



Happiness and Organizational Socialization: Exploring the Mediating Role of Restorative Environments

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the mediating role of restorative environments in the relationship between organizational socialization and happiness. 120 subjects with age ranging from 22-30 years participated in the study. Results indicated that restorative environment significantly mediated the relationship between happiness and organizational socialization.

Keywords: Restorative environment, happiness, mediation and organizational socialization.

Introduction

From ancient Greeks and Buddhist to modern philosophers and thinkers, many have tried to define happiness in their own ways. The concept of being happy has always been relative and subject to bias and perceptions. Happiness means a state of wellbeing characterized by emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy; a pleasurable experience. Discerning from the fact that there are disparities in terms of how happiness is defined. Most have agreed on some common aspects of it such as positive emotions, cheerfulness, serenity, optimism and joy. Happiness consists of three basic components, such as positive affection, negative affection and satisfaction. Happiness at one point of time was considered as ultimate end and purpose of human existence. Further, explained that happiness is understandable; based on relevant concepts of positive feelings like happiness and joy. The most nurtured goal of any conscious human being in any venture to perform best is to seek happiness¹. A key to a good life being not only joys of money or pleasure but enriched to positive factors in life. It further enhances individual growth and environment in which individuals' live². Happiness is a lay construct, although withdrawn from Aristotle's teachings of Edaimonia, the term happiness when used to replete with personal beliefs from each one of us. In today's world, 70% of our time is spent at workplace refers to a professional setting. In order to be happy, what it needs is not only to find purpose and meaning in what we do, but also work in organizations that develop and recognize the contribution of work and workplaces on individual's happiness.

Organizational Socialization and its dimensions:

Socialization is a process when a person learns to accept the way to indulge in social groups, both at workplace and social gatherings. The socio-psychological perspective describes organizational socialization as a process wherein an individual secures relevant job skills accumulates a functional level of

organizational understanding, attains supportive social interactions with co-workers, and generally accepts the established ways of any organization. However, socialization helps employees adapt and grow in any new environment. Organizational socialization plays a critical role in the adjustment and learning processes of employees. There are different domains of socialization, but in the present research we have focused on the aspects of people and politics. The people dimension elaborated role of organizational socialization as the concept of establishing and involving successful and satisfying work relationships with other members at the workplace³. It was predicted that searching the right individual from whom to learn about the organization, colleagues and job role plays a pivotal role in socialization. The formative theory defines organization socialization as to how well an individual's social skill and behaviors have been accepted by other members in the organization. Whereas, politics dimension elaborated Socialization in any organizational role is benefit for an employee as it helps understand work politics, power structures and formal and informal roles at work. Fisher found out that organizational socialization involves learning to work from within group's culture and deal with political behaviour⁴.

Restorative environments: Restoration is defined as the action of restoring a person to health or consciousness; recovering of physical and psychological aspects. In recent times, there has been a stress on the influence of restorative environments particularly natural scenes from environments on human beings⁵.

What we mean by natural scenes here is the visualization of natural environment and by no means limited only to wilderness. The presence of natural scenes has been identified if there is a presence of three major situations: i. if the natural landscape is dominated by water, mountains and vegetation, ii. if artificial features are absent or concealed and iii. if the dominant visual profiles are curvilinear or irregular. Natural

scenes include parks and open spaces, streets, vacant lots, backyards, fields, forests pastures, cereal crops and even golf courses⁴.

Theories of restorative environment: It has been seen in psychological research that people maintain cognitive clarity to enhance their performance efficiently on a daily basis⁵. To restore mental fatigue at the workplace, it is important for employees to restore their vital energies through direct contact with nature. When an individual suffers from mental fatigue he has exhaustion of directed attention. Mental fatigue has negative influences, irritability, impulsiveness, impatience, reduced tolerance and lessened ability of information⁶. Hence restorative environments in either physical or illusionary world or accumulation of both can be of help in ameliorating attention fatigue, enhance competence and increase effectiveness in functioning. The progressive levels of restoration a human can experience based on theory of enhanced processing. Firstly, cleaning the head allows removal of random and weird thoughts and gradually fades away from memory. Secondly, restoration is recharging directed attention capacity. Thirdly, one can hear unattended thoughts or matter coming or distracting mind, to reduce internal noise. Fourthly, to evoke reflections of one's life priorities and possibilities and one's actions and goals can also lead to restoration⁷.

