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Happy leadership, now more than ever

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Abstract: The Covid-19 crisis demonstrated the need for new leadership styles suited to times of economic uncertainty. Today, leadership in organisations is less humanistic and inspirational and more authoritarian. More management models should be promoted based on ethics, corporate happiness and social responsibility. This research reflects on the type of leadership suited to the new era. It explores the concept of happy leadership and analyses its characteristics. This construct combines the rational and emotional minds of those who lead. It seeks to exercise actions that help reduce stress, frustration, and fear, improving wellbeing to optimise work performance. Thinking, feeling and doing from a happiness management approach supports people's vision from an organisational and emotional perspective by developing aspects such as creativity, flexibility and sustainability. Happy leadership promotes new models of integral management through changes in corporate culture, helping to reconcile productive efficiency with business ethics, entrepreneurship, organisational justice and happiness at work.

Keywords: leadership; happiness; happiness at work; human resources; happy employees.

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1 Introduction

The health crisis generated by Covid-19 has shown that new leadership styles are needed that are more appropriate for economic uncertainty (Taylor, 2022). In turbulent times, the climate within organisations is characterised, among other factors, by job anxiety and the fear of their human capital losing their jobs. All these are powerful elements that encourage labour conflict, social unrest and cynicism (Aqueveque and Encina, 2010).

Undoubtedly, it is a vicious cycle that encourages nihilistic leadership that is distant from the collective wellbeing of internal customers (Narayanan and Zane, 2009). For many economists, both vectors can be dangerous for business development. Such thinking could be better because large company managers make tough decisions regarding their human resource policies based on the idea that the solutions to their problems lie in carrying out leadership of a practical nature whose success lies in reducing personnel costs rather than in addressing their employees' life and career approaches (Ahmed-Iqbal et al., 2021).

It is, therefore, not surprising that, in recent years, especially in 2020, leadership in organisations has become less humanistic and inspirational and more authoritarian and

hierarchical (Vora and Kainzbauer, 2020; Jakubik, 2021) rather than an attitude which favours promoting management models based on ethics, corporate happiness, and social responsibility (Fotourehchi and Ebrahimpour, 2019). To cover this winter, which is difficult to reverse due to multiple causes, a spring is needed, sprouting from academic and professional debate, where the need to cultivate the seeds of proactive, inclusive and digital leaders within organisations arises (Erhan et al., 2022).

Against this backdrop, the authors of this paper ask what kind of leadership will exist after the Ukraine War. Whether the dominant leadership in companies has been one that is alien to the corporate happiness of their human capital (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2021a; Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022), although they realise that there is nothing written in the stars about this. However, what is that light if not a growing light emerging in management to address the wounds created between capital and labour? It could be a new kind of management coaching, and why not happy leadership?

This paper reflects on a new type of leadership that may be suitable for the new era. It defines the concept of happy leadership, analyses its characteristics, utilities and resistances, and proposes a model for analysing the main effects it can have on organisations. To this end, a recent literature review shows the research community the need for academic studies that provide an overview of happy leadership. Over the last decades, qualitative and quantitative bibliometric thoughts on leadership have been characterised by the continued absence of happy leadership (e.g., Vogel et al., 2021; Dhamija et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2023). To address this gap, the authors organised a brainstorming meeting to define and characterise happy leadership. With these ideas, an analysis of the characteristics of the core leadership styles was carried out and compared with the ideas generated in the brainstorming. The conclusions were shared, and the analysis of the issues and their relationships deepened. The result was the definition of the concept, the proposal of its utilities and resistances, and the proposal of a model for analysing its effects. Subsequently, each researcher revised the model individually to integrate all the contributions and suggestions. The proposed model was validated in a final meeting through logical reasoning.

After this introduction, Section 2 analyses the leadership styles. It presents a figure arranged on a continuum from those considered closer to the dark side of leadership to those more comparable to the bright side. This figure includes the new concept of happy leadership. Section 3 describes the methodology of this study to provide a picture of the existing literature on the term happy leadership. Section 4 defines this concept, analyses its characteristics, and proposes a model for its effects. The work ends with the main conclusions, contributions and future lines of research.

2 Leadership styles

The current context has made people's lights and shadows more visible. Leaders in organisations display arrange of behaviours from selfishness to philanthropism. A topic studied in previous literature is the effect of different leadership styles on performance (e.g., Pizzolitto et al., 2022; Choudhary et al., 2013). Pizzolitto et al. (2022) review the literature on authoritarian, autocratic, managerial and paternalistic styles and propose a conceptual map in which they consider the effects of environmental, organisational, and emotional context on them. They also define the actions that can be carried out, grouped into strategies and behaviours.

