

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Happiness at Work: Seafarers' Experience in a Maritime Company

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We investigated the person-level factors that influenced the degree of happiness at work of Filipino seafarers in a maritime company. We used the model of Fisher (2010) as the basis for the person-level dimensions, namely: (1) job satisfaction; (2) vigorous work engagement; (3) dispositional affect; and (4) flourishing at work. We investigated if job satisfaction would most significantly explain happiness in the workplace of the seafarers among all person-level dimensions. We also hypothesized that the bundle of person-level dimensions significantly influences happiness at work. We used descriptive and causal research designs and surveyed 229 randomly selected Filipino seafarers from one Maritime Company through a questionnaire sent via email. We found that seafarers quite frequently experience vigorous work engagement, are satisfied with their job, are quite a bit happy in the dispositional affect, and agree that they flourish at work. Seafarers generally agree that they are happy in their workplace. Our multiple regression results indicated that the bundled variables explained 53% of the variance, which affirmed the hypothesis that the bundle of person-level dimensions will significantly influence happiness at work. However, only three variables namely: 1) vigorous work engagement, 2) dispositional affect, and 3) flourishing at work significantly explained happiness at work. Interestingly, job satisfaction was not contributory to happiness at work. A new model was proposed from our study partly explained by Fredrickson's (2004 (c)) broaden-and-build theory and Filipino psychology. Based on the results of our study, it is imperative that the Company foster happiness at work through the adoption of strategic human resource management approaches both at the corporate and business levels and that these should be linked with the internal growth strategies as well.

**Keywords:** happiness at work, positive psychology, Filipino psychology, Filipino seafarers, work engagement

**JEL Classifications:** L20, M12, M54, O15, J24, J8

Numerous organizations realize that employees are the core competence and the competitive advantage of their organization (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Human resource practices such as providing decent work and meeting employees' needs leads to productivity, job satisfaction, happiness in the workplace, overall success, and sustainability.

The need to live and care for families should entitle people to work (Pope Leo XIII) because it develops

their identity, enables them to act out their goals, and allows them to become creative (Okhuysen et al., 2015). Being able express their full humanity has considerable effects on a worker's social existence (Edralin, 2016; Okhuysen, et al., 2013). It also shapes their lives and psychological well-being which in turn impacts society (Harter et al., 2002). People who are happy at work become successful and can be more effective and productive workers (Boehm

& Lyubomirsky, 2008; Zelenski, Murphy, & Jenkins, 2008).

### *The State of Filipino Seafarers*

Maritime shipping is the maxim of globalization and competitiveness (UNCTD, 2015). Filipinos are preferred seafarers because they can speak English, show dedication, discipline, are flexible, highly-trained, value teamwork, and have a positive attitude (GGSMS, Inc., 2018). For this reason, Filipinos easily find work onboard (Ruggunan, 2011) and contribute to the Philippine economy through monetary remittances. However, there is a dearth of studies about seafarers (Terry, 2014) which can actually provide vital feedback to the maritime industry.

With a range of issues that confront Filipino seafarers (being far away from their families for several months; boredom due to prolonged isolation; occupational hazards; stress; demoralized at work (Gregorio Jr, 2012); danger at sea affecting their psycho-social health (Baylon & Santos, 2011, p. 38; see also Mena Report, 28 Oct 2015, Mena Report, 16 Oct. 2016, and Abila & Tang, 2014); maritime accident (Baylon & Santos, 2011), it is important to know if they are still happy at work despite the circumstances.

Our study asked the question “What person-level factors influence the degree of happiness at work of Filipino seafarers in a maritime company?” Specifically, we described the person-level measure of happiness at work using job satisfaction, vigorous work engagement, dispositional affect, and flourishing as dimensions. Second, we determined the level of happiness at the workplace of Filipino seafarers. Third, we analyzed the extent of influence of the person-level dimensions on the level of happiness at the workplace of the Filipino seafarers. Fourth, we identified which among the four person-level dimensions of happiness at work: job satisfaction, vigorous work engagement, dispositional affect, and flourishing will most significantly explain their happiness in the workplace. Lastly, we developed a new model and definition of happiness at work, based on the results of our study.

Our research is ingrained in the organizational behavior that fosters happiness and how workers function within an organization (Peiro et al., 2014) which addresses the gap in the construct of happiness relevant to the seafarers’ workplace. The model of happiness at work is derived from valid and reliable

measurements from the literature and a rigorous research methodology.

## **Literature Review**

### *Happiness and Happiness at Work*

Happiness at Work is remembered well-being that comprises four aspects of happiness (Hervás & Vázquez, 2013). These include the two principal domains of happiness namely, the hedonic (subjective perspective) and eudaimonic (psychological perspective) domains (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Remembered well-being also includes general well-being and social well-being.

### *Hedonic Happiness*

Hedonic happiness and well-being is obtained through pleasure and avoiding pain (Ryan & Deci, 2001) but does not last long (Fisher, 2010) because it is focused on subjective well-being (SWB) (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Happiness, according to SWB, is the physical pleasure, material gains, and pain avoidance, with the usual affect founded on intellectual, physical, or social influences (Fisher, 2010; O’Keefe, 2016; Waterman, 1993; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

### *Eudaimonic Happiness*

The word “daimon” in eudaimonia focuses on human excellence that reflects a potential to succeed (Waterman, 1993). The eudaimonic approach is centered on Psychological Well-Being (PWB) which refers to a fully functioning individual (Ryan & Deci, 2001) that points to a person’s ability to gain meaning in life and self-fulfillment amid his challenges (Keyes et al., 2002). Eudaimonic happiness pertains to what an individual remembers when he balances pleasure and pain that embodies substance, warmth, sharing, worthiness, and the moral mental state (Kahneman & Riis, 2005).

### *General Well-being*

General Well-being refers to how a person evaluates his life using his standards in terms of his achievements against his expectations (Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2011). It also includes how grateful a person is for his life and his sense of happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Perceived support is a stimulus to job satisfaction at work (Newman et al., 2015), the work environment (e.g. noise, air quality) influences life satisfaction (Garcia-Mainar et al., 2015),

and work dissatisfaction, conflicts between work and family, dangerousness, and role ambiguity were found to impact life satisfaction (Pasupuleti et al., 2009).

