

# The Effect of Employee Happiness on Employee Performance in UAE: The Moderating Role of Spirituality and Emotional Wellness

Nesreen Awada, Siti Sarawati Hj. Johar and Fadillah Binti Ismail

**Abstract---** *Happiness is the ultimate goal of life. There are few studies that examined the effect of employee happiness on employee performance and most of these studies examined the employee happiness in the context of business organizations in developed countries. In addition, few studies examined the employee spiritual and emotional wellness. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of employee happiness on employee spiritual and emotional wellness, and employee performance in the public sector of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study also aims to examine the moderating role of employee spiritual and emotional wellness. The population of this study is the public servants in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. A random sampling technique is deployed. The instrument of data collection is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated, and a pilot study was conducted prior to data collection. Data examination was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The hypotheses of this study were tested using Smart Partial Least Square (Smart PLS). The findings indicated that employee happiness has a significant effect on employee performance and spiritual and emotional wellness. Employee spiritual and emotional wellness moderated the effect of employee happiness on employee performance. Decision makers are recommended to increase the employee happiness and spirituality and emotional wellness at the workplace.*

**Keywords---** *Employee Happiness, Employee Performance, Spirituality and Emotional Wellness.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the production era, organizations encourage employees to enhance their performance and as a result, employees are working longer hours but increasingly becoming more stressed and less fulfilled to their works, which ultimately reduce their productivity. While focusing on increasing the performance of employees, organizations are neglecting the ultimate goal of a good life, which is the happiness (Gavin & Mason, 2004). Employees are the most important asset of organizations (Compton & Hoffman, 2019). Making them happy with their workplace and the work itself will benefit not only the employees but also the organizations as well (Achor, 2011; Ravina-Ripoll, Nunez-Barriopedro, Evans, & Ahumada-Tello, 2019). In this context, employee happiness is defined as “a holistic state of well-being, of doing well and being well, and of taking authentic pride and self-esteem in one's accomplishments” (Gavin & Mason, 2004).

Organizations with happy employee outperform their counterparts with 37% in productivity (Beheshti, 2019). Happy employees are 50% more successful and 88% more loyal to their organizations (Sharifzadeh & Almaraz,

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2014). In light of the increasing importance of happiness, organizations started to focus on this variable and listed it as an organizational objective aiming to make employees happier and achieve the high organizational productivity. This is because happy employees are more productive and have more commitment as well as satisfaction with their jobs (Marescaux, De Winne, & Forrier, 2019; Tanwar, 2019). Nevertheless, despite the increase attention toward happiness of employees, there is a lack of academic studies that examine the effect of employees happiness on employees performance (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2019; Zhao & Pan, 2019). Further, the lack of studies is more severe in public organizations as majority of previous studies focused on business and for-profit-organizations (Oswald, Proto, & Sgroi, 2015a; Sharifzadeh & Almaraz, 2013; Zhao & Pan, 2019).

Previous studies also pay special attention to happiness in developed countries as these countries are rich and life standard is high (Neve et al., 2019; Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2019; Rego & Cunha, 2008) while limited studies focused on developing countries such as United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Alnuaimi, 2018; Suwaidi, 2019). UAE was among the first countries in the world to establish the ministry of happiness in 2016. The ministry aimed to spread the happiness among UAE citizens. In addition, according to the UAE vision 2021, the country aims to become among the five happiest countries by 2021 (UAE, 2018). The first pillar of the vision aims at society and its main agenda is to make the UAE among the happiest country in the world. Further, the rulers of the country highlighted and pay specific attention to make employees happy in public sector and for this reason, Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and council of happiness were established in all governmental entities (UAE, 2018).

