



DO WE WORK LESS TO BE HAPPY? THE CORRELATION BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND WORKING HOURS

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ABSTRACT

The most important value and purpose of human life is happiness. Happiness can be expressed as a state of feeling full of energy and being in a good mood. Happiness is not a kind of concept that exists only in social life and gives people motivation for social life. Many factors in working life will also affect people's happiness or unhappiness. Happiness in business life occurs with many positive attitudes and behaviors such as positive social relationships, appreciation, love, achievement, as well as positive evaluation of the work and working conditions. Thanks to happiness subjective well-being in business life affects the well-being of the group, this is reflected in the work done. According to the 2019 happiness report published by the United Nations, the study examines the correlation between working hours and happiness by comparing the ten happiest countries and the ten unhappiest countries in the world in terms of their legal working hours. In the study, a case study research design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. The obtained data were analyzed by the content analysis method.

Key words: Happiness, Working life, Working hours.

1. INTRODUCTION

The life purpose of a person is to be happy. *Happiness* is the manifestation of the positive energy that stems from feeling good in a way that can be perceived by other people. A happy person feels more energetic, which is reflected in his/her thoughts and behaviors; so s/he becomes effective and efficient. The happiness of people depends on the fulfillment of material and spiritual requirements. As in social life, the fulfillment of requirements in working life makes a person happy. *Happiness* in working life is also a motivation tool. The perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of individuals and groups in working life influence a person's working power and desire. Therefore, the expected efficiency in working life can be achieved through happy people. *Happiness* provides self-confidence and strengthens the ability to cope with difficulties. Problems that may be encountered in social and working life are solved more easily. The positive energy created by happiness is perceived by everyone and spreads by affecting them.

Happiness, which relies on a person's physical, spiritual, social, and economic wellbeing, depends on many factors. In order for people to be happy, many factors that occur or are provided in their social life must be created or provided in working life, and both lives must support or balance each other. The concepts such as working, doing business, and producing are the ones that have existed since people started to struggle for life. With the industrial revolution, the concept of working life emerged with the start of working in factories. In the early days of the industrial revolution, the concept of employee happiness was not so important. The workforce was large, but the employment was limited. Human desires and needs did not matter. The idea that the desires and needs of employees should be met in ensuring efficiency gained importance with the Neo-classical management approach as from the 1930s. To be successful in today's competitive conditions, it is a must to ensure employee satisfaction. The employee who is satisfied with the business life is happy, and thus the happy employee becomes productive. In this study, according to the 2019 happiness report published by the United Nations, the ten happiest countries and the ten unhappiest countries in the world are compared in terms of their legal working hours. In this way, the effect of working hours in happy countries on the happiness of people is assessed.

2. THE CONCEPT OF HAPPINESS

The concept of *happiness* has attracted the attention of people for centuries, and thus many philosophers have worked on this subject. One of the first age philosophers who systematically studied *happiness* is Socrates. Socrates established a link between *virtue* and *happiness* and regarded them as the same. "Good", which is born from knowledge and has a sound basis in the knowledge, makes people happy and brings health and well-being to the soul. According to Socrates, "good" is fed by *virtue*, and the source of *virtue* lies

in reaching the right knowledge with reason and the power of thinking. According to other Greek moral philosophers and Aristotle, the aim of all efforts is *happiness*. *Happiness* is also dependent on external conditions in a way, but the main subject of morality is what is found within human beings, that is, the happiness that is achieved by their self-activity. In other words, it is their self-realization of "good". Every being can be happy with the development of its sense of self, and its peculiar activity. Since the essence of a human is mind, s/he can be happy with her/his mind, the operation of her/his mind, and the activity of her/his mind (Gökberk, 1967: 50-53). Confucius, the Chinese philosopher trying to explain the ways of a happy life to people, also supported that *happiness* can be achieved with the knowledge to be obtained through education. The Greek philosopher Epicurus, known for his philosophy of pleasure, defends the idea that human nature can be contented with simple blessings and do not need false pleasures and false love. According to Epicurus, we must create such peaceful happiness in humble needs ourselves, rather than living in eternal worries for wealth and authority, which arises from pure conscience, keeping yourself on the straight and narrow in thought and work, and not being a slave to life. Epicure shows every new day as a happy donation to a person (Örs, 1962: 21-22). Therefore, *happiness* can be defined as the virtues gained through personal powers and reason, and also joy, delight, and comfort gained by fulfilling the needs. The concept of *happiness* is a concept that can vary from person to person. In the meantime, the concept of *happiness* is an emotion that is not easy to explain and formulate both conceptually and theoretically. Social scientists have approached *happiness* with various theories. These theories are as follows (Canpolat, 2018: 8):

Adaptation theory argues that individuals' state of being happy is temporary and that people get used to positive situations over time, just like in negative situations.

