

CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF HAPPINESS AT WORK: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Social, historical, and cultural environment leads to different individual perspectives and approaches to life, as well as a personal sense of happiness. The purpose of this article is to provide insight into current literature regarding diverse understanding of happiness in relation to culture, and to provide a reflection on cross-cultural perspectives of happiness at work. This study includes a bibliometric analysis of the literature alongside a chronological overview of the conceptual development of the research topic. By giving insight into previous research in the field, the article provides overview of published papers on the researched topic by country, the number of quotations in the published papers, the structure of the published papers according to relevant categories, and the number and structure of the analysed papers according to relevant categories. In addition, the chronological development of the conceptual framework of the research topic is given together with bibliographic network analysis. As such, this article provides a reflection on current research in this field and indicates guidelines for future empirical research and analyses.

KEY WORDS

happiness, subjective well-being, culture, cross-cultural, organization

CLASSIFICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Happiness and subjective well-being, often defined as inner feelings or states of satisfaction [1], have a long history of research in the field of social sciences, primarily psychology, but also in the field of economy. Economists usually attribute it to fulfilled desires, while psychologists, on the other hand, talk about positive feelings or satisfaction of basic needs, e.g. [2-4]. The focus on this aspect of the individual's condition in organizational settings has increased with positive organizational behaviour. Concepts like work-related well-being and happiness thus have been widely researched. Previous research has indicated that significant differences in understanding happiness or subjective well-being could be observed in relation to age, e.g. [5, 6] and gender, e.g. [7, 8], but also to different cultural settings, e.g. [9-13]. The social, historical, and cultural environment in which individuals are raised creates a strong impetus for one's behaviour [14-16], but also leads to diverse understanding and approach to life and personal sense of happiness.

Both the meaning and importance of happiness, as well as predictors vary across time and between nations [17]. For instance, systematic review of studies from over 100 countries and 44 culture found myriad determinants of happiness [11]. Research in relation to cultural values, has shown that power distance as a dimension of culture can be seen as a very stable and significant determinant of subjective well-being [12]. Moreover, research indicates individualistic cultures perceive differently happiness than collectivist cultures, e.g. [18], with individualistic cultures tending to report higher levels of subjective well-being compared to collectivist ones [19]. In addition, happiness of Western individualists is more closely correlated with psychological traits like self-worth and self-consistency than it is with collectivists [16].

Still, in the context of organizations, this is a relatively young field of research [17]. Many issues remain open. Among others, explaining cross-country differences is seen of utmost importance [12, 20] as meta-analytic reviews in the field found it thinly covered [21]. Additional support for differences and validation of constructs in different cultural setting is needed [22].

With this article, we try to provide insight into current field of research on cross-cultural perspectives of happiness at work. By conducting literature review which gives a summarized insight into scientific development [23], the research goals of this article are to: (1) present research trends and subjects; (2) identify main chronological developments in the field; (3) present bibliographic network analysis as well as to (4) give critical overview of current research in the field. The article and presented data can serve as an insight into the field, a reflection on current situation in this field and indicate guidelines for future analyses.

CONCEPTS OF HAPPINESS, SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND HAPPINESS AT WORK

Literature on happiness is mostly concerned with how and why people experience their lives in a positive way, including cognitive judgments as well as affective reactions. Accordingly, various terms have been used in research such as happiness, satisfaction, well-being, morale and positive effect with the term subjective well-being often considered and used as a synonym with happiness [24, 25]. Term subjective well-being is used more to avoid misinterpretation of the term happiness, since expressions like happiness, which are frequently used in everyday discourse, often have vague meanings. In this article, the terms are also used as synonyms.

In the most common definitions, it is emphasized that it is the harmonious satisfaction of one's desires and goals [26]. Diener [27], who determined the existence of three categories by which well-being can be explained, offered classification that is more detailed. The first category

implies that well-being can be defined by an external criterion such as virtue or holiness, the second focuses on when and how people evaluate their lives in a positive sense, and the third implies that happiness means the predominance of positive effects (such as joy and love) over negative ones (such as anxiety and sadness). In conclusion, subjective well-being can be defined as a “global judgment of one’s life (cognitive assessment of the entire life e.i. life satisfaction), satisfaction with important life domains (satisfaction with one’s work, health, marriage, etc.), positive affect (prevalence of positive emotions and moods), and low levels of negative affect (prevalence of unpleasant emotions and moods) [28; p.118]. Therefore, a person is considered to enjoy a high level of subjective well-being if he/she is satisfied with life, often experiences positive emotions and rarely experiences negative emotions.

