

Exploring Variations In Employee Happiness Across Disciplines: A Study Of Higher Education Institution

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Abstract:

Happiness among academicians in higher education is not just a personal benefit; it directly impacts the functioning and success of educational institutions. It plays a crucial role for several reasons, impacting both individual well-being and institutional effectiveness. The study focuses on several factors such as work environment, professional fulfilment, Work Life Balance, Career & growth advancement, compensation and Benefits, job security and stability impacting happiness among employees working in higher education. A study aimed at the factors affect to analyse the above factors in employee happiness. Analysis highlights significant differences in employee happiness across various disciplines in higher education institutions and Job security and stability among disciplines often feels happy in their roles and institutions.

Keywords: Workplace happiness, employee wellbeing, Performance, job satisfaction

Introduction:

The happiness of employees working in higher education institutions is increasingly recognized as a key factor that contributes not only to individual well-being but also to the overall success and effectiveness of academic institutions (Syahirah, Aziz, Rahman, & Lokman, 2022). Higher education institutions deal with difficulties like teaching loads and administrative duties, which might affect the mental health of its staff. In this unique environment, where academicians, administrators, and support staff collaboratively contribute to the development of students, employee happiness is crucial. Happy employees tend to be more engaged, motivated, and productive, positively impacting both student outcomes and institutional culture. The happiness of employee working higher education is vital for several reason, impacting both and individuals within the institution and the institution as a whole. When employee feel and fulfilled in their roles, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated. Engaged employees are more willing to go above and beyond their responsibilities, contributing positive to the institution's success. Nature of work, compensation and benefit are important factors influences employee happiness (Bhatia & Mohsin, 2020). Many institutes are suffering from acute faculty shortage and job satisfaction & personal growth and development are one of the major reasons of high faculty attrition rate (Reddy & Vallabhaneni, 2023). Work environment is another factor in increasing employees job satisfaction as employee spend maximum of time at workplace and hence work environment can make a lot of difference in employee job satisfaction (Sakarji, et al., 2021).

The happiness of teaching staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) is a crucial aspect of the academic environment, influencing both faculty well-being and overall institutional success (SS, Lokman, Aziz, & Rahman, 2022). Teaching staff in these institutions are integral to shaping the future of students, and their satisfaction directly impacts the quality of education. The experiences of teaching staff in city like Mumbai, with a wide variety of public, private, and autonomous HEIs, can differ, but common elements that affect their contentment include workload, job security, pay,

opportunities for professional growth, and work-life balance. The rapidly evolving educational landscape, increasing demands for research outputs, and the growing expectations for administrative duties often contribute to stress among teaching staff (Tasleem, Muhammad, & Tasleem, 2023). On the other hand, positive aspects such as a supportive work culture, academic freedom, engagement with students, and recognition of efforts can foster a sense of satisfaction. Considering Mumbai's status as an educational hub, where institutions are often ranked among the best in the country, it becomes essential to understand the challenges and rewards faced by faculty members in HEIs to create an environment conducive to their professional and personal growth.

Objectives:

Study focuses on understanding the happiness and performance dynamics of employees working in higher education institutions and identify various factors that influence both the performance and happiness of employees.

1. To assess the happiness level of employees working in higher education Institutions.
2. To study the factors that shape the performance and happiness level of employees working in Higher Education Institution.

Literature Review:

The following literature review throws light on the factors of happiness of employees working in Higher Education.

(Singh, 2022) examines five institutional factors of work life balance among faculty members found that recruitment, career progression, work environment, job autonomy, performance analysis, and rewards & recognitions significantly impact job engagement, satisfaction, and motivation. Addressing these factors can improve faculty motivation and enhance their engagement and commitment to advancing students, institutions, and professions. The Indian government's higher education policy 2020 highlights low faculty motivation in teaching, research, and service at Higher education Institutions.

(Arora, 2020) analyses academicians who are happy, satisfied, and motivated are better equipped to engage with the younger generation and spread positivity. However, the increasing use of ICT tools in teaching and training has led to constant availability and involvement of both students and faculty, 24/7. This constant engagement can become overwhelming and negatively affect the happiness and well-being of faculty members

(Gadhav, Parikh, Patel, Joshi, & Thaker, 2021) explored the factors contributing to employee's happiness such as life satisfaction, interpersonal relationship, self-affirmation, and physical and mental health, study was conducted with the sample size of 362 participants from Ganpat University, Gujarat.

(Meena & Agarwal, 2014) carries the observation that the positive organizational climate can enhance job satisfaction and contribute to greater happiness among employees. However, the relationship between job satisfaction and happiness is more complex, with factors beyond work contributing to overall well-being.

