



# WELL-BEING AND HAPPINESS IN EDUCATIONAL AND WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS



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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and reflect on the concepts of well-being and happiness within educational and workplace environments and their relationship with career counseling provided to students before entering university. It is approached from the theoretical perspective of positive psychology, considering the experiences of the Centro de Investigación, Diagnóstico y Desarrollo de Talentos (CIDDT) in Mexico with its users. The goal is to provide new guidelines for viewing career and professional counseling. Rather than focusing solely on cognitive intelligence and student interests—as has traditionally been the case—this approach emphasizes a more comprehensive view that includes all human strengths. It focuses on personal strengths, considering a range of positive attributes such as virtues, strengths, skills, gifts, talents, knowledge, experiences, and inherent positive emotions. It also examines how these internal factors positively impact academic and professional performance, contributing to the cultivation of continuous well-being and happiness.

**Keywords:** career counseling, happiness, subjective well-being, employment.

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## RESUMEN



El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar y reflexionar acerca del bienestar y felicidad en los ámbitos escolar y laboral, determinar la relación que hay entre la orientación vocacional que se brinda a estudiantes antes de ingresar a la universidad, se aborda desde la perspectiva teórica de la psicología positiva, tomando en cuenta la experiencia del Centro de Investigación, Diagnóstico y Desarrollo de Talentos (CIDDT) de México con sus usuarios, con la finalidad de brindar algunas pautas para mirar la orientación vocacional y profesional desde un punto de vista más actual, centrada no solo en la inteligencia cognitiva y las áreas de interés del estudiante como se ha venido haciendo desde siempre, sino considerando todas las fortalezas humanas. Este enfoque se centra en las fortalezas personales, es decir, toma en cuenta el cúmulo de características positivas como las virtudes, fortalezas, capacidades, dones, talentos, conocimientos, experiencias y emociones positivas inherentes a la persona, y cómo estos factores internos impactan positivamente en su desempeño en el ámbito académico y laboral, contribuyendo a generar estados constantes de bienestar y felicidad.

**Palabras clave:** orientación vocacional, felicidad, bienestar subjetivo, empleo.

# INTRODUCTION

Career counseling provided at school, whether it is of high or low quality, has a direct and immediate impact on the student's subjective well-being while they are pursuing their chosen field of study. In the short-term, it also has an impact on their workplace, affecting their productivity, well-being, and happiness as they perform their job functions.

If the individual's strengths align with the requirements of a degree program, and there is a match in interests, previous experience, and skills necessary for success in that field, the individual will develop commitment and engagement in professional activities. This alignment helps individuals experience "Flow"—a mental state of being completely absorbed and focused on an activity, which leads to feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction. Such flow and happiness are evident when job functions are performed with passion. Conversely, a lack of alignment can be counterproductive.

Historically, psychology entered the U.S. university system in the late 19th century in the form of a degree program and graduate diploma. However, its knowledge and practices were accepted in Europe and Latin America only until the 1940s (Buss, 1979). At that time, psychology's approach to the study of the mind and human behavior focused on weaknesses or disabilities, which were key elements in explaining mental pathology, learning delays, maintaining morale during wartime, and assessing individuals' suitability for work roles. (Di Domenico and Vilanova, 2000).

Since its emergence, career counseling, psychological counseling, clinical psychology, occupational psychology, industrial psychology, and educational psychology have been central topics in the curriculum design of Psychology programs in the United States from late 19th century (Di Doménico and Vilanova, 2000; Sexton and Hogan, 1992; Vilanova, 1990).

Initially, only psychologists were specialists in providing career counseling. However, over time, other professionals from related fields, such as educators, have joined this area. Educators interact daily with students, gaining firsthand knowledge of their in-

terests, needs, strengths, and abilities, including their aptitudes, skills, abilities, gifts, and talents, and limitations.

This chapter explores career counseling and its impact on the academic and workplace environments from the perspective of positive psychology. Historically, the foundations of this perspective trace back to Greek thought, Hellenistic and Roman philosophy, Egyptian wisdom, and Eastern philosophy (Fernández, 2008). However, it was not until the 1990s, with Martin Seligman leading the American Psychological Association (APA), that this perspective began to gain significant prominence. The aim was to study all facets of human well-being in depth.

This new approach focused on what is right with people from birth to death, analyzing what makes life worth living. In other words, it concentrated on what is considered as “good life” in relation to each individual’s developmental environment. This paradigm shift led to a wave of specialized research and publications on positive psychology while also redefining traditional psychology, allowing this field to offer a more comprehensive view of its subject matter from both perspectives.

