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**Scientific literature review on Happiness:  
Implications and possibilities of achievement  
in the work environment**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of people at some point in their life find themselves with the need to work. The origin of this need can be very varied, but the truth is that in most cases it will involve spending a fairly high percentage of adulthood and vital time. Presumably then, individuals will seek, to a lesser or greater extent, that the time allocated is preponderantly beneficial or positive for them (Lyubomirsky, 2008). In the case of this paper, the aim is to decipher to what level the well-being of people is important for their daily lives and for the organizations which they are a part of. Concretely the objective of the academic work is the compilation and review of the scientific literature that has addressed the topic of well-being and happiness at work in the last two decades, in order to understand what it really means for organizations and their members, while establishing which are the possible practical tools to make happiness at work a reality.

The concept of "happiness" has been present throughout history, from the minds of the great thinkers of each era to the mind of any individual in general, because it has been, and continues to be, an intrinsic aspect of the meaning of life. A priori, it is difficult to establish a single definition, since if people were asked randomly and broadly what happiness is for them, probably would have a variety of responses and would not achieve a consensual response that applies to all. In the same way, throughout the history of humanity from the field of philosophy, happiness has been subjected to debate and has had different definitions: for hedonists it was basically the sum of pleasant moments, a vision that mainly focuses on pleasure and the immediate satisfaction of desires. This line of thought had greater depth with the epicureans who also proposed that for those pleasant moments to be happy, one also had to be prudent. While for the stoics, it was not only about obtaining pleasure but also avoiding pain. However, the renowned greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have influenced the western vision of happiness to a greater extent, which includes the concept of eudaimonia that relates happiness to possessing and developing the virtues of each human being; emphasizing an internal force that would allow reaching personal goals (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Vázquez, 2009). The intention below is to clarify what similarities and differences these definitions have with the actual understanding of happiness, based on empirical research beyond philosophical thoughts.

Until not long ago, when it comes to studies on humanity, the attempt to understand the human mind through psychology has been focused from a negative point of view. The deficits and diseases of the psyche and their implications in other aspects of life have

been studied and analyzed in depth; but apparently when people were well there was no need to go deeper. This perspective has taken a turn in recent decades, especially in the second half of the 20th century, but more specifically since the 1970s, when some authors question the absence of scientific foundations on the much-desired "happiness" and the positive effects it could have for humans. In this way, a totally opposite new line of research arises: positive psychology (Carr, 2007; Lyubomirsky, 2008; Vázquez, 2009). Later on, the specific characteristics of this approach are deepened, which is of vital importance for the understanding of what happiness implies in scientific terms.

The work below, after clarifying some basic concepts, is divided into two large blocks. The first, which seeks to frame the topic of happiness in a global way, covering the distinctive characteristics that allow readers to understand the concept and the aspects that contribute to happiness; and the second, which introduces the concept of happiness to the work environment, determining the main characteristics of the link that exists between the two of them, as well as practical issues of how to obtain happiness in said context.

This review aims to understand technical aspects of a subject as popular as it is important, presenting the empirical evidence that allows building a way of working that is more connected to reality and to the needs of both organizations and the people that constitute them.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The choice of the topic is not strictly part of the initial search for content and therefore is not considered within the methodology, since it stems from a personal interest of the author. The motivation to delve into the possibilities of being happy at work is because I never had a work experience from which I can say that I was happy at work, so it is especially interesting for me to learn and understand this field of study, not only to be able to aspire to said happiness in future jobs, but also to promote it for others from possible future business management roles.

Therefore, and according to the chosen topic, a theoretical review is proposed. In this sense, the work methodology implies an extensive search of scientific literature that allows an understanding of the concepts associated with happiness, and later, the work and organizational perspective of it is deepened (Sabatés & Roca, 2020).

Taking into account the bibliography recommended by the tutor, the formulation of this paper will be based mainly on the review of manuals by leading authors on the subject, in order to capture the essential content. Additionally, in the subtopics that require it, scientific articles derived from the search in databases such as Scopus and Web of Science will be deepened, in addition to those also suggested by the tutor.

Below are the followed steps to develop the paper (see table 1) that emerge from the initial schedule arranged by the tutor and student. The review of the work was stipulated in several instances in order to be able to monitor and adjust its progress.

**Table 1: Followed steps**

TASKS / DATES	October 2022	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023
Meeting with the tutor and consideration of the topic	11				
Approach to title, objective/s, justification, methodology and index		13-20			
Proposal submission		21			
Corrections. Introduction, methodology, beginning theoretical framework		22-4			
Submission 1 - Initial version			5		
Corrections. Theoretical framework continued			6-24		
Submission 2 - Intermediate version			25		
Corrections. Completion of the theoretical framework			26-7		
Submission 3 - Intermediate version			8		
Corrections. Setting introduction and conclusions			9-29		
Submission 4 - Final version				30	
Official submission					9
Face-to-face defense					20

Face-to-face instances
Online submissions
Long tasks

Source: own elaboration

### 3. UNDERSTANDING OF KEY CONCEPTS

The term "happiness" is very present in the common vocabulary of all people who endow it with a fairly broad and diverse meaning or connotation. In this sense, some authors from the scientific community have chosen to use words considered equivalent, such as subjective well-being and/or psychological well-being, as they are less controversial; preferring, in turn, the "psychological" option to avoid falling into false accusations that being "subjective" cannot be correctly evaluated (Vázquez, 2009). In this paper, all these forms of expression will be considered valid, since precisely because of its popularity, the term "happiness" is also included in titles or explanations when attempts are made to reach all readers with academic information. In any case, it is necessary to clarify what psychological well-being encompasses and the elements that frame it, since they are terms that are frequently used in the field of study of positive psychology. The main terms or expressions used are presented below and summarized in table "Key concepts" (see table 2), which take as reference the precisions of previous works (Diener, 2006; Fredrickson, 2006; as cited in Vázquez, 2009), where the last three (affect, satisfaction with life and area of satisfaction) are the main components that allow to define the concept of psychological well-being.

#### Psychological well-being

It encompasses in a broad and general sense both the reflective or evaluative elements, as well as the reactions and emotional states that people experience regularly throughout their lives.

#### Emotions and Moods

There are three main differences between emotions and moods. While the former are a clear and recognizable response to a certain stimulus, they are of relatively short duration (ephemeral) and endowed with considerable intensity; the second are not necessarily linked to a specific event but rather refer to a routine experience, where they also tend to last for a certain time and are much less intense. Logically both concepts can be diversified into both positive and negative approaches.

#### Pleasure

It is a state that normally accompanies positive emotions, but that truly compensates a need of the organism in a rewarding way. It is a subjective state that supposes the joy and satisfaction of the person.

### Positive and negative affect

They encompass the several emotions and moods that people may have in response to various stimuli or events in life. There are those that are classified as positive that are indicative of a pleasant subjective content and well-being; and the negative ones that, on the contrary, indicate an unpleasant subjective content and non-well-being.

### Satisfaction with life

Concept used to establish an assessment of judgment or evaluation of how people feel with their own life, at a more macro level, encompassing the entire life from birth or delimiting the assessment within a specific time frame.

### Areas of satisfaction

It works as a measurement element that diversifies the sectors or dimensions that cover life in a stable way, since the satisfaction of each area and the global one do not necessarily coincide; giving rise to the possibility of deepening into the specific domains and also evaluating how adjusted it is to the ideals or if any specific aspect of a certain area would be changed.

**Table 2: Key concepts**

<b>Psychological well-being</b>	<b>Emotions</b>	<b>Moods</b>	<b>Pleasure</b>
Reflective and evaluative elements; Reactions and emotional states.	Response to specific stimulus. Ephemeral. High intensity.	Response to routine experience. Longer lasting. Low intensity.	Rewarding state. Associated with joy and satisfaction.

<b>Positive affect</b>	<b>Negative affect</b>	<b>Satisfaction with life</b>	<b>Areas of satisfaction</b>
Response to emotions and moods. Pleasant subjective content and well-being.	Response to emotions and moods. Unpleasant subjective content and non-well-being.	Evaluation of feelings about one's life. Possible different time frames.	Measures and diversifies life's global domains. Assesses suitability with personal ideals.

Source: own elaboration (based on Diener, 2006; Fredrickson, 2006; as cited in Vázquez, 2009).



The measurement of psychological well-being has caused challenges in the scientific community due to the subjectivity of some characteristics, and therefore it may be non-specific. However, as in other research areas, the fact that there are subjective variables does not prevent well-being from being quantified, through the use of comparison systems with indicators that are consistent and intrinsically associated with other aspects more "easily measurable", in addition to logically using sufficiently representative samples to compensate for possible individualities.

