The Fourth Dimension of Happiness and Work Satisfaction

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Abstract. *Happiness and work satisfaction have been the focus of many studies in the last decade. The literature suggests three main dimensions of the quest for happiness – pleasure, meaning, and engagement. While goal setting has been identified as a prominent process that may support happiness as well as work satisfaction, it has never been addressed as a dimension in the quest for happiness. This study addressed the literature gap, by presenting empirical evidence for the fourth dimension and its effect on work satisfaction. Based on 1077 respondents, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were employed. Results confirm the existence of an independent fourth dimension, and its effect on job satisfaction and happiness. Although goal setting is a prominent construct to achieve happiness, especially in western culture, this is the first study that validates it as the fourth dimension in the search for happiness, followed by practical implications in the workforce.*

Keywords: Work satisfaction, happiness, wellbeing, goals, meaning, engagement, pleasure.

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Introduction

Happiness research has grown exponentially over the last decade (Mureşan & Ciumaş, 2020). Considered as the highest and most important aspiration of a person throughout their life (Sujarwoto, Tampubolon, & Pierewan, 2018), happiness is generated through the experience of positive emotions (Ruggeri, Garcia-Garzon, Maguire, Matz, & Huppert, 2020).

The literature suggests that the search for happiness is divided into three main domains: pleasure, engagement and meaning (Lee Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2004). Pleasure is defined as maximizing positive feelings and minimizing negative feelings (Park, Peterson, & Ruch, 2009). Engagement focuses on the pursuit of challenging goals and tasks which fulfil a person's life and make him feel a sense of belonging and partnership (Von Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014). Meaning is defined as a collection of feelings or actions taken by a person to belong and serve a greater purpose (Giannopoulos & Vella-Brodrick, 2011). According to the literature, pleasure does not bring a sustainable and lasting happiness, only the quest for meaning brings the person closer to the desired happiness (Schueller & Seligman, 2010).

However, western culture in the twenty-first century underlines the need for achievement and realization of goals; work and career occupy a large part of our lives and require meeting deadlines (Gevers, Rutte, & Van Eerde, 2006), proof of results and

productivity (Hanaysha, 2016). These demands have emphasized satisfaction that many people receive by achieving a goal, regardless if the goal was actually achieved.

Happiness is an individual state of mind, a state of well-being and contentment as well as the individual's motivation to constructively react to an unpleasant reality (Lambin, 2014), while work satisfaction may result from achieving goals set by the job requirement (Lent & Brown, 2006). Achieving personal and organizational goals maximizes job satisfaction (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). The higher the performance of employees, the more achievement and productivity they will produce, and thus the level of job satisfaction will increase (Badrianto & Ekhsan, 2020). That is, the whole process of achieving the goal until it is actually achieved supports the engagement dimension on the one hand (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008) and satisfaction from achieving a goal on the other hand (Maier & Brunstein, 2001). Engagement is not about achieving goals, but rather about passion and commitment (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). These qualities support the ambition of achieving goals, which eventually may lead to work satisfaction and as well as a higher level of happiness. Therefore, goal setting may positively affect happiness and work satisfaction, while taking in mind that achieving a goal takes time, and therefore one should not expect immediate happiness. Although achieving goals is a well-known field of research literature, its effect on happiness has been neglected. This study fills in the gap by providing empirical evidence for the existence of the fourth dimension of the quest for happiness, generated through goal setting and achievement. Implications for work satisfaction are discussed.

Literature review

Quest for happiness dimensions

Pleasure

Pleasure is defined as a process of stimulating or accepting a situation that can cause different sensations, and may cause people to act in a particular direction (Frijda, 2001).