In some research, emphasis has been placed on the fact that there are two types of well-being, hedonic and eudemonic aspect. Hedonic aspect is strongly oriented towards happiness, but from the satisfaction point of view, the emphasis is on greater positive emotional states. On the other hand, eudemonic aspect is more focused on the quality of social relationships, curiosity and engagement, as it includes challenging oneself and the desire for personal growth, hope and courage, and is oriented towards goals and the aspiration to reach one’s full potential, which is also intrinsic motivation. According to research by Disabato et al. [29], hedonic aspect is measured by the life satisfaction scale, the subjective happiness scale and the depression scale. On the other hand, eudemonic aspect is measured by psychological well-being, which has six subscales of positive psychological functioning such as self-acceptance, positive relationship with others, autonomy, adaptation to the environment, purpose of life and personal growth [29].

A significant component of personal identity is individual work-related identity [30]. As regard to happiness at work, Fisher [31; p.385] considers it refers to “pleasant judgments (positive attitudes) or pleasant experiences (positive feelings, moods, emotions, flow states) at work”. In encompasses good feelings at work, positive experience of job characteristics and organization as a whole [25]. Creating such motivational environment presents managers’ noteworthy and complex tasks on different organizational levels [32, 33], specially as different impetus for happiness vary across different stages of life [34, 35]. As it implies employees’ way of thinking, it enables them to act to optimize their performance and realize their greatest potential. Different determinants of happiness have been recognized on various organizational levels, as presented in Table 1.

Research has shown happiness at work subsequently affects various individual work related outcomes, as their performance [37, 38], job satisfaction [39] or organizational citizenship behaviour [40]. However, it also affects outcomes on organizational level [41], such as reduction of turnover rate [42].

Table 1. Determinants of happiness at work [36; p.40].

Organization level determinants	Social level determinants	Psychological level determinants
Organizational culture Leadership and job characteristics Income, employee opportunities and work engagement Perceived organizational support Full time employment, income, meaningful activities	Social status, relationships with co-workers Co-worker support and friendship Friendship	Self-esteem and freedom Enjoyment in work Quality of work life and alignment of individual and organizational values Psychological capital Cultural values

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Hommerich and Klien [43] cite the work of Kroeber and Kluckhohn who in the beginning of 1950s, found 164 different definitions of culture, which can be grouped into six major classes of definitions of culture: descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural and genetic. Today, one of the most common definition used considers culture is “the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought“ [44; p.2]. In its most basic form, culture is comprised of three basic human activities: thought, behaviour, and creation [44]. Moreover, a number of universal characteristics emerge: culture is shared, integrated, symbolic, adaptive, learnt, and passed down over generations [44].

Cross-cultural studies on happiness have been emerging lately, and general conclusion is that the concept of happiness and its drivers differ considerably between cultures [45]. For instance, as regard to diverse understanding of happiness, a research done by Lu and Shih [46] showed that the Chinese understanding of happiness places more weight on interpersonal or external evaluation and satisfaction, whereas the Western understanding of happiness lays more weight on intrapersonal or internal evaluation and contentment. Consequently, European and North American cultures focus on pleasure, individual well-being that includes aspiration and personal responsibility, while East Asian cultural groups focus on balance of mind and tranquillity [47].

A very interesting perspective on subjective well-being is the one where indigenous peoples have been studied, especially since the concept and drivers of indigenous society differ from each other. For example, in the Peruvian Amazon, the concept is associated with health and productivity, and on the other hand, among the Inuit in the Arctic, happiness or subjective well-being is associated with family relationships and participation in the social world, and the same is true for the subjective well-being of American natives, Australian Aborigines and similar. Among some Amazonian indigenous peoples, the importance of maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships is also emphasized, which refers to spirits that also affect subjective well-being [45].

Work values also differ among cultures and as such differently contribute to happiness at work [48]. For instance, In Western, usually more individualized countries, happiness at work is more connected with sense of belonging, balance and collaboration with co-workers than in collectivistic cultures of East [22].

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to address article’s research goals, the initial literature search was performed using the Web of Science (WoS) database, and keywords used were happiness, work, subjective well-being, culture, and cross-cultural diversity. Filters were applied, including full-text availability, open access, and subject terms in psychology, business, and economics. The focus was on studies published in English. This search yielded an initial selection of 188 publications. Further refinement ensured the inclusion of only studies explicitly addressing cross-cultural differences in happiness at work while excluding those that examined related topics in broader contexts. As a result, 53 highly relevant articles were selected for detailed analysis. The analytical tool VOSviewer was used for a comprehensive bibliometric analysis in order to identify key concepts in the scientific discussion.