Traditional psychology, under the disease model, views people as “imperfect and fragile beings, victims of harsh environments or poor genetics” (Park et al., 2013, p. 1). In contrast, the positive psychology model sees individuals as perfectible beings with strengths and capabilities either inherited genetically or developed in their environment, which can be further enhanced through their personal development and interaction with positive developmental environments.

A positive environment promotes well-being, security, and excellence and favors individuals’ development. These environments can be supportive families and positive relationships, positive schools and classrooms, positive work environments, and other close or direct environments with which individuals maintain strong interactions. These environments allow them to deploy their potential and balance the negative events they experience daily, contributing to a fulfilling life.

Together, both branches of psychology (traditional and positive) cover the study of both positive and negative life events. Both approaches complement each other, examining, analyzing, and reflecting on the psychology of the individual and how these factors determine behavior and underlying processes (thought, emotion, memory, etc.).

These naturally changing characteristics develop as part of human evolution to adapt to various environments, which is particularly useful for meeting societal demands: education, work, mental health, and necessary recreation to balance the ups and downs of life (Di Doménico & Vilanova, 2000).

Mental and emotional health are closely related to success in education, which in turn is tightly linked to the workplace, as the latter depends on the former two. Currently, job markets and human resources departments go beyond psychometric tests to assess whether a candidate is suitable for a position.

Psychological evaluations of candidates are more comprehensive, with psychometric tests providing employers or recruiters with additional insights into a candidate's personality, aptitudes, interpersonal skills, attitudes, and values. Overall, they seek to ensure that candidates possess the required job competencies and exhibit mental and emotional balance to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the company.

## THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE POSITIVE CAREER COUNSELING MODEL

For a long time, the field of psychology focused solely on the study of inherited or developed pathologies within the human species. This scientific approach resulted in a narrow disciplinary framework that led to the development of psychopathology or psychotherapy.

While this perspective has produced effective intervention models for many psychological issues, it is not enough to see only the problem. It is necessary to consider the psychological resources or tools that individuals possess to face adversity, adapt to various developmental environments, and identify and harness their strengths and talents to achieve happiness and success (Contreras & Esguerra, 2006; Dominguez & Ibarra, 2017; Vera, 2006).

Psychology's objectives were not always oriented toward the treatment of disorders, difficulties, suffering, pain, distress, sadness, and other negative personality traits or

moods. Before World War II, the field of psychology had a broader scope and was focused on contributing to a more productive and fulfilling human life, which included identifying and developing individual talents and intelligence. However, after World War II, a variety of factors led to a shift in focus. Psychology increasingly focused on treating mental health issues and alleviating suffering (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

In the last 40 years, psychology has increasingly revisited the study of positive perspectives to develop theories, methods, and strategies aimed at identifying and optimizing individuals' positive psychological traits and resources. Several authors have contributed to the development and theoretical foundation of positive psychology. Key contributors are summarized in the following table, compiled with information from Seligman (2017), Emmons & McCullough (2003), Universidad TecMilenio (2014), Moyano (2010), and Dominguez & Ibarra (2017).

**Table 1.** *Contributions to Positive Psychology*

Author	Contributions
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi	He has studied optimal experiences or flow, creativity, talent development, and well-being at work.
Christopher Peterson	He has researched strengths and virtues, as well as positive interpersonal relationships. Within the field of positive personal traits, he has studied optimism, which protects against the debilitating effects of negative events because it is associated with active problem-solving. He linked positive outlook with physical, psychological, and social well-being.
Edward Diener	He is known as the father of the study of happiness, subjective well-being, and life satisfaction. He has conducted applied research on quality of life and subjective well-being, focusing on what people think and how they feel about their lives.
Martin Seligman & Christopher Peterson	They have studied character strengths and virtues. Seligman proposed the PERMA model of well-being, which stands for: P (positive emotion), E (engagement), R (relationships), M (meaning), and A (accomplishment). He also proposed the study of positive aspects of human experience from three perspectives: positive experiences, psychological strengths, and characteristics of positive organizations.
George Vaillant	He conducted a study on people recovering from addictions and mental disorders, and the longest longitudinal research on adult development.