The experience and search for pleasure are important driving forces that underly decisions and behavior (Biswas-Diener et al., 2015). There are different forms of pleasure, and, according to the motivational theory of pleasure, what makes the experience pleasurable is our response to it and not something internal to the experience (Smuts, 2011). Pleasure is actually a joyful situation that is subjectively expressed by the individual (Wiborg, 2013). Even so, there are also personal differences in pleasure that may be related to changes throughout life (Berenbaum, Chow, Schoenleber, & Flores, 2013). Kuboby (1999) argues that there is a distinction between pleasures: there are pleasures that occur through the activation of tactile and auditory senses, pleasures of the mind (intellectual pleasures) and pleasures associated with social interaction.

In addition, many studies have shown the benefits of pleasure and positive emotion affecting a variety of desired outcomes in human health, social engagement, and success (Vella-Brodrick, Park, & Peterson, 2009). Pleasure is a necessary component of the experience of happiness (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008). Pleasure makes a person happy because it causes feelings and actions that have a positive interpretation that a person enjoys while he performs and feels them (Kanis & Brinkman, 2010). However, we can come to a state of constant pursuit of pleasure, a pursuit designed to increase our happiness levels, which can ultimately lead us to a state of discomfort and frustration (Akhtar, 2010). Many scholars have argued that a sense of pleasure does not necessarily bring a person to a state of happiness (Kováč, 2012). Pleasure generates a momentary joy arising from an external

source that comes from the stimulation of one of our five senses, only occurring during stimulation and for a limited amount of time. However, happiness is the result of an ongoing process, and comes from an internal source within us (Nylan, 2015).

Meaning and its influence derived from engagement

Meaning in life is characterized by a system that connects everyday experiences engendering life satisfaction (Oishi & Diener, 2013). Reker (2000) defined meaning as "a cognizance of order, coherence, and purpose in one's existence, the pursuit and attainment of worthwhile goals, and an accompanying sense of fulfillment" (p.41). A sense of meaning is related to increased happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Employees feel meaningful at work when work has a goal, purpose, and value that is related to the employee and his ability to build meaning at work (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007) and when there is a match between the employee's values and goals on the one hand and the organization's values and goals on the other (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). People can derive a sense of meaning from both secular sources such as relationships, social roles, and achievements and religious sources in their life purpose (Homan & Boyatzis, 2010).

Park (2007) suggested that the sense of meaning and purpose in life may be the ultimate source of motivation for protecting the physical and mental health. There is a connection between engagement and sense of meaning: as the degree of engagement increases, the sense of meaning and value increases, and thus the individual contribution of the employee gives him a sense of satisfaction (Shuck & Rose, 2013). That is, the employment value and engagement of an employee in the company affects their sense of meaning (Erlandsson, Eklund, & Persson, 2011). According to Chalofsky (2003), people are looking for a significant type of work that fulfills the purpose of their lives and maximizes their sense of motivation.

Kahn (1990) described engaged employees as being physically, cognitively, and emotionally fully connected to their work roles. Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004): Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, and enthusiasm and challenge, and absorption is characterized by being fully focused on work (Bakker, 2011). Many managers who develop high levels of engagement bring workers to a certain level of competitiveness that increases their loyalty to the organization and their sense of meaning in the organization (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

The process of searching for meaning in life shows that a person wants to achieve a sense of happiness, satisfaction, and self-fulfillment, and that is what drives him to act (King, Heintzelman, & Ward, 2016).

Engagement and its influence - the need to achieve goals

Employee engagement is the basis of the relationship between the organization and the employee and is key to the success of the organization, productivity, and increased organizational commitment (Joo, Lim, & Kim, 2016).

By implementing employee engagement, an organization gains a competitive advantage over its competitors as it can be considered one of the most powerful factors to measure company vigor (Baumruk, 2004). Rich, Lapine and Crawford (2010) suggest that

meaning may be achieved when people are involved in work. They thus invest their hands, heads, and hearts in their performance; that is, they personally relate to their organization. In addition, engagement has been defined as an energetic state of involvement with personally fulfilling activities that enhance one's sense of professional efficiency (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Since engagement is the result of an optimal balance between job demands, job resources and personal resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), the need for self-fulfillment and achieving goals of the employee affects work engagement (Siu, Bakker, & Jiang, 2014).