The key analytical steps included were the following:

- publication trends – analyzing publication periods and citation counts,
- category breakdown – classify papers by type (e.g., articles, review papers, book chapters),

- geographic distribution – examining research outputs by country,
- conceptual framework evolution – reviewing the chronological development of the research theme,
- bibliographic network analysis – mapping relationships between authors, institutions, and keywords.

These steps provided a structured and in-depth overview of the current state of research on happiness at work from a cross-cultural perspective.

RESEARCH RESULTS

By reviewing the literature from the Web of Science (WoS) database, it can be concluded that in general article citations on the topic of cross-cultural perspectives of happiness and happiness at work are steadily increasing. From 1995 to the present, 5 820 articles have been cited a total of 6 001 times, with 5 962 citations excluding self-citations, resulting in an average of 14,53 citations per article and an H-index of 37.

Analysis of 53 selected scientific articles that explicitly address cross-cultural differences in happiness at work further reveals a growing interest among researchers in recent years. The number of published articles and citations since 1995 is shown in Figure 1, with data sourced from the WoS database up to 2024. Additionally, the number of published works and citations over this period is graphically presented in Figure 1.

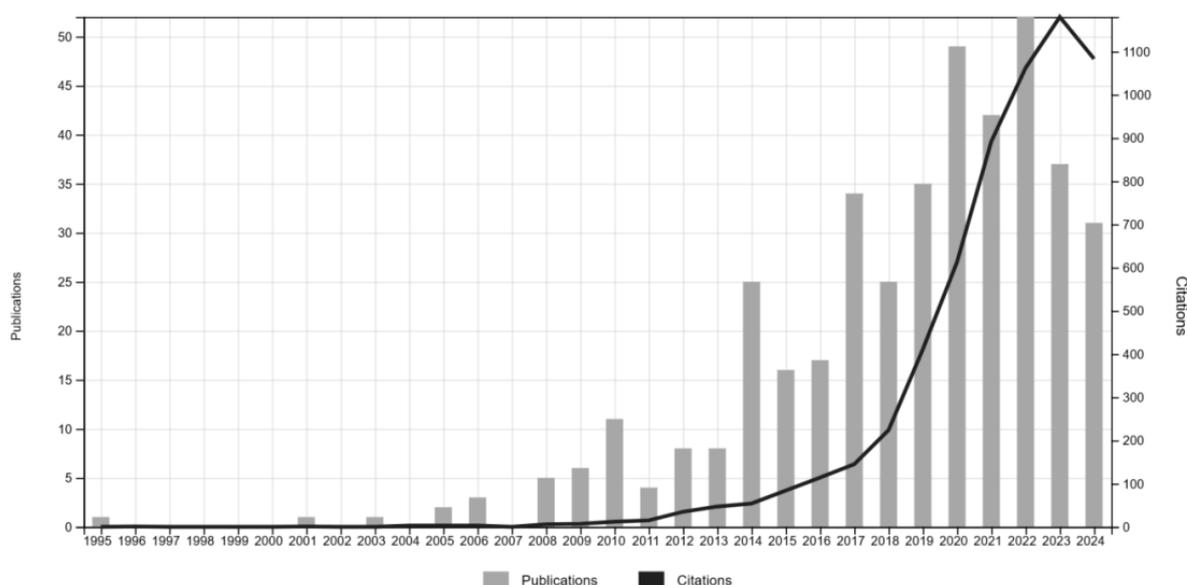


Figure 1. Presentation of the period of the papers published about the analysed topics with regard to the number of quotes. Source: author’s research according to Clarivate Web of Science, Copyright Clarivate 2024.

Table 2 shows the number of selected 53 papers by category. There are mostly articles (46) and review articles (3), and 4 books and book chapters.

Table 2. Number of papers by categories published in the WoS database on the researched topic. Source: author’s research according to Clarivate Web of Science, Copyright Clarivate 2024.