### *Social Well-being*

Social Well-being relates to how an individual values his circumstance, and the manner by which he acts in society (Keyes C. M., 1998). Love and belongingness in Maslow's model express a human need to socially interact (Layard et al., 2012), and while continuous interaction would not be necessary to focus in accomplishing work, it is an advantage in the workplace, as good relations motivate people to work (Chancellor et al., 2015), most especially when there is social support (Hombrosados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2011). Caring and respect in the workplace nurture social well-being (Di Fabio, et al., 2016).

### *Dimensions of Happiness at Work*

The tri-component model of *attitude* is an individual's tendency to act in certain ways on what he is experiencing and with his temperament (Pickens, 2005). These include "dispositional affect" as the tri-component of affect (a feeling); "job satisfaction" as the tri-component of cognition (a thought or belief); and "vigorous work engagement" and "flourishing" as the tri-component of behavior (an action) (Pickens, 2005).

### *Job Satisfaction*

Job satisfaction looks into both the intrinsic (or cognitive) and the extrinsic (or environmental, e.g. pay and supervision (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996)) aspects of the job (Starbuck, 1963), with respect to the level of happiness an individual views his work (Kahneman, 2000).

### *Vigorous Work Engagement*

Vigorous Work Engagement is work engagement that refers to challenging work (Bakker & Leiter, 2010) that relates to vigor associated with flexibility and elevated energy, and readiness to overcome difficulties at work (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engagement, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1975), is coherent with 'flow' that exhibits the unity of a clear mind and body, absorbed and effortless attention, absolute control, self-unconsciousness, confusion, and deep-rooted ecstasy (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Vigor is a positive affective reaction to an individual's work in progress that lasts for weeks

(Shirom, 2003 (a)). Positive affect is important because it motivates employees to take initiative and become productive and creative in their work (Sonnentag & Niessen, 2008). Those who experienced being vigorous at work felt "physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness" (Shirom, 2003 (a), p.1, 2011(c), p.50).

### *Dispositional Affect*

Dispositional Affect is an individual's tendency to display personality traits that are influenced by the way he sees things, be it positively or negatively. His assessment of the pleasant and unpleasant episodes in his life results to affects or moods and emotions (Diener et al., 1999). Positive mood experiences, smiling, and liveliness (Barsade & Gibson, 2007); similarly, alertness and enthusiasm (Crawford & Henry, 2004) as well as joy and delight (Gamble & Gärling, 2012), all exhibit positive affectivity. On the contrary, troubled and hostile situational decisions (Barsade & Gibson, 2007), distress (Crawford & Henry, 2004), anger, and fear (Gamble & Gärling, 2012) exemplify negative affectivity.

### *Flourishing*

Flourishing is when an individual's best functions reflect his PWB (Diener et al., 2010), where a person's intellect advances to a purpose, his action, and human virtue, and that as a consequence of having a goal in life, he flourishes (Bynum, 2006). It centers on finding meaning and self-realization that equates to the individual's well-being as he is completely functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

### *Filipino Psychology*

"Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology) refers to the psychology born out of the experience, thought, and orientation of Filipinos, based on the full use of Filipino culture and language" (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000, p. 49). It plays a large part in influencing Filipino attitudes and behaviors in everyday living and in the workplace.

The foundation of Filipino internality-externality embodies "*saya and ligaya* [which means] happiness" (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000, p. 57). Being happy, as a state of mind, is a defense mechanism to directly block the pitiful veracities of their lives (Tiango, 2006).

The role of the family is significant (Baylon & Santos, 2011), such that Filipinos employ “*pagsisikap*, the ability and willingness to endure hardships or make sacrifices for the sake of the family” (Lamvik, 2012, p. 25). This is reinforced with “*pasensiya* and *pagtitimpi*” (resignation to, and acceptance of, failures) and “*pagtitiis*” (enduring life’s difficulties without complaining and being resilient to adversities) (Selmer & de Leon, 2002, p. 11).

Filipino psychology incorporates the virtue ethics of the free-willed *kagandahang-loob* (beauty-of-wills) which is modeled by *malasakit* (being responsible for the needs of others rather than oneself). *Pakikisama* (good relations with others) (Leoncini, 2005) or deference to a group (Hechanova et al., 2014), a daily workplace practice (Saito, 2010), is a form of *pakikipagkapwa* (having friendly rapport with co-workers) (Javier, 2010; Guevara, 2005). Seafarers are subservient to their bosses and give the impression of acceptance to the ethnical and racial layers in their workplace (Terry, 2014). They do not want to generate *samaan ng loob* (feelings of being hurt) that can possibly ruin relationships (Selmer & de Leon, 2002). The Filipino’s strong faith in God helps him endure the hardships of working as a seafarer (Javier, 2010).

## Theoretical Framework

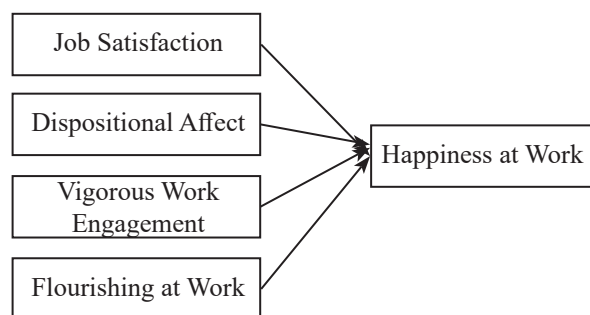
Our theoretical framework embodies the “broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions” (Fredrickson, 2004 (c), p. 1367), which is within the field of positive psychology and is defined as the “science of positive aspects of human life, such as happiness, well-being, and flourishing” (Boniwell, 2006, p. 1). It originated from a blend of *hedonic* (positive and negative affect and the satisfaction derived subjectively) and *eudaimonic* (founded on meaning and purpose in life) (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011) perspectives. The theory states that “positive emotions [that] serve to broaden an individual’s momentary thought-action repertoire, which, in turn, has the effect of building that individual’s physical, intellectual, and social resources” (Fredrickson, 1998 (a), p. 1).

