

Research on Work Happiness Brought by Mindfulness — From the Perspective of Self-determination Theory

Li Zhang, Wenchi Zou *

School of Business, Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 947370520@qq.com

Abstract. In recent years, the positive effects of mindfulness have been recognized in various research fields, and the relationship between mindfulness and work happiness has also attracted extensive attention from scholars. From the perspective of self-determination theory, this study analyzed the relationship between mindfulness and work happiness by reviewing and sorting out previous studies, and established a research model based on it. Finally, the future research direction is proposed, which provides ideas for the following related research.

Keywords: mindfulness; work happiness; self-determination

1. Introduction

Employee happiness can stimulate the potential of employees themselves, and then affect the performance of employees. At present, with the acceleration of the pace of work and life, employees' anxiety, distraction, depression and confusion in the workplace have become common problems in the modern workplace, and the craftsman spirit and workplace happiness sought by organizations seem to be scarce. How to improve employees' happiness at work has become an important management issue that urgently to be solved.

Data shows that more and more people are experiencing work-related stress, and the impact on individual psychology and wellbeing, as well as organizational performance can be devastating." In the face of the current contradictions and severe management problems, it is urgent to seek appropriate solutions and effective ways. Mindfulness is a widely used treatment for psychological and mental illness.

In theoretical research, it has been proved that it is beneficial to improve negative emotions and relieve pressure, and is positively related to job satisfaction, job engagement and other factors[1]. Whether the introduction of mindfulness can solve the above management problems has become an important topic in the management field.

2. Research status at home and abroad

2.1. Research on mindfulness

In recent years, mindfulness has attracted attention in sociology and management. The word 'Mindfulness' comes from Buddhism. Since the 1970s and 1980s, the term "mindfulness" has been formally introduced into the field of science by scholars such as Jon Kabat-Zinn[2]. It is defined as being on purpose, non-judgmental, and attentive in the present moment. Since then, the academic circles have started to study, psychology, medical circles in their respective fields of the relevant issues have achieved a lot of results.

Some scholars describe mindfulness as a state that it has certain guiding significance for observation and research in specific places. Some scholars view mindfulness as an ability. For example, M.Epstein believes that mindfulness is an ability to focus wholeheartedly on what is happening and cultivate the ability to distinguish things. This shows that mindfulness can be acquired through some technical means or learning. Current research data show that mindfulness can improve work outcomes, reduce work stress, increase attention, and enhance work performance.

WENDY K,SILKE R,MARC W found through empirical research that the reduction of perceived stress, the improvement of happiness, the increase of team and organizational climate and individual performance were related to mindfulness. According to 496 questionnaire reports, Amy et al. found that workplace mindfulness can effectively improve employees' happiness, promote communication and regulate emotions[3-4].

Domestic scholars Chai Shuai, Wang Qian, et al. conducted an empirical study through 343 valid questionnaires and concluded that mindfulness has a significant positive impact on miners' safety behavior; Scholars Peng Wei and Xu Xiaowei also found the influence of mindfulness on employee creativity in their latest research. Through empirical analysis of the IT industry, Yang Qian and Zhao Zizhen proposed that employee mindfulness positively affects work happiness. It can be seen that the positive effects brought by mindfulness have been generally agreed by scholars in different fields, which provides a reference for human resource management[5-6].

This finding provides new ideas for the study of workplace performance, happiness and other issues. In the organization of recruitment, talent selection, cadre training, and put the right people on the right position to provide guidance.

2.2. Research status of happiness at work

Happiness at work originated from the discussion of happiness by ancient Greek philosophers. With the proposal of positive psychology and organizational behavior, happiness has been extended to the field of management and organization[7]. As early as 1987, Warr proposed that work happiness is the overall experience or emotion of employees towards work and organization. Scholars Efraty and Siegy believe that work happiness is an employee's subjective judgment that work can meet his personal ideal and living standard.

After in-depth research, Efraty and Sirgy proposed that work happiness should be used in subjective evaluation of people's satisfaction degree of ideal and living standard. Through the relevant researches of early scholars, it can be found that work happiness is closely related to people's subjective judgment and emotional change in work, which reveals the importance of work field environment and management style[8-9].

With the continuous in-depth discussion on the concept of work happiness, some scholars define work happiness as the satisfaction people experience in work activities. Some scholars define job happiness as an individual's job satisfaction and experience more and more positive emotions and less negative emotions.