Fixed point theory is the theory that attributes happiness to genetic predisposition and personality traits.

Top-down happiness theory is the theory that argues that *happiness* is achieved by the way individuals interpret events.

Bottom-up happiness theory argues that the basic criteria of happiness are pleasure and life satisfaction.

The goal theory states that happiness is felt by meeting needs and having certain goals.

Activity theory argues that all kinds of activities individuals are involved in and the experience they get in order to achieve certain goals will bring happiness.

Judgment theory argues that individuals evaluate happiness within the framework of certain criteria and make decisions about the level of their happiness.

2.1. Elements of Happiness

The structure of happiness is made up of our cognitive and judgmental thoughts (Diener, 1985: 71). According to Andrews and Withey (1976), the three basic dimensions that constitute happiness are positive emotions, negative emotions, and life satisfaction.

Positive emotions: They are emotions such as pleasure, satisfaction, hope, joy, enthusiasm, delight, pride, interests, and participation in positive activities that make an individual happy.

Negative emotions: They are emotions such as anger, sadness, boredom, stress, anxiety, disappointment, guilt, shame, jealousy, loneliness, and helplessness. The severity and continuity of negative emotions can make life unpleasant.

Life satisfaction: It shows how individuals evaluate their own lives as a whole from birth onwards (Diener, 2006:400-401).

Our cognitive and judgmental approach to these three elements will make us feel happy or unhappy. The variables that affect happiness may come under the heading of personal variables, social variables, and environmental variables (Çalışkan, 2010: 126):

- ✓ Personal variables: They can be listed such factors as self-respect, self-esteem, self-efficacy, empathy, optimism, emotional control, social initiative, openness to innovation, intrinsic motivation, and critical thinking.
- ✓ Social variables: They express the social support obtained as a result of the relationships that a person establishes with her/his environment.

- ✓ Environmental variables: They are the cultural environment in which the person lives and technological factors.

2.2. Happiness in the Workplace

The concept of happiness in the workplace gained importance through the efforts of organizations to maintain their existence in working life in the 21st century. The idea of gaining efficiency in organizations made it necessary to focus on human capital. Considering the employee as a social entity in organizations formed the main idea of behavioral (neo-classical) organization theory in the 1930s. In contrast to the main concepts of classical theory such as rationality, activity, and order in the workplace, the neo-classical theory focused on the main concepts such as characteristics of the human element, behaviors, groups, motivation, participation in management (decisions), satisfaction (Koçel, 2018: 257). With many experiments conducted in the neoclassical theory, it is shown that efficiency can be achieved by valuing the employee and providing satisfaction, motivation and happiness. The concept of happiness, which emerges when people encounter positive emotions, events, situations in their lives, or when they evaluate the situation they are in positively, contains much positivity. According to Maenapothi (2007), happiness in the workplace refers to the situation in which the staff work happily, they do not feel like they are working, they are productive and achieve goals at both personal and organizational levels. Five factors that constitute happiness in the workplace are as follows (Chaiprasit and Santidhirakul, 2011: 191):

Work as a source of inspiration: Employees are satisfied with the work assigned to them and can achieve their goals.

The common value of the organization: Employees attach importance to common behavior and the culture of the organization.

Relationship: Employees care about interaction, group relations, and acceptance among colleagues.

Quality of work life: Employees' satisfaction with their life at work results in the highest level of efficiency.

Leadership: The managers of the institution give their subordinates motivation, awareness, and commitment. They encourage and create happiness in working life. Leaders also establish two-way and transparent communication with their employees and are committed to creating a good atmosphere for their employees.

