

Generating Happiness at Workplace for Optimal Performance

Abstract

This study sought to test in a real organizational setting, the strength of the linkages that exist between the variables at three levels; firstly, the level of the team leaders viz. personal happiness with life and the particular leadership style that they follow; secondly, variables at the level of the team such as team happiness, team cohesiveness, and positive psychological resources of the team members; and thirdly, whether these linkages between the leader level variables and team level dynamics result in better performance for the teams. At the level of the leader, this study intended to test whether a leader who is happier with his life is more likely to follow a humanistic leadership style. Whether following such a leadership style produces happier work teams and stronger leader – member relationships? Whether these enhanced levels of team happiness and leader – member relationship strength produce more cohesive work teams? Whether greater happiness of the work teams is directly linked to higher levels of positive psychological resources for its members? Whether greater team cohesion and higher levels of positive psychological resources produce superior team performance at the work place as well as team members who are more satisfied with their life? Thirteen hypotheses were tested in all pertaining to these three levels of the study. The data for this study was collected from the Bangalore operations of a public sector manufacturer and supplier of electronic hardware and technology to the defense organizations, which has its head office and main plant based in Bangalore.

Instruments were developed by the scholar himself to measure the leaders' happiness, humanistic leadership style scores of the leaders, leader – member relationship strength, and happiness at the workplace of the team members. The instruments to measure hope, self efficacy, resilience, team cohesiveness and satisfaction with life were borrowed from the literature and a two item scale was devised by the scholar himself to measure the performance level of the teams that participated in this study. The data was collected in four phases out of which the first three phases were used to collect quantitative data pertaining to the three levels of the study while the last phase was used to conduct interviews with some chosen team leaders and their corresponding team members. Altogether 38 team leaders participated in the first phase of the data collection while only 31 teams participated for the team phase of the study despite repeated reminders.

The first four hypotheses belonged to the first level of the study. There was strong support for the first two hypotheses which stated that happier leaders are more likely to follow a humanistic leadership style and that the teams led by happier leaders would experience greater happiness at the work place. The first hypothesis had two parts to it. Hypothesis 1a postulated a significant positive relationship between leaders' happiness level with life and humanistic leadership style while the hypothesis 1b postulated that leaders who derive a greater part of their happiness from the spiritual dimension are more likely to follow a humanistic leadership style. Both these parts of the hypothesis were strongly supported by the data. The third hypothesis pertaining to the first level of the study postulated that teams led by leaders scoring higher on the humanistic leadership scale would experience greater happiness at the workplace. This hypothesis too was

strongly supported by the data. The fourth hypothesis at the first level postulated that teams led by leaders who score higher on the humanistic leadership scale would have stronger leader – member relationship strength. But this hypothesis was not supported strongly by the data. Thus all the hypotheses pertaining to the first level of the study except the fourth one were strongly supported. But a step wise multiple regression identified humanistic leadership style as a more significant predictor of team happiness than leaders' personal happiness level.

Hypotheses 5 to 7 belong to the second level of the study. Hypothesis 5 postulated a positive and significant correlation between mean team happiness levels and team cohesiveness, hypothesis 6 between leader – member relationship strength and team cohesiveness, and hypothesis 7 between mean team happiness and positive psychological resources (PPR). Hope, self efficacy and resilience were the three representative PPR chosen. Hypotheses 5 and 6 received extremely strong support from the data while the seventh one did not receive significant support. On the whole the predicted second level relationships were supported.

Hypotheses 8 to 11 belong to the third level of the study. Hypothesis 8 postulated a positive and significant correlation between team cohesiveness and team performance, hypothesis 9 between PPR and team performance, hypothesis 10 between team cohesiveness and satisfaction with life, and hypothesis 11 between PPR and satisfaction with life. Hypothesis 8 was supported to a large extent by the data with $r = 0.32$. But this relationship just failed to meet the significance criterion of $p = 0.05$. Hope and self

efficacy were found to be strongly correlated to team performance, but resilience was not. A step wise multiple regression found hope as the most significant predictor of team performance among the PPR variables. Hypotheses 10 and 11 were very strongly supported by the data. Thus on the whole the relationships predicted for the third level of the study were also supported by the data.

Hypotheses 12 postulated that teams led by happier leaders perform better and hypothesis 13 postulated that happier teams perform better. But both these hypotheses were not supported by the data. Thus it seems that most of the relationships predicted in this study hold in actual business organizations in the manner shown in the conceptual framework used for this study. Happier leaders trigger a number of good things in organizations but indirectly by following the humanistic leadership style which in turn triggers greater happiness at the workplace of work teams. This greater happiness at the workplace triggers greater team cohesiveness which in turn produces better team performance and employees who are more satisfied with their lives. But leaders' happiness or team happiness cannot predict superior team performance directly. They do so indirectly by triggering the next variable in a chain as shown in the conceptual framework which has received a very strong support from the data.

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