Restorative environment (green buildings) and its behavioral impact: In the 21st century, human beings remain disconnected from nature, thus leaving an adverse effect on wellbeing of both humans and environment. Experiments found that outdoor walks in nearby nature made individuals happier and more productive. Research has shown that humans fail to maximize their time in nearby nature and thus miss opportunities to enhance happiness. It is also seen that the path to sustainability leads only through nature⁸. Humans perpetually show indifference to natural environment; though they are in many cases aware of the benefits of staying connected with nature⁹. Biophilia hypothesis illustrate that humans who unfold in natural environments have better efficiency with other living environments. Furthermore, it is hard to judge the evolutionary origin of rapport for natural environment, people's closeness for natural environment, people's fondness for natural scenery, gardening are empirical evidence.

Recent empirical work indicates that the subjective connection with nature forecast environmentally sustainable attitude. Urban designs often make contact with nature and green space; spending time with nature and experiencing more happiness. Walking outdoor in green workplace enhances morale of employees; which further strengthens productivity at work. It further suggested that there are abundant benefits of being close to the nature, and ultimately leads to happiness.

Research indicates that living in proximity to urban green space leads to improve health and wellbeing¹⁰. It has also been shown that there is a social dimension of green space and its relationship

to health outcomes. The observations outline that any contact with natural environment increases the level of physical well-being and helps in building social contacts and networks.

Organizational socialization enhances employee happiness and growth and turnover of any organization is associated with whether the employee is happy or not.

Restorative environments and its sociological impacts: Previous research in this area does reflect that individuals are happier when living in urban areas with greater amounts of green space¹¹. Living close to the nature and having green environment around helps in reducing mental stress and enhances the overall well-being of a person. The 21st century has tremendously become aware of components of natural environment affecting human health. It is important to explore the role of green buildings enhancing employee happiness in India.

It is articulated that employees working in green buildings socialize with colleagues while embracing the nature. The sympathetic affect left on human emotion by greenery is helpful in growing and evolving both at work and personal level. There are instances on ground where organizations have provided restorative experiences for work to their employees. The green infrastructure enhances the vitality and passion of employees working here.

Methodology

Research Participants: The study consisted of 120 employees' 61 males and 59 females participated in the study. The average age of the respondents were 28.3 years (SD=4.2 years), with the average age of males being 27.8 years (SD=4.3 years) and that of females being 28.7 years (SD=4.1 years). Almost they have work experience of 3.3 years (SD=1.6 years) in their respective organizations.

Measures: Organizational Socialization: The 34 item scale consisted of content areas of socialization. The reported cronbach alpha is 0.78. The scale was developed by (Chao et al.). In the study we have used only two dimensions politics and people and 11 questions were asked to the respondents.

Happiness: Oxford Happiness Inventory is a 29-items multiple choice instrument. The scale was developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills in 2002. The reported cronbach alpha is 0.84. In the study 26 questions were asked from the respondents to measure their happiness levels.

Restorative environment: Environmental Features Ratings, Overall Environmental Satisfaction, and Job Satisfaction (Veitch et al. 2007) - The 20-item instrument measuring dimensions such as satisfaction with privacy and acoustics, satisfaction with ventilation, satisfaction with air and job satisfaction. Scale scores are averages of the contributing items. The Cronbach's alpha value of the scale is 0.83.

Results and Discussion

Results: Mean scores and reliability coefficients for each of the measures are shown in table-1. All scales were found to be internally consistent with satisfactory alpha coefficients.

Measure	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Alpha
Organizational Socialization	33.05	4.27	23.00	43.00	0.72
Oxford Happiness Scale	3.50	0.42	2.13	4.60	0.63
EFR Scale	79.58	7.28	61.00	97.00	0.78

The mean score for organizational socialization was 33.05 with a standard deviation of 4.27, with a minimum score of 23 and a maximum of 43. This reflects that most of the respondents were near the mean of the scale with very few outliers. The mean score for happiness was 3.50 with a standard deviation of 0.42, with a minimum score of 2.13 and a maximum of 4.60. This reflects that most of the respondents were near the mean of the scale with very few outliers. The mean score for environment features rating scale was 79.58 with a standard deviation of 7.28, with a minimum score of 61 and a maximum of 91. This reflects that most of the respondents were near the mean of the scale with very few outliers.