Category of paper	Number of papers
Article	46
Review Article	3
Books/Book Chapters	4

The Web of Science (WoS) database categorizes its content into three broad areas: general sciences (Science Citation Index), social sciences (Social Science Citation Index), and arts and humanities (Arts & Humanities Citation Index). Table 3 provides an overview of the number and distribution of analyzed papers, grouped by the thematic categories associated with each journal in the WoS database. These thematic categories include: Psychology Multidisciplinary, Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, Management, Public Environmental Occupational Health, Sociology, Business, Humanities Multidisciplinary, Multidisciplinary Sciences, Psychiatry, Education Educational Research, Communication, Language Linguistics, Psychology Social, Economics, Psychology Experimental. The explicit interdisciplinarity of research on happiness at work presented in Table 3 is one of the key strengths of this field, as it draws from a range of disciplines to provide a more holistic understanding of the concept. The study of happiness at work is not confined to a single academic domain but integrates perspectives from psychology, sociology, economics, management, and cultural studies, among others. Psychological theories, for instance, help explain individual well-being and emotional states, while sociological frameworks provide insight into the role of social relationships, organizational culture, and group dynamics in shaping happiness at work. Fields of economics including management, business and economics represent 15,75% of the published papers. Economic theories contribute by exploring how financial incentives, job security, and overall economic conditions impact workers' happiness which is presented in 2,66% of the research papers, while management and organizational studies focus on leadership styles, workplace practices, and employee engagement and are third most analysed category with 7,75% of the published papers.

This interdisciplinary approach enriches the research by addressing various factors – both individual and organizational – that influence happiness, and by accounting for the varying cultural, economic, and social environments in which work takes place. However, the challenge of integrating these diverse fields lies in developing a unified framework that accounts for the complexity and interconnectedness of these factors. Despite this challenge, the interdisciplinary nature of the research makes it particularly valuable for developing practical, culturally sensitive, and evidence-based strategies for enhancing happiness in the workplace.

Table 3. Number and structure of papers on the researched topic in the WoS database according to relevant categories. Source: author's research according to Clarivate Web of Science, Copyright Clarivate 2024.

Category of Web of Science	Number of papers	Percentage, %
Psychology Multidisciplinary	53	12,83
Social Sciences Interdisciplinary	38	9,20
Management	32	7,75
Public Environmental Occupational Health	26	6,30
Sociology	25	6,05
Business	22	5,33
Humanities Multidisciplinary	22	5,33
Multidisciplinary Sciences	18	4,36
Psychiatry	18	4,36
Education Educational Research	15	3,63
Communication	13	3,15
Language Linguistics	12	2,91
Psychology Social	12	2,91
Economics	11	2,66
Psychology Experimental	11	2,66

Table 4 provides an overview of published papers on the topic, categorized by country. USA ranks first with 21,07% of the publications, followed by Japan at 16,47%, Peoples Republic of China at 8,72%, and Russia at 7,99%.

Table 4. Published papers on the researched topic by country. Source: author’s research according to Clarivate Web of Science, Copyright Clarivate 2024.

Countries	Number of papers	Percentage, %
USA	87	21,07
Japan	68	16,47
Peoples Republic of China	36	8,72
Russia	33	7,99
England	29	7,02
Australia	25	6,05
Spain	25	6,05
Canada	20	4,84
India	15	3,63
Germany	12	2,91
France	11	2,66
Turkey	11	2,66
Italy	10	2,42
Netherlands	10	2,42
Portugal	10	2,42
South Korea	10	2,42

The weak representation of EU countries in the scientific topic of happiness at work is a notable gap in the existing literature. While much of the research focuses on North America, Japan and few more developed European nations, the lack of diverse perspectives from across the European Union limits the understanding of how happiness in the workplace varies across different EU cultures. The EU itself is a complex and diverse union with varying cultural, economic, and social values that can influence perceptions of happiness at work, yet much of the research tends to concentrate on Eurocentric ideas without accounting for the full range of EU cultures. This oversight reduces the comprehensiveness of cross-cultural studies and undermines the ability to generalize findings to a broader European context.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK EVOLUTION

Results of the chronological development of the conceptual framework related to cross-cultural perspective and differences in relation to understanding happiness at work are presented in Table 5. The presented chronological analysis includes articles that address both the core aspects and the broader context of the research topic, specifically focusing on cross-cultural perspectives of happiness at work. The selected articles were chosen for their significant contributions to understanding the differences in happiness across individualistic and collectivistic cultures, as well as for exploring key determinants such as power distance, gender equality, and cultural fit.

This chronological review highlights the development of the conceptual framework for studying happiness at work, revealing a progression of ideas and theories over time. While some articles emphasize psychological and organizational factors, others provide insights into the socio-cultural variables that influence happiness.

As the literature reveals, one of the most common used variables for assessing differences in cross-cultural research are Hofstede dimension of culture namely in individualism as opposed to collectivism, as well as power distance.

Individualistic culture, more present in countries as Unites States of America or France, promotes that each person is a distinct individual with characteristics that set them apart from the group; with individualists following internal processes to fulfil their own potential and find self-satisfaction [49]. On the other side, in collectivist cultures more present in countries as

Table 5. Chronological conception of cross-cultural perspective on happiness at work (continued on pp.435-436).