As such, the setting of work goals for both managers and employees will create an experience of engagement, responsibility, and commitment to work (Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee, & Lin, 2020).

Goal settings – the fourth dimension of happiness in the 21st century

The importance of achieving goals in Western culture

Defining and chasing personal goals is an important aspect of a human functioning and well-being (Hadley & MacLeod, 2010). Many of the differences in employee motivation, management style, and organization structure of companies around the world can be attributed to differences between people from different cultures so that the role of culture in understanding organizational behavior and organizational communication is a critical one (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2005). Western culture is seen as promoting achievement, individualism, and equality (Varma, 2004).

The nature of achievement motivation is strongly reflective of the cultural value and ethos of Western culture (Ganesan, Mamat, Mellor, Rizzuto, & Kolar, 2014). In Western culture, there is a premium on individualism, which can be described as the attitude of independence of the person who feels a large degree of freedom in the conduct of his personal life, an importance manifested such that individualism may motivate personal accomplishment and self-expression (Miroshnik, 2002). In Western culture where individualistic value is dominant, there is an emphasis on independent self-construction (Rudman & Dennhardt, 2008). In the Western cultural template, people are characterized as egocentric, autonomous and capable of achieving their goals (Sökefeld, 1999).

The importance of achieving goals at work

Most people have a basic need to define specific goals and achieve them (Schneiderman, 1988). Goal-setting theory emphasizes the important relationship between goals and performance, and the most effective performance comes when the goals are specific, challenge the employees (Lunenburg, 2011), and are done in full co-operation between the members of the organization (Arraya, Pellissier, & Preto, 2015).

Goals have a widespread impact on employee behavior as well as employee performance in organizations and administrative practices (Locke, & Latham, 2002). Setting specific and challenging goals, in contrast to simple and vague goals, can strongly drive employee behavior and increase performance during work (Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009). When people pursue a goal, they will seek effective means of achieving it, especially if the goal is difficult to achieve (Medinschi, 2015).

According to Brunstein, Schultheiss & Maier (1999), there are three goal appraisal dimensions - commitment to goals, ability to achieve goals, and progress in achieving goals which explain the interpersonal differences in emotional well-being and satisfaction. In addition, according to Kasser & Ryan (1996), targets can be classified under two types:

intrinsic goals (personal growth) and extrinsic goals (financial success and fame), so that people with intrinsic goals focus on self-realization, have experiences that provide their needs which helps to support their happiness and well-being. However, people with extrinsic goals focus on achieving rewards and positive assessments from others. Setting goals in the organization increases employee satisfaction and improves work efficiency and performance (Bipp & Kleingeld, 2011).

Goals motivate people to develop strategies that will allow them to perform their tasks at their required levels, and thus goal achievement can lead to satisfaction, self-esteem, and continued worker motivation (Latham & Locke, 1991). Success in achieving a goal at work gives an employee a sense that he is significant, efficient, important, and promotes his organization through his goals (Osa & Amos, 2014).

Importance of goals for promotion or job survival

Given the competitive business environment, high levels of performance are often the key to the survival of an organization's employees in their role, as well as their promotion (Molleman, Emans, & Turusbekova, 2012). Self-promotion is a strategy used to create and maintain a certain image that emphasizes high abilities (Schütz & Tice, 1997). It not only refers to emphasis on achievements, but also minimizing of failures (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008).

Some people may be more self-motivated than others (Kacmar, Carlson, & Bratton, 2004). Motivation can be expressed as the desire to achieve a goal, and is a process that explains the intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward achieving the goal (Contan & Serban, 2015). Motivated people are driven by setting and achieving goals for proving their status and role in the organization, and even for promotion and personal development (Haryono, Supardi, & Udin, 2020).