Moreover, finally, they consider the consequences or results, differentiating between organisational and emotional effects. One aspect that is noteworthy in their proposal is the consideration of the emotional and organisational dimensions. In the emotional context, aspects such as climate, trust and compassion are included. For the results, variables such as job satisfaction, stress and leader-follower relationships are considered. In this line of research, a significant body of academic research shows that a leadership style focused on the corporate wellbeing of employees positively influences their levels of productivity and operational efficiency (Larsson and Vinberg, 2010). It is achieved through positive communication that stimulates motivation, intrapreneurship, responsibility and proactive cooperation of organisations' human capital. Qualities are very present in participative, entrepreneurial or democratic leadership (Foels et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2022; Aránega et al., 2023).

Other authors have focused on comparing the effects of transformational and servant leadership on organisational performance (Choudhary et al., 2013) or on the innovative behaviour of employees (Iqbal et al., 2023). Another exciting aspect is the effect of leadership on employees' creative behaviour. Some authors have highlighted the positive results first of servant leadership and with less impact of transformational leadership (Iqbal et al., 2023). The effect of transformational leadership on innovative behaviour is better translated through affective commitment, whereas the influence of servant leadership more strongly transmits through employees' creative self-efficacy. It may be because transformational leadership is focused on achieving organisational effectiveness, whereas servant leadership is more oriented towards employee behavioural issues such as empathy, humility and authenticity (Iqbal et al., 2023). These psychological attributes encourage the progressive growth of employees within companies as long as company managers encourage active listening, charisma, friendship, or affectivity within the organisations. In other words, it is a charismatic type of leadership. This style of inspirational vision generates a working climate of trust, fair treatment, team spirit and happiness (Eman et al., 2023). This managerial purpose is shared by humanistic and ethical leadership. The former focuses on building a corporate culture that fosters trust, respect, solidarity, dignity, equality and personal development of its workforce (Anadol and Behery, 2020).

Moreover, the second characterises promoting workers' professional performance through social vocation, organisational justice and ethical values (Le and Nguyen, 2023). These last three aspects are absent in unethical leadership styles such as pseudo-transformational, exploitative, corrupt or toxic (Hassan et al., 2023), techniques that are not only known to reduce people's productive performance, corporate wellbeing and psychological health but also to increase their stress and turnover (Islam et al., 2023). Therefore, it is unsurprising that recent studies on the dark side of leadership point out that this managerial attitude leads to job insecurity and adverse reactions from followers (Tian et al., 2023). This is because the leaders' interests take precedence over the collective good of the organisations. It leads to a toxic environment and the loss of trust of workers in unethical leaders (Mitchell et al., 2023). However, this is not the case with leaders who seek synergy between productivity and corporate happiness, such as coaching or inspirational leadership (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020; Cruz and Kim, 2023).

Another aspect that is receiving particular attention is the effect of leadership on employee creativity (Herrmann and Felfe, 2013; Qu et al., 2015; Le et al., 2017). Here, empowering and transformational leadership styles appear that allow the formal authority to exercise positively and positively affect creativity (Gong et al., 2009; Zhang and

Bartol, 2010). Other authors have found a negative effect of authoritarian styles on group creativity (Zhang et al., 2011). Gu et al. (2018) explain that the impact of authoritarian leadership on creativity depends on individual differences and cultural values. Authoritative leadership can affect employees' psychological connections with their leaders and teams (Chen et al., 2014; Schaubroeck et al., 2017), and such psychological links will ultimately contribute to employees' creativity (Gu et al., 2018).

An exciting conclusion of the study by Pizzolitto et al. (2022) is the analysis of the shift from the dark side of leadership to the light side and its association with leadership styles. At the end of the dark side is authoritarian leadership (based on control and dominance), followed by autocratic (task-oriented and very suitable for environments with high uncertainty and hierarchy), and closer to the light is directive leadership (which is like a guide focused on the pursuit of efficiency) and paternalistic (which acts like a parent taking care of moral aspects).