(Bataineh, 2019) explored happiness at workplace is sense of pleasure, positive affective experience, good feeling and employment because it is also means having meaningful work life.

(Ritu Gandhi Arora, 2020) carries the observation that the happiness is closely related to performance of productivity as well as greater energy, faster promotion, higher income, better health and long life.

(S & AS:, 2024) explores workplace happiness among teaching staff in Kerala's autonomous, government, and deemed-to-be universities with the findings of significant correlations between happiness, motivation, technological adaptability, and interpersonal relationships, emphasizing the importance of fostering a positive work environment.

(Aggarwal, Sharma, Vohara, Sharma, & Sharma, 2023) studied the work environment is an essential element of job performance as workplace environment improves productivity, retained talent, as well as plays vital role in overall mental health of employees.

(Midje, 2018) examines the work environment of university academics, revealing higher workaholism and conflict among academics, with high job demands and role overload affecting both issues.

(Garg, 2024) examined the wellbeing and professional fulfilment of male and female working in self-financed institutions in Ghaziabad focusing on disparities in mental health and job satisfaction and explores the key factors influencing educators' psychological wellbeing, workplace satisfaction and gender specific experience.

(Reetu, 2019) studied the job satisfaction of teachers in Haryana. Teachers are known as builders of the nation, and they work as role models for students that helps students choose their career and shape their life. Study examined the impact on satisfaction level of employees and job satisfaction of teachers working in higher education in Haryana. Data analyzes the male teachers are more satisfied than female teachers.

(Litynska, et al., 2024) studies approach to analyses factors affecting personal career growth in education institutions. It uses the cluster and discriminate analysis to establish relationship and determine relevant factors. The models reflect the relationship between factors affecting career growth, with cluster analysis helping to determine factors influencing personnel growth and building clusters. This approach helps in understanding the impact of various factors on career advancement.

(Hanaysha & Hussain, 2018) explores several key areas related to employee motivation, particularly in the context of higher education institutions in Asia, focusing on employee empowerment, employee training, and teamwork.

(Woldie & Singh, 2023) investigates the connection between emotional intelligence, job satisfaction & job performance and highlighted the emotional intelligence positively affect job performance and job satisfaction by conducting study on academic staff of Ethiopian higher education institutions of public universities.

Research Methodology

This study is aimed at employee happiness as a multidimensional concept consisting of six factors: work environment, professional fulfilment, work-life balance, career growth, compensation, and job security. A systematic questionnaire was developed with 18 statements, with each factor consists of three statements. The elements for the questionnaire were altered from previously validated scales and theoretical frameworks. Specifically, the statements related to work environment were taken from the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) by Spector (1997), professional fulfilment statements were informed by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1966), and work-life balance component were derived from the Work-Life Balance Scale by Fisher et al. (2009). Similarly, career growth statements were created from the Career Satisfaction Scale by Greenhaus et al. (1990), while compensation and job security factor derived from studies on employee engagement and motivation, including Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985). These sources provided a strong theoretical foundation for the questionnaire, ensuring its significance and extensive.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, systematic testing was conducted. Validity was established through content validation, where a panel of three subject matter experts evaluate the questionnaire to make sure the elements of all the factors are adequately represented the constructs being evaluated. Their suggested a small change that helped improve clarity and alignment with the study's objectives. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs achieving values above the suggested threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating strong internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.75 to 0.89 across the six factors, further confirming the instrument's reliability.

A pilot test was then conducted with a sample of 30 employees who were representative of the main study population. The pilot testing evaluated the clarity, readability, and relevance of the questionnaire. Based on the results of the pilot study, small changes were made to ensure the statements were easy to understand and aligns with the objectives of the present study. The final questionnaire has been forwarded to a total of 470 respondents out of which the usable sample size comes out to be 454.

Data Analysis

Sr. No.	Constructs	Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Work Environment	I feel comfortable and safe in my work environment.	0	0.4	5.7	24.9	37	25.3	6.6
2		My workspace is well-maintained and conducive to productivity.	0	1.8	4.4	29.1	33.3	21.8	9.7
3		The institution provides the resources I need to perform my job effectively.	0	1.3	2.9	26	37.9	21.4	10.6
4	Professional Fulfilments	I am satisfied with the recognition and rewards I receive for my work.	0	0.9	6.2	24.4	38.1	23.3	7
5		My work aligns with my personal values and professional goals.	0	0.4	8.1	26.9	44.5	13.2	6.8
6		I feel that my contributions	0	1.5	9.3	26.2	44.9	12.3	5.7