Mediation Model Testing—Happiness, organizational socialization and restorative environment: The emphasis in the

research was to test the mediation effect of green restorative environment on happiness and well-being of employees. Leading from observations and previous research, the following hypothesis to test for the mediation effects:

Restorative environment mediates the relationship between organizational socialization and happiness of employees.

Mediation occurs when an independent variable indirectly affects a dependent variable through a third variable, which acts as a mediator¹². According to Baron and Kenny, to test any mediation model first requires that mediation assumptions are met (i.e. the independent, dependent and mediator variables must all be significantly correlated). To begin with this assumption, the correlations between the desired variables (happiness, organizational socialization and restorative environment) were tested (table-1). Results from the correlation analysis show that all the three variables in the model were correlated with each other and the correlations were significant at 99% level of confidence¹³.

In case to have any mediation, it is important to have three valid assumptions, which correspond to the relationship between the dependant, independent and the mediator variable.

It is important that the independent variable is a significant predictor of the dependant variable and the mediator and the mediator in turn predicts the dependant variable as well. The model in this case which was analyzed is shown in figure-1.

Table-1
Pearson correlation coefficients for all variables in Model 1

	Happiness (OH)	Organizational Socialization (OS)	Restorative environment (RE)
Happiness (OH)	1	.399**	.374**
Organizational Socialization (OS)	Nil	1	.508**
Restorative environment (RE)	Nil	Nil	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

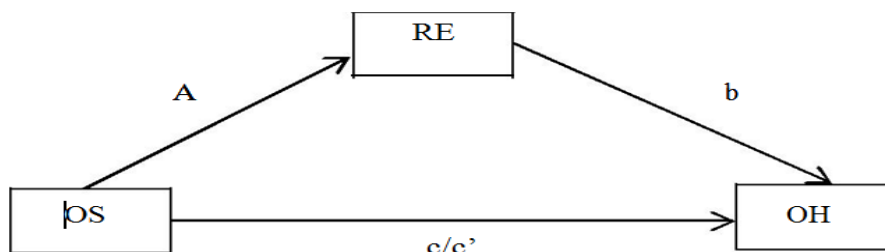


Figure-1
Regression paths and the model tested

In figure-1, a, b, c and c' specifies the path of association between the variables (c is for a simple regression between dependant and independent variable and c' is for a multiple regression which includes mediator as well. The three regression paths as shown in Figure 1 were then tested with hierarchical regression analysis. In the first regression, organizational socialization was entered as the independent variable and happiness was the dependant variable (path c). In the second regression, organizational socialization was entered as the independent variable and restorative environment as a mediator variable (path b) and in the final regression model, both the mediator and independent variable were entered simultaneously (path c').

Results from the regression analysis show that all three associations were significant (at 95% confidence interval). Organizational Socialization was a significant predictor of happiness ($R^2=.159$ and $p<0.01$) and also of restorative environment ($R^2=.258$ and $p<0.01$), indicating that people who socialize more in a working environment and have peer groups, they are happier and also cherish a green working environment more than who socialize lesser.

In the third regression when both organizational socialization and restorative environment scores were entered in the model, against it was significant ($R^2=.199$ and $p<0.05$). In this case, the standardized beta coefficient of the relationship dropped from

0.399 in the first case (path c) to 0.282 in this case (path c'). This indicated that there is some level of mediation occurring in the model. It is also evident from the analysis that the mediation is partial as in the third regression model (path b and c'), the beta coefficients for organizational socialization and happiness is not zero (table-2). This indicates that restorative environments do play a partial mediating role in predicting happiness when organizational socialization is taken as a dependant variable.