It can be seen that work happiness is a kind of satisfaction and positive perception of people in the work situation. With the development of research on work happiness, scholars have tried to classify work happiness from the structural dimension, believing that work happiness is the product of employees' knowledge and belief about work[10-11]. Its dimensions include working environment, salary, promotion, colleague relationship and system arrangement.

From a medical perspective, some scholars believe that work happiness is the reflection of people's positive psychological and health status in the work field, and is an important indicator to measure the health of employees. A state of high pleasure experience from low arousal to high arousal. It can be seen that since there were labors and work, the cognitive experience of work happiness came into being[12]. According to Maslow's hierarchy needs theory and McClelland's achievement needs theory, it can be deduced that people desire achievement, power, belonging and self-actualization on the basis of satisfying basic needs in work. When these needs are met, people can feel a positive and beautiful emotion from work, and this experience process is called work happiness. From the perspective of the definition of happiness at work, foreign scholars can provide insights for the research of happiness at work[13-14].

Chinese scholars have also made numerous studies and definitions of work happiness in combination with local culture and work characteristics. Miao Yuanjiang defines job happiness as employees' perception, evaluation, motivation and emotion on various aspects of specific areas of work. Wu Qi proposed that work happiness refers to the psychological satisfaction that people have

through work to get the corresponding reward, give play to their own advantages and realize their self-value[15].

Liu Jiayan believes that work happiness is the emotional experience and psychological function quality of employees in the work situation. Wu Weijiong, Liu Yi, Lu Hong, Xie Xue et al. summarized the previous research results and proposed that work happiness is the reflection of subjective well-being in the workplace, which is to guide employees' emotional experience and cognitive evaluation of positive and negative work. Later scholars supported this view and agreed to regard work happiness as an individual's positive cognitive evaluation and emotional experience of work[16].

From the above scholars' interpretation of the connotation and definition of work happiness, it can be seen that no unified opinion has been reached on the definition of work happiness, but it is certain that it is closely related to people's emotions, emotion and cognition in the workplace.

3. Problem analysis

By reviewing the research literature on mindfulness and work happiness from domestic and foreign scholars, we found that both the variables of mindfulness and work happiness are related to people's basic psychological needs, cognition, motivation level and goal outcome, and these factors are affected by the self-determination of individual key factors.

From the definition of mindfulness and work happiness of previous scholars, it is found that the description of mindfulness and work happiness basically emphasizes positive emotions, such as concentration, non-judgment, satisfaction, dedication, etc. Secondly, they all mentioned cognitive evaluation. Thirdly, scholars emphasize the experience in the work situation[17-18].

In the description of mindfulness, scholars have proposed that Eastern mindfulness means having the ability to grasp current things, remember them, and not ignore them due to distraction, mind wandering, associative thinking, interpretation deviation or exclusion. Scholars believe that work happiness is the overall experience or emotion of employees' subjective well-being in the work situation. It is the quality of employees' emotional experience and psychological function in the work, and the evaluation of employees' job satisfaction, emotion and value[19-20]. Previous studies have shown that mindfulness can promote self-regulation by reinforcing and clarifying the experience, and enhance the awareness of happiness and well-being.

Mindfulness not only perceives and regulates emotions, but also perceives and experiences thoughts, bodies and the surrounding environment. Compared with emotional intelligence, the ability of individuals to perceive, understand and regulate the emotions of themselves and even others is broader and deeper[21-22]. According to previous studies, we can find that mindfulness and job happiness are closely related and mutually influenced by employees' intrinsic motivation, and self-determination is a strong factor.

Self-determination theory is one of the basic theories of management. In 1985, foreign scholars Deci & Ryan constructed the self-determination theory (also known as SDT)[23-24]. According to this theory, self-determination is based on the individual's inner love and interest goal, so it will produce more positive emotional experience and happiness. According to Maslow's demand theory, when the material needs of employees are met, they will rise to spiritual needs, and then produce all series of psychological suggestions and self-motivation.