The four positive emotions are: one, *joy* (usually interchanged with happiness, and produces an unscripted physical, social, intellectual, and artistic play); two, *interest* (a brief thought-action predisposition

to investigate what a person is curious about that lead to learning which can be an “individual interest” or “situational interest” (Hidi & Renninger, 2006, p. 113). It leads to a positive emotion of engagement because an individual is completely absorbed in ‘flow’ as he encounters a “focused attention, clear mind, mind and body union, effortless concentration, complete control, loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time, and intrinsic enjoyment” (Csikszentmihalyi as cited in Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004, p. 295); three, *contentment* (gained after a flow, as a person is more in sync internally and externally due to positive emotions); and four, *love* (a blend of certain constructive feelings that develops the range of temporary thought and action because people share this with others they love) enhances a person’s range of thinking and acting that nurtures his physical, intellectual, social, and psychological capacities (Fredrickson, 1998 (a)).

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study, as shown in Figure 1, is a list of person level constructs that “refer to pleasant judgments (positive attitudes) or pleasant experiences (positive feelings, moods, emotions, flow states) at work” (Fisher, 2010, p. 385), which explains happiness at work. The conceptual framework indicates that job satisfaction is “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” which involves both thinking and feeling (Saari & Judge, 2004). Dispositional affect is when a person’s general character is stable enough that one would react to circumstances with certainty as they affectively view their environment either positively or negatively (Barsade & Gibson, 2007); vigorous work engagement is where “vigor represents a positive affective response to one’s ongoing interaction with significant elements in one’s job and work environment that comprises the interconnected feelings of physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness” (Shirom, 2007(b), p. 90); and flourishing is a human excellence approach that “focuses on meaning and self-realization and defined well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 141). These are the variables that explain happiness at work.



**Figure 1.** *Conceptual framework of happiness at work*

## Research Hypothesis

To answer our research problem and meet our objectives, we considered that the science of happiness which includes work in economics, social policy and psychology refer to hedonic interpretations (Ahmed, 2008). Hedonic interpretations emphasizes gaining essential materials found on intellectual, physical, or social derivations (Waterman, 1993). Locke defined job satisfaction as “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values” (1976, p. 1342). Hsiao and Chen were more upfront stating that, “job satisfaction is the extent of one’s happiness with his or her job ... [and it is] one’s positive feelings toward his or her job” (2012, p. 166). Job satisfaction is subjective, which follows Fisher’s hedonic interpretation that refers to “pleasant feelings and favourable judgements” (Fisher, 2010, p. 385).

Benz and Frey (2004) measured job satisfaction in connection with job security, income, advancement opportunity, if job is interesting, work independent, and working with others. They concluded that job satisfaction is happiness at work. Zeng, Forrest, and McHale (2013) examined how job satisfaction impacts overall happiness where pay and working conditions were considered in measuring job satisfaction. They found that it was the level of pay rather than absolute income that was related to happiness at work (Zeng, et al., 2013).

Fisher (2010) mentioned that the studies on job satisfaction as a dimension predicting happiness is extensive. Judge and Klinger also said that the literature they reviewed were evidence that “job satisfaction is strongly and consistently related to subjective well-being” (2007, p. 403).

Judge and Klinger (2007) concluded that “job satisfaction is a salient and perhaps inveterate attitude, permeating cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of peoples’ work and nonwork lives. These features accentuate the importance of job satisfaction as a construct worthy of attention in the organizational sciences, as well as subjective well-being research more generally” (p. 407).

In view of the above findings from past studies, we hypothesize that,

*Hypothesis 1:* Job satisfaction most significantly explains happiness in the workplace of the seafarers. This is founded on the premise that job satisfaction is subjective, which follows Fisher’s hedonic interpretation that refers to “pleasant feelings and favorable judgements” (2010, p. 385).

According to Fisher, happiness is in the “form of pleasant moods and emotions, well-being, and positive attitudes.” (Fisher, 2010, p. 384). All person level measures of happiness at work included in this study indicate that positive psychological and affective states or feeling of happiness may emerge.

First, Weiss (2002) agreed with Fisher (1998) that job satisfaction is an attitude. However, Weiss emphasized that attitude only referred to positive and negative evaluations that a worker makes regarding his job or job situation.

Second, the person level measure of happiness is vigorous work engagement, which is “a positive affective response to one’s ongoing interaction with significant elements in one’s job and work environment that comprises the interconnected feelings of physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness” (Shirom, 2007, p. 90). According to Shirom (2003), the discernment of vigor originated from Hobfoll (1989) who explained in the *model of conservation of resources* that people work hard to have and develop resources, which they value or because it is a way to realize things, their individualities, circumstances, or strengths. Shirom (2003) relates vigor only to energetic resources that pertain to physical, emotional, and cognitive energies rather than to internal resources (e.g. self-esteem, optimism, and self-efficacy) and external resources (e.g. social support, employment, and economic status). When workers affectively speak, and perform their work spontaneously, instead of having a positive

affect about situations and instances, there is vigor (Shirom, 2003).

Third is dispositional affect which Watson, Clark, and Tellegen’s (1988) referred to positive and negative affectivity, where Positive Affectivity (PA) refers to “high energy, enthusiasm, and pleasurable engagement [while the opposite is Negative Affectivity (NA) that denotes] distress, unpleasurable engagement, and nervousness” (Judge & Larsen, 2001, p. 71). The dispositional processes of PA and NA is important to understand because these characteristics are brought by people to work every day (Judge & Larsen, 2001). These processes involve the personality traits of individuals, such as that of the “Big Five” (Judge & Larsen, 2001, p. 76) and how they affectively respond to the hedonic motivations around them because of how they perceive and think about them (Judge & Larsen, 2001). Thus, people differ in the way they process and utilize information, and their cognitive styles that direct their tendency to convincingly experience affect over time which is what can be referred to as the person’s dispositional affect (Chan & Park, 2013).