Nevertheless, the world happiness report in 2019 showed that UAE is still in the 21<sup>st</sup> rank (Walker et al., 2019). Previous studies conducted in UAE examined the factor that affect happiness and found that mainly it is related to leadership style, organizational culture and structure, as well as the human resource (HRM) practices (Alnuaimi, 2018). Other studies in the country were conceptual and review of the literature and found that there are organizational, job related and individual factor that form the employee happiness (Suwaidi, 2019). For this reason, this study aims to the effect of happiness on spirituality and emotional wellness as well as on employee performance. The study also aims to examine the moderating effect of spirituality and emotional wellness between happiness and employee performance.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### ***2.1 Employee Performance***

Employee performance is a critical factor for the organizational performance and for the productivity of organizations and countries. Employee performance generally refers to the productivity of employees within a time frame. Several researchers defined the employees performance differently. For example, McConnell (2004) defined employee performance as “the achievement and contribution of an individual in practical and quantifiable terms”. There are several theories that have been used in previous studies to link the employee performance to its predictors. Theory Y was developed based on the management view that employees are innovative, committed and has capabilities and skills and providing them with the environment that suits their ambitions will results in a better job performance (Bass, 2015). In the theory Y a manager should try to improve and promote employee's self-esteem, confidence, achievement, happiness, respect of others, and respect by others (McGregor, 1960). Happiness is a

competitive advantage and organizations that are able to make their employees happy will gain a sustainable competitive advantage and this advantage makes the employees successful and the organization more productive (Achor, 2011).

The Two-Factor Theory and also known as Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory was developed by psychologist Frederick Herzberg in 1959 (Alshmemri, Shahwan-Akl, & Maude, 2017). The theory proposed that the satisfaction and motivation of employees is based on two set of factors that are the hygiene factors and the motivator factors. The hygiene factors are factors that are essential for the job and must exist in the workplace (Alfayad & Arif, 2017; Sabri, Mutalib, & Hasan, 2019). For the motivational factors, the theory proposed that the motivational factors make employees satisfied with their job and these factors includes the recognition, sense of achievement, growth and promotional opportunities, responsibility, and meaningfulness of the work (Alfayad & Arif, 2017; Alshmemri et al., 2017; Holmberg, Caro, & Sobis, 2018; Lo, Lin, & Hsu, 2016).

The Job Characteristic Model was developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976). The model is used widely to predict the impact of certain job characteristic on the work's outcome and the job satisfaction of employees. According to the model, there are five factors that are the core characteristic of a job and these include skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. These five characteristic are expected to influence three critical psychological states of a work and these are the experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results. The three psychological states will affect the outcome of the job and these includes the motivation, performance and job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Taking the score of the five core job characteristics, an index of the job can be created and through this index it can be known to what level the employees are having positive or negative attitude toward their jobs.

## ***2.2 Happiness at Workplace***

Happiness is the ultimate goals of life and the desire to be is a common desire among all people. However, the importance of happiness at work can be critical for the job itself and the continuity of the employment. Academic research into happiness has been influenced greatly by positive psychology in general and have begun to pursue positive organisational scholarship. Happiness has changed from being personnel feeling of individuals to an organisational objective. This is because organizations realized that making employees happy has impact on the organizational productivity and the employee's desire to stay with the organization (Wright, Cropanzano, & Bonett, 2007).

Findings of previous studies showed that employees that are happy with their work contributing to their organization performance by adding 12% in comparison with employees who are less happy with their work. In addition, organization that makes employee happy, have potential to outperform their competitors by 20%. Thus, it is important for organization to have a happy employee who can contribute to the culture, performance, and reputation of the organization and work to achieve the organizational objectives (Shour, 2016).

Researchers who investigated the employee happiness suggested that the happy feeling can be break out into three targets that includes the work, contextual feature, and the organization as a whole (Hoboubi, et. al., 2017). In

this context, this study looks into happiness from job itself, the working environment, and the relationship with management, peers, and supervisor in the work.