## **FIRST PART**

### **4. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY OF HAPPINESS**

#### **a. Positive psychology**

As anticipated at the beginning of this document, the scientific study in relation to the positive aspects of the human mind and happiness has been rather late: from the 20s of the last century interested authors began to appear, but it was not until the second half of the century that really began to delve into the study and analysis of well-being (Vázquez, 2009). Until then, the scientific approach had been predominantly negative and sought to understand negative emotions and moods, mental illnesses and the effects they could have on other aspects of people's health and life in general. Therefore, what some experts launched into question was that if it was known and proven that unhappiness or states of discomfort negatively affected people's lives, then why not investigate and scientifically verify the causes and positive effects of happiness? In this context, the bases of a new current of psychological study are established (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

By the end of the century, it had already been studied enough to be able to establish that it constituted a new approach with its own name, so the American psychologist Martin Seligman, one of the greatest references on the topic, uses his new position as president of the American Association of Psychology to finally coin the term Positive Psychology in 1998. What is established is that this new psychological current was not intended to compete with all the scientific evidence that existed regarding the harmful effects of some negative emotions or ways of coping with certain situations, and of course it was not intended to eliminate therapy with traditional clinical psychology; but

rather that they were complementary. It is not unreasonable to think that once a patient overcomes stages of depression or anxiety, mental health professionals could also provide them with the tools to face life in another way, trying to avoid a relapse, and with the aim of living with greater fullness (Carr, 2007; Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Consequently, positive psychology arises from the need to understand and facilitate happiness and subjective well-being, in order to be able to anticipate or predict how it is possible to achieve these states. In this sense, psychology becomes able to not only remedy negative emotions, negative moods and the deficits they entail, but it can also improve well-being with a positive approach (Carr, 2007; Vázquez, 2009).

## **b. Positive emotions**

For a better understanding is it therefore necessary to delve into positive emotions and Martin Seligman (as cited in Carr, 2007) proposes that these can be divided into three categories according to their relationship with time: past, present and future. Within the category of positive emotions related to the past, the main ones are pride, serenity, personal fulfillment and satisfaction. Within those that are related to the present, he in turn divides them into two types, the momentary emotions associated with pleasure and the more lasting ones that are associated with gratification. In order to have a better picture and go deeper into these states, he again subdivides the pleasures, depending on whether they are experienced through the bodily senses or if they are more complex sensations that he calls superior (such as joy and enthusiasm). Finally, the main positive emotions associated with the future are confidence, security, faith, hope and optimism.

Furthermore, the psychologist and professor Barbara Fredrickson has developed the theory of expansion and construction of positive emotions (2002; as cited in Carr, 2007), which allows us to understand the upward spiral or chain effect that the experience of positive emotions can have. These behave like a non-zero sum game, since at the end of the experience of the emotion, the individual does not remain in a neutral state or equal to the one before experiencing it, but rather, on the contrary, it obtains something in return, a profit. The theory points out that in addition to the personal well-being of the experience of positive emotions, these involve development and contribute to the growth of the individual, through an infinitely reproducible sequence where the experience of positive emotions leads to expanding the momentary thought-action repertoires, which in turn allow the development of lasting personal resources, and which ultimately will transform the person.

Additionally, it is worth noting what Sonja Lyubomirsky et al. (2005; as cited in Hervás, 2009) define in relation to positive emotions and life satisfaction, and it is indeed positive emotions have an effect on happiness, but also happy people seem to be more predisposed to seek a greater number of satisfactory experiences; in what could be understood as a feedback wheel. On the other hand, in the investigations of the authors Diener, Sandvik and Pavot (1991, as cited in Hervás, 2009) it was already deduced that the promotion, enjoyment and continuity of daily pleasures has a greater effect on positive emotions in general than those more explosive but isolated events; denoting the prevalence of frequency over intensity.

### **c. Hedonism and Eudaimonia**

The introduction mentions two ancestral philosophical aspects that exist around what is meant by well-being or happiness. On the one hand, the hedonic view that in general terms it is considered as the sum of pleasures; and on the other hand, the eudaimonic view that would also encompass the development of human potentials through the realization of true nature. The two currents, although they are old formulations, are still valid today and serve as a basis for analyzing the different conceptions of happiness. A priori, they would appear to be two totally independent paths, but in practice, the reality is that both constructions overlap in some aspects (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The initial hedonic vision proposes that the ultimate goal of life is to encompass the greatest possible number of pleasant experiences and that therefore happiness is measured as the totality of these in a person's life. Throughout history, the concept of hedonism was acquiring some other nuances, such as the search to satisfy human appetites, but also that a good society is built from maximizing pleasures and self-interest. Among psychologists who consider themselves hedonic, the conception of well-being that has the greatest number of followers, according to Diener et al. (1998, cited in Ryan & Deci, 2001) assumes that happiness is subjective, and should be widely interpreted to consider not only physical hedonism (bodily pleasures), but also the one that can be derived from the judgment of other areas and the achievement of goals.

The predominant evaluation format of the pleasure/pain continuum among the followers of this view has been the evaluation of subjective well-being analysis (SWB), where three aspects are analyzed to obtain the level of happiness as a result: satisfaction with life, positive moods presence and the absence of negative ones. On the other hand, another hedonic conception of well-being assumes an approach that

measures the relationship between expectancy and value, which suggests that regardless of the things one considers valuable, well-being will be given by the results obtained in relation to the initial expectancy. On the contrary, from the eudaimonic perspective, happiness cannot be equated to subjective well-being as considered by the hedonic view, since it maintains that not all the results of the things that a person values will trigger actual well-being, even if they are pleasant results momentarily, can in effect be detrimental in the long term. In this sense, the followers of the eudaimonic vision, prefer to conceptualize it as psychological well-being, which supposes personal fulfillment and growth at the individual level; and at a collective or social level, the commitment to shared values and goals (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Waterman (1993, cited in Ryan & Deci, 2001) argues that people's activities and their way of living must be in congruence with their deeply rooted values, thus generating a truly intense and authentic life experience, in congruence with the true nature of each individual. The author has called this as personal expressiveness (PE). Assessed and compared to hedonic measures that relate to a relaxed state away from problems, this personal expressiveness has more to do with being challenged, striving, and personal growth and development.

In what has been the study of well-being, the two perspectives have focused on different aspects and, therefore, to approach different questions; hence, in reality, the information obtained, rather than discrediting one another, behaves in a complementary way (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The Happiness Orientation Theory (Peterson et al., 2005, as cited in Peiró et al., 2019) proposes that both currents are ways of achieving well-being and that they behave in a compatible way, because an individual might be pursuing both ways at the same time. In terms applied to work, these two currents will have an influence on the level of performance of workers, but scientific research concludes that a eudaimonic approach has a greater influence on it. These results will serve as guidelines on how it is more feasible to achieve well-being at work (Peiró et al., 2019); something that is also supported at the end of the work when the characteristics of good places to work and the structure of happiness at work are detailed.

#### **d. Genetics, context and behavior**

The fact that from remote ancestors there has been an attempt to answer what happiness is and how to obtain it, has generalized the idea of the pursuit of happiness in such a way that it has led people to think that it is an object that they have to

discover, a kind of trophy at the end of the competition. The psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of the book "The how of happiness" (2008) rejects this popular phrase, and chooses to call it the "creation" or "construction" of happiness, since, as has been scientifically demonstrated, happiness is not an achievement relegated solely as an ultimate goal, nor is it something that is out there, but rather, to a large extent, it is a continuous process, where the decisions and attitudes that people make are decisive.