Satisfaction of achieving goals on a personal level

People pursue the feeling of satisfaction through fulfilling valuable goals, and sometimes are asked to increase their efforts when there is dissatisfaction with substandard performance. Thus, as self-satisfaction is dependent on execution and achieving goals, people direct themselves and create self-incentives to persevere in their efforts until they achieve their goals and thus will experience the sense of satisfaction (Theodorakis, 1996).

Locke and Latham (1990) concluded that the effect of satisfaction on performance is a key to high performance, combined with other factors such as a sense of commitment to the organization and its goals. Only if these goals are challenging and accompanied by high self-efficiency, will they result in high performance, which will make the employee feel satisfied.

Success in performance leads to a satisfying feeling particularly when employees prove to themselves that they use their abilities fully and get good results (Islami, Mulolli, & Mustafa, 2018). The pursuit of achieving personal goals promotes mental well-being and life satisfaction (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

Theoretical framework

Locke's Goal-setting Theory

Goal-setting theory (Locke, 1968) argues that there is a relationship between conscious goals and intentions and task performance, by the fact that goals and intentions serve as mediators of the effects of incentives on task performance.

According to the theory, defining specific and difficult goals leads to higher task performance as opposed to easy and vague goals. Commitment to a goal is enhanced by self-ability as well as valuing the goal as important, achievable and consistent with the company's aspirations (Locke & Latham, 2006). Another principle is receiving feedback through which people will be able to track their progress in relation to their goals. Task complexity may also affect goal achievement. Therefore, managers need to ensure that work does not weigh too much on employees and that tasks are too complex and demanding (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Vroom's Expectancy Theory of Motivation

According to Vroom's expectancy theory (1964), motivation is the force that leads the person to behave in a particular way, and is dependent on how much the person thinks his effort will lead to good performance, how good performance will lead to the desired results and achieving the goal, and how important the goal value is to the person (Chiang & Jang, 2008).

The theory assumes that people expend energy pursuing goals based on conscious choices to provide an important need or desire. People can be motivated if they believe their efforts will yield positive results, which will result in a reward or an estimated outcome that makes the invested effort worthwhile (Helland & Winston, 2005). The expectancy theory suggests that employee role performance is a function of the interaction between motivation and ability. Motivation is a function of the interaction between the person and the probability or expectation that the person's efforts will achieve the purpose of its execution (Oliver, 1974).

Atkinson's Achievement Motivation Theory

According to the achievement motivation theory (1964), each person has free choice based on his desire to choose between different goals, according to how easy they are to achieve (Geen, Beatty, & Arkin, 1984).

That is, the theory refers to the ratio of motivation to achievement and choice and accomplishment of tasks, as well as focusing on the extent of desire for a personal success (Atkinson & Feather, 1966). Motivation for achievement is a combination of two personality variables, one that tends to approach success, while the other tends to avoid failure. Motivation for achievement is defined as a way to work diligently and skillfully, aiming towards goals and control over difficult and challenging tasks which create a sense of achievement for a person (Singh, 2011).

Happiness Enrichment and Sustainable Happiness

While the three theories (i.e., the Goal-Setting Theory, Expectancy Theory and Achievement Motivation Theory) elevate satisfaction from pursuing and attaining goals, Eckhaus & Sheaffer (2019)'s Happiness Enrichment and Sustainable Happiness Theory takes goal setting a step further towards happiness. Eckhaus & Sheaffer (2019) draw on Goal Setting and Experimental Learning theories, and construct the Happiness Enrichment Perspective (HSP), a cyclic Happiness Sustainability Model of four stages, suggesting that sustainable

happiness may indeed be achieved by setting happiness achievement itself as a goal. In the current study, we extend the concept presented by Eckhaus & Sheaffer (2019) of aligning goal setting with happiness, and suggest that goal setting and attainment, especially in western culture, constitute the fourth dimension of the search for happiness.

Based on all the above, the following are hypothesized.