And finally, flourishing is “to live within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience” (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005, p. 678). Younkings (2010) theorized human flourishing and happiness as having a connection with common and distinct achievable properties of human nature that makes every person unique as each would apply them in their own way. It is incumbent upon everyone to pursue self-fulfillment by way of taking advantage of his abilities, aptitudes, and strengths (Younkins, 2010). Nevertheless a moral self-direction or autonomy in the pursuit of happiness is important because everyone must be accorded equal respect which defines the “principle of natural rights” (Younkins, 2010, p. 3). Therefore, Younkings (2010) asserts that happiness can be regarded as the consequences and circumstances of living properly that is related to one’s self-esteem (“one’s agency and competence” (p. 3)) and flow (“the state of being deeply involved and absorbed in meaningful and valuable activities” (p. 3)). Moreover, he explained that it is how a person interprets and

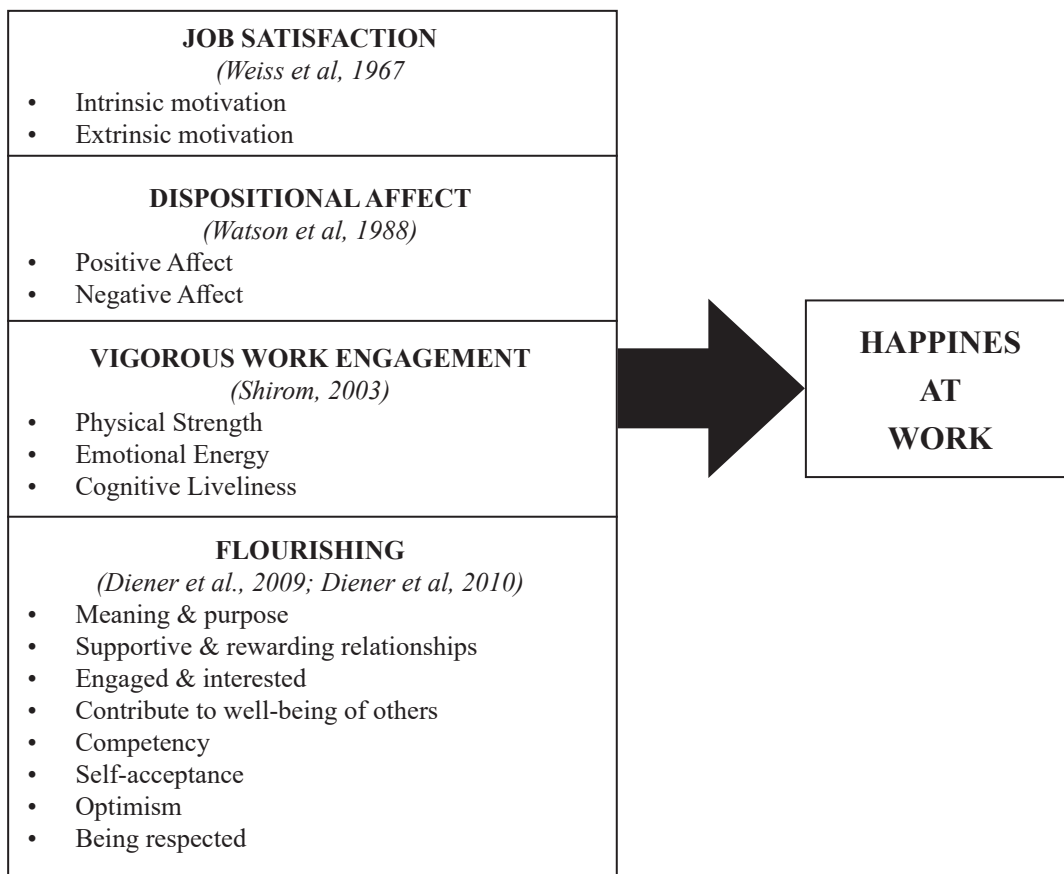


Figure 2. Operational framework of the study

rationally thinks and freely applies the generic goods and virtues (“a principle that guides a person’s choices in accordance with the conclusions of his reasons” (p. 4) that leads a person to flourish and become happy (Younkins, 2010). Thus, happiness stimulates a person to act because he can fulfill his goals and ideals which are fulfilled affectively and intellectually (Younkins, 2010). With these, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 2:* The bundle of person level dimensions significantly influences happiness at work. This refers to the person-level constructs of Job Satisfaction, Vigorous Work Engagement, Dispositional Affect, and Flourishing at Work, which is the combination of hedonic and eudaimonic views, that can explain happiness at work (Fisher, Happiness at work, 2010).

Figure 2 shows that the person level dimensions composed of job satisfaction, dispositional affect, vigorous work engagement, and flourishing at work estimates of happiness at work. Happiness at work was measured with the remembered well-being variable.

## Research Methodology

We used the descriptive and explanatory research designs to determine the causal links between the personal level dimensions and the happiness at work construct. The single dependent variable happiness at work was analyzed using multiple regression on the four independent variables of vigorous work engagement, job satisfaction, dispositional affect, and flourishing at work to identify the causal relationships among variables. We intended to generalize results on human social behavior considering the large sample that was selected (Saunders et al., 2009).

We were able to recruit 229 respondents from one Maritime Company with 20 ships and 323 Filipino seafarers onboard the ships. Using the survey method, we emailed to them a self-administered questionnaire which was written in both English and Filipino. We pre-tested this questionnaire to 32 seafarers. This instrument was a nine-page, 78-item questionnaire where five items pertained to demographics was printed on an 8” x 11” white paper and were stapled together. Participants were employed seafarers of a shipping company who were, at that time, attending a final briefing prior to going onboard for a new assignment.