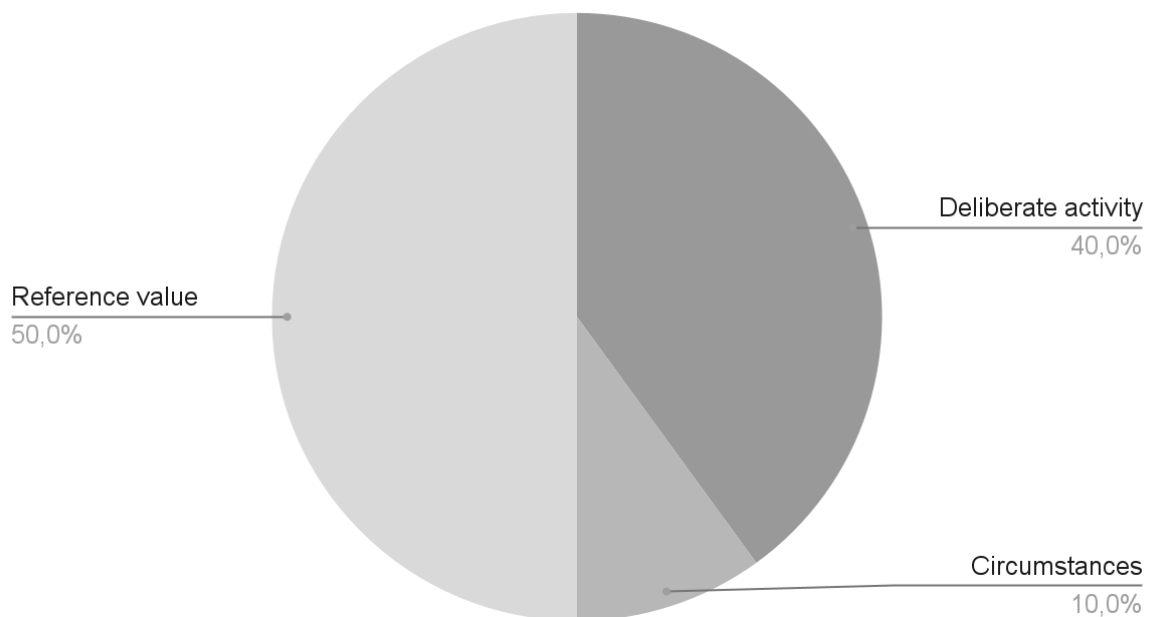
In 2001, the author together with colleagues Ken Sheldon and David Schkade, met with the purpose of generating a categorization of the different ways to achieve the acclaimed happiness and also in a lasting way; but they found out that research in the scientific field at the time had reached two quite pessimistic conclusions for a large part of the population. It had been established that, on the one hand, happiness is genetically inherited and therefore remains mainly stable throughout life, and on the other, that people find it enormously easy to get used to any positive change, giving rise to rapid habituation and returning to the same reference level of happiness perceived prior to the change or event. These two guidelines would indicate that those who do not inherit the "quality of being happy" are then destined to never achieve it, or at least not permanently or consistently (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Fortunately, the trio of professionals were not content with the findings and the pessimistic outlook, so they decided to embark on the investigation of the extent to which these claims were correct. On the one hand, they discover that yes, it is true that part of happiness depends on genetic aspects inherited from both the biological mother or father (or even both) and predisposes a reference value for happiness, which would be the potential for happiness with which people are born and to which they always return, even when positive events happen to them. But what is actually most remarkable is that this reference value for happiness represents only 50% of all the variables, giving rise to a more optimistic vision of how happiness is determined. The remaining 50%, the investigation has managed to subdivide into two other determining factors, which are the circumstances or context and the deliberate activity. The majority of ordinary people would consider that the most important would be the context (since is what the most people are always trying to change), but the findings show that to be wrong, that only 10% depends on the circumstances in which the person lives (such as economic wealth, physical health, physical attractiveness, marital status, etc.); leaving the remaining 40% of determining factors for happiness in the behavior or deliberate activity that people carry out.

The reason behind why changing the context or circumstances does not greatly alter people's level of happiness is due to the phenomenon called "hedonic adaptation", which stipulates that as people get something they wanted they believed would change their lives, and therefore their happiness, soon normalizes the new situation by shifting the central point of assessment, adapting and returning to the prior reference value of habitual happiness.

The following graph "What determines happiness?" (see figure 1) represents the division of these three factors, which allows us to visualize how wide the spectrum is to achieve happiness in a lasting way (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

**Figure 1: What determines happiness?**



Source: Lyubomirsky (2008).

In sum, what the finding and determination of these percentages suggests is that the key to achieving happiness is not found either by doing the impossible (which would be modifying inherited genetics) or by aspiring to drastically modify context issues or circumstances (such as becoming very rich or modifying physical appearance); rather, the margin of action or potential to be happier is found precisely in deliberate activities, taking into consideration and as a reference point what the happiest people do and think.

While the above conclusions that genetics are quite determinative and that people quickly get used to positive events in their lives are not in themselves wrong, considering that individuals cannot change their happiness is. The most hopeful

discovery then results in the great incidence that each one has in their own happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

#### **e. Intrinsic motivation, psychological basic needs and flow**

Every time someone sets a new goal, they obviously do so with the aim of achieving it and for this, motivation is necessary. Since this is a limited good, which is not constantly maintained in its greatest exponent, long-term goals sometimes lack sufficient motivation. To solve this inconvenience, it is appropriate to incorporate other shackles into the chain, or what would be the same, intermediate goals to achieve the ultimate one. It is a common belief among the population that achieving goals will bring satisfaction and therefore lead to a state of well-being or happiness, but research has shown that this will only be the case if the origin lies in genuine interest, and it is the person in their individuality who considers it really important, that is, having an intrinsic motivation (as opposed to extrinsic goals that would be those established by the expectations of others or by imposed socio-cultural stereotypes). In addition, goals, in order to be really important for the person and lead to the person's well-being, have to be related to basic psychological needs (also called basic components of psychological well-being). There is no absolute consensus on which and how many these needs are exactly, but the ones that are most repeated throughout the works of different authors (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Baumeister, 1991; Epstein, 1990; Ryff, 1989; Maslow, 1943; as cited in Hervás, 2009) are: 1. Need for relatedness; 2. Need for competence; 3. Need for autonomy; 4. Need for self-acceptance; 5. Need for vital meaning and 6. Need for growth. Each of them is briefly explained below:

##### Relatedness

It is clearly present throughout people's life cycle, from the attachment of newborns to their parents or caregivers, to belonging to distinctive groups or institutions, to stable intimate relationships and mutual care. This type of need is usually the one that is most strongly associated with well-being.

##### Competence

Also present from childhood with the abilities that children acquire to interact with their environment, and mostly developed in adult life through work. The need for competence, related to efficiency and productivity, is very relevant for obtaining

well-being, since it implies the feeling of mastery of different aspects or relevant areas of life.

### Autonomy

The need for autonomy is linked to independence, both to manifest or express individual identity and to choose the type or path of life. It is of vital importance in the stages of adolescence, to establish the personality and individuality of each one, and in the third age, to feel that they do not become a burden. During the long stage of adult life, economic and professional independence significantly influence the satisfaction of the need for autonomy.

### Self-acceptance

Related to self-esteem but not identical to it, the need for self-acceptance present throughout life is more linked to self-love, adopting an attitude of care and understanding to oneself, mainly in the face of limitations, frustrations and situations perceived as failures.

### Vital meaning

Linked to having a purpose or reason for living, the need for vital meaning involves that people achieve a feeling of usefulness and value as one of the essential pillars to maintain well-being, since the absence of this supposes the sensation of existential emptiness.

### Growth

Related to the progressive development of the full potential of people, through the incorporation of new challenges and the acquisition of new knowledge that allow the improvement of various areas perceived as important.

Bearing in mind what each of these basic psychological needs entails, it should also be noted that well-being is not ensured by successfully covering only one or some of these needs, but to the detriment or neglect of others. Rather, in reality, what the scientific evidence shows is that the balance and equilibrium of small or moderate satisfactions in each and every one of the areas is more valuable and promotes a higher level of well-being, which is above all, a stable well-being (Hervás, 2009).

As previously mentioned, motivation can have two clear origins, external or internal. The biggest difference between the two is that extrinsic motivation is triggered by the



results (almost always to avoid an unpleasant consequence), and intrinsic motivation is driven because the activity to be carried out is pleasant in itself for the concerned person. According to psychologist Albert Bandura (1997; as cited in Carr, 2007), intrinsic motivation is developed by people to carry out activities that meet three characteristics: they pose a moderate challenge, the person believes they can do it well, and it also gives them satisfaction. Experimentation and reaching a certain level of performance is precisely what leads to the feeling of satisfaction, since it is strongly linked to the positive emotions of attainment of the achievement itself.

Autotelic activities, which etymologically comes from the Greek where auto means for oneself and telos means objective or goal, are those that are carried out because the activity itself supposes an intrinsic reward, without any other anticipated benefit. This characteristic, that the activity becomes the end in itself, is the most distinctive of optimal experiences. As another of the referents of this field of psychology, Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, called this kind of experience "Flow". He points out in several of his works (1988, 1990, 1997; as cited in Carr, 2007) that flow, in order for it to occur, must be accompanied by two other characteristics: the activity or task requires a high skill and is perceived as difficult but at the same time it is controllable or manageable; and, as it could already be deduced at this point, it must be carried out by intrinsic motivation. In addition, so that these tasks do not become frustrating and really lead to an optimal experience or flow, the objective(s) must be clear and the feedback or reward, in addition to being intrinsic as has been said, must be immediate. The level of concentration requires to be very high, but the feeling of effort, when flow is reached, disappears due to being absorbed in the activity.