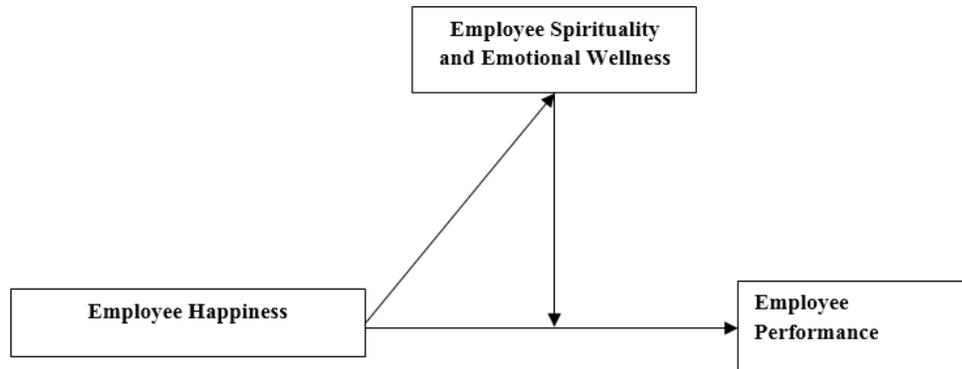


Figure 1: Research Framework

### ***2.3 Hypothesis Development***

Based on the extent literature review and the framework, the hypotheses are briefly discussed to avoid redundancy.

#### ***2.3.1 Employee Happiness and Employee Performance***

Happy employees are more productive and produce superior performance compared with their less happy peer (Oswald, Proto, & Sgroi, 2015b). Researchers indicated that happy employee work harder and more committed to their work and organization (Alaarj, Mohamed, & Ahmad Bustamam, 2018; Alaarj, Abidin-Mohamed, & Bustamam, 2016a, 2016b; Alaarj, Mohamed, & Bustamam, 2017b, 2017a). A review study by Van De Voorde, Paauwe and Van Veldhoven (2012) found that the employee happiness resulted in better performance of employee as well as organizational performance. In a study conducted by Boehm and Lyubomirsky (2008), the findings indicated that happiness promote career development and improve the success in performance and workplace success. Employee happiness has found to have a significant effect on job satisfaction (Proctor, 2014). Accordingly, in this study, the employee happiness is expected to have a positive effect on the performance of employee in UAE. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H1: Employee happiness has significant positive relationship with employee performance

#### ***2.3.2 Employee Happiness and Employee Spiritual and Emotional Wellness***

Happiness is status that can affect the behavior of individual from several perspective. Happy employees are more productive, more committed, and more satisfied. Happiness also proposed to affect the spirituality and emotional wellness of employees. In a study conducted by Grant, Christianson and Price (2007) the effect of happiness on the employee well-being was expected to have a significant effect. Happiness in the workplace also found to affect the subjective wellbeing of employees in the study of Zou and Dahling (2017). Zhao and Pan (2019) found that when employees are happy, it will have impact on their citizenship behavior and turnover intention as well as the organizational commitment. Few studies in the literature examined the effect of happiness on employee spiritual and emotional wellness. This study expects that employees happiness will have a positive impact on the

employee spirituality and emotional wellness among UAE public sector employees. Accordingly, it is proposed:

H2: Employee happiness has significant positive relationship with employee spiritual and emotional wellness.

### ***2.3.3 Employee Spiritual and Emotional Wellness as A Moderator***

Improving the spirituality and emotional wellness in the workplace is highly important to create an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable and ready to work better (Johar et al., 2018; Johar, 2019; Johar, 2013). Helping employees understand and improve their own emotional wellness will likely lead to healthier and more valuable corporate citizens (Mahal, 2016; Daniels and Strauss, 2010). Employee spirituality increase the employees' wellbeing and has positive effect on the productivity (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2017). Few studies examined the moderating effect of employee spiritual and emotional wellness. In a study conducted by (Altaf & Awan, 2011) it was found that employee spirituality moderated the effect of job overload and job satisfaction. A Study conducted by (Kumar & Kumar, 2014) found that workplace spirituality has a moderating effect between stress and healthy work environment. High spirituality reduced the effect of harmful emotional labour on employee wellbeing while lower spirituality increase the effect of harmful emotional labour on employee wellbeing (Zou & Dahling, 2017). Based on the above discussion, in this study, the employee spiritual and emotional wellness is expected to moderate positively the effect of employee happiness on employee performance. Accordingly, the following is hypothesized:

H3: Employee spirituality and wellness has a moderating effect on the relationship between employee happiness and employee performance.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

This study is a quantitative in nature. The population of this study is the entire governmental employees in UAE. However, due to the fact that Abu Dhabi and Dubai are the most crowded and business-active states in UAE, as well as all the ministries are located in these two cities, the city of Abu Dhabi and Dubai are chosen as the target population of this study. Almost a total of 60,000 thousand governmental employees are working in the two cities (The National, 2019). A simple random sampling technique is deployed in this study. The study also deploys a questionnaire for data collection. Measurements of employee happiness was adopted from Index of Psychological Wellness developed by Berkman (1971). Employee performance in this study is measured using 20 items. The measurement was adopted from Pahos and Galanaki, (2018). All the items are measured using five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree ) to 5 (strongly agree). The moderating variable employee spirituality and emotional wellness was adopted from Daniel (2012). The measurement consists of ten items and it is measured using five point Likert scale.

The questionnaire was validated by three experts and a pilot study was conducted to check the reliability of the measurement. The data of this study was collected from public servant in the UAE. A total of 500 questionnaire using random sampling technique were mailed to the respondents. The respondents were given a period of one month to answer the questionnaire. As a result, a total of 334 responses were collected. These responses are sufficient for the purpose of the analysis (Alaaraj, 2018; Alaarj, Zainal, & Bustamam, 2015; M. H. Kayali, Safie, & Mukhtar, 2016a, 2016b; M. Kayali, Safie, & Mukhtar, 2019). Data was analyzed using SPSS and smart partial least

square (Smart PLS).

#### IV. FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. The highest percentage of the respondents are older than 30 years and they are males with bachelor degree working as sub-ordinate with experience of more than five years.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Age	Less than 30	44	13.8
	30-40 years	177	55.5
	41-50 years	60	18.8
	51-60 years	30	9.4
	Above 61 years	8	2.5
Gender	Male	195	61.1
	Female	124	38.9
Education	High school or less	12	3.8
	Diploma	33	10.3
	Bachelor's degree	168	52.7
	Master	86	27.0
	Ph.D.	20	6.3
Position	Manager	36	11.3
	Deputy manager	19	6.0
	Head of department	52	16.3
	Supervisor	81	25.4
	Sub-ordinate	131	41.1
Experience	Less than 5 years	60	18.8
	5-10 years	92	28.8
	11-15 years	104	32.6
	16-20 years	25	7.8
	21-25 years	38	11.9

N=319

##### 4.1 Data Examination

The data was cleaned from missing values and outliers. In addition, the normality analysis showed that all the variables have skewness and kurtosis less than 1 indicating that the data is normality distributed. Further, the multicollinearity analysis showed that the variation inflation factor (VIF) is less than 5 and the tolerance is less than 0.20. (F. Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & G. Kuppelwieser, 2014; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Lowry & Gaskin, 2014)

##### 4.2 Measurement Model

Researchers and statisticians have agreed that the measurement model is evaluated by examining five criteria. These includes the factor loading (>0.70), Cronbach's Alpha (CA) (CA>0.70), composite reliability (CR) (>0.70), average variance extracted (AVE>0.50), and discriminant validity (root square of AVE is greater than the cross loading) (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2017, 2011; Lowry & Gaskin, 2014). The first step in assessing the

measurement model is to ensure that the factor loading for all items are greater than 0.70. The measurement model was conducted. Items with low factor loading were deleted. Table 2 shows that all the variables have CA greater than 0.70 and CR greater than 0.70 indicating that the measurement are reliable. For the convergent validity, findings in Table 2 show that all the variables have AVE greater than 0.50 indicating that the convergent validity was achieved. To achieve the discriminant validity, the root square of the AVE should be greater than the cross loading. In other words, the indicators in bold are greater than its rows and columns. Table 2 shows that the root square of AVE in bold is greater than the cross loading indicating that the discriminant validity is achieved