Their completely accomplished questionnaires were returned after nine to twenty-five minutes. The established instrument’s internal consistency ranged from being acceptable to excellent. The Cronbach alpha of our instrument for the Vigorous Work Engagement subscale consisted of 14 items ( $\alpha = .925$ ), the Job Satisfaction subscale consisted of 20 items ( $\alpha = .882$ ), the Positive Dispositional Affect subscale consisted of 10 items ( $\alpha = .861$ ), the Negative Dispositional Affect subscale consisted of 10 items ( $\alpha = .826$ ), the Flourishing at Work subscale consisted of 8 items ( $\alpha = .882$ ), and Happiness at Work subscale consisted of 11 items ( $\alpha = .783$ ).

## Results

229 Filipino randomly selected seafarers participated as respondents, with ages ranging from 26 to 62 years old. Their mean age was 36 to 42 years old. They worked as Officer (28%), Engineers (29), Cadets (7%), and Ratings (37%). Table 1 displays the mean scores of the different dimensions and happiness at work.

**Table 1.** Mean & Standard Deviation of the Four Dimensions & Happiness at Work

Dimension	No. of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Vigorous Work Engagement	14	5.93	.65899
Job Satisfaction	20	5.75	.53328
Dispositional Affect	20	5.92	.62858
Flourishing at Work	8	6.33	.46543
Happiness at Work	11	6.15	.53425

Multiple regression was used to analyze the relationship between the single dependent variable, Happiness at Work and four independent variables: vigorous work engagement, job satisfaction, dispositional affect, and flourishing at work. Hair et al. (2010) clarified that independent variables in multiple regression generally have its proportional input to the entire prediction and explain the influence of each variable.

Multiple regression analysis was utilized to test if Vigorous Work Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Dispositional Affect, and Flourishing at Work significantly explained Happiness at Work. The

model derived in explaining Happiness at Work is  $\hat{y} = 1.159 + .300a + .078b + .136c + .309d$  where,  $\hat{y}$  is Happiness at Work, a is Vigorous Work Engagement, b is Job Satisfaction, c is Dispositional Affect and d is Flourishing At Work.

Table 2 shows the multiple regression results which indicated the bundled variables that explained 53% of the variance ( $R^2 = .534$ ,  $F(2, 224) = 64.054$ ,  $p < .000$ ). It was found that Vigorous Work Engagement ( $b = .300$ ,  $p < .000$ ), Dispositional Affect ( $b = .136$ ,  $p < .004$ ), and also Flourishing at Work ( $b = .309$ ,  $p < .000$ ) significantly explained Happiness at Work. The model explained through the coefficients and the corresponding p-values that happiness at work of the seafarers is derived when they flourish at work and nearly the same by vigorous work engagement. Dispositional affect also increased the seafarers happiness at work but not as much as flourishing at work and vigorous work engagement did. However, Job Satisfaction ( $b = .078$ ,  $p < .198$ ), did not contribute to the happiness at work of the seafarers compared to all the other variables.

Hypothesis 1, which stated that “Job satisfaction would most significantly explain the happiness in the workplace of seafarers,” is therefore rejected. There were only three variables namely, vigorous work engagement, dispositional affect, and flourishing at work, that significantly explained happiness at work. Hypothesis 2, which affirmed that “The bundle of person level dimensions will significantly influence the happiness at work is accepted. This is evident in the model’s  $R^2$  and significant F-values. Table 2 presents the regression result of Happiness at Work.

**Table 2.** Regression Result of Happiness at Work (n=229)

Variable	Happiness at Work		
	B	SEB	β
Vigorous Work Engagement	.300	.051	.370**
Job Satisfaction	.078	.061	.078
Dispositional Affect	.136	.046	.160**
Flourishing At Work	.309	.077	.270**
$R^2$	.534		
F	64.054**		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

## Discussion

Our study generated several interesting findings based on Fisher’s (2010) suggested person level dimensions that explained happiness in the workplace of seafarers. The purpose of our study was to determine the extent of influence of the bundled person level dimensions of happiness in the workplace of seafarers, particularly, Vigorous Work Engagement, Dispositional Affect, Flourishing at Work, and Job Satisfaction. The major findings of our study showed that the bundled person level dimensions explain approximately 53% of the variance in seafarers’ Happiness at Work.

Another objective was to determine which among the person level dimensions would most significantly explain happiness in their workplace. However, the Happiness at Work of the seafarers were only significantly explained by three variables, namely, Vigorous Work Engagement, Dispositional Affect, and Flourishing at Work. It was found that Job Satisfaction had no statistically significant effect on Happiness at Work.

It is of interest to know why only three variables explained the seafarers’ happiness at work significantly. Moreover, why did the Job Satisfaction dimension not significantly explain the Happiness at Work of the seafarers? We rationalize that Filipino psychology plays a large part in influencing Filipino attitudes and behaviors in everyday living and in the workplace. This impacts the seafarers’ “*need for better family life*” and “*the need to be part of the main*” as they were not realized, and therefore Job Satisfaction did not become a significant explanatory variable.

The *need for better life of family* explains why job satisfaction was not a significant explanatory variable to happiness at work of the seafarer. Job satisfaction is happiness at work related to income (Benz & Frey, 2004), higher wages (de la Garza, Sannabe, & Yamada, 2008), or the level of pay rather than absolute income (Zeng, Forrest, & McHale, 2013). While there are financial rewards on being a seafarer (Baylon & Santos, 2011), Filipinos earn less than those hired from other countries. Filipinos also complain that the union imposes contributions that are too high (Ruggunan, 2011). Therefore, there is a mismatch between the expected earnings with what they bring home to their families and thus does not satisfy the *need for better family life*. By meeting this need, they will be able to improve the financial condition of their families and



consequently will make their families' lives better (Lamvik, 2012) and this is the reason they chose to be seafarers.