- H1. Goal setting dimension positively affects happiness.
- H2. Goal setting dimension positively affects work satisfaction.
- H3. Working towards sustainable happiness is a goal by itself.
- H4. Working towards sustainable happiness does not imply immediate happiness.

Methodology

Sample and survey

The survey was distributed by senior BA students using Google Docs to friends, coworkers, family, and acquaintances. The university Ethics Committee's approval was given. Only respondents with work experience were included. In total, 1077 completed questionnaires were collected: 613 of the respondents were females and 464 males. Respondent age ranged from 18-30 (696), 31-50 (218), and 51+ (163). The survey included Peterson, Park & Seligman (2005)'s orientation to happiness scales, with an additional question for the meaning construct (HPM7b), as well as the goal setting dimension items, and an open question asking respondents if they would define themselves as a happy person and why.

Analysis

We employed a mix method design, which enables the combination of strengths of both the qualitative and empirical methods (Eckhaus & Davidovitch, 2019).

First, we manually overviewed the responses for the open question and identified major themes relevant to the research question. We then tagged texts for including (or not) the themes investigated, as follows: IsHappy: people who declare that they are happy; WorkForHappiness: the understanding that happiness requires work; and WorkSatisfaction: the perception that work may provide satisfaction and even happiness.

Next, in order to show that the goal setting items are different from the items of the other three dimensions, and belong to a unique dimension, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to assess the differentiation between the four orientation to happiness scales. Finally, we performed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the model's goodness-of-fit. Model fit was estimated using CFI, NFI, TLI, RMSEA, NFI, and minimum discrepancy divided by their degrees of freedom (CMIN / DF). Values of CFI, NFI, and TLI $\geq .95$ are considered good fit. The ratio CMIN/DF should not exceed 2, and the RMSEA should not exceed the .05 (Agli, Bailly, & Ferrand, 2017).

We used AMOS v.26 for SEM, and SPSS v.26 for other statistics.

Results

EFA

A principal component factor analysis of the 9 items using verimax rotations was conducted. After removing items which did not load well, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .83, while Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(153) = 5273.27, p < .001$). The loadings were all $\geq .5$ (Table 1). Given these overall indicators, factor analysis was

deemed to be suitable with the 18 items. Eigen values showed that each variable loads highly onto four factors, explaining 55.01% of the variance. The factor-loading matrix is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Factor loadings based on a principal components analysis with verimax rotation for 19 items.

		1	2	3	4
HPP4	I agree with this statement: "Life is short – eat dessert first."	0.755			
HPP1	Life is too short to postpone the pleasures it can provide.	0.748			
HPP3	In choosing what to do, I always take into account whether it will be pleasurable.	0.746			
HPP6	For me, the good life is the pleasurable life.	0.717			
HPP5	I love to do things that excite my senses.	0.661			
HPP2	I go out of my way to feel euphoric.	0.652			
HPG7	Achieving a goal I have set for myself fills me with a sense of joy.		0.835		
HPG9	A goal that has been successfully achieved gives me great satisfaction.		0.817		
HPG1	Achieving a goal I have set for myself fills me with a sense of satisfaction.		0.768		
HPG8	Making a plan to achieve a goal I set for myself gives me a feeling that I am working for the betterment of my life.		0.731		
HPG3	I have long-term ambitions and I am working to achieve them.		0.507		
HPM7B	The belief that my life has meaning elevates positive feelings.			0.786	
HPM4	My life has a lasting meaning.			0.782	
HPM1	My life serves a higher purpose.			0.757	
HPM2	In choosing what to do, I always take into account whether it will benefit other people.			0.51	
HPE3	Whether at work or play, I am usually "in a zone" and not conscious of myself.				0.817
HPE4	I am always very absorbed in what I do.				0.773
HPE5	In choosing what to do, I always take into account whether I can lose myself in it.				0.587
HPE6	I am rarely distracted by what is going on around me.				0.508

Source: Authors' own research.