Recently, much attention has been paid to the 'dark, or destructive, side of leadership' (Gu et al., 2018). Current research on leadership styles pays particular attention to unethical ones (De-Clercq et al., 2021; Syed et al., 2021). One style associated with ineffective leadership behaviour is authoritarian, where absolute authority and obedience are exercised (Gu et al., 2018). These leaders also often engage in unethical behaviour, in which subordinates are pressured to achieve demanding goals and follow the rules imposed by the leader (Karakitapoğlu-Aygün et al., 2021; Li et al., 2018; Pizzolitto et al., 2022). This leadership style does not usually positively impact work climate and performance (Shen et al., 2019). However, some authors have found that the effects are not always so adverse (Pizzolitto et al., 2022). Another factor to consider is that it is a popular style in contemporary companies around the world (Chiang et al., 2020) and that the effects of its application depend very much on the organisational culture and the dominant psychological mechanisms in the organisation (Chen et al., 2014; Georgakakis et al., 2019).

Destructive leadership styles (Tepper, 2000) are also carried out by abusive and self-interested leaders seeking to exploit followers (De-Hoogh and Den-Hartog, 2008). People who work with despotic leaders feel disgruntled, frustrated and demotivated, which can reduce their work performance and even seriously affect their psycho-emotional and physical health (Spector et al., 2016). Despotic leaders are arrogant, bossy, destructive and self-centred, with low moral standards, leading to organisational malaise, which decreases organisational performance and emotional wellbeing (De-Hoogh and Den-Hartog, 2008). Stress, frustration and anxiety can lead workers to behave counterproductively. This behaviour is explained by the resource conversion theory (COR), according to which the gain of resources (positive psychological state) is paramount to the loss (Hobfoll, 2002).

Destructive leadership is often associated with generating negative emotions, such as disgust for its leaders' abusive and tyrannical behaviour, which leads to adverse outcomes (Syed et al., 2021). One way to mitigate disruptive, self-indulgent, offensive and unethical leadership is to manage psychological capital based on the resource caravan, as previous studies have found empirical evidence that psychological capital mitigates stressful situations (Khelifat et al., 2021).

The actions and behaviours of others in an organisation are the stimuli of emotions and feelings. Human beings have two minds: the emotional mind and the rational mind that confers. The emotional mind influences our behaviour and interactions at work. It is interesting to analyse whether there is a form of leadership that considers both

aspects, such as happy leadership. Therefore, future research is needed to show happy leaders as a source of work passion, organisational prosperity and business success for organisations in the Industry 5.0 era (Ahumada-Tello et al., 2022).

Table 1 Leadership styles. Characteristics and effects

	<i>The dark side of leadership</i>		<i>The bright side of leadership</i>		
	<i>Authoritarian/ Autocratic</i>	<i>Management/ Paternalistic</i>	<i>Transformational</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>Happy</i>
Authority	Leader-centred	Leader-centred	Leader-centred	People-centred	People-centred
Power	Leader-centred	Leader-centred	Leader-centred	Leader is a coach	A leader is one more
Attitude towards supporters	Control and dominance/ Task-oriented	Guide/ Paternalism	Organisational behaviour	Employee behaviour	Bringing out the best in everyone – Workplace Wellbeing
Application	Generally ineffective/ Effective in stressful and hierarchical contexts	Effective for decentralised, high-tech and uncertain environments/ Effective when the main aspects are the moral aspects	Organisational goals and effectiveness	Vision, gain credibility and trust from followers, and influence others	In contexts of all kinds, especially in situations of economic and social change
Effects	Fear, defiance, disgust, frustration, oppression, stress	Frustration, discomfort, productivity, flexibility/Super protection, lack of initiative, productivity, sustainability	Charismatic, Humanistic, Inspirational Entrepreneurial, motivation, democratic, intellectual, participative, stimulation, individualised consideration	Coach, empathy, humility, authenticity, satisfaction, commitment, passion, permanence	Creativity, productivity, flexibility, innovation, responsibility, sustainability
Examples of references	Parris and Peachey (2013), Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016), Laureani and Antony (2017), Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar (2018), Gu et al. (2018), Georgakakis et al. (2019), Pizzolitto et al. (2022), Hassan et al. (2023), Islam et al. (2023), Mitchell et al. (2023) and Tian et al. (2023)		Foels et al. (2000), Avolio et al. (1991), Gong et al. (2009), Qu et al. (2015), Le et al. (2017), Anadol and Behery (2020), Aranega et al. (2023) and Eman et al. (2023) Gregory Stone et al. (2004), Choudhary et al. (2013), Salas-Vallin et al. (2020), Ahumada-Tello et al. (2022), Iqbal et al. (2023) and Wang et al. (2023)	Farling et al. (1999), Schneider and George (2011), Van Dierendonck (2011), Le et al. (2017), Langhof and Guldenberg (2019), Cruz and Kim (2023) and Parris and Peachey (2013)	Own elaboration

Source: Expanded and adapted from Pizzolitto et al. (2022)

Table 1 summarises the main characteristics of leadership styles by considering their projection on a continuum from the dark to the light side of leadership. The lighter end of the continuum would be the new leadership style explained below.