Author	Contributions
Barbara Fredrickson	She has studied the psychophysiology of positive emotions and their role in human flourishing. She has worked on the effects of positive emotions on people's lives, growth, flourishing, and personal development. She has contributed to the psychology of gratitude.
Massimini & Delle Fave	Optimal experience or flow, the most positive daily experience. The psychological selection procedure (activities, values, and personal interests) is strictly related to the quality of the subjective experience.
Myers	Positive personal traits: happiness. He has studied the predictors of subjective well-being, often measured as happiness and life satisfaction.
Ryan & Deci	Positive personal traits: self-determination.
Salovey, Rithman, Detweiler & Steward	Relationship between positive emotions and physical health. Psychological resources, positive illusions, and health.
Robert Emmons, Michael McCullough and collaborators (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Larson, Bono, Kimeldorf and Cohen)	They have researched the field of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life, contributing to the functions and psychological dynamics of gratitude.
Tal Ben-Shajar	He conducts applied research. He created the "Positive Psychology" course at Harvard University. His approaches focus on identifying what works for people, couples, and organizations.

**Note.** Compiled by the author.

According to García (2016), people who think positively are happier, live more in the present (the here and now) rather than in past events (the past limits or conditions their capacity for action), and exhibit greater satisfaction with their experiences. They are more likely to live a more fulfilling and successful life, especially when they are academically prepared and make the most of the opportunities provided by education.



# MEXICAN CONTEXT OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND CAREER COUNSELING

Since the onset of the modern era, the primary focus of academic training has been on acquiring knowledge and developing skills from a utilitarian perspective, aiming to boost productivity, competitiveness, and profitability for the continuity of businesses. This approach, however, has often neglected the human dimension referred to as dignity—a concept that gained significant importance after World War II and was legally enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Specifically, the first paragraph of Article 23 of this Declaration states that “everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment” (United Nations Human Rights, 1948).

When contrasting these ideals with reality, studies in Mexico reveal that even in the first two decades of the 21st century, Mexican society has struggled to address the right to work, particularly for young university graduates.

Márquez (2011) analyzed various official sources on the employment status in Mexico and concluded that there is a mismatch between educational offerings and the demand for professionals in the labor market. This mismatch results in young professionals facing higher unemployment rates. The misalignment between market needs and academic offerings means that graduates are often employed in jobs for which they are not academically prepared, and companies hire professionals who do not meet the job profile requirements (Gracia, 2015; Varea, 2021).

A more recent study by Pérez (2018) found that unemployment among individuals aged 18 to 29 spans all educational levels (no schooling, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, normal school, technical training, undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degrees). However, it was evidenced that as a person’s educational level increases, so does their employability and income, with graduates with a professional degree having the lowest unemployment rates. Nonetheless, despite this seemingly positive statistic, it corresponds to the fact that 68.18% of professionals are employed in informal jobs.

Although this data may not be representative of the entire Mexican population, it raises questions about the quality of education received—whether it was adequate and relevant, whether students received proper career counseling to choose a profession aligned with their virtues, strengths, interests, passions, abilities, gifts and talents before entering university, whether they had the support of their institutions, such as access to a job board for alumni to successfully enter the labor market, or whether they had access to government support programs to find formal employment opportunities.

From the perspective of the economics of happiness, research provides a measure of well-being based on employees' subjective satisfaction. This outlook goes beyond the traditional approach of measuring overall well-being solely in terms of production and profit. It has been found that having a job is essential for personal happiness and mental health. Public policies should therefore be oriented towards achieving quality and well-paid employment (Ansa, 2016).

Recent research reveals that a significant percentage of workers globally are unhappy with their jobs. The Gallup Institute in the United States has been tracking employee satisfaction internationally through an evolving survey and has reached 25 million workers across 189 countries.

In October 2013, Gallup collected data from 230,000 full-time and part-time employees across 142 countries and discovered that only 13% of workers felt engaged in their jobs, experienced passion for their work, and had a genuine connection with their employer. These engaged employees tend to be more productive, innovative, and continuously drive their companies forward (Forbes, 2013).

Among Latin American countries surveyed, Mexico had a percentage close to the global average, with only 12% of workers completely satisfied with their jobs, 60% feeling frustrated and dissatisfied, and 28% hating their jobs. In contrast, Brazil, the largest economy in the region, reported the highest level of job satisfaction, with 27% of its workers feeling happy in their roles. However, 62% felt frustrated and dissatisfied, while 12% disliked their jobs, which translates into lower productivity (Forbes, 2013).