In sum, for a task or activity to be considered as flow or optimal experience, there are certain distinctive parameters or conditions to take into account. First, it must be perceived as difficult or a challenge and that it requires the use of above-average aptitudes or abilities of each person, in order to really be able to complete the task. Second, the immediacy of the reward, which implies that the person continues advancing because they know that they are achieving what has been proposed. Third, which emerges from the two previous ones, is that the concentration must be real and deep, giving rise to a loss of awareness of the environment, of oneself and of daily problems; when people are experiencing flow in the task at hand, they are focused solely on it. Fourth, the perception of time is transformed, altering what lasts a long time and seems to elapse in seconds, and what happens in seconds but feels like an eternity (depending of course on the kind of experience and the individual). Fifth, the optimal experience must be to some extent fostered by the family, culture, and environment in which the person is immersed; certain forms of upbringing/education,

bonding and particular characteristics of the nation or culture where each one lives, are responsible for the person feeling safe and finding opportunities to experiment freely without fear or concern of reprisals (Carr, 2007). All of the above combined in the individuality and uniqueness of each person will allow each one to have their own experiences of flow, because of course, what absorbs and challenges some people does not do so in others.

As the logical deduce, the tasks most commonly called simple or that are very repetitive, rarely lead a person to a state of flow. This could be considered a problem in certain work contexts, since if a worker is involved in monotonous, repetitive and non-challenging tasks during his workday, then it is unlikely that he will find the possibility of having flow experiences in it (Delle Fave et al., 2009).

On the other hand, the fact that the task requires above-average skills obviously does not mean that people are experts from the start. It can happen that one at the beginner level is still attracted to the activity by perceiving it as interesting and stimulating. In this way, the individual goes deeper and deeper into mastering it, increasing the skills and competencies that move the challenges and goals forward. As Delle Fave (2004; as cited in Hervás, 2009) points out, the continuous acquisition of skills and the progressive refinement of competencies then becomes a kind of virtuous circle that allows the development of the individual throughout life.

Contrary to what Privette and Bundrick (1991; as cited in Hervás, 2009) assumed that optimal experience or flow activities were predominantly related to leisure or recreation, it has been shown that "compulsory" type activities such as study or work (regardless of whether are merely intellectual or require the physical body) and that require a high level of involvement and concentration could lead, in several cases, to states of flow (Delle Fave et al., 2009).

Quoting Antonella Delle Fave, Marta Bassi and Fausto Massimini (2009, p.227), it can be concluded that *"authentic development should be one of the goals of positive psychology if its ultimate goals are to provide people with a life worth living and promote well-being in communities and societies"*.

#### **f. Psychological wealth**

In the previous sections, it has been explained how there are certain areas that must be taken into account to achieve states of well-being or happiness, but which are ultimately subjective because it is based on what each person evaluates and perceives of their life and what is important in it.

When thinking about wealth, the first thing that comes to mind for most people is financial wealth. But what Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) state for is that surely when most people stop to think more deeply if there are other things that can provide or increase someone's level of wealth, they will come to the conclusion that there are other important aspects, such as: experiencing satisfaction or joy in a variety of circumstances, having deep and intimate emotional ties, having some kind of spirituality or meaning in life beyond the earthly and being committed to the cause and achievement of goals intrinsic motivated by each one. There are probably very few who would disagree that a life that encompasses all of these areas is not much more real and profound wealth than simple monetary wealth. When all of the above is taken into consideration, it is then that the concept of psychological wealth can be understood. This assumes that the wealth of each individual is the total net sum measured precisely by considering social ties and their support, the development of a purpose, the attitudes that each person has towards life and its different scenarios, the activities of which they are a part from, their health and also, but only as one of its components, material and economic resources.

Despite the above, the fact of obtaining money to be able to afford the goods and material resources necessary to survive (and live) implies spending a large amount of time in each one's life. Probably, working (seen solely as a means of earning an economic income) is one of the contexts in which adults spend the most time. What the concept of psychological wealth, according to the father-son duo Diener, intends to highlight is that economic and material abundance is not worth it if all other factors are left aside, because instead of "winning", such materialism would mean a decrease in total value and individual wealth.

It could be said that psychological wealth is experiencing life as excellent through living it in a meaningful, enjoyable, committed and rewarding way; therefore, people perceived as psychologically wealthy have a characteristic in common, and that is that even keeping their feet on the ground over the reality that surrounds them, they have the ability to see the world and their circumstances with good eyes and optimism, in such a way that allows them to approach each situation as an opportunity to use their strengths.

All of the above can be clearly summarized by quoting Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008, p.11) as follows: *"As physical beings, we are part of the material world and need to build our tangible resources to experience security and comfort. But we are also spiritual, needing a sense of meaning and purpose that is larger than ourselves, and that connects us to humanity and nature. Finally, we are psychological beings who interpret the world around us, and this means that our happiness depends in part on*

*the mental habits we develop. True wealth requires material, spiritual, social and psychological resources”.*

One of the main components of psychological wealth lies in, as previously mentioned, happiness is the process and not the destination. On the other hand, and the one that becomes more relevant in the following sections, is that happiness should be seen more than anything for the functions or benefits it can have, somewhat leaving aside the fact that it obviously feels good. Understanding happiness as a process supposes that everyday issues and how they are interpreted are considered part of well-being, therefore developing or mastering the ability to interpret life situations in a positive way will become a strength to face it. On the other hand, understanding happiness as something more than merely a state of satisfaction or something that is enjoyable and feels pleasant will allow it to become a resource that helps people to be more functional.

Just as some negative emotions or unpleasant experiences can be beneficial in some cases, because they serve the purpose of protecting us from something (such as fear, to flee from a dangerous situation), research on positive emotions and experiences has shown they are also beneficial. Happy people tend to get sick less and thus live longer, commit fewer crimes and help others more, just as they tend to be more creative, work harder and perform better at their jobs. All this scientific evidence simply makes clear the practical benefits that happiness can have for people in all the great domains of human beings' lives, affecting the entire society as a whole. To the same extent that people are more proactive when they are in a good mood, the same happens in relation to positive emotions and positive experiences: when in a state of well-being, people feel energized and are able to build and develop the resources to face the different scenarios and circumstances that arise in life, which will ultimately lead to facing everything in a better way, in a feedback loop where personal fulfillment and social well-being prevail. This does not mean that negative emotions and unpleasant experiences are not equally necessary for the full development of people, since in the end these provide perspective and also learning, but what is really important is that positive ones predominate, since happiness helps to create psychological wealth (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

#### **g. Conditioning factors of well-being**

It is not revealing or surprising that people are not all the same and that each one has a sum of personal characteristics that make them unique. But the reality is that the

universe of characteristics or traits can be grouped. Next, in the following table "Factors and components of personality" (see table 3) the personality theory developed by Costa and McCrae (1992; cited in Carr, 2007) is represented, which groups personality factors into 5 traits, where each one is made up of 6 facets. The combinations of values in each of these areas and taking into account the context of each person, will result in a particular "way of being" (Carr, 2007).

**Table 3: Factors and components of personality**

<b>1. Stability / Neuroticism</b>	<b>2. Extroversion</b>	<b>3. Openness to experiences</b>	<b>4. Sympathy</b>	<b>5. Conscientiousness</b>
Courage / Anxiety	Affectionate	Fantasy	Trust	Competence
Calm / Hostility	Gregariousness	Esthetic	Sincerity	Order
Happiness / Depression	Self-assertion	Feelings	Altruism	Duty consciousness
High self-esteem / Low self-esteem	Activity	Actions	Complacency	Achievement eagerness
Impulse control / Impulsivity	Thrill-seeking	Ideas	Modesty	Self discipline
Resistance / Vulnerability	Positive emotions	Values	Goodness	Deliberation

Source: own elaboration (based on Costa and McCrae, 1992; cited in Carr, 2007).

Most people will present moderate levels or values for any of these characteristics, and only some will stand out with very high or very low levels of a certain trait. This information is competent for this work because according to different studies on personality, happy people and unhappy people present certain determined traits (Diener et al., 1999; cited in Carr, 2007). The two personality traits that are mostly related to happiness, or on the contrary to unhappiness, are the extroversion trait for the former and the neuroticism trait for the latter. Scientific information indicates that people with a high level of extraversion are more predisposed to experience a greater number of positive events, while people with higher levels of neuroticism are more predisposed to experience predominantly negative events (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

On the other hand, it should be noted that the cultural context will also influence how these personality traits are perceived. For example, in Western cultures that are predominantly individualistic, optimism, self-esteem, and congruence between actions and thoughts are associated with a higher level of subjective well-being; while for Eastern cultures that are primarily collectivist, these traits are not associated with a

higher level of subjective well-being, indicating that what each culture appreciates varies (Triandis, 2000; cited in Carr, 2007).

Intercultural studies are consistent in the fact that there are also cultural and sociopolitical factors that must be taken into account as well when determining well-being and happiness. It has been shown that living in a country with a stable democracy, where there is no political oppression and no armed conflicts, has a direct relationship with the subjective well-being of its population. In addition, aspects such as social equality, the social benefits offered by the government and a good relationship between public institutions and citizens are of great importance, since in these places subjective well-being is higher (Triandis, 2000; cited in Carr, 2007).