3 Methodology

This paper aims to bring to academic attention the need to conceptualise happy leadership in the post-pandemic era of Covid-19. There are two reasons for this. The first is the absence in the recent literature on leadership style theories of scientific studies focused on investigating whether a happy leader is a source of competitive benefits for companies (Gardner et al., 2021). The second is the need for an academic corpus exploring the construct of happiness as an intangible resource that contributes to ensuring leaders' success in managing the human capital of organisations (Vogel et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2023). Therefore, the results of these scientific studies can help advance the literature on leadership styles from the culture of happiness management (Ravina-Ripoll and Robina-Ramírez, 2023).

From this perspective, the authors of this paper carried out a documentary, hermeneutic, non-experimental, generalist and descriptive bibliometric analysis of the term 'happy leadership' from 2000 to 2022. The choice of this time interval is justified, as has been pointed out in previous sections, by previous researchers' lack of interest in laying the foundations for the importance of managers' happiness at work not only in improving their professional performance but also in increasing the collective and participative commitment of company employees.

By the time frame established for this bibliometric analysis, the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases were selected as search engines, as they are the most widely used in bibliometric research (Sevinc, 2004). In addition, 'happy leadership' was used as the exact match search equation for paper titles, abstracts and keywords. This approach returned zero results. For this reason, it was decided, on the one hand, to refrain from continuing with the bibliometric analysis, and, on the other hand, to avoid carrying it out from the approach of historiography, document collation or bibliographic coupling. Both decisions are motivated by the main objective of this academic work, which is to define happy leadership as a critical driver in formulating and implementing strategies focused on the search for the collective wellbeing of all stakeholders (both internal and external). Consequently, the following section goes on to conceptualise this term in detail. In this way, the existing gap in studies of leadership styles can be filled, and the interest of researchers in this new topic can be awakened.

4 Happy leadership

4.1 Concept

In addition to ethical aspects, today's world calls for people's desire to go beyond what is right and to seek wellbeing and happiness (Premchandran and Priyadarshi, 2018). However, among leadership styles, there needs to be a proposal that integrates efficiency and emotional aspects. The current environment has led organisations to consider factors such as happiness management and to start talking about a new style of leadership that

tries to integrate the best aspects of traditional techniques. The concept of happy leadership is a term that has yet to be defined in the literature from an organisational perspective. To explain this concept, the authors have carried out a process of reflection. In the continuum of leadership styles, those closest to the dark side and those closest to the bright side have been presented. Servant leadership is people-centred and seeks a particular way to improve employee behaviours. However, it does not consider aspects related to happiness. Therefore, leadership centring on people, in whom the leader is one of the group and manages to bring out the best in everyone, will enhance company wellbeing and can help implement happiness management practices. Happy leadership is a style that can be placed on the brighter side of leadership styles. It is a complete concept that has to be defined in a multidimensional way, so a definition proposal has been made considering all these aspects. Happy leadership can be described as ‘those people who lead organisations by considering internal factors such as positive emotions, enthusiasm, ethical judgement, affectivity, integrity, authenticity and emotional intelligence, but without forgetting the importance of individual and organisational efficiency’.

4.2 Comparison with other leadership styles

Today, happy leadership is not only out of the academic conversation but also of company management debates. From a theoretical and practical point of view, the justification for these phenomena is found in the existing flaws in the leadership styles that companies are implementing in the era of Industry 4.0. One of these widespread failures is the types of leadership with very distant dynamics in the quest to maximise the wellbeing at work and the quality of life of employees. Therefore, it is of great interest to place in the academic focus those leaders that show high degrees of positive psychology, assertiveness and effective communication, among other multiple aspects (Salas-Vallina and Swart, 2022).

At this point, it is necessary to mention the existence of extensive literature of studies that indicate that leaders do not generate a high degree of trust, loyalty and commitment between management and employees. It makes conflict resolution much more complex and challenging to resolve in an amicable and dialogical way, especially in companies with horizontal and authoritarian hierarchical structures in the current context (Pizzolitto et al., 2022), when top management believes that human resources are a cost and not an investment.