Cronbach's alpha examined internal consistency for the scales, showing .66 for HPE, .82 for HPP, .79 for HPG, and .71 for HPM.

Model results

Figure 1. illustrates the model and results

* $P < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Source: Authors' own research.

The hypothesized model showed a good fit: CMIN/DF = 0.94 ($p > .05$), CFI = 1, NFI = .99, TLI = 1, RMSEA = 0. All hypotheses were supported. All relationships are positive and statistically significant except for the effect of WorkForHappiness on IsHappy, which was not significant. HPG positively affects IsHappy (H1), HPG positively affects WorkSatisfaction (H2), working towards sustainable happiness positively affects HPG (H3), and WorkForHappiness does not affect IsHappy (H4) since it does not imply immediate happiness.

Discussion

The results show that the dimension of achieving goals (HPG) indeed brings happiness (IsHappy) and work satisfaction (WorkSatisfaction). People who say they still need to work for happiness (WorkForHappiness) are not yet happy (IsHappy) but do understand the need to achieve goals.

These results underline two major insights. The first suggests that people who believe they have not reached happiness yet do understand that they need to set and achieve goals that will bring them closer to their desired objective. The second is the evidence that achieving goals does indeed bring about happiness as well as job satisfaction when the goals are set and met in the work environment.

The findings of this study corroborate the Happiness Enrichment and Sustainable Happiness Theory (Eckhaus & Sheaffer, 2019), which suggests that goal setting may be used in a proactive process for attaining sustainable happiness. In this study, we present empirical evidence for this concept of setting and achieving goals as being the fourth dimension of the quest for happiness.

This study thus makes some important contributions.

First, the three dimensions of the quest for happiness have been often used in research (Eckhaus, 2019; Obhi, Hardy, & Margrett, 2020). By presenting the fourth dimension, this study offers an abundance of opportunities for research extensions in the study of happiness,

which is a dominant research area in many fields, including psychology, sociology, economics, and management (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2016).

Second, work satisfaction was investigated in numerous studies due to its direct relation with productivity (Vicario-Merino et al., 2020). It is a core concept of organizational behavior (Meng et al., 2018). This study extends the research on work satisfaction by introducing the relationship between the fourth dimension of the quest for happiness and work satisfaction.

Third, work satisfaction is a dominant goal of the human resource (HR) function in organizations (Sudiardhita et al., 2018). By enhancing the research on work satisfaction, this study supports HR practice, suggesting that developing seminars or programs for staff on goal setting tactics may result in improved workplace morale.

Limitations and future research

We presented empirical evidence for the relationship of the dimension of setting goals to happiness and work satisfaction. However, we did not investigate specific types of work. Some types of work may increase motivation (Olafsen, Deci, & Halvari, 2018), while other types may increase risk of mental disorders (Harvey et al., 2017). Future studies may extend this research by investigating the relationship of the fourth dimension of the quest for happiness with different types of work.

In addition, in order to allow for generalizability, which is beneficial for both research and practice, we did not investigate the effect of demographic variables on the suggested model. Future studies may explore effects of variables such as gender and age on goal setting and achievement as well as their part in the quest for happiness in general and specifically in the context of work satisfaction.

Another interesting extension to this study is the comparison of the dimensions of the quest for happiness to the forms of knowledge - rational knowledge, emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge (Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2020; Bratianu et al., 2020). That is, pleasure may be rationalized for achieving immediate joy, engagement may be obtained through a process of emotional knowledge, as emotional knowledge communicates a person emotional state (Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2019), and meaning is naturally obtained through a form of spiritual knowledge. A multidisciplinary study that would present this comparison, may also extend the concept of the three forms of knowledge with the fourth dimension, compared to the current fourth dimension.

Happiness is the most desirable of goals, although one not always easy to attain. While the dimension of pleasure may fail as a means of reaching sustainable happiness, goal setting may be the key in the quest for happiness. Although it may not solely suffice to sustain happiness, goal setting is surely an important tool to be used towards this important goal.

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