*The need to be part of the main* was also a reason why Job Satisfaction was not a significant explanatory variable to happiness at work of the seafarer. Job satisfaction, according to Judge and Klinger (2007) is associated with a subjective well-being which Locke (1976) said stems from a person's appraisal of a pleasant emotional circumstance. John Donne once said, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." (Donne, 1624; Donne, n.d.). We relate "... part of the main" as the seafarers' being part of their families. Seafarers' working conditions are unique compared to those who work on land because the high cost of internet access in ships makes it difficult for seafarers to have real-time face-to-face reunions, thus making it difficult to be *part of the main*, who are their families. Therefore, *to be a constant part of their family at home* is difficult to achieve because seafarers are isolated in the ship for so long (Gregorio, Jr., 2012). This is reflected in the quantitative result of social well-being of the dependent variable, Happy at Work, particularly, "I think that I live in a society that lets me fully realize my potential" which had the lowest mean score ( $M=5.95$ ;  $SD=.871$ ). According to Keyes (1998), people have public and private demands that creates consequences in their lives. When a person evaluates his circumstances and how he or she functions in society, it refers to that person's social well-being (Keyes, 1998). Love and belongingness are important human needs when people relate with each other (Layard et al., 2012). Since the Filipino society is a collective society, and the family is viewed as the most important unit in the society, the family's role is very important to a seafarer's health and self-esteem (Baylon & Santos, 2011). The strong Filipino family ties shape the idea of a "family-based enterprise" (Lamvik, 2012, p. 22), which fulfills the seafarers' goal of being financially capable because they send money to their families (Terry, 2014). This reflects a Eudaimonic Well-being subscale of Life's Meaning which reveals a positive emotion of love. This is the reason why seafarers can cope with life in the ship (Lamvik, 2012). Their *pagsisikap* is the core nature of seafarers. Love for their families compel seafarers to yield to "*pasensya and pagtitimpi*" and "*pagtitiis*" as they struggle with isolation in the ship (Gregorio, Jr., 2012) to work. Hence, the seafarers'

subjective appraisal of their work condition was an unpleasant emotional circumstance that contributed to why Job Satisfaction was not a significant explanatory variable to happiness at work.

However, there were evidences of *positive emotion of love* in our study. For example, the highest mean score in the dependent variable, Happiness at Work was a Eudaemonic Well-Being subscale that pertained to Life's Meaning, particularly, "At work, I think my life is useful and worthwhile" ( $M = 6.53$ ,  $SD=.590$ ).

Additionally, being interested also showed in the Eudaemonic Well-Being subscale of personal growth of the dependent variable, Happiness at Work, particularly, "At work, my life is full of learning experiences and challenges that make me grow" ( $M=6.41$ ;  $SD=.607$ ). It was second to the highest mean score among all subscales in this dependent variable.

Among all independent variables, Flourishing at Work was the highest ( $M=6.33$ ;  $SD=.465$ ). The question pertaining to: "I am optimistic about my future" ( $M=6.56$ ;  $SD=.608$ ) also had the highest mean score. "I lead a purposeful and meaningful life" ( $M=6.43$ ;  $SD=.817$ ) was second to the highest mean score in the Flourishing at Work scale. These reflect human excellence in eudaimonic happiness as seafarers perceive themselves to be optimistic about their future, thus, have purpose in life (Bynum, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2001), meaningful life, and being fully functional (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Moreover, seafarers flourish emotionally because they can control their feelings. Even when the seafarers were demoralized in the ship (Gregorio, Jr., 2012), they still flourished socially because of *pakikisama* (good relations with others (Leoncini, 2005) or deference to a group (Hechanova et al., 2014)) that helped them get along with others and build relationships. However, being stressed-out, bored, demoralized due to heavier workload than European crews (Gregorio, Jr., 2012) also affects the Social Well-Being of Filipino seafarers.

As explained by the broaden-and-build theoretical framework (Fredrickson B. , 2004 (c)), the positive emotion of *love* of the seafarers for their families triggered the seafarers' passion and desire to improve their lives. Likewise, the seafarers became *interested* with their work that is related to Fredrickson's (1998 (a)) explanation that, *interest* caused seafarers to explore, investigate, and learn whilst they aimed towards an achievable goal. In that positive encounter, they become categorically absorbed that engendered

a *flow*. Results of the survey on Vigorous Work Engagement show that seafarers very frequently had “*A feeling of flow*” ( $M=6.28$ ;  $SD=.810$ ). The seafarers flourished intellectually because they developed the knowledge to accomplish their work. Learning took place through the continuous training and guidance that they received from co-seafarers and superiors.

Overall, the quantitative results of the dependent variable Happiness at Work suggest that seafarers ‘agree’ ( $M=6.15$ ;  $SD=.534$ ) that they are happy at work. Seafarers flourish socially because they build relationships. Flourishing socially reflected in Vigorous Work Engagement’s, “*I feel able to show warmth to others*” ( $M=6.20$ ;  $SD=.952$ ) was the second to the highest mean score. *Pakikisama*, a Filipino character, reinforces the seafarers’ efforts in trying to get along well with everyone in the ship. While the Filipino *sikolohiya* or character of *pakikisama* enriches the seafarers for they can show warmth to others as they try to get along well with others, there are also negative influences because of *pakikisama* which impedes the Social Well-Being of seafarers. This was revealed to have a low mean score ( $M=5.95$ ;  $SD=.871$ ), in particular, “I think that I live in a society that lets me fully realize my potential when I am at work” in the construct of Social Well-Being within the dependent variable, Happiness at Work.

## Conclusion

How the Filipino seafarers rated the Fisher Model (2010) which was the source of the four dimensions used as independent variables namely; attitudes towards their work, particularly, Job Satisfaction, Vigorous Work Engagement, Dispositional Affect, and Flourishing at Work (this being a combination of the hedonic and eudaimonic views), described a long-lasting positive affect, such as happiness in the workplace. The capacity to experience positive emotions is a fundamental strength that is key for Filipino seafarers to flourish in their workplace and be happy. It starts with the seafarers’ *love* for their families that compel them to surrender to “*pasensiya* and *pagtitimpi*, (which are Filipino characteristics that refers to resignation to and acceptance of failure); and *pagtitiis* (where seafarers endure difficulties of life without complaint by adapting to misfortunes with resiliency” (Selmer & de Leon, 2014, p. 11). The seafarers’ *love* is one of the four positive emotions

which is “described as broadening an individual’s thought-action repertoire” (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 7). *Love* for their families, drive these Filipino seafarers to embrace the difficulties of working in the ship. In the process, they cultivate an active and explicit *interest*, which is another positive emotion, that also broadens their thought-action resource (Fredrickson, 1998). Their *interest* triggers the action to explore learning that bring about a feeling of *flow*, which therefore, builds their physical, intellectual, social, and psychological resources that in turn result to their happiness at work when they attain their goal.