Since people spend a large part of their daily lives in their workplaces, the work they do, their work environment, and the work itself have a positive effect on their rate of happiness. At work, a wide variety of studies have been carried out to determine the various factors that make employees happy and unhappy. Among these studies, in the happiness survey conducted on 1063 people in the United Kingdom, ten factors that make employees happy and unhappy at work are listed as follows:

Table 1. Ten factors that make employees happy and unhappy at work

Top ten factors that make employees happy at work	Top ten factors that make employees unhappy at work
1. Having friendly and supportive colleagues	1. Lack of communication in management
2. Having a fun job	2. Non-competitive salary/ wage
3. Having a good boss or manager	3. Lack of appreciation for achievements
4. Good work/ life balance	4. Having a bad boss or manager
5. Doing various jobs	5. Little personal development
6. Believing in our doing a worthwhile job	6. Ideas ignored
7. Taking an opportunity for good performers	7. Not feeling we have made a difference in doing that job
8. Being part of a successful team	8. Lack of benefits
9. Being appreciated for achievements	9. Not having an enjoyable job
10. Getting a competitive salary or wage	10. Not feeling that the work done makes a difference

Source: Happiness At Work Index, 2007; as cited in Nazlı, 2015: 53-54

When the ten factors that make employees happy at work are listed, we see that work/ life balance comes fourth. Today, one of the common goals of employees is to be able to balance their working life and daily life. We can say that this balance means a person has a sense of harmony between the time that s/he devotes to work and the time s/he makes for his/ her family, social life and interests, etc. The effects of time spent at work on individuals have been widely debated by scientists recently. Employees complain that they cannot spare time for themselves and their families, saying that their work takes all their energy away. In return,

companies prepare support programs for their employees to ensure a better balance between their working life and daily life. In developed countries such as European countries, the United States of America, Australia, and Canada, laws on flexible working hours have been enacted and regulations have been implemented. Turkey has been working on this issue in the process of adaptation to the European Union (Vatansever, 2008: 1-15).

3. STUDY ON THE CORRELATION OF HAPPINESS AND WORKING TIME

3.1. Purpose of the study

This study aims to reveal the correlation between the time spent in working life and happiness. The concept of happiness is explained and the factors affecting happiness are listed. The importance of work-life balance among the factors affecting the happiness of individuals and the negative effect of intensive work timetables in establishing this balance were emphasized. According to the 2019 happiness report published by the United Nations, the ten happiest countries in the world and the ten unhappiest countries were examined in terms of legal working hours, and thus the correlation between working hours and happiness was explained within the framework of the data obtained.

3.2. Scope of the study

Within the scope of our study, the working hours of the ten happiest countries and the ten0 unhappiest countries published in the 2019 "World Happiness Report" were examined. The correlation between working hours and happiness was examined. The findings obtained were interpreted and reported. The ten happiest countries in the 2019 "World Happiness Report" including 156 countries in total are Finland, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada, and Austria. The ten unhappiest countries are Haiti, Botswana, Syria, Malawi, Yemen, Rwanda, Tanzania, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, and South Sudan.

3.3. Study Method

As the method of the study, one of the qualitative research methods, a case research design was used. Qualitative research is a method that takes an interdisciplinary holistic perspective and examines the research problem with an interpretive approach. (Altunışık and et al., 2010: 302). In the study, the 2019 happiness report data published by the United Nations and the data published by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as of 2019 were used. The data obtained as a result of the study were analyzed by the content analysis method and reported. Content analysis is a method that requires a close examination of the data obtained as a result of the study and reaching the concepts and themes that explain these data. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 89). However, content analysis is frequently preferred in the social sciences due to its properties such as objectivity, systematic way, explicitness, and generality.

3.4. Study Findings

Through the "World Happiness Report" published for the first time in 2012 with the support of the United Nations, it is aimed to measure how happy the citizens of the country feel. World Happiness Report is formed as a result of the responses from all existing surveys such as countries' daily GDP per capita, social support, and healthy life expectancy at birth, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. In the "World Happiness Report (2019)" report, 156 countries were ranked as a result of the average obtained by evaluating 2016-2018 data. Among these countries, Finland is the country with the happiest people. Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada, and Austria follow Finland, respectively. The top ten countries and the last ten countries are listed in line with the scores of the countries. They are as follows (<https://s3.amazonaws.com/happinessreport/2019>):

1. Finland (7.769)
2. Denmark (7.600)
3. Norway (7.554)
4. Iceland (7.494)
5. Netherlands (7.488)
6. Switzerland (7.480)
7. Sweden (7.343)

8. New Zealand (7.307)
9. Canada (7.278)
10. Austria (7.246)
147. Haiti (3.597)
148. Botswana (3.488)
149. Sria (3.462)
150. Malawi (3.410)
151. Yemen (3.380)
152. Rwanda (3334)
153. Tanzania (3231)
154. Afghanistan (3203)
155. Central African Republic (3.083)
156. South Sudan (2.853)

