maroco, 2018).

For the execution of the analytical study, a degree of confidence ( $1 - \alpha$ ) of 95% was used, to which corresponds a level of significance ( $\alpha$ ) of 5%. The statistical decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) when the p-value or significance probability is inferior or equal to  $\alpha$  (Maroco, 2018). In the correlation study, it was possible to increase the degree of confidence to 99.9%.

## Results

The collaborators' ages ranged between 20 and 60 years old. They presented a modal length of service in the institution and in the professional category of 4 years (Table 2).

**Table 2: Sociodemographic characterization (quantitative variables) of the SCMB collaborators**

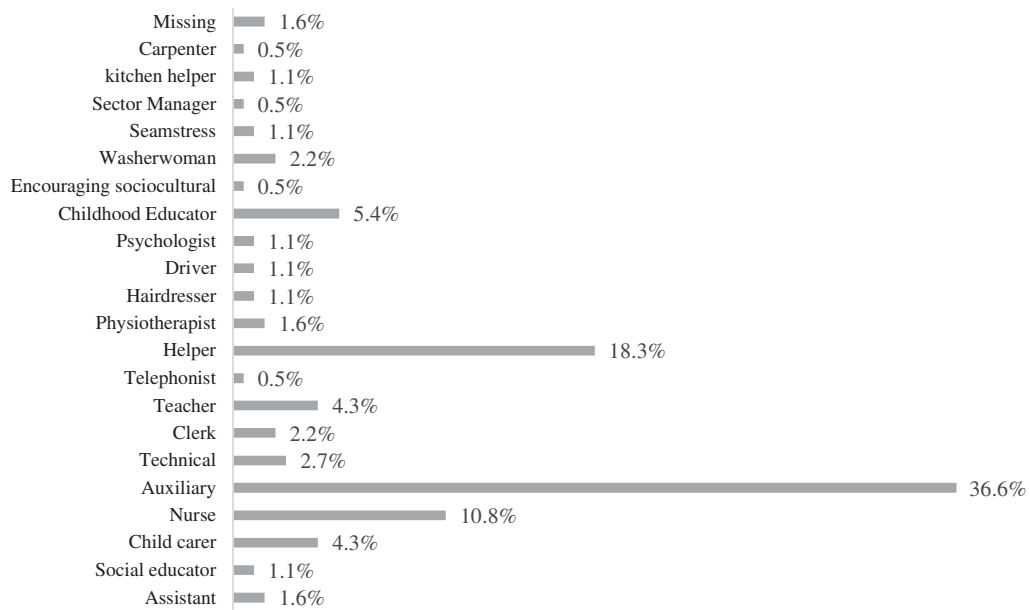
Variables	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
Age (years)	45.5	11.4	46.5	55	20	66
Children (number)	1.1	0.976	1	0	0	5
Length of service	16.2	11.1	16	4	0.42	43
Length of service in the category	13.1	10.7	10	4	0.42	43

As shown in Table 3, among the total of 186 respondents, the majority were female (85.5%), married or cohabiting (64%), holding secondary school academic qualifications (33.9%) or higher education qualifications (35.5%), and had an indefinite-term employment contract (71.5%).

**Table 3: Sociodemographic characterization (qualitative variables) of the SCMB Collaborators**

Variables	Groups	Frequencies	
		Absolute (n)	Relative (%)
Gender	Female	159	85.5
	Male	27	14.5
Marital status	Single	36	19.4
	Married/cohabiting	119	64
	Widowed	4	2.2
	Divorced/separated	26	14
	Missing	1	0.5
Level of Education	Primary school	17	9.1
	Elementary school	10	5.4
	Middle school	29	15.6
	Secondary school	63	33.9
	Higher education	66	35.5
	Missing	1	0.5
Employment Contract	Indefinite term	133	71.5
	Trial period	2	1.1
	Fixed term	43	23.1
	Service commission	5	2.7
	Other	1	0.5
	Missing	2	1.1

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the respondents per profession. As we can see, auxiliaries (36.6%), helpers (18.3%) and nurses (10.8%) stand out among the other professions.



**Fig 2. SCMB collaborators' distribution per job**

For the 12 items divided equally per the two dimensions, namely, *motivation at work* and *work environment*, the answers could vary from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The mean point of the answer interval was 3.0. This means that below 3.0, collaborators had a low level of agreement; equals to 3.0, their level of agreement was moderate; and above 3.0, their level of agreement was high. As shown in Table 4, both *motivation at work* (Mean = 3.98; SD = 0.711) and *work environment* (Mean = 3.50; SD = 0.754) recorded mean values above the moderate level of agreement.

For the three items constituting the dimension *happiness at work*, the answers could vary from 1 (none) to 5 (a lot), with a mean point of answer interval of 3.0. Globally, the collaborators feel quite happy at work (Mean = 3.84; SD = 0.634).

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reveals the reliability of the data collected through the questionnaire. Table 4 shows that for the 12 items making up the two dimensions (independent variables, namely *motivation at work* and *work environment*) and for the 3 questions constituting the dependent variable *Happiness at work*, the consistency was of 0.906, 0.887 and 0.755, respectively. The levels of reliability showed that the dimensions considered in this study are adequate to measure happiness at work.