Bearing in mind what was discussed above, regarding the fact that happiness is influenced to a large extent by deliberate activities and not only by factors of genetic inheritance or vital contexts, it is noteworthy that there are certain leisure activities that have a strong relationship with happiness. On the one hand, there are those that have short-term positive effects, such as good rest, recreation and good nutrition; as well as vacation periods that improve mood and reduce irritability. And on the other, several studies support the fact that participating in recreational or sports-type activities, such as dance, music, and mass sports, also increase levels of well-being continuously and in the longer term, probably because they are linked to the satisfaction of needs of relatedness, competence and personal growth (Carr, 2007).

## **SECOND PART**

### **5. HAPPINESS AT WORK**

#### **a. Why happiness at work matters**

All the previous sections have issued scientifically proven information that makes it possible to ensure that happiness has positive repercussions in people's lives. Since part of those lives is the time allocated to work, below and in the following sections, the importance of happiness at work and what are the keys to make it a reality will be specifically addressed.

Delle Fave et al. (2009, p.229) ensure that *“Positive emotions and experiences, optimism, active and intrinsically motivated dedication are elements that can increase productivity at work [...]. Analyzing the resources and strengths of individuals and*

*encouraging their development has become the new commitment of companies*". In this same line, the author Jessica Pryce-Jones reveals in her book *Happiness at Work: Maximizing your psychological capital for success* (2010) the results of years of research and empirical studies, providing highly relevant information to understand the implications that has for organizations to have happy employees. Together with her team, she also creates a framework of happiness at work that reveals the findings and synthesizes them in such a way that regular people and organizations know how to achieve happiness in the work environment. Before delving into this structure of happiness, other relevant concepts and aspects must be addressed, which is why it will be explained later in this document.

The predominant perspective towards work until not long ago has been to assign the value of companies solely to financial value, putting economic objectives at the center of the mission and purpose of organizations, believing that it was the best business strategy. The most recent findings from various related disciplines argue that new practices and approaches to work are necessary, and that although financial capital is unquestionably important for every company, this is actually the result or direct consequence of human relations within. The management of other values or capitals "previous in the chain" will define success or failure for the business. To trace the origin and understand the true value organizations have, the sequence is explained below. Represented in the scheme "The four capitals" (see figure 2), it is clearly visualized how financial capital is the final result of three other previous echelons, starting with psychological capital and going through social and human capital (Pryce-Jones, 2010).

**Figure 2: The four capitals**



Source: Pryce-Jones (2010).

Human capital is made up of both the talents and skills, as well as the education and experience of the workers, thus allowing the development of business strategies and the achievement of the proposed objectives. For this reason, it constitutes an essential component to obtain financial value, and therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind its adequate management and its constant optimization. For this, it is key to take into account social and psychological capital, since as described by Pryce-Jones *"Social capital leads people to want to be in a group and learn from it, while psychological capital gives them the wherewithal to do so"*. On one hand, Social capital is made up of

the connections and relationships that are established with others in various groups, communities or jobs. A high level of this supposes having aspirations, goals, purposes and values in common, in such a way that similar and consistent ways of thinking and acting are developed. In the work context, it means that people are committed to the team and are willing to take risks for them, knowing that there will be mutual support along the way. On the other hand, Psychological capital refers to the personal mental resources that each one develops when going through good times, and which are tools to go through bad ones. It has to do with resilience, optimism, believing in oneself and self-worth. All these elements will allow the person to feel good about themselves, but they will also influence integration in the workplace, within the bond with colleagues and in work performance; especially in current work dynamics (Pryce-Jones, 2010).

In a study carried out in California between 2003 and 2011, where 850 students were asked about happiness (Almaraz & Sharifzadeh, 2014), it was concluded that for the common population it is difficult to define it. The answers were very varied, without consensus, even going so far as to define it as what it is not, that is, the absence of sadness. However, it is demonstrated in this study that the ways to achieve happiness are diverse and that they are related between each other; as when a goal is proposed to achieve another later. They were also asked if they believed that a happy employee was a more productive one and the results showed that if the elements associated with happiness at work, such as being treated well, being paid accordingly and enjoying the work environment, then they were more likely to put in more effort and work harder.

However, Pryce-Jones (2010, p.4) and her team, based on their most complete and comprehensive studies, do try to define happiness at work, and they do so as follows: *“Happiness at work is a mindset which allows you to maximize performance and achieve your potential. You do this by being mindful of the highs and lows when working alone or with others”*. Three main aspects emerge from the above definition: the importance of presence and awareness to gain perspective; that despite the fact that the construction of happiness is mostly individual and personal, it always occurs around others; and that happiness at work does not mean that people do not experience unpleasant moments and negative emotions, but that they must learn from these and overcome them to return to states of well-being.

It is easy to identify when someone is unhappy at work, because the consequences in terms of energy, effort, and enthusiasm become quite apparent. The same does not happen with the consequences of being happy at work, it becomes more difficult to see the positive contribution; but it does, and some of the direct consequences of the happiness of the workers are: that individuals learn more; generate more and better



creative ideas and interact better with peers, supervisors, and bosses; this way they have better support and often get better reviews. All of the above is going to have a massive influence on reaching goals faster and getting promoted in less time, therefore it will also affect the level of success achieved and probably also increase salary and other forms of compensation. Last but not least, happiness at work is also related to better people's health, strengthening the immune system and improving the ability to face high pressure and stressful situations (Pryce-Jones, 2010).

The number of hours spent at work is predominant in people's lives, so whether or not they are happy at work will greatly influence whether they are happy in their life in general (Tasnim, 2016). However, happy workers are not the only ones benefited from their happiness in the work context, but it is also convenient for the organizations for which they belong. Scientific research conducted by Diener and Biswas-Diener, shows that people who feel more satisfied in their work environment and who have a high level of happiness in general, are more creative due to the good moods they usually have. The ability to think more broadly, "outside the box", allows them to have original ideas or different ways of analyzing situations, which ultimately favor the solution of certain circumstances or the achievement of various business goals. Furthermore, happier people are capable of making more effective decisions, which logically yield positive results in the end. This better performance is usually related to better evaluations by supervisors, which ultimately can lead to higher financial compensation or other kinds of appreciation. Additionally, the bond between happy employees and their supervisors and other colleagues is usually more pleasant, so collaboration between peers or providing help when necessary is more frequent. All of the above conditions indicate an enjoyable work environment for the employee and this increases the reasons for staying longer in a certain organization, thus avoiding the high costs associated with frequent staff turnover (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

Some of the results obtained by Pryce-Jones (2010) strongly support as well the reasons why being happy on a daily basis at work has a great impact, both on each individual and their colleagues, and on the organization itself. The most relevant are highlighted below. To begin with, the happiest people at work, compared to their least happy colleagues, are 47% more productive and 25% more efficient and effective. The level of positive energy, which results in enthusiasm and motivation, is 180% higher in the group of the happiest workers. Motivation is increased by 50% and the feeling of reaching their potential is 40% higher, compared to those who are less happy. Furthermore, the happiest people will take considerably less sick leave. Although the physical work environment must meet minimum comfort requirements, the good design and aesthetics of the establishment will only bring temporary happiness; but what really

influences tremendously the daily work environment is that the happiest employees experience 28% more respect from colleagues and 31% more respect from bosses. All of the above only shows where organizations should allocate their attention if they want to be truly functional in the long term and in the most optimal way: support the happiness of their employees in all possible ways.

**b. Work from different points of view**

Just as there are different interests in general and the motivations that drive people to do certain things are extremely broad, the approach given to paid work can also be diverse, influencing the level of satisfaction that it provides to each individual. Research supports that work orientation can be divided into three categories and that depending on each person's point of view, the associated pleasure, motivation and importance given to work will be specific to each group. The first category is Job Orientation: in these cases the work is seen solely as a means of economic compensation. The second category is Career Orientation: work is seen as a way to obtain other gains in addition to the financial ones, such as respect or status. The third category is Calling Orientation: reserved for those employees who love their work and for whom financial compensation is secondary, prioritizing the importance their work has and the contribution they feel they are making to the world. The following table "Work orientation categories" (see table 4) exemplifies the characteristics of workers in each of the three categories (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

**Table 4: Work orientation categories**

<b>Job Orientation</b>	<b>Career Orientation</b>	<b>Calling Orientation</b>
Leisure prevails over work	Could enjoy the work	Passionate about work
Money motivated	Achievements or goals motivated	Motivated by sense of contribution
Does not recommend the job	May recommend the job	Recommend the work
Waits for the workday to end	Eagerly awaits vacations	Has work always in mind
Work as directed	Initiative to impress superiors	Performance by intrinsic compensation
Effort according to economic incentives	Effort for achievements or goals	Effort because job is rewarding

Source: Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008).

It should be noted that the simple fact of having a job makes people happier than those who are unemployed. This is probably because it is a space to develop skills, have a sense of purpose and also form part of a social support network (Warr, 1999; cited in Carr, 2007).