Author	Year	Title of article	Result
Spreitzer	1995	Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions, measurement, and validation	In low power distance countries, higher well-being is often associated with psychological empowerment, involvement in decision-making and flatter organizational structures.
Triandis	1995	Individualism & Collectivism	Well-being in collectivist cultures - social support, teamwork, and harmonious relationships within the organization.
Lu, Shih	1997	Sources of Happiness: A Qualitative Approach	Chinese understanding of happiness places more weight on interpersonal or external evaluation and satisfaction, whereas the Western understanding of happiness lays more weight on intrapersonal or internal evaluation and contentment.
Diener, Suh	2000	Culture and Subjective Well-being	Satisfaction scales can hold different meanings across cultures due to a global tendency toward positive response bias. Societies with distinct value systems are likely to prioritize different criteria when assessing their societal success. Individuals in various nations may perceive their own society as superior because they evaluate it based on criteria where their nation excels. Concept of cultural relativism.
Deci, Ryan	2000	The “What” and “Why” of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior	Well-being in individualistic cultures may experience higher job satisfaction and well-being when they have opportunities for personal growth and recognition.
Robert et. al.	2000	Empowerment and continuous improvement in the United States, Mexico, Poland, and India: Predicting fit on the basis of the dimensions of power distance and individualism	The authors based their predictions on individualism-collectivism and power distance, suggesting that certain practices align better with some cultures than others, leading to job satisfaction. Using structural equation modelling, the authors found that empowerment decreased satisfaction in India but increased it in the other three groups. Continuous improvement boosted satisfaction in all groups.
Diener	2000	Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index	Income and material wealth can be drivers of subjective well-being and lead to happiness. Societies with low levels of monetization has shown that they can show high levels of subjective well-being without income and that sometimes income can have negative effects on subjective well-being.

Table 5. Chronological conception of cross-cultural perspective on happiness at work (continuation from p.434, continued on p.436).

Author	Year	Title of article	Result
Suh, Oishi	2002	Subjective Well-Being Across Cultures	In individualistic Western cultures, people very often think about how satisfied and happy they are with their lives and actually consider it a question that should often be asked. As opposed to Eastern countries where thinking about happiness is rare.
Hommerich, Klien	2012	Happiness: Does culture matter?	The problem in researching is how such a complex construct as “happiness” is measured. Cultural-relative approach is required where researchers approach the research topic without evaluating their own cultural background.
Ye et al.	2015	Culture and Happiness	Additional cultural elements, beside individualism and collectivism found to affect the level of subjective well-being are power distance and gender equality.
Khaw, Kern	2015	A Cross-Cultural Comparison of the PERMA Model of Well-Being	Multiple aspects of culture when comparing cultures, including subsistence and economic systems, religion, marriage, food, institutions and practices. More important determinant can be person culture fit, when values of culture overlap with those of the society.
Oishi, Gilber	2016	Current and future directions in culture and happiness research	Predictors of happiness vary at different levels of analyses and it is necessary to analyse within-culture variations in happiness.
Zubair, Kamal, Artemeva	2018	Mindfulness and resilience as predictors of subjective well-being among university students: a cross cultural perspective	Americans and Australians (individualistic cultures) were found to prefer more individualized and personal indicators of happiness and well-being, while Pakistanis and Malaysians (collectivist cultures) prefer the well-being of parents and family more than personal well-being.
Cheng, Rizkallah, Narizhnaya	2020	Individualism vs. collectivism	Individualistic cultures emphasize personal identity and distinctiveness, while collectivist cultures prioritize group identity and values. In collectivist cultures, individuals define themselves through their connection to the group and focus more on collective tasks and social contexts.
Reyes-García et al.	2021	Happy just because. A cross-cultural study on subjective well-being in three indigenous societies	The concept of happiness and its drivers differ considerably between cultures. In individualistic cultures, happiness is a core value and a primary goal, while in collectivist cultures, it is more closely tied to social relationships and a sense of purpose. Additionally, some cultures view expressions of happiness as inappropriate or even bad luck.

Table 5. Chronological conception of cross-cultural perspective on happiness at work (continuation from pp.434-435).

Author	Year	Title of article	Result
Brailovskaia et al.	2022	A qualitative cross-cultural comparison of well-being constructs: The meaning of happiness, life satisfaction, and social support for German and Chinese students	European and North American cultures focus on pleasure, individual well-being that includes aspiration and personal responsibility, while East Asian cultural groups focus on balance of mind and tranquillity.
Dai et al.	2022	Power distance belief and workplace communication: The mediating role of fear of authority	In countries where there is a high power distance – high-perceived degree of inequality among people, where individuals accept distribution of power, resources and authority, a lower level of subjective well-being is expected.