This issue and many other elements lead us towards a low-cost economy and job insecurity. If this vision is not to succeed at the micro level, this landscape can be reversed if a ‘Yellow Swan’ is introduced in the classrooms of the world’s most prestigious business schools. In happiness management theories, this concept is understood as a business culture that maximises corporate profits under social responsibility, green economy, organisational justice and the pursuit of holistic and integral employee happiness’ (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2022).

In this way, organisations can become a natural platform for sustainable dreams that improve their employees’ quality of life, subjective wellbeing and job satisfaction. Academic work is currently developing that shows this scientific evidence (Jiménez-Marín et al., 2022). However, no corpus of papers shows that adequate, agile, happy and fair governance is based on trust, commitment, proactivity and passion for the work of internal customers (Junker et al., 2022). However, all these elements are challenging to achieve without innovative, cheerful, charismatic and inclusive leadership that stimulates

workers' knowledge and organisational performance (Yue, 2021). Based on this leadership, company management can develop a human resources policy to significantly improve their competitiveness and economic growth in the digital society.

Transformational and servant leadership are among the styles that come close to the bright side. Both transformational and servant leaders are visionary, build trust, serve as role models, show consideration for others, delegate responsibility, empower followers, teach, communicate, listen and influence them. They are complementary styles because transformational leaders focus more on organisational goals, while servant leaders focus more on people (Gregory Stone et al., 2004). However, future research should include other people-centred leadership behaviours and examine whether these forms of leadership can explain employee creativity and innovation and consider mechanisms such as cognitive (e.g., psychological safety) and socio-relational (e.g., trust in the leader) (Iqbal et al., 2023). In this sense, happy leaders can be conceptualised as those who lead organisations from the internal factors of positive emotions, enthusiasm, ethical judgement, affectivity, integrity, authenticity and emotional intelligence. These factors mean that management practices undertaken by this type of leadership seek corporate happiness through the implementation of the following actions:

- 1 Making decisions based on serenity, reflection and general interest.
- 2 Knowing how to persuade their teams to construct the multipolar values of social responsibility, organisational justice, emotional pay and passion for work.
- 3 Cultivating an atmosphere of wellbeing at work that fosters innovation, intrapreneurship, creativity, teamwork and internal communication.
- 4 The philosophy of happiness management as a vehicle multiplies employees' individual and collective performance based on job stability, motivation, commitment, proactivity, transparency and cohesion.
- 5 Achieving financial and sustainable business prosperity by aligning all stakeholders' interests and the common good (internal and external).
- 6 Transforming operational inefficiencies within organisations into opportunities from the perspective of the Pareto allocation concept. It represents an opportunity for improvement and transformation in the search for corporate well-being under the precept of improving by improving others.
- 7 Encouraging corporate harmony, valuable and productive knowledge, disruptive thinking, reliable empowerment, and self-responsibility to fulfil the objectives set by the organisation.

4.3 Utilities and resistances

In this regard, the literature review points out that employees who feel unhappy with the performance of their jobs are less productive, entrepreneurial and dynamic (Kainulainen et al., 2018; Wen et al., 2023). From strategic management and positive psychology perspectives, this requires a step change in current governance models. This transformation must start with developing corporate cultures that promote corporate happiness within organisations, a source of positive energy that undermines the toxic, stressful and conflictive environments that generate tensions within companies.

Moreover, this leads to a work climate that stimulates proactivity, teamwork, creativity, enthusiasm and intrinsic motivation (Kaur and Kaur, 2023).

How can this positive climate be achieved? On the one hand, a comprehensive management model stimulates collaborative learning and prosperity at work (Kleine et al., 2022). It requires human resources departments to undertake practices or actions that favour employees' involvement in their jobs and enhance their cognitive skills in their professional performance (Alikaj et al., 2021). Such aspects will invigorate their creative destruction, self-development and organisational commitment.

On the other hand, flexible, adaptable, resilient and happy leadership inspires and excites members of companies to give their best in the daily exercise of their working lives (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). To achieve this goal successfully, senior management in companies must implement a psychological contract that strengthens the employee-management relationship, organisational support, emotional compensation, and assertive and empathetic communication with internal and external stakeholders (Smithson and Lewis, 2000). When this happens, stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion and job insecurity of internal clients are dampened, on the one hand, while mental health, job satisfaction, positive affectivity, psychological wellbeing, self-efficacy and productive performance will increase.

Based on these theoretical arguments, happy leadership arises to protect and care for one of the most valuable resources that organisations possess, namely their human capital (Gabčanová, 2011). It is not a trivial issue in these times of economic recession. This valuable asset will allow companies, among other things, to face the new digital challenges demanded by the globalised market. In this light, firms must design a corporate culture based on the architecture of organisational justice, ethics and employee wellbeing.

