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Subjective Happiness as a Mediator between Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change among College Teachers

Abstract

A subjectively happy person is a mentally healthy person and irrespective of life's hurdles they still are happy and possess increased psychological well-being. This study investigated the mediating role of subjective happiness on the relationship between perceived stress and resistance to change among college teachers. A correlational study was done to determine the relationship between the three variables, and the results showed that subjective happiness is negatively correlated with perceived stress and resistance to change. On the other hand, resistance to change is negatively correlated with subjective happiness but has a positive relationship with perceived stress. A mediation analysis was carried out to determine the mediation effect of subjective happiness on perceived stress and resistance to change. The results showed that there is a mediating effect and that subjective happiness completely mediates the relationship between perceived stress and resistance to change. The findings of this study state that it is important to focus upon subjective happiness in order for teachers to avoid resisting to change and for diminished appraisal of events as stressful.

Key Words: Happiness, Perceived Stress, Resistance, Change, Well-Being

Introduction

*“Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and
you shall form an invincible host against difficulties”*

Helen Keller.

A subjectively happy person is a mentally healthy person and irrespective of life's hurdles they still are happy and possess increased psychological well-being (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Change exists and is inevitable and, in a world, where the rate of change is now faster than it has ever been there will be resistance to change wherever it occurs (Caruth & Caruth, 2013). Because change is inevitable a person's response to the change in their environment matters a great deal for them to be mentally happy and not think of change as problematic and so that change can be implemented successfully (Dupuy, 2002). Positive emotions increase one's satisfaction in life and one is satisfied not because they feel good but because they develop resources for living well (Cohn et al., 2009). When one responds to change in a positive manner, no matter how challenging or stressful it is, they do not perceive it to be so and they know that they are bigger than the challenge in front of them and are able to carry them out with confidence yielding positive outcomes. Positive emotions widen an individual's instantaneous thought-action repertoire (Fredrickson, 2004). This leads to the assumption that, how happy one reports themselves to be, will determine their appraisal of events and responses towards change and this will have an impact on the outcome and productivity in a dynamic environment.

When there exists an organizational change, employees' subjective responses to change and Resistance to Change attitudes account for a substantial proportion of the variance in employee well-being (Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2016). The same can be applied to employees in higher-educational institutions. Changes in the teaching-learning practices are frequently resisted by members of the faculty (Caruth & Caruth, 2013). Teachers in higher educational institutions face constant changes in their work environment as they need to educate different generations which require them to cope with these changes to stay happy. Positive psychological capital and positive emotions may be important in countering potential dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors relevant for change (Avey et al., 2008). Hence, it is important to know what influences appraisal of events as stressful and peoples change resistance behaviours.

All this narrows down to the three main variables of this study, they are, Resistance to Change, Subjective Happiness and Perceived Stress with College Teachers being the sample population.

Resistance to Change

With change come our own responses to change. When educational change occurs or is sought, teachers do not all react in the same manner. Researchers have studied about gender, subject specialisation, and personal change orientations, for example, can all influence how teachers respond to specific educational changes and change in general. The age and stage of profession of teachers are two of the most significant variables. Considering age differences, research shows that today's young teachers are eager and mainly positive persons early in their careers, who have mastered the adaptation required for generational survival in an occupational and social environment marked by rising change. Most instructors focus their remaining energy and rewards on a more relaxed sense of accomplishment within the classroom as their bodies begin to deteriorate, their experiences of repetitive educational change wear them down, and imminent retirement lessens the grip that others have over them (Hargreaves, 2005).

In the meantime, during the middle years of teaching, instructors maintain but temper some of their enthusiasm, and with developing confidence, competence, and a sense of security, they are able to be open to but selective about the change proposals they adopt.

Subjective Happiness

Happiness is defined as positive emotional well-being in its simplest form, and it is used interchangeably to represent one's subjective well-being (SWB) (Jalloh et al., 2014). Subjective Happiness refers to the extent to which people can intuitively rate themselves as being happy or unhappy.

Teachers' health has long been a source of concern for educational systems around the world. Furthermore, study findings – particularly in the field of positive psychology – show that high levels of happiness are linked to extra benefits that improve teachers' professional performance (Rahm & Heise, 2019). Therefore, we can say that a happy teacher would be a content and competent one bringing out the best in her students by being an example and mirroring her happiness and positivity allowing their students to explore various fields of knowledge.

Perceived Stress

Selye (1976), also known as ‘the father of stress research’, defines stress as the “non-specific response of the body to any demand.” In this study Perceived Stress can be referred to as those emotional responses which occur due to the demands of one's job; e.g, workload and competence.

The main stressors that teachers generally have and are also proven by many research scholars are job-role conflict, job burnout, inadequate reward policy, work overload, dual roles (work and home), personal development stressors, and/or organizational climate stressors.

This study considers various areas of change such as institutional change, change in position, adjustments, role changes, and any minor or major changes that would have taken place among these higher education teachers in the recent past.