Table 2: Factor Loading, CA, CR, and AVE of Constructs

Variable	CA>0.70	CR>0.70	AVE>0.50			
Employee Performance	0.981	0.982	0.755	<b>0.869</b>		
Employee Spirituality and Emotional Wellness	0.978	0.981	0.864	0.155	<b>0.930</b>	
Employee happiness	0.950	0.959	0.770	0.699	0.117	<b>0.877</b>

### 4.3 Structural Model

Researchers (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2017, 2011) pointed out that in order to assess the structural model, the four criteria must be achieved. The R-square ( $R^2$ ) values must be greater than 0.25 to consider the model as a predictive of the dependent variable. Second, the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) must be greater than zero to consider the independent variable can predict the dependent variable. The path coefficient and effect size ( $F^2$ ) must be examined and checked. The R-square in this study indicates that a total of 72.7% of the variation in the employee performance can be explained by employee happiness. Predictive relevance showed that the value of  $Q^2$  for employee performance is 0.508 and all the effect size are greater than 0.02 indicating that they are acceptable. Figure 1 shows the structural model.

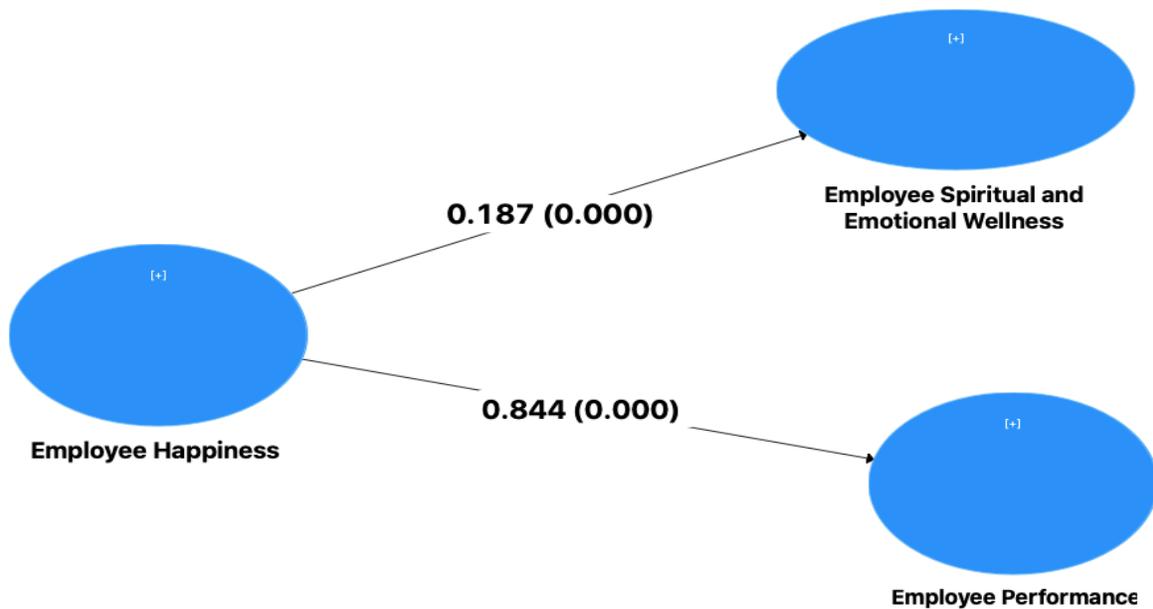


Figure 1: Structural Model

#### 4.4 Hypotheses Testing

This section presents and briefly discusses the result of hypotheses testing for direct effect. Table 3 shows the results of testing the hypotheses.