In this way, workers will be positively motivated to face the future challenges that will emerge in the post-Ukrainewar era. One of these challenges will be holistic person-company integration (Marcus et al., 2022). Through the development of this construct, managers will have to implement a career model whose goal is to certify that corporate happiness is an achievable, honest and successful goal. It means that happiness becomes an intangible resource that feeds the strategic direction of companies to promote to their internal customers the idea that the job satisfaction of their employees is in a harmonious balance with financial results (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2021b).

Therefore, happy leadership positions are one of management's primary roles in multiplying companies (Goh et al., 2022). It will make a management model more committed to employees' subjective wellbeing and stakeholders' interests (Daniels et al., 2017). Consequently, this type of leadership will become one of the critical bulwarks for companies not only to attract talent and enhance their innovative capabilities but also to connect employees' values with the companies' corporate culture (Yang et al., 2021). In this way, happy leadership will catalyse psychological safety and vital interactions to create a positive atmosphere within organisations (Xu et al., 2023).

It is worth pausing at this point to note that the top hierarchies of global corporations may be highly resistant to this type of leadership. Their managers understand that happiness in the workplace cannot generate an organisational culture that empowers their senior managers to undertake management that would end the low wages, casualisation and labour tensions generally experienced within their companies. Meanwhile, many companies boast of being at the forefront of social responsibility, sustainability and business ethics.

4.4 Effects of happy leadership

To reverse this dynamic – and prevent global corporations from veering towards authoritarian and intolerant leadership styles – it is more necessary than ever to recast current business management models. An excellent example of this is the philosophy of happiness management. This innovative organisational culture opens the door to happy leadership. This actor will enhance employees' emotions, confidence and positive motivations. For this reason, this group will increase their sense of belonging to the organisation, their professional performance, and the development of activities that add value to companies.

Both aspects are essential to improve the corporate image of companies, as well as to ensure their future economic success. It will help multiply internal customers' dynamism, creativity and productivity. Hence, happy leadership emerges as a fundamental instrument to promote vibrant, innovative, resilient and efficient ecosystems. This roadmap will make it possible, on the one hand, to reduce the psycho-managerial factors that undermine the wellbeing of human capital in the post-pandemic era. On the other hand, it will promote the positive synergies generated within organisations.

For these reasons, it is interesting for companies to have happy and helpful leaders to successfully achieve their strategic and economic goals based on their human capital's enthusiasm, commitment, knowledge and positive attitudes (Rabiul et al., 2022). This type of leadership can be a crucial element in generating an atmosphere that drives influential events, psychological needs, prosocial behaviour, or organisational justice (Pérez-Rodríguez et al., 2019). In this way, this type of leadership becomes, and perhaps unknowingly, the perfect scaffolding that makes it possible for the creative destruction of employees to transform into an inexhaustible source of prototypes, patents, or industrial properties in today's digital society.

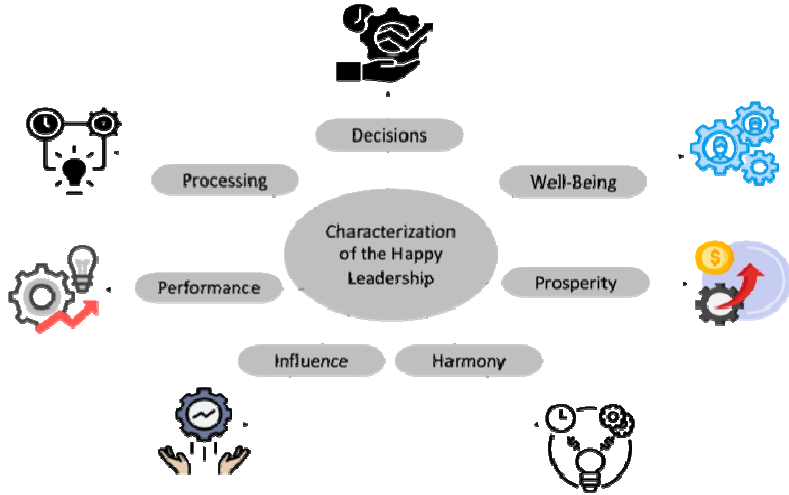
The effects of this style of leadership must be seen from the idea of the multidimensionality of the concept. The proposed definition stresses that this leadership mainly seeks an internal impact on people and emotional and psychological aspects that can significantly affect happiness. However, it remembers the organisational outcomes. Reducing stress, frustration, fear and discomfort, which enhances other leadership styles, can help improve work performance. Both individual and corporate effects of happiness can be seen in improved productivity, innovation and creativity, and differentially from other leadership styles in aspects such as flexibility and sustainability.