The broaden-and-build theoretical framework of Fredrickson’s (2004) partly helped to provide an understanding that the generated positive emotions, which in this study was the triggered positive emotion of *love* of the seafarers for their families, spark the seafarers’ passion and desire to improve their lives. And in the process of working in the ship, the seafarers become *interested*, another positive emotion in Fredrickson’s theoretical framework, to learn something of relevance as they move towards goals they regard as attainable.

The person-level constructs of happiness at work stand to be the seafarers’ views, understandings, and evaluations of their work environments and events around them (Fisher, 2010). Thus, how the seafarers responded to or measured the different constructs of Job Satisfaction, Vigorous Work Engagement, Dispositional Affect, and Flourishing At Work, which were the combination of hedonic and eudaimonic views in this study, explain their positive attitude in their workplace or their happiness at work. These person-level constructs are attitudes towards work that can describe positive affect, which are long-lasting, such as happiness, in the workplace as seafarers evaluate the environment and events around them. It is evident from the results that these Filipino seafarers evaluate their work by way of the person-level happiness at work constructs of Job Satisfaction, which is based on one’s intellectual evaluation of conditions of work; Vigorous Work Engagement, which involves an individual’s *physical strength*: being active in the workplace; *emotional energy*: their relationship with and towards others at work; *cognitive liveliness*: mental alertness at work; Dispositional Affect, which is one’s outlook or character at work; and Flourishing At Work which measures the “respondent’s self-perceived success

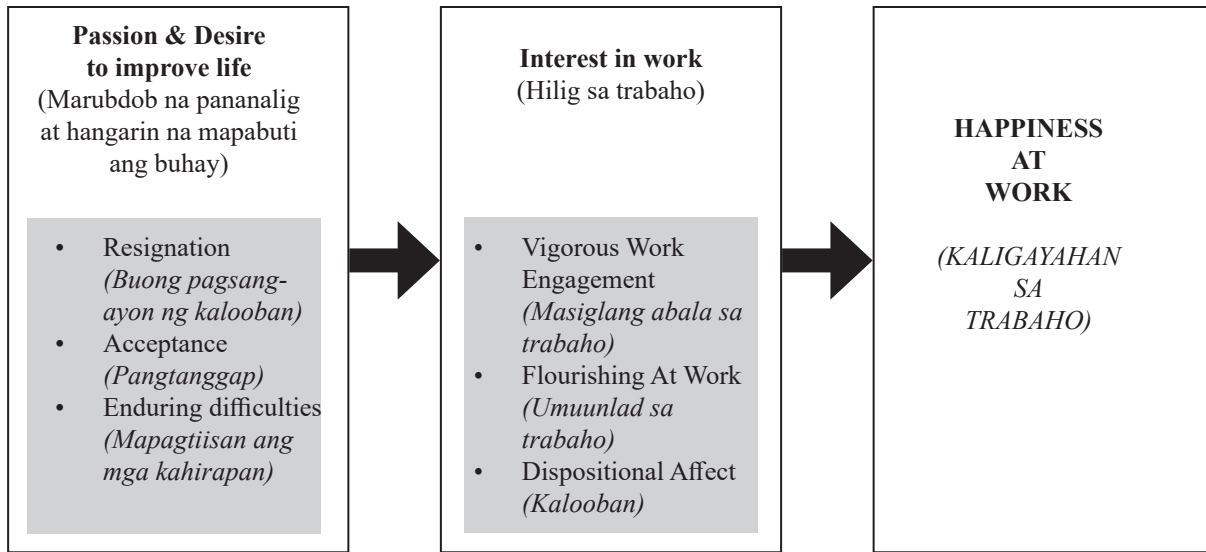


Figure 3. New Model of Happiness at Work.

in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism” (Diener et al., 2010, p. 143).

An enlightening finding in this study is the relevance of Filipino psychology, that the *pagsalooob* reveals the Filipino seafarers’ experiences of *pagtitimpi*, *pagtitiis*, and *malasakit* which generate *kagandahang loob* and *Pagsalinaw* which provides the Filipino seafarer the principle of *pakikipag-kapwa* at work and in the end for his family. *Pagsisikap* makes his *kagandahang loob* come out in terms of competent work behavior that shows his *pagkukusa* for his co-seafarers and in the end for his family. Thus, the seafarers’ *marubdob na pananalig at hangarin na mapabuti ang buhay* (passion and desire) are attributable to their *love* for their families that motivates them to work at sea in a working environment which they call a mobile prison (Lamvik, 2012, p. 26). Further, together with their disposition to *pagtiisan ang kahirapan* (endure difficulties), *tanggapin* (accept), and *buong pagsang-ayunan ng kalooban* (resignation), their *hilig sa trabaho* (interest in work) is brought about by their *masiglang abala sa trabaho* (vigorous work engagement), *kalooban* (dispositional affect), *kasiyahan sa trabaho* (job satisfaction), and *paguunlad sa trabaho* (flourishing at work), which all explains their *kaligayahan sa trabaho* (happiness at work).

Findings in our study help explain organizational psychology that fosters happiness and how workers function within an organization (Peiro et al., 2014)

which addresses the gap in the construct of happiness relevant to the seafarers’ workplace.

In view of this, we provide in Figure 3, the new model of Happiness at Work which we define as a human’s passion and desire to improve life while enduring and developing resilience to difficulties of work, and though in the process of exploring about work, one becomes completely immersed and captivated in achieving an attainable goal.