Table 3: Results of Testing Direct Effect Hypotheses

H	Path	Coefficient	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values	Remark
H1	Employee happiness -> employee performance	0.844	0.024	35.538	0.000	Supported
H2	Employee Happiness -> Spiritual and Emotional wellness	0.187	0.043	4.335	0.000	Supported
H3	Employee Spirituality and Emotional Wellness* Employee Happiness -> Employee Performance	0.094	0.035	2.707	0.007	Supported

First hypothesis of this study suggested that employee happiness will affect positively the employee performance. Findings showed that the suggestion holds true and employee happiness has significant effect on employee performance (Coefficient= 0.844, T-statistics=35.538, P<0.001). Thus, H1 is supported. For the second hypotheses, the study also predicted that employee happiness will have a significant effect on the employee spiritual and emotional wellness. The findings in Table 3 showed that the effect of employee happiness on employee spiritual and emotional wellness is positive and significant (Coefficient= 0.187, T-statistics=4.335, P=0.000). Thus, H2 is supported. The third hypothesis of this study proposed that employee spirituality and emotional wellness has a moderating effect between employee happiness and employee performance. To test the moderating effect, there are two methods. First is the indicator approach and second is the two-stage approach. The two-stage approach is more preferable when the variables are second order variables (Hair et al., 2017; Lowry & Gaskin, 2014) such as in the case of employee happiness which is a second order variables its indicators are latent variables. Thus, the interaction effect between employee happiness with employee performance was created (Employee Spirituality and Emotional Wellness\* Employee Happiness). The findings in Table 3 showed that the interaction effect is significant (Coefficient=0.094, T-statistics=2.707, P-value=0.007). Thus, there is a moderating effect of employee spirituality and emotional wellness.

## V. DISCUSSION

Employee happiness was predicted to have a significant effect on employee performance. The findings showed that the prediction is true. Employee happiness affected employee performance of governmental employees in UAE. Happiness is essential for productive and well-performed employees. Happy employee is more productive and committed to the organization. Thus, decision makers in UAE are advised to increase the happiness of employees so that the performance of employee will increase.

The positive and significant effect of employee happiness on employee performance could be related to the notion that UAE is among the top 21 happiest country in the world and government devotes great effort to increase the happiness of employees and for this reason the government founded the ministry of happiness. The literature revealed that happiness has several outcome on the employee performance, attitude, motivation and commitment to the organization. Happy employee are more productivity and has effect on the organizational performance (Van De

Voorde et al., 2012). It also affect the career development and the performance of the employee as well as their job satisfaction (Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2008; Proctor, 2014).

The findings showed that spiritual and emotional wellness has a positive moderating effect between employee happiness and employee performance. This indicates that the increase in the level of spiritual and emotional wellness of the governmental employees in UAE will result in an increase in the positive effect of employee happiness on employee performance of employee in UAE. These findings are in agreement with the findings or prior literature that examined the moderating effect of spirituality and emotional wellness. Findings of the study of Altaf and Awan (2011) showed that effect of job overload on job satisfaction was moderated by employee spirituality. The effect of stress on healthy work environment was also found to be moderated by workplace spirituality (Kumar & Kumar, 2014). Further, the findings of Zou and Dahling (2017) showed that the effect of harmful emotional labour on employee wellbeing was moderated by spirituality. Overall, this study has contributed to the theory and practices by examining the validity of the theory Y, job characteristic model, and two-factor theory.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to find the effect of employee happiness on employee performance and to examine the moderating effect of spiritual and emotional wellness of employee between employee happiness and employee performance. The findings of PLS indicated that the effect of employee happiness on employee performance is significant. The findings also showed that employee spiritual and emotional wellness has a positive moderating effect between employee happiness and employee performance. Decision makers were advised to increase the employee happiness and increase the spirituality in the workplace.

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