Sobel's Test for Partial Mediation: Results from the analysis indicated that there is partial mediation through restorative environment on how organizational socialization impacts happiness of employees (all the variables have positive linear associations with positive β coefficients, table-2). This leads to an initial inference that the direct impact of how much an employee who socializes and is happy is mediated by the environment individual is in and restorative green environment play a role of positive mediation. Furthermore, whether the mediation occurring in our model is significant, Sobel's test is used¹⁴. The test hypothesizes that relationship between independent variable and dependent variable is through indirect effect and it exists because of the influence of a third variable (the mediator). That is why, when the mediator is introduced in the regression with the dependant variable, the direct effect of dependant variable gets reduced, with that of mediator being significant (Path c, b and c' in table-2).

Table-2
Results from hierarchical regression analysis to test mediation model

Path	B (unstandardized)	SE	B (standardized)	R ²	P
C	0.039	0.008	0.399	0.159	0.00
A	0.866	0.135	0.508	0.258	0.00
B	0.013	0.006	0.231	0.199	0.018
c'	0.028	0.01	0.282		

Table-3
Test of significance for mediation and results from Sobel's Test

Indirect effect (a*b)	0.011
Sobel's SE=[(a.SEb) ² + (b.Sea) ²] ^{1/2}	0.005
Z=indirect effect/Sobel's SE	2.053
P	0.040
Standardized indirect effect ($\beta a * \beta b$)	0.117
Portion of (X ² Y) due to M =(c-c')/c	28.2%

Results from the Sobel's test suggest that the association between organizational socialization and happiness is significantly mediated by restorative environments at 95% confidence interval ($p < 0.05$). Together these results show that they do so by strengthening the association of employees with their natural restorative environments. The empirical evidence depicts 28.2% of the direct relationship between organizational socialization and happiness is mediated by how an employee scored for restorative environments.

Discussion: The study assessed adds to the literature of how green buildings and restorative work environments affects the happiness of an employee. There have been conflicting researches which have highlighted that whether green buildings and restorative environments have a positive or a negative impact on the employees. Recent research shows that the indoors and the natural proximity in a certified green building no more engages the employees and enhance employee satisfaction¹⁵. Whereas, other studies show that there is a significant positive relationship between employee satisfaction and level of perceived environmental performance.

Results from the present research indicate that a higher score on the socialization of an employee is linearly and positively related to happiness at the workplace ($\beta = 0.399$, $R^2 = .159$ and $p < 0.01$). This indicates that a person who socializes more at the workplace and has a peer group to talk to and share thoughts is generally happier than one who is more reserved to her/his self. It was also seen that one who is more socially active in an organization, perceives better about the natural environment than others. It is to be understood from the fact that the green working environment is similar for all employees; still there is difference in perception on the basis of how sociable an employee is? This could stem from the fact that a socially active employee who is happier perceives things in a positive manner than one who is more reserved.

Inference from this research also points out that the perception of working in a restorative and green environment is a significant mediator of the direct relationship between organizational socialization and happiness of an employee. Further confirmation of the mediation model by mediates around 28% of the causal relationship between how sociable and happy an employee is. Indeed the findings support that spending more time in green buildings results in more positive outcomes. It was recently, observed by several research scholars in the field, psychological restoration in nature is a worthwhile topic of discovery¹⁶.

In recent times, companies have been investing a lot to make the workplaces green and provide a natural working environment to their employees. Recent research which highlights that working conditions could be stressful many a times and could lead to reduction in overall happiness and productivity of employees. This makes it even more imperative to look into the aspect of green buildings and restorative working environment. The

present piece of research work is an attempt to highlight that green working environments does play a crucial mediating role in employee happiness and argues that more research is needed in this area.

The most relevant suggestions to the authorities and policy regulations are to tackle biodiversity globally and protect ecosystems. At the same time providing presence of green space within urban system is predominant to enhance the happiness of urban dwellers¹⁷. As recently acclaimed, developing sustainable buildings is most important goal to support urban lifestyles¹⁸.

Conclusion

The study enriches the relationship between employee's happiness and organizational socialization through restorative environments. Furthermore, providing support for healthier management of daily life settings. As a result employees' will spend longer time in natural settings more meaningful interactions with nature helps to promote sustainable urban lifestyles. Restorative environments are crucial elements of urban green space aimed at protecting the wellbeing and happiness of employees, as such should be supported to improve the quality of urban life.

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