Under the role of self-determination, employees will shift from the secular (material incentives) to the spiritual (intrinsic incentives)[25]. Under the stimulation of mental motivation, employees will spontaneously focus and effectively strive for the goal. When the effort reaches a certain level, it evokes mindfulness in the body, which is a significant increase in attention, concentration, non-judgment, awareness, etc. Employees' mindfulness positively affects their work happiness. Therefore, under the role of self-determination, the improvement of mindfulness will inevitably increase and improve employees' work happiness. (Fig. 1)

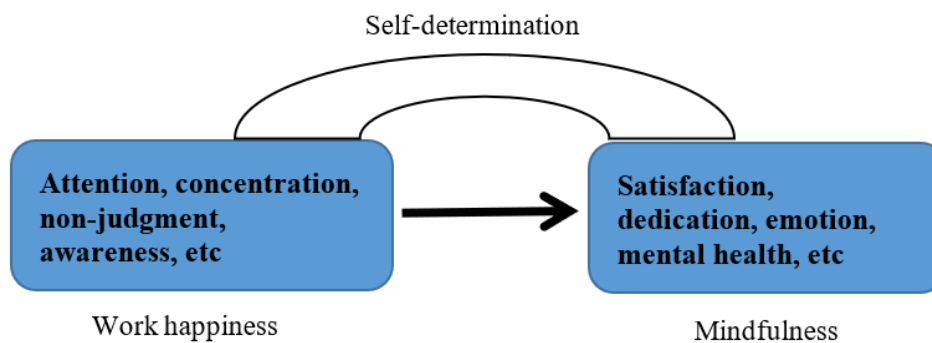


Fig 1. The self-determination utility diagram

4. Conclusion and suggestions

At present, the positive effect of mindfulness and work happiness has been more and more recognized by psychology and management circles. The relationship between mindfulness and happiness at work has also attracted more and more attention from scholars. Some scholars have recognized that mindfulness is related to positive emotion at work. Domestic scholars Yang Qian and Zhao Zizhen confirmed the impact of mindfulness on work happiness of employees in the IT industry by empirical methods, but they did not respond to whether there are commonality between employees' mindfulness and work happiness, or what ultimately determines them. This does not reveal the underlying mechanism between the two.

This paper analyzes the relationship between employee mindfulness and work happiness by combing the relevant literature, and holds that the effect between employee mindfulness and work happiness lies in the self-determination consciousness of individual employees after internal or external stimulation and calling.

It means whether you recognize the meaning and value of your work, whether you decide to work toward your work goals, and whether you are willing to inspire mindfulness. Scholars have realized that self-determination has a profound impact on the way employees think and act. Thus, when employees decide to work together for their personal goals and the goals of the organization, they enter a higher level, that is, the spiritual level. And spiritual strength is an important source of happiness. From this, the following model is built. (Fig. 2)

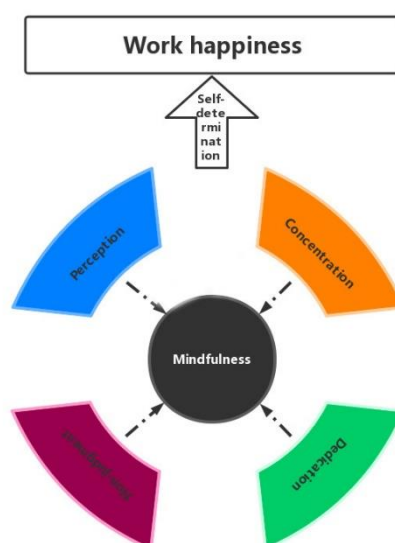


Fig 2. Operational Mechanism of mindfulness and work happiness

Based on the above analysis, this paper believes that the following aspects should be considered in future research:

(1) Attach importance to the important role and formative factors of self-determination theory in psychology and behavior. All human motives and results are closely related to self-determination. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a meta-theory about individual motivation, emotion and personality quality, which focuses on the causal attribution of individual behavior. So what are the aspects of causal attribution and how are they formed. Focus on personal behavior and organizational management in the future.

(2) Pay attention to the development of pre-mindful factors and ability training. The positivity brought by mindfulness has been the consensus of scholars. Most of the previous studies focused on the outcome variables of mindfulness, such as the impact on performance and innovation. There are few studies on the antecedent factors of mindfulness. Therefore, it is suggested that the internal factors affecting mindfulness such as individual traits, external environment and leadership can be discussed in the future.

In practice, according to the saying that "mindfulness is a kind of ability", the relevant training and development of mindfulness should be strengthened. For example, psychological support and deviation correction services for EAP employees should be set up to cultivate employees' concentration, pay attention to the elements of mindfulness, comply with the conditions and rules for the formation of mindfulness, and create an organizational atmosphere for the formation of mindfulness to provide a guarantee for the formation of employees' mindfulness so as to help employees adjust workplace pressure and improve the happiness of work.