A study on teacher mental health proves that teacher mental health may contribute to the resilience of teachers who choose to stay in the profession (Gray et al., 2017). There is wide scope for research among teachers in the higher education institutions as not many researches have been found among higher education teachers as compared to elementary and secondary school teachers which enhance the need for this study.

Reviewing the many different stressors faced by college teachers, this study aims to address whether Subjective Happiness influences teacher's Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change. It aims to create awareness on whether Subjective Happiness intervenes between Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change among College Teachers. When a change exists in the work environment of college teachers, they perceive it as stressful and either accept or resist the changes. Subjective Happiness of the teachers is what actually influences this is the assumption of this study. Negative emotions expressed towards change in other words, resisting change negatively has an impact on the subjective well-being (which is the broader term for happiness). Employee well-being is influenced by the responses to change in particular (Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2016).

Need for the Study

As mentioned earlier, due to the dynamic roles of higher-educational institution teachers along with their increased workload and competence that they have to keep up to it is important to study how they adapt to changes that exist in their work environment and with their roles. And as we now know that employee well-being (which is also a broader term for subjective happiness) is linked to their subjective experiences of change and that teacher happiness contributes to better performance of teachers we can see that this study is of great significance to educational institutions in managing the mental well-being of their staff members and also in maintaining their happiness and satisfaction at the workplace.

Thus, this research study aims to throw light upon the relationship between three variables, i.e, Resistance to Change, Perceived Stress and Subjective Happiness among College Teachers and how Subjective Happiness plays a mediating role between Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change. Moreover, no studies have been done to determine the relationship or connection between these three variables which makes clear that a knowledge gap exists.

Objectives

- 1) To assess the relationship between Subjective Happiness, Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change
- 2) To determine the mediating effect of Subjective Happiness on Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change

Hypothesis

H1: Subjective Happiness mediates between Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change among College Teachers.

Design

The research design used in this study is correlational research design, as the study aims to find out and describe the relationship between the three variables, i.e, Subjective Happiness, Perceived Stress and Resistance to change in which Resistance to Change is considered as the dependent variable, Perceived Stress is the independent variable and Subjective Happiness is considered as the mediating variable in which a mediation analysis is done to determine whether Subjective Happiness mediates and the correlations among the variables are determined.

Sampling Design

Convenient Sampling design is used for this study as the study is done given a time constraint and considering the pandemic situation where movement or physical meeting was restricted. Sample size taken for this study is 90 consisting of pre-university college, degree college and masters degree college teachers from different colleges/ institutions across Karnataka.

Tools Used

Tools refer to those standardized tests that were used for collecting the data from the sample population for the study. Three tools were used for this study, they are: Subjective Happiness Scale, Perceived Stress Scale and the Resistance to Change Scale.

Subjective Happiness Scale by Lyubomirsky and Heidi Lepper: The Subjective Happiness Scale is a new four-item questionnaire that assesses overall subjective happiness. The alphas ranged from 0.79 to 0.94 (M = 0.86) and the M was 0.86.

Perceived Stress Scale by Sheldon Cohen: The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) is a 10-item standard stress assessment questionnaire that was developed in 1983 to assess how stressful situations in one's life are perceived. Cronbach's alpha: Perceived Helplessness: $\alpha = 0.85$, Perceived Self-efficacy: $\alpha = 0.82$

Resistance to Change Scale by Shaul Oreg: The Resistance to Change Scale is a 17-item questionnaire that assesses an individual's tendency to oppose change. The Resistance to Change Scale predicted people's affective reactions to the move as well as their functioning at work. The scale's coefficient alpha was .79.

Statistical Techniques used: Statistical analysis refers to the science of collecting data to uncover the patterns and trends that the study aims to analyse. Inferential Mediation Analysis and Correlation Analysis was conducted to assess the data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to analyse the data in this study and the Process Macro v 3.5 was used to determine the mediation effect.

Results and Discussion:

Correlation Analysis:

To analyse the link between each variable, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. Figure 1 shows that Subjective Happiness is negatively correlated with Resistance to Change and Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change is negatively correlated with Subjective Happiness and slightly positively correlated with Perceived Stress.

Table 1:

Correlation Analysis which indicates the relationship between variables

Variables		Subjective Happiness	Resistance to Change	Perceived Stress
Subjective Happiness	Pearson Correlation	1	-.321**	-.399**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.000
	N	90	90	90
Resistance to Change	Pearson Correlation	-.321**	1	.190
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		0.073
	N	90	90	90

Perceived Stress		-.399**	190	1
		.000	0.073	
		90	90	90

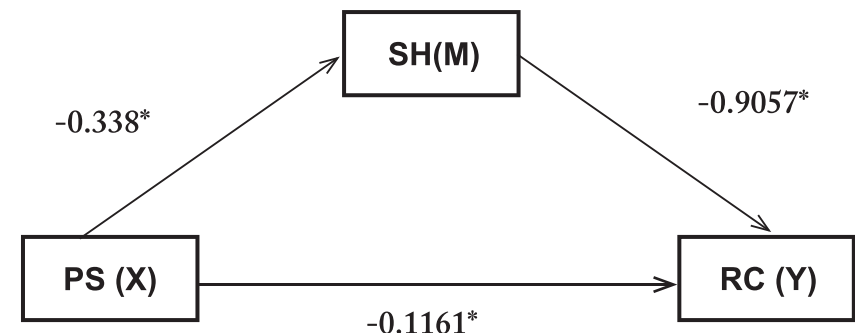
Mediation Analysis

The following is the report of the mediation analysis of Subjective Happiness (M) on Perceived Stress (X) on Resistance to Change (Y).