Another Gallup survey aimed at understanding the extent to which employees exert minimal effort to avoid being fired revealed that 71% of employees showed no commitment or involvement in their work or with their employers.

An exploratory study by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics in 2012 on subjective well-being in the Mexican population clearly showed that higher levels of education correlate with greater life satisfaction (INEGI, 2012). This underscores the importance of creating educational policies that promote professional education and enhance career counseling processes, incorporating positive psychology perspectives to prepare future employees with a more human-centered approach.

Addressing the employment issue is multifaceted and requires, on one hand, the design of specific public policies and, on the other hand, a strong commitment to meticulous and collaborative work among educational institutions, businesses, and government bodies to realize the right to employment for recent graduates.

From the perspective of educational institutions, one necessary action is to implement preventive strategies that help students secure quality employment—jobs that are enjoyable, dignified, and satisfying, leading them towards happiness and self-fulfillment both academically and professionally. This involves more focused career counseling based on their strengths, abilities, and talents before entering university.

On the other hand, it is crucial to address the relevance of curricula in university programs to modify study plans, aligning content and skill development with market needs.

This alignment is critical for the successful integration of graduates into the workforce. Often, the gap in knowledge and skills is bridged through in-company training. While this training can entail higher costs in talent acquisition, it has a direct positive impact on productivity, competitiveness, and profitability, both in the medium and long term.

Creating satisfactory working conditions is also essential, as outlined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This involves ensuring that employment is not only enjoyable for employees but also enables them to develop their potential and contribute to economic prosperity. However, achieving such positive work environments—where employees' virtues and strengths are recognized and valued and where they feel happy and fulfilled, remains a significant challenge. Most corporations are primarily focused on aligning human talent with the company's objectives to enhance productivity, competitiveness, innovation, and financial returns, rather than prioritizing the well-being and happiness of their staff.

According to Peterson & Seligman (2004), virtues and strengths are stable positive personality traits that can be expressed through behaviors, thoughts, or feelings. As protective factors, they help develop resilience in the face of adverse contexts and situations.

These psychological resources (strengths and virtues) help individuals cope with and resolve problems with greater mental flexibility, social adaptation, and enthusiasm, leading to positive outcomes for well-being, such as reduced stress, increased self-esteem, and psychological well-being (Campos, 2004; Porto et al., 2018).

In today's rapidly evolving educational and workplace environments, individuals and organizations face increasing competition and demands. This dynamic creates high levels of pressure and stress, contributing to what is often termed as the professional illness: stress, burnout syndrome, work addiction, among others, where emotional or psychological factors significantly impact academic and professional quality of life (Durán, 2010).

Stress or burnout can incapacitate students or employees. When experiencing stress, they may suffer from moderate to severe exhaustion, lose interest in their activities, avoid responsibilities, experience sleep disturbances, and persistent anxiety, which can lead to loss of control and influence behaviors such as drug addiction. These conditions adversely affect their performance and the achievement of personal and professional goals (Belkis et al., 2015; Oblitas-Guadalupe et al., 2017).

It is crucial to diagnose and train virtues, character strengths, and talents in both students and employees. These are coping tools that promote a healthier life and contribute to balance and psychological well-being. They can serve as means to counteract tension, nervousness, overwhelm, anxiety, and distress. Theoretical models of stress coping include the biological model, psychoanalytic model, stress processing model, transactional theory, among others (Urbano, 2019).

Talents are a type of personal strength that can protect individuals from psychosocial risk zones. These are outstanding skills where a person demonstrates high levels of competence, commitment, and engagement (as per the PERMA model of well-being). Talents are activities that an individual performs with great ease, dedication, and passion, and while they can be either genetically inherited or developed through practice, they consistently lead to states of flow—experiencing happiness while doing what one does best. As a tool for personal development, talents offer a pathway to discovering one's true purpose in life (Domínguez & Ibarra, 2017).

Additionally, techniques based on mindfulness and meditation training have proven highly effective in educational and workplace settings for improving health, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction (Domínguez et al., 2020; Oblitas-Guadalupe et al., 2017).

Another strategy educational institutions can implement to ensure dignified employment aligned with students' academic training is providing assistance in obtaining their first job. This is highly significant for students but can be challenging, particularly for those who have had their studies interrupted. Mexican youth face a harsh and unfair transition from the educational phase to working life, and it seems that the labor market "charges" them a price for entering by offering low wages in exchange for experience (Horbach, 2004).