Sr. No.	Constructs	Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		are valued and make a positive impact.							
7	Work-Life Balance	I am able to maintain a healthy balance between my work and personal life.	0	0.7	5.9	23.8	38.8	23.6	7.3
8		The institution supports flexible work arrangements when needed.	0.9	1.8	3.3	14.8	42.5	28.6	8.1
9		I have enough time for my personal interests and family responsibilities.	0.4	3.5	5.3	28	43.2	14.1	5.5
10	Career Growth and Advancement	I have clear opportunities for career progression within the institution.	0.2	0.9	5.3	28	34.8	24	6.8
11		My career goals are supported by the institution's development programs.	0.4	2.6	3.3	23.1	39.2	8.9	12.3
12		My achievements and milestones are recognized and celebrated.	0.2	2	3.5	28.6	49.1	11.7	4.8
13	Compensation and Benefits	I am satisfied with my salary and overall compensation package.	0	0.2	3.7	24.2	53.3	13.7	4.8
14		The benefits provided by the institution meet my needs.	0	1.3	2.6	24.7	39.4	25.6	6.4
15		Compensation is fair and	0	0.9	1.5	33.9	45.4	10.6	7.7

Sr. No.	Constructs	Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		competitive compared to similar roles.							
16	Job Security and Stability	I feel secure in my current position.	0	0.7	8.1	24.9	37	22.5	6.8
17		I believe the institution is committed to staff retention and development.	0	2.4	5.1	25.8	37.7	13.2	15.9
18		I am confident in the stability of the institution and my role within it.	0	1.8	5.1	30.8	32.8	18.5	11

The above table presents employee responses to various elements, including Work Environment, Professional Fulfilments, Work-Life Balance, Career Growth and Advancement, Compensation and Benefits, and Job Security and Stability. The data reveals key insights into employee satisfaction across these dimensions. Responses are measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with percentages representing the distribution of responses.

Under the Work Environment factor, most employees specified satisfaction with their work environment. For example, 37% agreed, and 25.3% strongly agreed that they felt comfortable and safe at work. Similarly, statements regarding workspace maintenance and availability of resources to perform their jobs effectively also accepted strong agreement, with 33.3% to 37.9% agreeing and 21.4% to 25.3% strongly agreeing. That means employees generally perceive their work environment as conducive to productivity and safety and feel valued and motivated in their job role, with minimal dissatisfaction observed.

The concept of Professional Fulfilments highlighted that employees value recognition and alignment of their work with personal values. A major proportion of employees (44.5%) strongly agreed that their work aligns with their personal and professional goals, and 44.9% strongly agreed that their contributions are valued and make a positive impact. Satisfaction with recognition and rewards also recorded high levels of agreement, with 38.1% agreeing and 23.3% strongly agreeing. These results suggest that most employees feel professionally fulfilled, though a small minority of their opinion towards neutrality or mild disagreement.

In the case of Work-Life Balance, many employees expressed being able to maintain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives. Statements regarding flexible work arrangements and having sufficient time for personal interests received strong agreement from 42.5% and 43.2% of respondents, respectively. While dissatisfaction was minimal, a small percentage (0.9%-1.8%) disagreed with the institution's efforts to support work-life balance, indicating room for improvement.

The responses under Career Growth and Advancement disclosed that employees perceive clear opportunities for progression within their institutions. For example, 39.2% agreed, and 24% strongly

agreed that their career goals are supported by institutional development programs. In addition to that, 49.1% agreed that their achievements and milestones are recognized and celebrated. These findings suggest that institutions are viewed as supportive of employees' career advancement, although minor dissatisfaction (0.2%-2.6%) was perceived among some respondents.

The concept of Compensation and Benefits highlighted strong satisfaction levels, particularly regarding salary and overall compensation. Most respondents (53.3%) strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their salary packages, and 45.4% strongly agreed that their compensation was fair and competitive compared to similar roles. Dissatisfaction levels were notably low, with only 0%-3.7% expressing disagreement. These findings underscore the importance of fair compensation in maintaining employee satisfaction.

Finally, under the construct of Job Security and Stability, employees demonstrated confidence in their roles and institutional commitment to staff retention. Around 37.7% agreed, and 13.2% strongly agreed that their institution is committed to staff retention and development. Similarly, 32.8% agreed, and 18.5% strongly agreed that they felt confident in the stability of their institution and role. However, 5.1%-11% of respondents remained neutral or mildly disagreed with these statements, suggesting potential concerns about long-term stability.

Table 2.