### Recommendations

Our study has led to valuable insights that explain the whys and wherefores of working as a seafarer. The individual behavior of seafarers affects the business/group level and the corporate/organizational level. Thus, based on the results of our study and, using the strategic human resource management approach which entails the development and implementation of future HR programs to deal and respond to business challenges in the maritime industry and to positively impact their enduring business objectives (SHRM, 2022), we hereby propose the following to foster happiness at work of seafarers.

*Corporate-Level Strategies.* The seafarers’ happiness at work should be one of the core ideals in the mission and vision statements of the organization that ensures a balance between the well-being of the owners and the well-being of the employees. By doing so, various functions of the company will embrace the

happiness of its employees as one of the organization's priorities. This being said, to emphasize on simply and purely maximizing organizational competitiveness may be a narrow approach. It is therefore important to put effort in achieving mutually advantageous relationships of both the organization and its seafarers. Putting its seafarers as central to the mission and strategy of the company promotes seafarers as human partners of the organization where human partners are not viewed as material resources. Thus, the long-term goal is for both organization and seafarers to be loyal to each other.

The ultimate corporate goal is to invest in its seafarers. It is understood that such investment poses a risk to the company because they do not have a permanent hold on the seafarers. It is understood that seafarers may take their skills to competitive organizations. However, if seafarers believe that they receive value from the organization, reciprocal behavior will pay out the investment, and thus, be beneficial to the organization. In turn, a long-term relationship will survive. This promotes seafarers primordially as human partners of the organization for prolonged employee-employer relationship.

*Business-Level Strategies.* Competitive issues which the company faces should be analyzed to strategically manage the seafarers' human resources. This study provided the specific issues of the seafarers that is critical for the happiness of the company's seafarers. The result of this study conveys the failure of job satisfaction to be a significant explanatory variable of happiness in the workplace of seafarers. This issue is of great importance which calls for changes in the organization. A plan that encompasses major priorities, programs, and processes should be developed and executed. The same will need to be communicated to internal and external stakeholders of the organization.

*Job analysis and design.* The analysis of the job should be focused on the role of the job of the seafarers in the larger perspective. In planning, transparency is most appropriate where the views of the seafarers are taken into consideration. Openness to new ideas is a source of employee value. Thus, including all members when gathering inputs about their work will help create a complete and steady employment for the seafarers.

*Recruiting and selection.* There should be extensive socialization through social media or "seafarer career days" where values and benefits of

joining and becoming an organizational member of the company makes one feel that he has a family away from home. Internal sources may be used by involving other seafarers in the recruitment and hiring processes. Broad career directions to establish one's growth in the organization should be communicated.

*Training and development.* Rather than just looking at training and development as a financial investment and expecting a return, the long-term development of employees should provide a meaningful end in and of itself. Future job skills should be a focus and all employees should be trained. Training and development should be planned because the company needs to maintain skills required by the job and as prescribed by the international maritime industry. The company may consider extending training and development to seafarers and view it as an investment supportive of the growth of each seafarer rather than making it the seafarer's investment for himself.

Leadership training for officers should not only include systems and operations but also include relationship building and leadership. It can also cover an understanding of organizational culture, ethics, and respect to co-seafarers, and team effectiveness regardless of their position or level in the organization. It is also good to develop team effectiveness because it builds social relationships which promotes good associations among worker and thus creates a happier working atmosphere (Teng-Calleja & Alafritz, 2014).

*Performance management.* The manner by which seafarers are appraised for their work will depend on a well-written and understood job and task description based on an excellent job analysis and job design. A good performance appraisal can include a combination of systems that covers behavior, competency, result, and quality of work, depending on the position level and work process. Sources of information can be from superiors, peers, subordinates, and self. Specific behaviors should be clearly written and understood by superiors so that the behavior assessment is not objectively based. Feedback is necessary so that the seafarer can understand his appraisal. Appraisal can be done prior to the expiration of a seafarer's work contract.

*Pay structure, incentives, and benefits.* A main concern of seafarers based on quantitative analysis points foremost to wage concerns. The organization may consider pay weighted toward salary and benefits; individual incentives; and short or long-term incentives to be given to its seafarers.

The company may also do salary benchmarking to obtain a detailed process of the seafarer salary survey. Keeping the seafarers' pay structure within industry standard or average will ensure that the company remains competitive. Actually, White and White (2014) pointed out that it was a sensible approach to pay employees above the average and give them benefits because it will let companies hire the right and better people. However, they advised that the person being hired be excellent in the field and be good in highly leveraged jobs (White & White, 2014). There is a high demand for seafarers in the officer level because to be in such position would need skills training and certifications or licensure, which can only be obtained once a seafarer passes an exam; thus it may be good to consider industry average pay plus good benefits. This will help decrease instances that officers are not replaced on time because there are times when no one would replace a seafarer who is due to come home.

Benefits should consider not only short-term but also long-term remunerations to either the seafarer himself or for their families (e.g. insurance, retirement packages, education benefits, etc.).

The primary goal of the organization through its human resource function is to increase employee productivity and this is why business-level strategies are important. However, to attain committed and motivated employees, internal growth and organizational development is vital as one of the strategic objectives of the company. Thus, interpersonal factors are an important part of human resource management because an employees' performance is based on his attitude towards his work. Thus, linking business-level strategies and internal growth strategies should be achieved. One of the internal growth strategies proposed is "celebration as a form of reward" that recognizes the good works of employees which complements the business-level strategy of pay structure, incentives, and benefits. This is an example on how employee happiness in the workplace can be promoted.

### Limitations of the Research

Our study mainly focused on the perceptions of the seafarers onboard in only one maritime company and did not cover sample representatives of the entire maritime industry.

### Future Research

Future research to validate the findings of our study can be carried out such as Happiness at work of seafarers on different types of sea vessels or a comparison of land-based work versus sea-based work. The Experienced Well-being subscale, as part of the Happiness at Work measure can also be studied. Other levels of measure of happiness such as job involvement and thriving may be worthwhile to pursue. Finally, empirical inferential studies that investigate the influence of moderating variables that include personality traits; managerial vs. non-managerial positions; length of stay in the company that can further explain the relationships between happiness at work and the bundled person level variables that we covered in this study are other research avenues.

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