Taking into consideration the research of Amy Wrzesniewski (cited in Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008) Calling Orientation is not restrained for certain professions or roles, but fortunately can be found in up to a third of workers in any job occupation. Any job can be categorized as Calling Orientation because it has less to do with the tasks to be performed, than with how well it fits the person and how committed they are to the job. The main distinction between this type of orientation and Job or Career Orientation is that the former assumes that workers participate in what is called job crafting. This concept implies that they take initiative so that their jobs and work environment have more to do with their vision of life and what they value in it, making tasks more efficient or performing additional ones, such as collaborating with co-workers or giving the extra mile. All these characteristics will result in greater satisfaction during the time spent at work. And although it may even be thought that they tend to work more than necessary, with the danger of becoming workaholics, in reality the time allocated is done without regret, also favoring well-being in other areas of their lives: the happiest people in their work are also the happiest people overall (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

Aligned with the characteristics of the workers of the different orientations categories, Carr (2007) adds that people should try to modify their employment situation when certain conditions are not met, such as not being able to put into practice their aptitudes, abilities, preferences or that are not intrinsically rewarding, because this will mean that they are less likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

As Tasnim (2016) points out, Job Satisfaction has been the most widely used tool to measure happiness at work. It involves both positive and negative feelings combined, in such a way that it can be evaluated if workers feel that they are having success at work, since it is related to productivity. On the other hand, the concept of Job Engagement so frequently used in the matter, implies evaluating the level of performance of the employee according to the standards of the organization; and it supposes to consider if the contribution of a specific department is align with the business success, if the effort contributed for the goals of the organization and the level of achievement that the individual can feel for being part of it. But these two terms, which are often used as synonyms for happiness at work, as Pryce-Jones (2010) points out, fall short, being narrower concepts than happiness at work, since it covers many more factors, explained later in this document.

The concept of "Flow", previously explained, implies that people can experience states of total absorption due to the tasks they are performing. When it comes to finding a job that can make each person happy, it must be taken into account that it must be appropriate, interesting and meaningful for each specific person. But it is also important to note, as Csikszentmihalyi described (1990, cited in Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008) that the degree of difficulty or challenge involved in the work must be balanced with the worker's aptitudes and abilities: excessive difficulty will generate anxiety, none or very little difficulty will generate boredom. However, when the level of challenge is optimal (always analyzing it from the individual characteristics and abilities of each person) it is more likely that a state of flow will be achieved. These situations do not happen all the time, but it is possible to have them at work if employees know their skills and strengths and seek to implement them, as well as build on them as experience and abilities grow. After all, if people want to be happy at work because they understand and believe in all the benefits it can bring to their lives in general, then they should look for job opportunities that will eventually allow them to reach flow states.

### **c. A good place to work**

Despite all of the above, happiness at work does not depend solely on the good attitude of people, but is also influenced by the workplace, and some organizations have professional suggestions more present than others. A good place to work, to begin with, must have company policies that look after both the organization and the employees that are part of it, providing the necessary mechanisms to deal with situations that may arise on a day-to-day basis (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

There are a series of indicators that must be present in the so-called good places to work, that relate the work environment and employee happiness. The most important features for job satisfaction identified by Warr (2007) and summarized by Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008) are presented below:

#### Personal Control

It refers to the freedom or flexibility of action in relation to how to perform certain tasks or how to apply the abilities that each one has. Although a job involves following certain standardized rules and procedures, these should not be tedious and without leeway, because not having any liberty over their duties will make them feel that their work is monotonous and not challenging. By giving them some freedom of decision, they will

be able to consider their work more rewarding and it will make them feel more involved with their tasks.

#### Variety of tasks

It simply implies that the activities carried out during the working day vary, since the monotony and constant repetition of an exclusive activity or very limited series of activities inevitably leads to boredom. That workers can participate in different activities or assume various responsibilities or tasks, will allow the possibility of having more engaged employees.

#### Supportive Supervision

One of the most valuable resources an organization can have is proactive and supportive supervisors. Those who are interested and concerned about employees, who encourage them and provide both positive and improvement feedback, and who are accessible at all times, will allow employees to feel more comfortable and have the necessary relaxation to perform their duties more efficiently. A good supervisor will ensure the continuous development of employees, providing them with the training and tools necessary to work with enough freedom. These types of work dynamics allow employees to feel more secure.

#### Respect and status

Although there are some professions that throughout history have been greatly respected and associated with high status (for example, doctors and judges), these characteristics can be taken into account in all types of organizations and at all levels. This is so because when bosses, supervisors, colleagues and clients treat workers well and also recognize their contributions to the organization, they feel that their work is worthwhile; influencing them to feel competent, enthusiastic and proud of their achievements.

#### Good pay and fringe benefits

In virtually all cases, living on minimum wage is more about just trying to survive, so a good place to work is going to be one that pays decent wages and supplements with other benefits that allow people to be able to pay an adequate standard of living. Considering that there are still a large number of employers who believe that workers only care about money, a reciprocal dynamic at work is necessary: workers must develop their skills and be productive in their work habits; and employers must provide a workspace that supports challenging and meaningful work. While all workers care

about their salary, and would prefer a higher one rather than a lower one, they are also concerned about the conditions of that position.

#### Clear requirements and information on how to achieve them

To avoid the anxiety of not knowing what is expected from the employee or how to achieve specific tasks, expectations need to be clear, as well as how and when to accomplish them. For this, good places to work that promote workers happiness must have supervisors and policies that facilitate and accompany these processes. The work environment cannot be too unstructured or too flexible with deadlines, but neither can it be too strict; the balance is in being able to use the unique strengths and talents of workers, allowing them a certain diversity of tasks and ways of achieving objectives without this implying that they do not know what to do. In this way, employees are more likely to enjoy their jobs and therefore want to stay longer within the organization.

Given that the characteristics necessary for job satisfaction addressed above are not always present, some organizations may not be good places to work. Working conditions can generate stress within the staff, both because of how the organization is managed, and because of the work overloads and demands that may exist. When these situations occur, it is said that the employee may experience burnout syndrome, a psychosocial deterioration that affects workers in their mental health. These previously mentioned situations cause employees to have emotional exhaustion and generate a defense mechanism translated into cynicism regarding their responsibilities and their co-workers. All of the above translates into a low sense of self-realization combined with a feeling of low professional efficacy (Benítez Saña & Águila Obra, 2020).

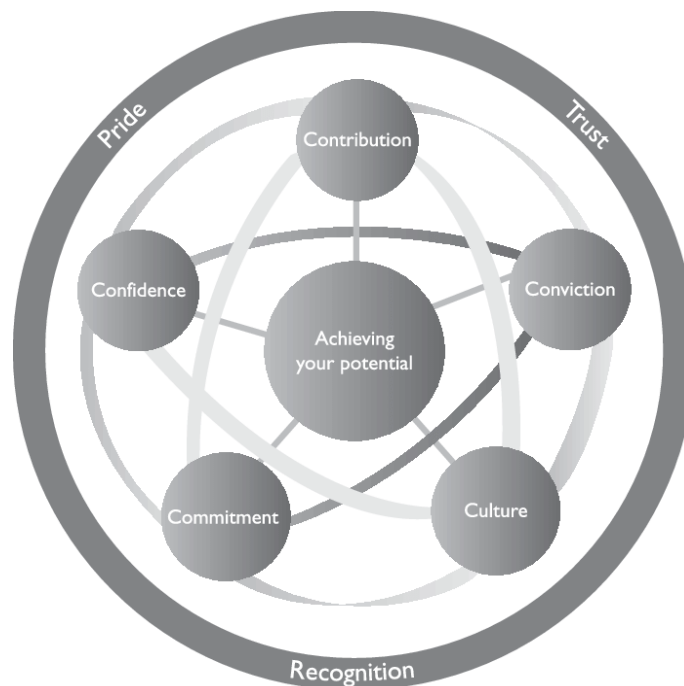
#### **d. The structure of happiness at work**

As previously anticipated, the studies and research conducted by Pryce-Jones (2010) and her colleagues, allowed them the creation of a structure that makes it possible to accurately visualize the elements that constitute happiness at work. It is represented below in "The structure of happiness at work" (see figure 3), where the 5 main factors can be seen in the center, surrounded by an outer level represented in the form of a ring that encompasses everything; and at the heart of the scheme the ultimate goal of why try to build happiness at work. The 5 factors, named by the author as the 5Cs, are: Contribution, which refers to the effort made and the perception thereof; Conviction,

indicating the worker's motivation regardless of the circumstances; Culture, that manifests how well anyone fits into the job they are doing and the feeling that they belong there; Commitment, which indicates the level of dedication to the job; and Confidence, that points out the belief in their work and in oneself. The three attributes that surround them are: Pride, Trust and Recognition. The first two function together since they refer to the pride that any employee can feel for the workplace, and that results in them trusting the workplace and its leaders (it behaves reciprocally). On the other hand, the Recognition attribute has to do with how the people the worker respects express in relation to the effort s/he applied to their work.