In Mexico, many universities have job boards. By visiting the websites of these institutions, one can identify which ones include this tool to facilitate the integration of their graduates into the labor market. This platform allows building networks and forging strategic alliances between universities and the business sector to facilitate the early and effective incorporation of students into formal employment, starting with community service and subsequently with professional internships.

For example, public higher education institutions such as the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) have job boards organized by faculty, as do the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP), the Universidad Veracruzana (UV), the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos (UAEMEX), the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo (UAEH). Private universities include the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), the Universidad de las Américas-Puebla (UDLA), the Universidad Iberoamericana (IBERO), the Universidad del Valle de México (UVM), and the Universidad TecMilenio, to name a few.

Thus, when students complete their studies, they already possess some degree of work experience required by any company. Employers, aware of their knowledge, talents, skills, and the results obtained during their community service and internships, as well as their commitment and involvement in assigned tasks, find these graduates to be strong candidates for available positions.

# IMPACT OF CAREER COUNSELING ON ACADEMIC WELL-BEING

As discussed throughout this work, identifying students' strengths is crucial for aligning them with a suitable career path within the vast array of available professions. This process helps focus their efforts on areas where they excel and enjoy working, while also mitigating the risks associated with pursuing activities misaligned with their strengths. The goal is to guide students in building a life plan based on their positive attributes.

The value of providing career counseling to students before they enter university is immeasurable, as the decision made during this phase will influence their future satisfaction. It is vital to establish compelling and meaningful reasons to support their decisions.

Furthermore, it is essential that the admission and graduate profiles in the chosen degree program align with students' virtues, strengths, interests, passions, abilities, gifts, and talents. These conditions will help students flourish, find beauty and fulfillment in what they do, and achieve satisfaction and significance in the activities related to the degree program they wish to pursue to become a happy and productive professional capable of meeting their fundamental needs.

Given that students will spend four to six years studying their chosen field, making the right choice is crucial. Missteps can lead to persistent frustration, which often results in academic failure, dropping out, or, at best, changing degree programs due to a lack of capacity, talent, or commitment to the chosen field. This misalignment can lead to disinterest, demotivation, boredom, listlessness, annoyance, constant failures, and academic unhappiness, eroding their willpower and potential for achievement.

In contrast, when a student has a talent for a specific area and chooses a degree program aligned with their experiences, interests, motivations, virtues, strengths, abilities, gifts, and talents, they tend to achieve better academic performance and greater life satisfaction than those who do not. Successes at various stages of their academic

life build the foundation for self-empowerment, confidence, and future success, extending beyond education into the workplace.

Students who are happy with what they do are more motivated because their motivation is intrinsic, coming from their deepest desires. Intrinsic motivation lasts longer than extrinsic motivation, which originates from external factors such as family, friends, teachers, etc. However, research shows that students' motivation to pursue a specific profession is extrinsic (Angulo, 2008), meaning it does not come from their own concerns, needs, interests, or talents.

Those who find internal motivation achieve better results due to their higher commitment and engagement. They love what they do and would even do it without financial compensation. Thus, when individuals with specific virtues, strengths, and talents pursue a passion and are compensated for it, and their earnings cover their basic needs, they will repeat this behavior in a positive, virtuous cycle benefiting both themselves and their employers.

In his theory of human motivation, Abraham Maslow (1943) argues that human needs are divided into several categories: basic needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. These needs range from the most fundamental for survival—such as food, sleep, and rest—to those necessary for remaining in stable conditions. Safety needs, for example, include physical integrity, such as healthcare, housing rights, access to public services, and social security—factors that contribute to improving quality of life.

Social needs, or belongingness, include social acceptance and a sense of belonging, which refers to the satisfaction of being part of a group, business, institution, society, or culture. This category also encompasses affection, relating to relationships with a partner, family, and friends.

On the other hand, esteem needs, or recognition needs, are divided into two aspects: First, they are associated with self-respect, which involves positive feelings such as self-confidence, feeling competent, the ability to achieve goals, and a sense of freedom and independence. Second, they relate to the respect of others, encompassing the need to excel, gain recognition, reputation, and social status, as well as the pursuit of dignity, success, and prosperity, among other motivational factors.



The lack of these needs can lead to low self-esteem and negative thoughts, severely impacting a person's performance, quality of life, well-being, and happiness. Thus, self-esteem is a fundamental pillar for finding personal balance and achieving success.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization is the highest psychological need. Maslow describes it as the motivation for growth or the need to be and self-actualization. While one must address the lower needs to achieve self-actualization, it is not necessary to fully satisfy each level to reach it. Instead, achieving a balance at each level and making progress to higher levels is essential.