**Table 4: Mean, Standard deviation, Cronbach's Alpha and number of items per dimension**

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
0. Happiness at work	3.84	0.634	0.755	3
1. Motivation at work	3.98	0.711	0.906	6
2. Work environment	3.59	0.754	0.887	6

As shown in Table 5, *happiness at work* presents correlation statistically significant, positive and moderate with *motivation at work* (R = 0.644; *p-value* = 0.000) and with *work environment* (R = 0.541; *p-value* = 0.000). It is worth noting that the correlation between *motivation at work* and *work environment* (R = 0.622; *p-value* = 0.000) was moderate, positive, and below 0.70.

**Table 5: Correlation between happiness at work and motivation at work and work environment**

Variables	Statistics	(0)	(1)	(2)
Happiness at work (0)	R	1.000		
	<i>p-value</i>	-		
Motivation at work (1)	R	0.644**	1.000	
	<i>p-value</i>	0.000	-	
Work environment (2)	R	0.541**	0.622**	1.000
	<i>p-value</i>	0.000	0.000	-

\*\* Statistically significant correlation at the significance level of 0.1%.

The estimated model of regression is the one presented in Table 6. As we can see, the model is statistically significant with a value of  $F = 74.084$  and  $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$ . Also, it was found that *motivation at work* ( $t = 7.162$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) and *work environment* ( $t = 3.258$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.001$ ) are both predictors of *happiness at work*. Moreover, the value of  $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}}$  shows that these predictors account for 44.1% of *happiness at work*.

**Table 6: Multiple linear regression model**

Variable	Non standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>
	$\beta$	Standardized error	$\beta$		
Constant	4.113	0.618	-	8.651	0.000*
Motivation at work ( $X_1$ )	0.224	0.031	0.502	7.162	0.000*
Work environment ( $X_2$ )	0.096	0.030	0.229	3.258	0.001*

N = 186;  $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = 0.441$ ;  $F = 74.084$ ;  $p\text{-value} < 0.05^*$ ; Durbin-Watson = 2; Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) < 5; Tolerance > 0.1 and < 1

\* Statistically significant difference at the significance level of 5%

Durbin-Watson statistic shows the absence of autocorrelation between residuals. The Tolerance Index and VIF indicate no multicollinearity problems. That is, the assumptions of the linear regression model were verified. Based on the results obtained (Table 6), the equation of the multiple linear regression model is represented as follows:

$$Y = 4.113 + 0.224 X_1 + 0.096 X_2 \quad (2)$$

### Discussion and conclusion

A cross-sectional study was developed and conducted with 186 workers of an institution for social solidarity located in Bragança, in the north of Portugal. The aim of the study was to analyze the impact of the *motivation at work* and *work environment* on the *happiness at work*. According to Lawler (1997), in order for motivation to exist, there cannot be feelings of frustration, unhappiness or insecurity. A higher motivation results in a worker's better performance and higher productivity.

Furthermore, the results show that the *work environment* has a positive impact on *happiness at work*. Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) developed a work which involved collaborators from three activity sectors, namely banking, university teaching and telecommunications. The authors concluded that the work environment plays a vital role in the achievement of job satisfaction. According to these authors, for organizations operating in highly competitive, innovative and dynamic environments to extract the maximum potential from their collaborators, they must provide an appropriate and friendly work environment. Positive relationships in the workplace are essential to achieve and to maintain happiness at work (van der Meule & Wolff, 2018).

According to Amabile, Barsade, Mueller and Staw (2005) and Fritz and Sonnentag (2009), positive attitudes towards organization and/or work are directly associated with individuals' perceptions and judgments. Positive mental states are related to creativity and proactivity. Positive moods positively increase performance, thereby acting on worker motivation (Erez & Isen, 2002). A study developed by Oerlemans and Bakker (2018) in which 68 workers participated, the authors established a positive, albeit moderate, relationship between the characteristics of perceived motivating work and worker happiness throughout the execution of work activities/tasks.

Finally, *motivation at work* has shown to be a good predictor of *happiness at work* and an even better predictor when compared to *work environment*. When there is motivation, the environment is positive and cooperative, one of interest, satisfaction and wellbeing (Lawler, 1997). In light of the results obtained in this research, and in accordance with Fisher (2010), Veld and Alfes (2017) it is paramount that organizations promote their workers' wellbeing, since there is strong evidence in literature that happiness has important consequences to both individuals and organizations. Happy people are more productive, both day to day and at work. Stehnen, Muller and Zenker (2011) argue that happiness is a key element of corporate innovation, the happier a professional team is, the more innovative they tend to be, and innovation, in turn, provides more worker satisfaction, among other social benefits. A happy work environment generates many benefits for workers as well as for the organization itself. Happiness at work results in less absence, fewer work accidents, less stress, more gratification, more fun, greater productivity, better return on investment, happier customers and higher quality of service (van der Meule & Wolff, 2018).

### **Limitations and future lines of research**

This study only analyzed the impact of factors related to motivation and work environment on individuals' happiness in the workplace. Bearing in mind that happiness at work is a multifaceted phenomenon which is not confined to motivational factors or factors related to the work environment, future research works may take into account other factors equally important to happiness at work, such as personal and professional development, acknowledgement and trust, engagement with leaderships and the organization, salary and personal and professional life balance. Also, it would be interesting in future research to deepen this study with a qualitative approach, to better understand the dimensions that are part of the multifaceted phenomenon "happiness at work". In other hand, it would be interesting to analyze this phenomenon taking into account sociodemographic and professional factors such as gender, age, qualification, type of link with the organization, among others. Finally, this study was limited to only one entity for social solidarity, the SCMB, one of the 388 Santas Casas da Misericórdia (Holy Houses of Mercy) currently operating in Portugal. Therefore, further studies may include other entities for social solidarity or even other organizations operating in other activity sectors.

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