China, Japan, and Korea, individuals gain values and social norms from the group and define themselves as aspects of the group, focus more on group tasks, context and external processes as determinants of social behavior [49-50]. Because of predominant value of either collectivism or individualism, there are diverse levels and approaches to happiness. Research indicates that countries with a collectivist culture have lower levels of subjective well-being as compared to countries with individualistic culture [12]. Reasons for this can be found in higher freedom of choice present in individualistic culture, stronger self-identity consistency and stronger self-esteem, all connected with higher levels of happiness [12]. In individualistic cultures, happiness is an important value that guides the lives of individuals and is their ultimate goal. On the other hand, where collectivist values prevail, life is driven more by social relationships or the need to have a purpose in life. Likewise, in certain cultures, some expressions of happiness encourage repulsion, and in some cultures, expressions of happiness are considered offensive and thus attract bad luck [45]. Human interactions, especially those with families, co-workers, and neighbours, are comparatively more important in the collectivist culture, so in that sense, happiness is affected strongly by evaluation of others [12]. People in individualistic cultures rely more on emotional experiences and their immediate effect to judge life satisfaction, while cultural norms have been the driving force in assessing life satisfaction in collectivistic cultures [51]. In extremely individualistic Western cultures, people very often think about how satisfied and happy they are with their lives and actually consider it a question that should often be asked. As opposed to Eastern countries where thinking about happiness is rare [16]. All this also reflects in organizational setting. Well-being in collectivist cultures is often linked to social support, teamwork, and harmonious relationships within the organization [28, 52, 53], while employees in individualistic cultures may experience higher job satisfaction and well-being when they have opportunities for personal growth and recognition [54].

It is valuable to stress that there is ample evidence that shows how positive affect and happiness are greatly influenced by environmental and socio-political factors prevalent in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. For example, Pakistani society as a collectivist culture promotes interdependence, social obligations and adherence to normative values, which can limit the freedom to assess personal well-being and happiness. Individualized sources of happiness prevail in Russian culture, while members of Japanese culture prefer to opt for more secular sources of happiness. In the study by McCarthy et al. as cited in [55], Americans and Australians (individualistic cultures) were found to prefer more individualized and personal indicators of happiness and well-being, while Pakistanis and Malaysians (collectivist cultures) prefer the well-being of parents and family more than personal well-being. According to Fiske (as cited in [51]), all researchers should be aware of multiple aspects of culture when comparing

cultures, including subsistence and economic systems, religion, marriage, sex, food, and institutions and practices. Although, sometimes more important determinant can be person culture fit, when values of culture overlap with those of the society, as for example research showed religious people are significantly happier in religious nations than non-religious nations [17].

Additional cultural elements, beside individualism and collectivism found to affect the level of subjective well-being are power distance and gender equality [12]. In countries where there is a high power distance – high perceived degree of inequality among people, where individuals accept distribution of power, resources and authority [56], a lower level of subjective well-being is expected. As regard to workplace and organizational settings, in low power distance countries, higher well-being is often associated with psychological empowerment, involvement in decision-making and flatter organizational structures [57, 58]. Presence of gender equality on the other side is positively correlated with subjective well-being. So raising gender equality together with decreasing power distance may contribute to higher levels of subjective well-being [12].

Likewise, the factors that influence happiness differ from culture to culture, since, for example, self-esteem is more important for feelings of satisfaction with life in Western cultures than in Eastern cultures. Therefore, culture also affects the measurement and definition of well-being. If, for example, happiness i.e. well-being is defined in terms of excitement and cheerfulness, happiness and joy, then members of Western culture will feel these emotions more, while members of Eastern culture may not. Failure to pay attention to these differences could lead to a distorted understanding of the well-being of members of Eastern cultures that they are simply not happy, when in fact this may not be true at all, as it depends on how their happiness/well-being is assessed. That is where the problem lies, because more importance is given to positive emotions that cause a high level of excitement, and any importance is not given to positive emotions of a low level of excitement that are more in line with the cultural customs of Eastern culture.

It should be noted that certain drivers of happiness differ not only among individuals, but also among social groups. Recently, special attention has been paid to how income and material wealth can be drivers of subjective well-being and lead to happiness. Nevertheless, research in societies with low levels of monetization has shown that they can show high levels of subjective well-being without income and that sometimes income can have negative effects on subjective well-being. Thus, levels of subjective well-being in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile were higher compared to the level predicted by their wealth. On the other hand, Japan was an exception with high income and relatively low subjective well-being [59].