The term "self-actualization," first coined by Kurt Goldstein, refers to the desire or tendency to become what one is potentially capable of becoming, to grow into what one is meant to be (Maslow, 1943). A person with a talent for something enjoys and commits to their activity so deeply that they autonomously and willingly seek to improve their knowledge and skills, advancing in a spiral of ongoing development and growth, as it becomes a fundamental necessity of their being.

Although the need for self-actualization is at the top of Maslow's hierarchy, he suggests that even when all these needs are fully met, individuals may still experience new forms of discontent and unease, leading to the emergence of new needs. Maslow argues that as long as these new needs have not arisen, individuals will naturally engage in activities for which they are well-suited and that bring them genuine happiness. In this sense, a musician must make music and a poet must write poetry to achieve true personal fulfillment.

However, we would add that happiness can only be achieved if the activity allows the person to express their deepest desires and aspirations. By identifying and utilizing their existing strengths and positive traits, individuals can build authentic happiness based on their true vocation (Beck, 2003; Seligman, 2017)).

Satisfying these motivational factors helps individuals connect with their inner essence. Discovering their virtues, strengths, and capabilities, and applying them to benefit society, gives meaning to their lives, enhances self-worth as individuals and professionals, and allows them to transcend their immediate world by contributing their talents beyond their own borders, leaving a lasting legacy. At this point, their talent belongs to the world. Self-transcendence is the highest end of self-actualization.

So far, we have discussed internal factors that foster individual happiness. However, humans are shaped by their social environments, which must be positive to develop their full potential. Favorable environments include supportive families, positive schools and classrooms, and encouraging workplaces.

## IMPACT OF CAREER COUNSELING ON WORKPLACE WELL-BEING

As previously discussed, career counseling significantly affects not only academic paths but also workplace environments. Considering that we spend more than half of our lives working, it is ideal for this to be satisfying. Companies seek to hire the most talented, committed, and high-performing individuals. Ideally, this is only achievable if the workforce is composed of people who are academically trained and convinced of their vocation and naturally motivated to achieve high levels of performance and personal satisfaction in their jobs.

Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory acknowledges that intrinsic motivation promotes general well-being, productivity, job satisfaction, competence, and commitment. Jiménez et al. (2016) found that individuals who are employed in positions aligned with their educational training experience greater intrinsic satisfaction.

From this perspective, organizations are more likely to possess intellectual capital that meets their needs, while individuals find favorable conditions to deploy their full capabilities, achieving excellent job performance without sacrificing personal satisfaction. This alignment between professional training, virtues, strengths, and talents with job roles allows employees to realize their full potential.

Jiménez et al. (2016) define job satisfaction as the subjective well-being an employee experiences while performing their work activities. Such satisfaction leads to emotional responses that influence the employee's performance within the company. They identify key variables affected by job satisfaction: absenteeism (reduced absence from work), employee turnover (lower resignation rates and reduced staff turnover), and productivity (higher performance and efficiency).

A committed employee remains active, draws inner strength to persevere, engages in their activities, and experiences states of flow that translate into increased productivity, creativity, and innovation. Their achievements constantly maintain their curiosity, interest, and motivation. This model of a self-directed, self-motivated individual who loves what they do represents the ideal for anyone seeking employment. Simultaneously, it is the ideal employee that every organization wishes to have.

This modern concept of quality of life at work goes beyond the traditional view mentioned by Vallejo (2016), which focuses more on external factors managed directly and generally by the company across its entire workforce. The approach proposed here aims to balance the internal forces within the organization to achieve goals and objectives. It considers the natural drive (self-motivation) that employees bring to their work to fulfill the company's objectives.

When we combine the effort of self-directed employees with the organization's external motivational efforts aimed at guiding staff toward achieving the objectives outlined in their action plans, there is a dual reinforcement (internal and external) for accomplishing these goals. As a result, performance is likely to improve continuously, creating a constant virtuous cycle.

From this perspective, the concept of human motivation defined by Cavazos (2003) becomes more significant. Cavazos argues that effort driven by personal interest (intrinsic motivation) provides employees with ample reasons to perform their duties and achieve organizational goals. However, from the traditional viewpoint of human resource management, there is a risk of becoming trapped in a vicious cycle by relying solely on extrinsic motivation to keep employees consistently motivated. This approach often fails to sustain the desired levels of productivity and competitiveness that the company needs.