Happiness Variables	Disciplines	N	Mean Value	F	Sig.
Work Environment	Management	129	4.84	5.824	0.001
	Arts	106	5.40		
	Commerce	113	4.99		
	Science	106	5.10		
	Total	454	5.07		
Professional Fulfiment	Management	129	4.82	2.996	0.031
	Arts	106	5.21		
	Commerce	113	4.87		
	Science	106	5.07		
	Total	454	4.98		
Work-Life Balance	Management	129	5.13	2.642	0.049
	Arts	106	5.08		
	Commerce	113	4.91		
	Science	106	4.78		
	Total	454	4.98		
Career Growth and Advancement	Management	129	5.19	2.637	0.049
	Arts	106	5.30		
	Commerce	113	4.97		
	Science	106	4.92		
	Total	454	5.10		
Compensation and Benefits	Management	129	4.85	3.426	0.017
	Arts	106	5.24		
	Commerce	113	4.90		
	Science	106	5.08		

	Total	454	5.01		
Job Security and Stability	Management	129	4.96	0.090	0.965
	Arts	106	4.99		
	Commerce	113	5.02		
	Science	106	4.95		
	Total	454	4.98		

The results of a One-Way ANOVA test analyse the mean differences in employee happiness variables across various disciplines (Management, Arts, Commerce, and Science) are presented in the table. The analysis provides insights into whether the type of discipline significantly influences specific dimensions of employee happiness, including Work Environment, Professional Fulfilments, Work-Life Balance, Career Growth and Advancement, Compensation and Benefits, and Job Security and Stability.

The findings reveals that there is a statistically significant difference in perceptions of the Work Environment across disciplines ($F = 5.824$, $p = 0.001$). Employees from the Arts discipline reported the highest mean value (5.40), indicating greater satisfaction with their work environment compared to other groups. This was followed by employees from the Science discipline (5.10), while those in Management reported the lowest mean value (4.84). Similarly, significant differences were observed in Professional Fulfilments ($F = 2.996$, $p = 0.031$), where Arts again had the highest mean value (5.21), suggesting that employees in this discipline feel more professionally fulfilled. The lowest mean value was reported by Management (4.82), indicating relatively lower fulfilment levels.

The Work-Life Balance, the test revealed a significant difference ($F = 2.642$, $p = 0.049$), with employees in Management reporting the highest mean value (5.13), followed closely by those in Arts (5.08). Conversely, employees in science reported the lowest mean value (4.78), suggesting challenges in maintaining a balance between personal and professional life. A significant difference was also observed for Career Growth and Advancement ($F = 2.637$, $p = 0.049$), with Arts employees perceiving the highest opportunities for career advancement (mean = 5.30), whereas Science employees reported the lowest mean value (4.92).

In terms of Compensation and Benefits, the differences were significant ($F = 3.426$, $p = 0.017$), with employees in Arts reporting the highest satisfaction levels (mean = 5.24), while Management employees reported the lowest satisfaction (mean = 4.85). These results says that perceptions of fair and competitive compensation vary across disciplines. However, for Job Security and Stability, the ANOVA test did not reveal any significant differences among the disciplines ($F = 0.090$, $p = 0.965$), indicating that all groups reported similar levels of confidence in the stability of their roles and institutions.

Findings

The findings from the analysis of both tables highlights significant differences in employee happiness across various disciplines in higher education institutions, while also revealing extensive patterns of satisfaction. Employees in the Arts discipline invariably reported higher levels of satisfaction across elements such as work environment, professional fulfilment, work-life balance, career growth, and compensation, indicating that they perceive their institutions as more supportive of their professional and personal needs. On other hand, employees in Management and Science disciplines reported comparatively lower levels of satisfaction, particularly in areas such as work environment, professional fulfilment, and work-life balance, pointing to potential challenges in aligning institutional practices with their expectations. These findings align with those of (Rana et al.2022), who observed that individuals in creative fields often experience higher satisfaction due to the intrinsic

value of their work. However, they construct with the study by Gupta and Verma (2020), which reported no significant differences in work-life balance perceptions across disciplines, whereas this study identified lower satisfaction in this area among employees in Science and Commerce. The constant perception of job security and stability across disciplines supports the conclusions of Singh et al. (2019), who drew attention to institutional policies that can effectively standardize employees' sense of stability. These results emphasise the need for discipline-specific strategies to address unique challenges faced by employees in Management and Science while maintaining consistent policies that promote job stability and security across all disciplines.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on employee happiness by providing information in discipline-specific variations in higher education institutions. The results highlight the significant role of factors, such as academic discipline, work environment, professional fulfilment, work-life balance, career growth, and compensation and benefit. This provides theoretical understanding of job satisfaction and happiness by showcasing that employee well-being is not similar across professional settings. The consistency in perceptions of job security and stability across disciplines strengthen institutional policy standardization as a key factor in promoting a uniform sense of stability. These findings validate and expand on theories related to workplace happiness, such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, by showing how intrinsic factors (e.g., professional fulfilments) and extrinsic factors (e.g., compensation) interact within the disciplinary context. Moreover, the results challenge existing assumptions of uniformity in employee experiences across different fields, paving the way for further interdisciplinary research in organizational behaviour.