According to the last data years revealing the rates of more than 48 working hours per week, among 156 countries included in the "World Happiness Report (2019)" report, the average working hours of the top ten countries and the last ten countries are listed as follows:

Table 2. Weekly working hours of the 10 happiest countries according to the World Happiness Report 2019 data

COUNTRY	Year of data	Average per working hours	The proportion of employees working more than 48 hours per week
Finland	2018	36 hours	%5.2
Denmark	2018	34 hours	%4.9
Norway	2018	34 hours	%4.2
Iceland	2018	40 hours	%14.4
Netherlands	2018	32 hours	%4.9
Switzerland	2018	36 hours	%10.3
Sweden	2018	36 hours	%4.3
New Zealand	2018	33 hours	%12.3
Canada	2018	36 hours	%7.8
Austria	2018	36 hours	%5.9

Source: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles>

Table 3. Weekly working hours of the 10 unhappiest countries according to the World Happiness Report 2019 data

COUNTRY	Year of data	Average working hours per week	The proportion of employees working more than 48 hours per week
Haiti	2012	42 hours	%36.3
Botswana	2010	43 hours	%33.7
Syria	-	-	-
Malawi	2013	-	%17.3
Yemen	2014	42 hours	%24
Rwanda	2018	34 hours	%20.5
Tanzania	2014	41 hours	%60
Afghanistan	2017	38 hours	%36.9
Central African Republic	-	-	-
South Sudan	-	-	-

Source: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles>

Figure 1 and Figure 2 shown below were created by the authors from the data in Table 2 and Table 3.

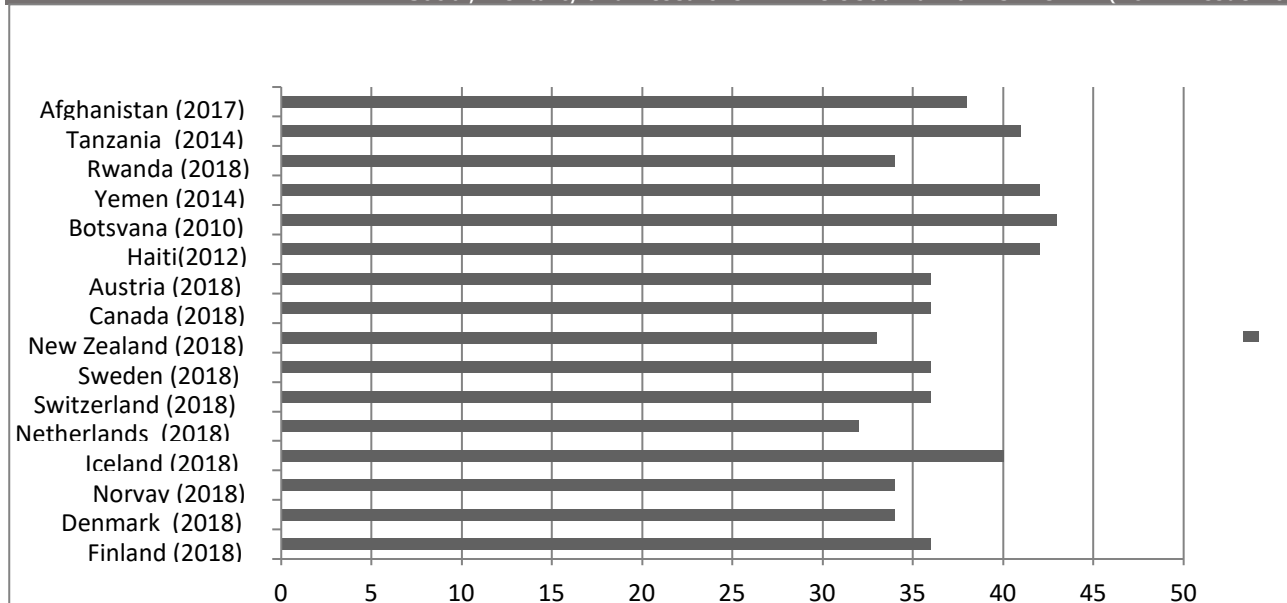


Figure 1. The weekly working time of the happiest and unhappiest 10 countries according to the World Happiness Report 2019 data with a bar graph.