The following are forms of extrinsic motivation for employees: awards, incentives, and rewards, such as punctuality bonuses, employee of the month recognitions, productivity bonuses, extra holidays, overtime payments, trips, financial support for school supplies, uniforms, and scholarships for employees' children, among others. These remain necessary and valuable for both employees and the organization, as they enhance quality of life and foster greater commitment to the company.

According to Cavazos (2003), for a person to find happiness in their work, they must feel valued by their employer, experience job security and personal empowerment,

independence, a sense of survival, enhancement of personal and professional experience, the ability to express themselves, and feel useful and valued for their skills and abilities. Additionally, they should be able to strengthen their personal dignity, discover themselves and their capabilities, manage and use their time effectively, and seek a role within society. These two outlooks on staff management are entirely opposed. In the traditional perspective, to move in the desired direction, a leader must constantly push or pull their minimally motivated subordinates who do not enjoy their work.

In contrast, the second perspective involves an employee who is self-directed, excels in a role aligned with their virtues, strengths, capabilities, and talents, loves what they do, and is committed and engaged. This employee experiences states of flow, as described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and drives towards the company's objectives without needing their leader to pull them along. However, they still require positive work environments to continue growing.

Theoretically, human resource management in organizations has traditionally focused on providing training, development, and motivation to employees in order to align their competencies with job requirements, improve their performance, and retain staff (Chambers et al., 1998; Covey, 1996). However, if the recruitment and selection process filters for self-motivated candidates with talent and experience in the field, training should be tailored to the job's needs, development should aim to enhance their talent, motivation should focus on providing methods, tools, and materials to improve their work, and a positive work environment should be created. According to Robbins (2009), strategies that management can consider include better personnel selection and placement, training, realistic goal setting, job redesign, increased employee involvement, improved organizational communication, offering sabbaticals, and establishing corporate wellness programs (p. 679).

Research in this field indicates that training increases an employee's self-efficacy and reduces work-related stress. Employees perform better when they have clearly specified goals because greater control over activities results in less stress, leading to more motivation. Even if their tasks are highly challenging, with adequate and sufficient training, and feedback on their progress towards goals, they experience greater subjective well-being. This reduces uncertainty about their performance, frustration, role ambiguity, and thus, stress (Robbins, 2009).

As previously mentioned, employee engagement, suggested by Robbins, is naturally achieved by hiring autonomous and self-directed employees with talent and experience in the area. For an employee with these characteristics, these working conditions could positively impact not only their commitment and engagement with the company's goals and objectives but also their personal fulfillment by meeting all their needs, from physiological to self-actualization as outlined by Maslow, contributing to both personal and corporate well-being.

Corporate wellness programs, as mentioned by Robbins, should focus on maintaining employees' physical and mental balance. This approach allows organizations to be seen not just as facilitators of well-being but as entities that incorporate it into their corporate culture (Robbins, 2009). Building a culture of well-being leads to healthier outcomes because these employees experience less suffering and human indolence.

Johnette van Eeden, founder and CEO of Star Wellness, which provides wellness assessment and preventive care services for businesses, local governments, and school systems in the United States, notes that science has shown that a healthier workforce results in a more productive workforce. Benefits for companies include fewer lost hours due to employee absences, reduced workplace accidents, lower turnover, and higher morale. She concludes that wellness programs offer executives a way to control the rising costs of health care (Corporate Wellness Magazine, 2021).

## HOW TO MEASURE THE LEVEL OF HAPPINESS AT SCHOOL AND WORK

Living a fulfilling life means living a good life in all aspects of human existence. This is the greatest aspiration of any individual and society. A good life is equivalent to living happily, healthily, productively, and with a sense of meaning (Park et al., 2013).

A fulfilling life can be achieved through two perspectives in psychology: using the traditional perspective to address and alleviate personal problems, deficiencies, weaknesses, and internal conflicts; and employing the positive psychology approach, which focuses on psychological health, the ability to experience positive emotions and feelings, utilizing talents and strengths, maintaining positive relationships, and finding a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Observing and evaluating one's life in positive terms helps determine the level of life satisfaction an individual feels, thus revealing their level of subjective well-being (Moccia, 2016). Life satisfaction is closely linked to an individual's overall functioning.

To determine the level of happiness, we will adopt Diener's (1984) approach, which employs a concept easily understood from a psychological perspective: subjective well-being. The fundamental components of subjective well-being are a high level of personal satisfaction, a high level of positive feelings, and a low level of negative feelings (Park et al., 2013).