Practical Implementation

Institutions can implement several unique and practical strategies to improve employee happiness across disciplines. Developing specialised professional development plans tailored to the specific needs of employees in different disciplines can address gaps in career advancement opportunities. For instance, faculty in Science and Management disciplines may benefit from programs focused on interdisciplinary collaboration or leadership in research-driven environments. Introducing hybrid work models, such as virtual office hours or asynchronous grading systems, can provide much-needed flexibility to employees in Management and Science, helping them achieve better work-life balance. Recognition programs should also be designed to align with discipline-specific achievements, such as acknowledging research breakthroughs for science faculty or creative contributions for Arts faculty, fostering a deeper sense of professional fulfilments. Institutions can further support well-being by designing discipline-specific wellness programs that address unique stressors, such as mindfulness workshops for science faculty managing research deadlines or team-building retreats for Management faculty handling administrative challenges.

Rotational job assignments and interdisciplinary teaching opportunities can break the monotony and expose employees to various environments, promoting collaboration and enhancing satisfaction. Exploring discipline-specific compensation packages linked to unique needs, such as research grants for science faculty or creative project funding for Arts faculty, can ensure equitable and meaningful rewards. Additionally, co-curricular collaborations between faculty from different disciplines can foster a sense of community and encourage the sharing of best practices. AI-powered feedback systems can be introduced to gather real-time inputs on institutional policies, enabling precise and impactful interventions. Cultural alignment workshops can also be organized to bridge differences among disciplines, creating a more cohesive work environment. Also, HR Analytical tools can be used to assess employee performance (Nayak, Chaudhary, & Kumar, 2024). Finally, conducting regular internal studies to assess evolving needs and refining policies based on research-driven insights can

ensure that institutional interventions remain relevant and effective over time. These tailored approaches can significantly enhance employee happiness and engagement across all disciplines.

Conclusion

The study reveals valuable insights into the factors influencing employee happiness in higher education institutions, highlighting the significant role of work environment, professional fulfilments, work-life balance, career growth, compensation, and job security in shaping overall satisfaction. By adopting a discipline-specific perspective, the research identified meaningful variations in employee perceptions across Management, Arts, Commerce, and Science disciplines. These differences underscore the complexity of employee happiness and the need for tailored strategies to address the unique expectations and challenges of employees in diverse fields.

While showing disparities among other area that requiring attention the result also underlines the significance of institutional measures in preserving uniformity in area like job security and stability. The findings also emphasized the importance of institutional policies in maintaining consistency in areas such as job security and stability, while revealing disparities in other dimensions that warrant attention. The stratified sample and a validated questionnaire were two examples of the methodological rigor used to ensure the study collected accurate and representative data. By combining theoretical framework with empirical data, the study adds to the longer debate on workplace happiness and provides practical suggestions for enhancing employee wellbeing in higher education. The results serve as a foundation for further research into discipline-specific interventions and cross-disciplinary comparisons in organizational behavior. Future studies could explore additional variables such as cultural influences, leadership styles, or technological integration to build a more holistic understanding of employee happiness in dynamic and evolving workplace contexts.

Scope for Future Research

Although the study offers an information foundation for understanding employee satisfaction in higher education, some of its limitations indicates area requiring more research. Study focuses on four disciplines such as Management, Arts, Commerce and Science and limits the findings applicability to other fields, such as engineering or medicine. Expanding the scope to include additional disciplines could reveal whether similar patterns of happiness emerge. The reliance on self-reported online survey data also introduces potential biases, such as social desirability and limited engagement. Future studies could incorporate mixed methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to gain deeper insights and mitigate these biases.

The cross-sectional design captures a snapshot of employee happiness at one point in time, preventing an understanding of how happiness evolves. Longitudinal studies could explore the impact of organizational changes, such as policy updates or leadership transitions, on employee well-being. Additionally, while this study focused on six constructs of happiness, future research could examine variables like organizational culture, leadership styles, or employee engagement for a more comprehensive understanding.

The study's findings are also limited by their geographic and cultural context. Future research could include participants from diverse regions and cultural backgrounds to provide comparative insights and enhance global applicability. Addressing these limitations could enrich the literature and provide actionable strategies for improving employee happiness.

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