The characteristics and implications of each of these factors and attributes are detailed below.

**Figure 3: The structure of happiness at work**



Source: Pryce-Jones (2010; Copyright iOpener Ltd).

### **i. Contribution**

The first and most important factor of the structure is Contribution. This is so because human beings are designed to constantly incorporate skills and complete tasks, which means that they are predisposed to implement the acquired abilities and get something in return. The research concludes that hard work inevitably leads to happiness, and that the Contribution can be evaluated by dividing into eight constituent elements. One half is the inside-out group, because it is what each individual wants from and within

work and the other half is the outside-in group, because it is what the working world offers in return. Each of these elements are explained in more detail below.

#### Inside-out:

##### Achieving goals

Setting goals at work gives people structure, gives them a path to follow, a direction in which to focus. When people set goals, what they are really doing is assigning their skills and talents to an end, where these in turn are developed and result in an ultimate feeling of satisfaction. This is because when people get it, they go from the "intangible" of wanting it to the "tangible" of actually having it.

There are some errors or self-traps that can arise when setting goals and that will logically affect, even prevent, their achievement. In the first place, the fact that the goal is not intrinsically motivated will imply that the necessary effort is not dedicated. Secondly, the proposed goal may involve something the person is good at and has the talent to do, but does not really enjoy; this would turn into a "duty" and generate a feeling of guilt. Third, if the goal is very ambitious or quite unrelated to prior knowledge, the person may not initially be aware of the sacrifice involved or what the characteristics of that achieved goal really are. Lastly, goals must be set from a positive aspect, since those that are set as negative and involve avoiding something will be much more difficult to achieve.

The construction of good goals, those that are raised correctly in order to be achieved, must be: realistic and appropriate according to the abilities; related to the strongest personal resources; that allow the development of an attainment strategy and that are neither too easy nor too difficult keeping congruence with others goals.

##### Having clear objectives

Goals and objectives are often confused, but they are not the same even if they are linked. The goals, the ones that were previously explained, have more to do with the great things that each one wants to achieve (like pursuing a promotion) and are related to vital purposes. Instead, objectives are the steps that must be taken to achieve those goals. They tend to be more in the short term and therefore take less time to complete. The objectives can be broken down into several smaller tasks, easily identifiable and measurable since they have a beginning and an end. Frequently, it is in these tasks where people find themselves with activities that they do not enjoy doing so much, but that are necessary to achieve the objectives that will allow them to accomplish the goals; and this is the most important thing to keep in mind in order to persevere despite setbacks.



### Raising issues that are important

The working world is increasingly collaborative, so making one's voice heard is necessary and important, because it has an impact on productivity, progress and the outcome of the situations that arise within the organization. The workers must feel the confidence and security to have an active participation, sharing their opinions and visions of things and being able to encourage or discourage something according to what is considered appropriate, because this will probably have an impact on their personal job goals. Suggesting ideas to improve, speed up or decompress certain practices, processes or workload, proposing alternatives and new lines of thinking and exchanging information are key aspects of raising issues that improve the status quo of the company.

### Feeling secure in the job

There are two types of insecurity that can surface at work. In the first place, the one generated externally, which supposes that some particular situation makes the employee feel or believe that their job position or its permanence at the company is in danger. If this belief persists, then it is likely that the worker will not perform tasks as expected and therefore not really contribute. In addition, constantly worrying about one's job future affects levels of psychological capital and can lead to burnout. Secondly, internally generated, there is what is called the Impostor Syndrome, which is nothing more than the individual constantly believing that they do not live up to expectations or demands. It may happen occasionally, but it should not be a constant or very frequent feeling, since it probably affects mood and emotions, and these affect the daily interactions with colleagues.

### Outside-in:

#### Being listened to

Related to the previous sections, being listened to has to do with feeling secure to raise issues that the worker considers important and that the work environment is fair, thus generating a greater Contribution. However, it is not an easy task for everyone. The listening ability can be divided into three levels: The first, and easiest, is to simply remain silent while the other person talks; but this does not really mean that attention is being paid or understanding what they mean. The second involves making sure that the same language is being shared, also observing facial and body expressions in order to understand the real intentions. The third level, the most difficult to achieve, involves validating the person who's talking by paying full attention, dedicating the time and focus necessary to understand the other. Reaching this higher level of listening is

when people really connect and increase their social capital; it is a reciprocal activity because the more a person really listens to others, the more s/he will be listened to as well.

#### Receiving positive feedback

Getting positive feedback on specific tasks, one that is precise and optimistic, that highlights the what and how of something that has been done, and that focuses on what should continue to be done can have very good results. Receiving positive feedback allows the worker to be clear about her/his role, to feel better and validated at work, to improve their sense of control and productivity, and to strengthen bonds. Logically, performance will not always be optimal, but the suggestion is that for one negative feedback there are three positive ones, ideally delivered at independent moments. It is not always easy to give feedback, even for trained supervisors, so if the worker asks for it, it also facilitates the exchange and the bond. An important learning tool is for each individual to analyze their personal situation and the factors that resulted in good feedback, so that they can recognize these characteristics and implement them in the future.

#### Being respected from bosses

Respect is essential in any relationship. Particularly at work, it supposes the bases from which the norms and daily practices are built. It is a behavior that functions as a uniting element between the members of a team, favoring hard work and therefore productivity. Workers want to have the respect of their boss because, in addition to being the person with the greatest influence over them in the work environment, it is associated with a fair work ethos, where they can express concerns. Furthermore, having the respect of the boss is transferred to a large extent to having it from colleagues too, generating a virtuous circle of mutual respect.

#### Feeling appreciated at work

If the feedback is related to pointing out the things that a worker does, the appreciation has more to do with highlighting the value for the worker itself. The gesture of appreciation may be small, even private, but it has greater personal meaning. Feeling appreciated has direct implications for motivation, energy, willingness to help others, and the desire to stay longer within the organization. It can be presented in the form of praise for something well-done or sometimes just a genuine "thank you" to demonstrate appreciation.

## **ii. Conviction**

Work conviction is connected to how successful the work role is in relation to the previous expectations of it and if these are also connected with the purpose of achieving the individual's potential.

The Conviction is made up of four essential elements. First, be motivated. This means that the worker feels an internal purpose, the desire to strive and have a direction that triggers some kind of action. Things like being competent in areas you value, connecting with colleagues you respect, and choosing experiences and behaviors that align with your values all amplify motivation. Second, the belief that one is efficient and effective. It supposes the correct use of individual talents and the allocation of energy to achieve the Contribution. Third, Conviction has to do with being resilient in difficult times. It can be appreciated both immediately and in the long term. The best way to build resilience is by coping proactively, as this will generate the necessary resources for future events. Fourth and last, the most encompassing element of the Conviction factor, is perceiving that the work one does has a positive impact on the world. This means that the hours and effort allocated at work are in the background, since the impact of the dedication goes further. It is related to the positive emotions generated by enjoying the job and being interested in it. This perception of positive impact on the world reaffirms that people should look to work on something that really connects with them.

## **iii. Culture**

The Culture factor in the work context - unlike Contribution which has to do with what the worker does, and Conviction which is related to what the worker feels - is associated with the work environment and assesses how in tune there are the ways of working of the organization with the preferences that each one has of how they want to work.

Culture not only differs between countries, which is the aspect that is usually understood by cultural difference, but it varies in all organizations, from one job to another and even between people from the same environment. It is made up of the sum of values, norms and specific behaviors, and it is impossible for it not to exist, even if it is not defined in the institutional information. A priori it would seem to be one of the factors where the individual has the least influence, but in reality there are small individual gestures that can affect it, and therefore contribute to happiness at work. The

language used, whether with a positive or negative connotation, reflects the culture of the organization and this influences the behavior of people and how they work, so attention to it must be paid to it.

Cultural preferences can be divided according to a scheme of 2 perpendicular axes: the first, from the most fixed to the most fluid, and the second, from the most restrictive to the most enabling. The culture, in terms of happiness at work, is made up of some more fluid elements that are affected on an almost daily basis, such as relishing the job and liking coworkers; and other more fixed ones that are more static and change slowly, such as appreciating the values the organization stands for, having a fair work ethos, and having control over daily activities. Individual workers will have much more influence on the former than on the latter.

#### **iv. Commitment**

Organizational Commitment is entirely tied to happiness at work: unless someone is truly happy, s/he will always hold something back. When employees are committed to their work, the reason for being there becomes clear and they know what and why they are trying to achieve. It has a strong relationship with motivation, behavior and attitudes, which, as already mentioned, has to do with Contribution. For this very reason, the level of Commitment is commonly judged by Contribution levels.