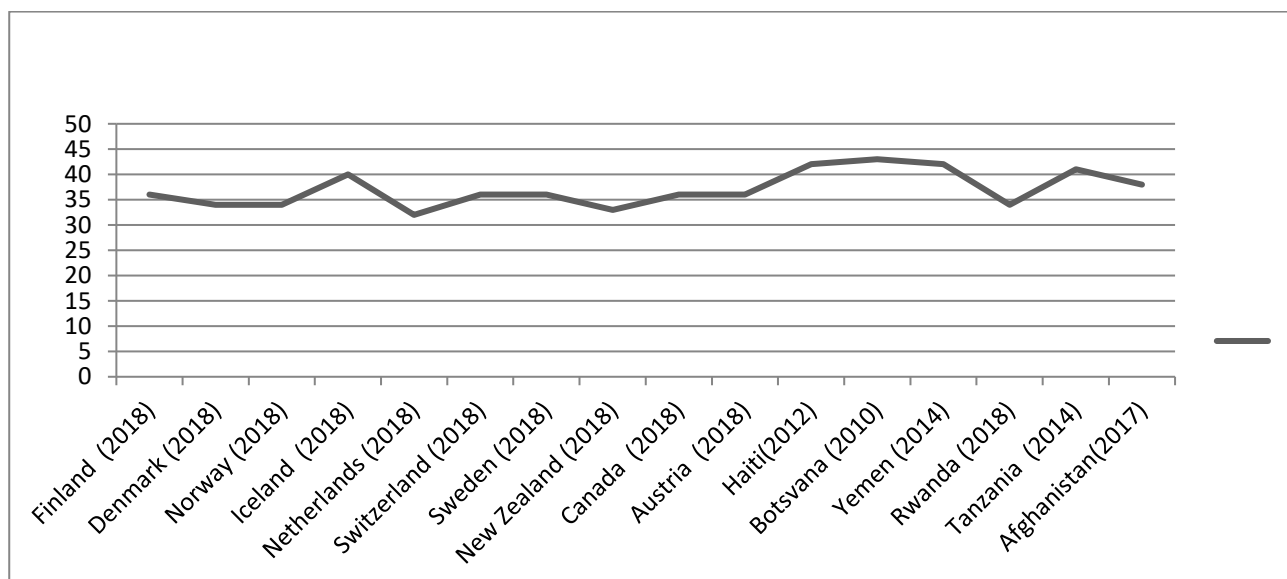


Figure 2. The weekly working time of the happiest and unhappiest 10 countries according to the World Happiness Report 2019 data with a line graph.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the 21st century, employees are the most valuable capital of organizations. Increasing productivity in organizations is possible with the effective management of human resources. The success of an employee in her/his job is closely related to her/his happiness, which can be expressed as subjective well-being. Human beings are social creatures that are in constant communication with their external environment. The happiness of a person can be achieved by physical, spiritual, and social well-being. Today, many people complain about not being able to devote time to their social life, as they spend most of their time in the workplace. In the study, according to the World Happiness Report 2019 data, the weekly working hours of the happiest and unhappiest ten countries were examined, and the correlation between the length of people's working hours and happiness was intended to be examined. According to the results, the weekly working hours of the top ten happiest countries in the world vary between 32-40 hours, while those of the ten unhappiest countries vary between 34-43 hours. When the proportion of employees working more than 48 hours per week in countries is examined, that proportion in the world's happiest ten countries varies between 4.2% and 14.4%. The proportion of employees working more than 48 hours per week in the ten unhappiest countries in the world is %17.3- % 60. Therefore, the difference between the weekly working hours of the countries in the world's happiest top ten and the countries in the last ten ranks is at least 2-3 hours, while this

difference is at most 11 hours. The difference between the countries in the two groups who work more than 48 hours per week is at least 13.1%, while the difference is at most 55.8%. The inverse correlation between people's happiness and their weekly working hours has emerged. Likewise, an inverse correlation has been found between people's happiness and the proportion of working more than 48 hours a week. It is known that many variables are involved in the formation of the 2019 World Happiness Report. In this study, the happiest and unhappiest ten countries were evaluated in terms of weekly working hours in line with the 2019 World Happiness Report within the framework of employee happiness.

When the literature is analyzed, studies reveal that there is no positive correlation between working hard and productivity, whereas there is a positive correlation between a happy employee and productivity. Therefore, what is important for organizations is employee happiness. While countries determine legal working hours or flexible working procedures, they should take the changing and developing world conditions into account. Today, the chaos of life requires fast action, and the fact that there are too many stimuli with technological developments prevents people from using their time effectively. This situation causes people to be unhappy. In this framework, it is thought that organizations and laws should rearrange working hours.

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