For all these reasons, we wondered what the effects of happy leadership might be (Figure 1). This style takes as its starting point the combination of the rational mind (thinking) and emotional mind (feeling) of people and leaders and seeks to exercise actions that help to reduce stress, frustration, and fear and to improve wellbeing in the workplace so that work performance can be enhanced (doing). Thinking, feeling and doing from a happiness management approach helps to consider people's performance from an organisational perspective (innovation and productivity) and emotional perspective by developing aspects such as creativity, flexibility and sustainability.

The effects of happy leadership (Figure 2) can be fascinating in making large companies think about the following three questions. First, the culture of happiness management is a crucial strategy for cultivating happy leaders. It is a much-needed tool to motivate employees to continuously improve their competencies and skills (Ahumada-Tello et al., 2022). Second, happy companies promote a management style whose business success is based on innovative, creative, and collaborative human capital

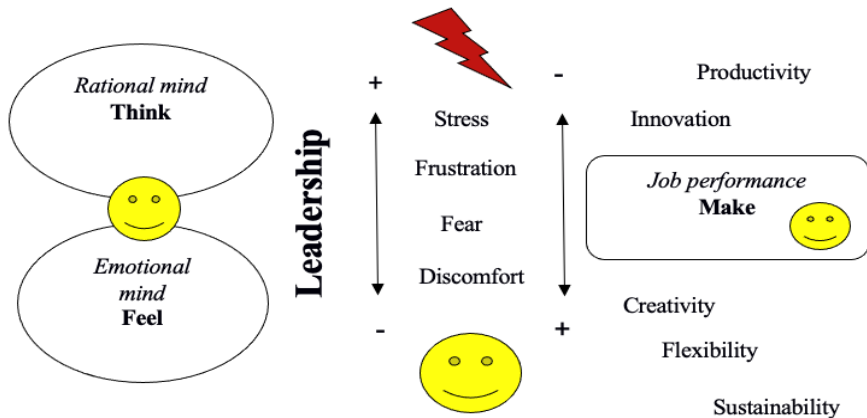
(Mercader et al., 2021). Moreover, happy leaders are a precious means for organisations to improve their competitive position in today's globalised society exponentially (Galván-Vela et al., 2023).

Figure 1 Actions that characterise happy leadership (see online version for colours)



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 2 Effects of happy leadership (see online version for colours)



Source: Own elaboration

5 Conclusions

According to recent scientific research, happy companies are now known to be more productive, sustainable, flexible and innovative (Choudhary and Kunte, 2023). Such findings, and multiple other aspects, support the conceptualisation of happy leadership within human resource and organisational behaviour theories. This actor can drive the job prosperity of internal customers as well as the economic growth of firms. That is, wealth

and subjective wellbeing for all its members (workers, suppliers, customers, shareholders and society).

It is essential to have human capital capable of coping with the economic and technological changes that prevail in the post-pandemic era. These circumstances require profound changes in current management models. As discussed throughout this paper, one will be in implementing happy leadership. However, it will require a profound shift in the mentality of managers, especially in those managers who have a solid inertial component in the belief of the need to sustain governance that plays exclusively in favour of the consolidation of a status quo where their interests triumph over the rest of the social actors.

To change this thinking, happy leadership enters the corporate sphere to drive new holistic management models. Therefore, companies must undertake organisational cultures that reconcile productive efficiency with business ethics, intrapreneurship, organisational justice, and happiness at work (Anuradha, 2020; Farid et al., 2021; Harrison et al., 2016). This is fertile ground for awareness of the importance of cultivating happy leadership, an actor of prosperity and wellbeing who must carry out their professional activity in an increasingly robotised and digitalised environment. In other words, it is a landscape that does not favour the existence of ecosystems that foster the cognitive potential, innovative elucidations and creativity of their internal clients, especially in those organisations that do not have agile, flexible and multifunctional structures capable of reacting efficiently and operationally in this tsunami of digital advances that bathe the ocean of the global economy. It opens the navigation of strategic management towards a new type of leadership, which could be, as discussed throughout the pages of this paper, happy leadership.