Commitment begins with the belief that what is being done at work is worthwhile. Hence, a genuine interest in it is generated, which allows connecting with the organizational vision and enables the appearance of positive emotions. All these elements are linked to each other and reinforce one another. Worthwhile work is associated with finding meaning and having a purpose, while being interested and engaged in work has more to do with what was explained previously in the Calling Orientation category. In order to believe in the organizational vision, it is essential that its leaders can communicate effectively and lead the way. Finally, people will know that they are on the right path if they experience positive emotions, also generating a reserve for when things are not going so well, when hope becomes an ally to know that everything is going to get back on track.

## **v. Confidence**

Confidence is the final factor in the center of the happiness structure, in absence of it, without the genuine belief that something can be achieved, it is not possible to move from desires or hopes to action. It is characterized precisely by allowing things to get done, and as more tasks are completed, more confidence is gained. It is complemented with self-belief and with the understanding of the role of each one. Self-belief increases as someone succeeds, whether it is oneself or someone alike; when embarking on new challenges or when connecting with each other's mental and physical state. On the other hand, understanding the role really means knowing if the initial expectations correspond with the job, if it is congruent with what is desired in the future (both personally and professionally), if it is a place or role in which the employee wants to remain and, as a fairly accurate external measure, whether a worker would recommend both the position and the organization to a close friend.

Confidence can be tricky, because too little is disabling and too much turns into arrogance. Neither of these extremes is helpful, because good performance disappears. To find the halfway point, where the individual is productive, it is necessary to find a job and establish goals and challenges that imply leaving the comfort zone, which means pushing away the limits and allowing the difficulty to increase as these goals and challenges are succeeded. It is equally important, as already mentioned, that they are realistic, otherwise they will become more harmful than fruitful.

A key tool regarding Confidence is that the people have to be present and aware of their progress, in order to be able to analyze the skills, talents and strengths that they have acquired, since these will form the grounds of how to face possible future situations.

## **vi. Pride, Trust and Recognition**

The ring that surrounds all the elements of the structure of happiness is made up of Pride, Confidence and Recognition. This is so because they are features present through the 5Cs factors already explained and encompass all the pieces associated with happiness at work.

As previously mentioned, Pride and Trust complement each other, meaning that employees want to be perceived as part of the organization they belong to. The study shows that if employees feel Pride, then they will trust colleagues and leaders for what

they stand for. And also, if there is Trust, they will feel proud to be a part of the team and what they can accomplish together.

Pride in the organization has a lot to do with self-identification with it, where the impact of the employee's work, at a concrete and broader level, coincides with personal values. It has positive aspects that can be seen both as resources and as results: it favors commitment to the organization; allows performance to be greater than is strictly necessary and to contribute and support the work teams; it empowers thinking about what more could be done to improve, which increases the level of challenges and ultimately encourages perseverance in the work environment; and on top of all of the above, it just feels good to be Proud of something someone is a part of.

While Trust, on the other hand, implies that the other members of the organization, both colleagues and leaders, are competent in their roles and demonstrate integrity by carrying out their work in the best possible way. This allows the individual to concentrate on their own job and take risks, without worrying that there will be interests behind their failure. Therefore, Trust in the organization has benefits such as fellowship, cooperation and the exchange of information and ideas; it reduces the pressures that individuals may feel and also creates social capital. Considering all of the above, working life becomes more enjoyable when there is Trust and work will be more efficient. However, it can be very fragile, since if arbitrary decisions are made, the rules of the game are changed or there are favoritisms, other employees will not feel as secure in their positions and therefore they will not Trust their leaders.

Finally, the aspect of Recognition is related to the appreciation that others make to someone, both of her/his way of being, and of her/his work, considering the achievements, dedication and ways of carrying it out in different situations. Appreciation is typically negatively correlated with money: it's not about getting a bonus for who you are or how you did a certain task, but rather about others being aware and giving a nod of validation. For some things, knowing that is well done is enough, but in other circumstances, external validation is necessary. This recognition has different formats and not all employees respond to the same ones. Some find it more valuable a few positive words, the simple fact of dedicating time or simply a physical gesture. However, for others the recognition will be more appreciated if it is translated into gifts or traits, in some visible symbol of achievement or even some expect the recognition, in specific cases, to be a promotion.

## **vii. Achieving your potential**

Doing tasks that are already easy to someone, that although they are being refined are indeed old lessons being repeated, does not lead people to reach their potential. Nor does it happen in the domestic sphere, where the tasks have more to do with patience than with the potential that each one has. Therefore, the work environment is one where people can experience and conquer their personal potential. Data shows that people weigh more achieving their potential at work, over staying in one that does not allow them to do so.

Although it is connected with all the other factors and elements already explained from the structure, working to reach one's potential is especially related to the Confidence factor, since to achieve it the person needs to use their courage, effort and persistence. In addition, achieving someone's potential has to do with aspects such as: feeling energized, making use of personal strengths and skills, while learning new ones, and going through and overcoming challenges that may arise in the work context.

It is easy to identify when people feel energized and it is important to pay attention to which are the things that generate it and which ones decrease energy levels, since it will have lower productivity as a side effect; working more hours does not always translate into greater productivity, if these hours are actually unfruitful due to low energy.

As for the use of personal strengths, it means taking advantage (because it is enjoyed) of those things that each one is naturally good at. They are not the same as skills, although they are often confused, so it is difficult to consciously recognize and apply them in the work context.

Skills, however, are things that everyone can acquire: they are not innate and can be honed through opportunities, practice, and support. In this way, the most relevant aspect in terms of the skills obtained and the level of expertise, will be based on the determination of improvement. Learning new skills means boosting psychological capital, through increased self-belief and Confidence. Learning, in general terms, is the safest, fastest and easiest way to exalt the contribution to the organization, since the skills that will allow solving the proposed goals are upgraded.

Lastly, accepting that challenges are part of life, and that they are also present at work, that even if they are imposed by the context, overcoming them is ultimately positive. And, although at the beginning of any challenge the level of happiness is lower, conquering and going through any obstacle means that happiness is greater at the end.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

As anticipated in the introduction of this paper, effectively defining happiness in scientific terms is a complicated task. There are several ways of understanding it and depending on the point of view some aspects stand out and are more important than others. But if there is one thing that is clear, it is that having a positivist approach to studying and understanding the human psyche, as Positive Psychology states, is essential to understanding patterns of behavior and the implications they may have for better ways of living. Identifying which aspects contribute to happiness allows people to consciously incorporate them (Carr, 2007; Lyubomirsky, 2008; Vázquez, 2009). One of the key characteristics that has been empirically demonstrated is the margin of action that individuals have to contribute to their own well-being. Contrary to the general idea that what is genetically inherited and the context in which each individual is born defines their chances of happiness, the deliberate activities of each one allows them to get closer or further away from well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2008). One of the reasons why it is difficult to define happiness is that although it has been possible to frame it in some key categories necessary to achieve well-being, these always have subdivisions that contemplate the diversity of interests; causing one person to consider her/his happiness as being surrounded by affection and people they care about, and for another, it has more to do with helping others or finding a sense of meaning from a professional point of view. All are valid, since in reality the evidence shows that well-being is not just a single thing, but rather a combination of these and other essential aspects (Hervás, 2009).

The simple fact of estimating the amount of time people spend working suggested the importance of considering well-being in the work environment. Indeed, it has been shown that it is necessary to study the aspects that contribute to happiness at work, since it has implications for the whole well-being of people's lives (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008), and that it also profoundly influences work performance, consequently affecting the development of business organizations (Pryce-Jones, 2010). The conception of work varies within the population, making it possible to distinguish three work-oriented categories, where the enjoyment of work, motivation, remuneration and other aspects are conceived differently; which does not strictly mean that only some can achieve happiness in the work context, but it does mean that some will have it a little easier than others (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). In any case, the attitude towards work, as well as the work environment itself, will have great importance in the personal well-being associated with work. Research shows that



regardless of the professional field, there is always the possibility of developing well-being (Amy Wrzesniewski, cited in Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008); and that to achieve happiness at work in practical terms it is necessary to consider all the factors and elements that structure it, ultimately allowing workers to achieve their potential (Pryce-Jones, 2010).

The present paper consists of a primary approach to the subject, briefly addressing terminology and concepts mainly from the field of psychology that allow readers to understand happiness from a more global vision. However, the consideration and deepening of other research, such as more scientific articles, perhaps more recent or directed from the business management field specifically, would be useful to delve into the practical tools that managers can use to enable the construction and optimization of happiness at work.

Furthermore, in a vital context where technology (and now especially Artificial Intelligence) is increasingly present in daily life and in the work environment, it would be interesting to be able to explore the impact it has and will have in the near future on workers and organizations, since it has the potential to change the work foundations completely.

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