(3) Pay attention to the important factors and formation mechanism of happiness at work. At present, the content of research on work happiness is various, which makes its antecedent variables more complex. This paper holds that it is particularly important to grasp the important factors and seek the deep mechanism of its formation. For example, it focuses on the influence of organizational environment, leadership and individual differences on job happiness. In practice, we should try to change the organizational environment and improve leadership, so as to activate the positive psychology of employees, integrate self-determination and self-realization, constantly improve the happiness of employees at work, and activate the vitality and creativity of enterprises.

With the in-depth research and development of mindfulness, work happiness and self-determination theory, it is believed that there will be more positive effects of mindfulness and work happiness in the future workplace, and a new corporate culture and organizational vitality will be formed in management practice.

References

- [1] Zheng Xiaoming, Ni Dan. A review of mindfulness research in organizational management. *Management Review*, 2018, 30(10): 153.
- [2] Kabat-Zinn, J. Mindfulness-based interventions in context: past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 2003, 10: 144-56.
- [3] Bishop S. R., Lau M., Shapiro S., Carlson L., Anderson N. D., Carmody J. and DEVINS G. Mindfulness: a Proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and PRACTICE*, 2004, 11: 230-41.
- [4] Brown K. W. and Ryan R. M. The benefits of being present: mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2003, 84: 822-48.
- [5] Miao Yuanjiang, Feng Ji, Bai Suyu. Overview of happiness at work. *Business Management*, 2009, 31(10): 179-186.
- [6] Shapiro S. L., Carlson L. E., Astin J. A., & Freedman B. Mechanisms of Mindfulness. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 2010, 62(3), 373-386.
- [7] Diener E. Subjective Well-being: The Science of Happiness and a Proposal for a National Index. *American Psychologist*, 2000: 55(1): 34-43.
- [8] Ed Diener. Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 1984, 95(3): 542-575.
- [9] Reb J., Narayanan J., and Chaturvedi S. Leading mindfully: two studies on the influence of supervisor trait mindfulness on employee well-being and performance. *Mindfulness*, 2014, 5: 36-45.

- [10] Williams M. and Penman D. Mindfulness;a practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world. London: Piatkus, 2011.
- [11] Duan Jianhua. An overview of subjective well-being. Psychological trends, 1996, 4(1): 46-51.
- [12] Huang Liang. A study on the dimension structure of Chinese enterprise employees' work happiness. Journal of Central University of Finance and Economics. 2014, 10: 84-112.
- [13] Liu Dege. Review and prospect of research on leader-member exchange. Journal of Guangzhou University (Social Sciences Edition), 2013, 12(4): 55-61.
- [14] Liu Haiyan, Yan Rongshuang, et al. The recent development of cognitive motivation theory: Self-determinism. Psychological Science, 2003, 06: 1115-1116.
- [15] Liu Hengchao, Jin Shenghua, Zhao Kaiqiang. The structure of organizational political skills in Chinese culture and the compilation of questionnaires. Chinese Journal of Applied Psychology, 2009, 14(3): 220-225.
- [16] Li Yanping, Xu Jia. The multi-level influence of collectivism on work happiness based on the mediating role of organizational identity. Chinese Journal of Management, 2014,11(2): 198-205.
- [17] Lian Wenting. Discussion on incentives for knowledgeable workers. Chinese Journal of Human Resource Management, 2021, 9(1): 28-29
- [18] Yun Guanglan. New progress in motivation research: Self-determination theory. Journal of Nantong University (Education Science Edition), 2005, (03): 38-41.
- [19] Meng Yishuang. Stimulating Inner Strength: Spiritual leadership. Changsha, Hunan University Press, 2013.
- [20] Pang Yu, Cai Ningwei, Peng Yongfang, Wu Xing. Review and prospect of research on happiness at work. Review of Economic Research, 2018, 8: 59-73.
- [21] Wang Jiayi, Hu An'an. A review of research on subjective well-being at work. Foreign Economics & Management, 2006, 28(8): 49-55.
- [22] Xi Juzhe, Zuo Zhihong. Wei W. U. Research on resilience.Advances in Psychological Science, 2012, 20(9): 1426-1447.
- [23] Zhu Yu, Wang Lingjuan, Li Qianqian. Leaders' psychological capital, leader-member exchange and employee innovation behavior: a theoretical model and empirical study.Foreign Economics & Management, 2015, 37(5): 36-51.
- [24] Zhao Yanmei, Zhang Zhengtang, et al. Review on the new development of self-determination theory. Chinese Journal of Management, 2016, 13(07): 1095-1104.
- [25] Zou Wenchu, Liu Jia. "One for all. All for one" in the team - Review of team-member exchange research. Advances in Psychological Science, 2011, 19(8): 1193-1204.