BIBLIOMETRIC NETWORK ANALYSIS

In order to examine the state of research, future directions, and development patterns in the examined field, a bibliometric network analysis was additionally done using analytical tool VOSviewer. In line with the keywords of the selected 53 article, the result of Vosviewer shows that several most often terms that can be extracted (Figure 2). On the network map, each cluster or sphere (node) represents a keyword, and the size of the sphere reflects how many keywords are there. The frequency of the keywords corresponds to the size of the sphere, with bigger sphere corresponding to more frequent keyword. In addition, distinct colour groupings correspond to distinct theme collections, with same colour indicating close association between keywords [60].

Figure 2 shows that the red cluster highlights the key words: wellness and cultural factor which are related to papers on the researched topic. In the blue cluster the terms individual happiness, positive emotion, Germany, China and Japan were used the most, in the green cluster the most used key words in the research are: cross-cultural comparison, society, hedonia, validity and author Diner, the key words in the yellow cluster are: wellbeing and individualism, at orange cluster the terms are: contribution, age, gender and workplace happiness.

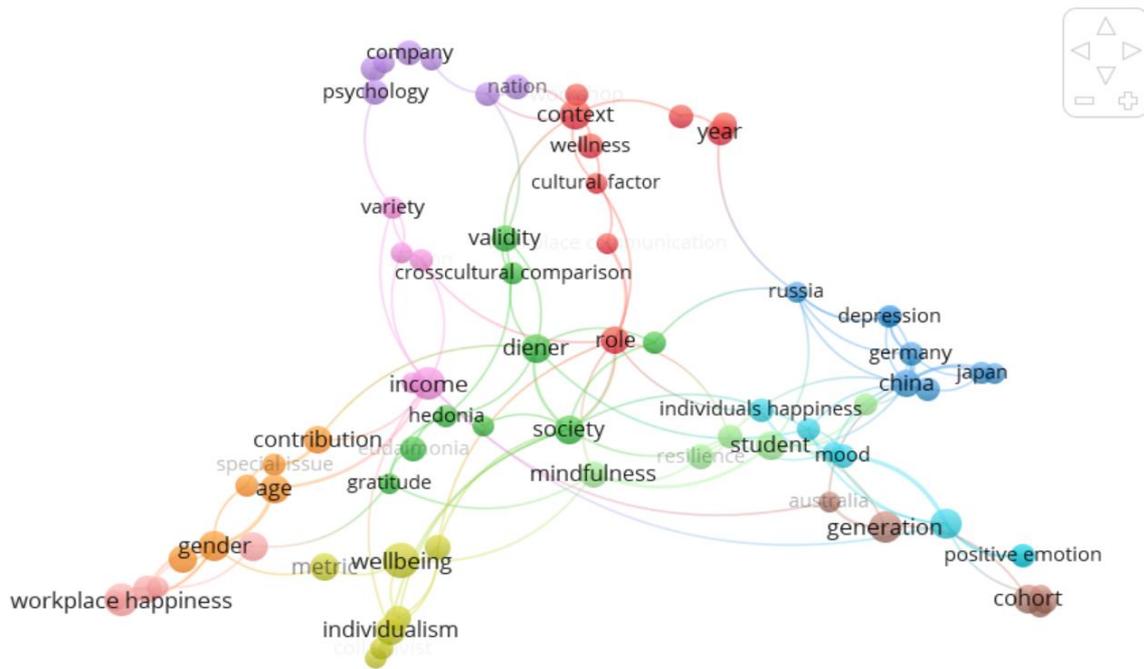


Figure 2. VOSviewer word network. Source: authors' research from VOSviewer.

After the researched and presented review of the literature on cross-cultural perspective of happiness at work, and the creation of a density visualization network map in VOSViewer, it can be concluded that cultural factor, individual happiness, China, cross-cultural comparison, hedonia, wellbeing and individualism and workplace happiness are the research points of great interest.

From the bibliometric analysis and literature review, it appears that psychological-level determinants are most frequently studied in relation to happiness at work. Many studies focus on self-esteem, freedom, enjoyment in work, and psychological capital as key drivers of subjective well-being. Additionally, psychological theories, such as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, have been widely applied to understand happiness across different cultural contexts. While organizational and social-level determinants are acknowledged, psychological factors appear to have the most significant representation in the reviewed research. Organizational factors remain an important but underexplored area in cross-cultural studies on happiness at work. This suggests a need for future research focusing on how organizational structures, leadership styles, and workplace policies impact happiness in diverse cultural settings.