In addition to this plethora of academic arguments, the authors of this paper are aware of the pioneering nature of this type of scientific study. To avoid the existence of these harmful elements for the development of companies, as well as the contemporary phenomenon known as ‘Silent Resignation’ (Karatepe et al., 2022), happy leadership can be proactively encouraged:

- It empowers workers by developing leadership that pivots around the corporate wellbeing of all organisation members.
- The development of horizontal and matrix hierarchical structures allows the workforce to sit at the same tables as the management teams. The aim is for management and employees to share experiences and knowledge through practical, two-way, positive communication. In this way, it is not only the degree of involvement of internal customers in decision-making multiplied but also their loyalty and organisational commitment.
- This culture promotes Schumpeter’s creative destruction to end authoritarian structures. They only listen to the ideas and the heartbeat of the working happiness of their human capital, with managers knowing that the synergistic interactions of these two elements produce better productive results and dynamic capabilities for organisations.
- That is a healthy, sustainable and positive organisational environment that recognises the performance of its employees. In this way, companies’ internal customers can generate a source of enthusiasm and happy emotions in their relationships with leaders. They feel more valued and heard. The employees’ daily work will bring out

their intra-entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation and self-responsibility. It brings us closer to one of the ideals of happiness management: organisations should be ecosystems of positive dynamics and corporate happiness.

Significant theoretical and managerial contributions to the recent happiness management literature exist. First, this paper is one of the first scientific studies to conceptualise happy leadership according to the bibliometric analysis developed herein. It is because scientific publications written in the last decades of this century on managerial styles have focused on empirically exploring the destructive, despotic and toxic view of leaders (Kıymalıoğlu and Yetkin Özbük, 2023). Secondly, this research shows, among other things, that if society wants to enjoy an ecosystem of happy companies, it must implement management models that stimulate the subjective wellbeing of its human capital (Robina-Ramírez et al., 2023). It requires happy leaders who drive passion, technological innovation and professional growth within their organisations. In this way, companies will successfully achieve their strategic, operational and sustainable goals in the medium and long term in the demanding globalised market. We live in a time of economic turbulence that demands happy leaders who maximise the productivity and efficiency of employees through their joy, motivation, analytical thinking, positive emotions and creativity in their daily job performance.

Finally, this scientific study enriches the happiness management literature by introducing the term “happy leadership”, a leadership style that positively affects management. On the one hand, to attract and retain creative talent and, on the other, to develop a management model that promotes human resources policies aimed at fostering the following skills in their workers: flexibility, resilience, empathy, adaptability and continuous learning (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2023); a paradigm that is not the majority in the galaxy of large companies. In line with the above, more than ever, happy leaders are needed to improve companies’ competitiveness and corporate image in the “Great Resignation” era.

Although there is still a lack of scientific research that proves, in a natural way, the relevance for companies to enjoy a happy leadership that revitalises and energises their human capital, this paper may constitute an academic seed for future researchers to explore this attractive, happy leadership empirically. In this era, management models of organisations must enter into the virtuous balance of interests between management and employees from the perspective of happiness and human resource management. In this sense, management must remember that happy employees are a wave of creativity and innovation in the ocean of corporate cultures. So, what are companies waiting for to experience happy leadership? Whether it constitutes a window to collaborative spirit, occupational health, social intelligence, transversal skills, or organisational abilities. Also, in this context, the application of neuroscience to happy leadership appears as an exciting line of future research (Ruiz-Rodríguez et al., 2023).

5.1 Future lines of research

Future research should go deeper into its definition to identify all the dimensions that can help to delimit it. To this end, work to apply techniques such as the focus group and the Delphi method should be implemented. In addition, in the future, this academic work will be helpful for new research that empirically shows the relevance of happy leadership in designing management models built under sustainability, efficiency, organisational

justice, and social responsibility. On the one hand, this evidence will answer the questions: Why is happy leadership important for companies, and can corporate happiness be the ethical compass that post-pandemic leaders need? Moreover, on the other hand, it will validate the success of human resources policies based on creating a climate of trust and cooperation between employees and managers (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2023). Without such a social climate, companies will be a breeding ground for conflict, unrest, emotional exhaustion, and job instability.

5.2 Limitations

This study has some limitations. The first limitation refers to the absence in recent literature of a clear definition of “happy leadership”. This fact hinders, on the one hand, a more significant cognitive understanding of this attractive construct and, on the other hand, the possession of fertile academic information on the psychological variables that directly influence this novel term in motivational management studies. Moreover, studies need to empirically demonstrate that happy leadership drives prosperity and social wellbeing. Despite the above limitations, it would be interesting to investigate this concept, presented here for the first time in the academic debate, to show the need for organisations to bring this type of leadership from the perspective of happiness management.

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