To make the mental and emotional state of an individual visible, it is suggested to maintain a log to record observations of events that generated satisfaction and feelings experienced throughout the day for later review. Create a table with three columns: the first titled "Personal Satisfaction," the second "Positive Emotions or Feelings," and the third "Negative Emotions or Feelings"; then fill in the table accordingly.

At the end of the day, calculate the total observations in each column. Using this information, weigh the personal experiences lived throughout the day by placing the total number of satisfying events on one side of the scale. Next, sum the total number of positive emotions felt that day—such as joy, satisfaction, pride, hope, happiness, delight, pleasure, or any positive sensation—and place this on the same positive side of the scale. On the other side of the scale, place the total number of negative feelings experienced during the day.

Finally, according to Diener's criteria, make the appropriate assessment: if there is a high number of personal satisfactions and a high number of positive feelings compared to a low number of negative feelings, it becomes evident that there are more positive terms or expressions of events and emotions on one side of the scale compared to negative feelings on the other. Therefore, this day had a positive balance in terms of happiness.

In contrast, if the number of negative feelings outweighs the positive, the balance of happiness and well-being would be negative. This would indicate lower life satisfaction, reduced subjective well-being, a less fulfilling life, and diminished overall fulfillment. Exercises like this help to reveal the well-being or discomfort underlying everyday behaviors.

This approach is particularly useful for determining whether a person enjoys their chosen degree program or current job, and whether it aligns with their interests, experiences, virtues, strengths, capabilities, gifts, and talents. It helps assess whether their life is directed towards building personal happiness or if they are repeating behavioral patterns that lead to a mundane existence.

The previous exercise can be applied specifically to the academic or workplace contexts, although not as broadly as initially presented. By tailoring the information to fit the particular schedules—whether academic or professional—one can assess the level of happiness within a school or workplace setting. Observations specific to each environment can be included, whether they relate to personal feelings or the conditions of the surroundings.

## CONCLUSIONS

Students experience greater happiness and better academic performance when their career counseling aligns with their virtues, strengths, interests, abilities, gifts, and talents.

Both students and self-employed, self-directed employees who align their work with their personal positive traits perform better in their activities because they are fueled by intrinsic motivation. One of the most important decisions in a student's life is finding their vocation, choosing a degree program based on their strengths and positive attributes, and showing passion for what they do. These steps are key to developing a fulfilling life and a successful career. Students who have received appropriate career counseling feel more enthusiastic and fulfilled about their future profession compared to those who lacked such counseling or who were misdirected.

Students with a talent for their chosen profession have better stress management and face academic challenges with greater positivity and success because their skills are within the flow zone (where challenge and ability are balanced). This provides them with continuous satisfaction and contributes to their subjective well-being.

Employees are happy at work when they consciously choose a job that aligns with their professional training, interests, abilities, gifts, and talents. They are more committed to organizational goals and objectives and experience higher life satisfaction.

Workplace happiness is enhanced when the primary motivation is intrinsic, complemented by extrinsic motivation provided by the employing organization.

Fair compensation, the right to legal or superior benefits, and positive work environments significantly enhance employee commitment and engagement. Such conditions lead to better performance and increased loyalty to the employer.

Happy employees discover themselves, know their strengths and weaknesses, recognize the limits of their education and academic development—knowledge, skills, and talents—and seek to autonomously and deliberately enhance them to improve their processes and performance.

Employees who enjoy their work find personal satisfaction in what they do and feel fulfilled when their employer values their virtues, strengths, gifts, abilities, skills, talents, and results.

Employees feel fortunate when they perceive that their efforts contribute to achieving the organization's goals and objectives. This fosters self-confidence, a feeling of empowerment, and the freedom to express their ideas, as they believe their participation is valuable for the continuous improvement of the company they work for.

Satisfied employees recognize the need to organize their tasks, prioritize, and use their time efficiently to achieve their goals. They are self-disciplined and independent, develop tolerance for failure, and manage frustration effectively.

Individuals in jobs that exceed their own capabilities experience higher levels of stress, frustration, worry, and anxiety.

Work is the area of life that allows individuals to develop their full potential by putting into practice their knowledge, skills, gifts, and talents to achieve self-actualization and transcendence in life. They put their abilities at the service of others and add value to their daily tasks in their professional development, employment, or entrepreneurship. A self-actualized person is a happy human being.



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