The relationship between Perceived Stress and Resistance to Change was mediated by Subjective Happiness. As Figure 1 illustrates, the standardized regression coefficient between Perceived Stress and Subjective Happiness was statistically significant, as was the standardized regression coefficient between Subjective Happiness and Resistance to Change. The standardized indirect effect was $(-.338)(-.9057) = .3061$. We tested the significance of this indirect effect using bootstrapping procedures. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000 bootstrapped samples, and the 95% confidence interval was computed by determining the indirect effects at the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles. The bootstrapped unstandardized direct effect was .1906 and the unstandardized indirect effect was 0.3061, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from .21, 1.28. Thus, the indirect effect was statistically significant.

Figure I:

Standardised Regression Coefficients for the Relationship Between Perceived Stress (PS) and Resistance to Change (RC) as mediated by Subjective Happiness (SH):



C = 0.1906

C' = -0.1161

Discussion

The aim of the study was to determine the mediation effect of subjective happiness between perceived stress and resistance to change among college teachers. A sample of 90 college teachers participated in this study which includes teachers from various fields of academic study, mainly with expertise in Humanities, Commerce, Science, English Language, Second Language and Mathematics and Technology.

The correlation analysis proves that subjective happiness is negatively correlated with perceived stress and resistance to change. This means that when subjective happiness increases resistance to change decreases and perceived stress too decreases. Stress was found to have negative relationships with growing mind, self-esteem, and happiness in a study by Hwang and Lee (2018). They found that stress has a detrimental impact on growth attitude, self-esteem, and happiness, according to the findings of their mediation study. Employees' positive psychological capital and positive emotions, according to Avey et al., (2008), positive emotions may be important in overcoming potential dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours essential to organisational change. Another study by Schiffrin & Nelson (2008) taking a sample of 100 college students found that participants who reported higher levels of stress were less happy than those who reported lower levels of stress and linear correlations between happiness and perceived stress were significant indicating that there was an inverse relationship between perceived stress and happiness.

Resistance to change is negatively correlated with subjective happiness but has a positive correlation with perceived stress. When there is increased resistance to change, there is decreased intuitive happiness, and this can show that perceived stress too would have increased. A study done by Takavoli (2010) coincides with the results of this study and it proposes that negative responses to change are a result of negative perceptions about the results of or outcomes of organizational change, the positive responses may result from appraisals of events in a positive way and these findings support that positive correlation between perceived stress and resistance to change.

The mediation analysis of this study reports that there exists a mediation effect of subjective happiness between perceived stress and resistance to change. A study by Schiffrin & Nelson (2008) examined the relationship between taking a sample of 100 college students. They found that participants who reported higher levels of stress were less happy than those who reported lower levels of stress and linear correlations between happiness and perceived stress were significant indicating that there was an inverse relationship between perceived stress and happiness. There exists no direct relationship between perceived stress and resistance to

change and no studies exist to prove the same. The two variables are linked through subjective happiness through complete mediation as proven by the indirect effect of perceived stress on resistance to change.

Conclusion

In summary, it can be concluded that the findings of this study were proven to be true that subjective happiness completely mediates the relationship between perceived stress and resistance to change. A sample of 90 participants were studied and the results were proved that if a person is subjectively happy or not, this will determine whether they are prone to perceiving events as stressful or any event as threatening than as taking the event as a challenge.

Recommendations

An exploration of age, gender and cultural differences of subjective happiness in relation to perceived stress and resistance to change would be beneficial to know if this model has an impact. A study on the acceptance of change than that of the resisting behaviours of change would be another possible field of study.

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Transforming Higher Education in India: A Critical Analysis of the National Education Policy 2020

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the potential advantages and obstacles of NEP 2020 in reshaping and modernizing the higher education landscape in the Indian Subcontinent. This research presents the National Education Policy 2020 on the Indian higher education landscape. With its challenges and key components the study highlights the significant potential of the National Education Policy 2020 to reshape higher education in India towards a student-centric, research-focused, and competency-driven model. While acknowledging the policy's ambitious goals and innovative strategies, the study also underscores the challenges of implementation, particularly in ensuring equitable access, maintaining quality standards, and fostering institutional autonomy. This study's findings can offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in the Indian higher education system, aiding in the implementation of NEP 2020 initiatives effectively. By integrating diverse methodologies and synthesizing findings, this study contributes novel perspectives to the discourse on educational reform, informing future research, policymaking, and practice in the field of higher education.