DISCUSSION

Since humans began to communicate with others, happiness has probably been the subject of numerous discussions, yet this concept has only recently begun to be studied scientifically in relation to culture and organizational settings. Researchers agree on the notion that culture can have strong effects on one's conception of happiness as well as variables leading to higher levels of happiness. Still, studies related to cross cultural aspects of happiness, especially in the organizational context, are still in conception, thus additional studies and understanding of the field is needed. The purpose of this article was to provide insight into the concept itself and get more deeply into the existing literature and research trends on cross-cultural understanding of happiness at work. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that although substantial progress has been made, the conceptual framework for cross-cultural perspectives on happiness at work is still evolving. The selected articles underscore the need for more research, particularly on variations within cultural contexts, to deepen the understanding of happiness as it applies to diverse organizational and cultural settings.

Review presented in this article has shown that conception of happiness varies significantly between cultures. Moreover, general conclusion of most studies is that diverse understanding can be attributed to difference between individualistic and collectivistic culture. Individuals living in individualistic cultures show higher levels of happiness than those who live in collectivist societies. Power distance and gender equality were also found to be significant cultural values connected with happiness. As regard to antecedents of happiness, individual psychological characteristics, such as self-worth and self-reliability, have a greater bearing on the happiness of Western individualists compared to Eastern collectivist nations. Still, it seems different contextual variables as well as person culture fit can also be seen as important variables affecting of perceived happiness.

This review also needs to be supplemented with certain issue that are emphasized in assessment of cross-cultural differences with regard to happiness. The problem in researching the impact of cross-cultural differences on happiness is how such a complex construct as “happiness” is measured [43]. Further, most research is still on data obtained from North America and more developed European countries, and based on Eurocentric ideas, as similar in some other fields related to human resource management, e.g. [61]. In the Western intellectual tradition, happiness is considered the most important goal to strive for, but this is not applicable to Asian countries. If culture is seen as a system of shared values, then happiness would be one of the values among all other values. In European or North American value systems, happiness may rank near the top of the value hierarchy. Namely, research has shown that the physical appearance of people who fill out a happiness survey greatly influences on how people are satisfied with their entire lives. Similarly, Mathews (as cited in [43]) concludes that North Americans are not actually “happier than East Asians, but they are more willing to emphasize what is happiness for them and what makes them happy”. Due to the above, a cultural-relative approach is required where researchers approach the research topic without evaluating their own cultural background [43]. So data from Africa, the Middle East, South America, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe in the future need to be obtained [17] as well as data from individuals belonging to different levels of society, not only students or well educated individuals as it is usually the case [17].

Another issue Oishi and Gilbert [17] emphasize is that predictors of happiness vary at different levels of analyses and it is necessary to analyze within-culture variations in happiness. For instance, research has shown that higher levels of education were associated with higher levels of happiness as opposed to lower levels of education. Nonetheless, within each city, county, or state, highly educated people were not always happier than less educated people [17].

As for practical implications, the information in this article draws from the major discoveries of earlier studies. As such, practitioners can use it as a guide in initiatives related to happiness in multicultural organizational settings. Academics can use it as a starting point for their research of the field, and design of their own new research.

This article has several limitations, which need to be addressed. As this was mostly prevailed in previous studies, the article oriented more on general concept of happiness and cultural differences in that aspect, so future studies would benefit from research on cross-cultural effects on happiness at work. This is something also evident and missing in the current literature and remains a field to be studied. In terms of future study, it would also be intriguing to examine the operationalization of happiness in earlier studies, as well as the statistical methods and research approaches that were employed. In spite limitations, the article can be used to gain insight into the topic, reflect on the state of the art, and suggest directions for further, more in-depth research.

CONCLUSION

The concept of happiness has been a subject of discussion for centuries, but its scientific exploration in relation to culture and organizational settings is relatively recent. Researchers agree that culture significantly influences one's understanding of happiness and the factors contributing to it. However, studies on cross-cultural aspects of happiness, especially in the workplace, are still in the early stages and require further exploration. This article explores existing literature and trends on the cross-cultural understanding of happiness at work. It concludes that while progress has been made, the conceptual framework for happiness across cultures is still evolving. The review shows that happiness perceptions differ across cultures, with individualistic societies reporting higher happiness levels than collectivist ones. Cultural values, such as power distance and gender equality, also influence happiness, with psychological traits like self-worth being more important for happiness in individualistic cultures. A cultural-relative approach is necessary, and more diverse data from other regions and societal groups is needed. Finally, the article suggests that further research on cross-cultural factors affecting happiness at work is essential for both academic and practical purposes.

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