

Effects of happiness management and organisational justice on organisational commitment

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Abstract

Purpose – The results confirm that Human Resource Practices (HRPs) positively influence both happiness management and brand pride, but not performance directly. In contrast, both happiness management and brand pride significantly affect job performance. Furthermore, a marginal mediation of happiness management is also observed in the relationship between HRPs and performance ($p = 0.051$), which suggests a near-significant emotional mechanism. Significant mediations of brand pride and happiness management are also found between pride and performance.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed with 408 participants. Data were analysed using covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) to assess the direct and indirect relationships proposed in the theoretical model.

Findings – The results reveal that happiness management is positively associated with both organisational justice and commitment, with justice partially mediating this relationship.

Research limitations/implications – The cross-sectional design and non-probabilistic sampling restrict causal inference and generalisability. Future studies should employ longitudinal approaches and test moderators such as leadership style or perceived organisational support.

Practical implications – The findings guide higher education leaders to implement emotional and psychological training programmes that foster happiness, fairness and commitment through transparent workload allocation, fair promotion systems and participatory decision-making.

Social implications – Promoting organisational cultures grounded in happiness and justice strengthens equity, well-being and institutional resilience, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Originality/value – The study provides novel evidence in the Ibero-American context by integrating four constructs into a single explanatory model, extending social exchange theory from an emotional perspective. It highlights that happiness management constitutes a management strategy and an ethical and cultural responsibility for building more human and sustainable organisations. Practical implications include promoting emotionally intelligent communication, symbolic recognition practices and a culture that fosters employee pride and well-being.

Keywords Happiness management, Organisational justice, Organisational commitment, Positive organisational behaviour

Paper type Research article

1. Introduction

At the dawn of a new organisational era marked by technological disruption, global complexity, and rising demands for workplace wellbeing, organisations are urged to rethink their management models (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2024). Achieving sustainable competitiveness requires integrating emotional and ethical dimensions into the work environment to build humane, resilient, and productive cultures (Agrawal *et al.*, 2024). Within this paradigm, happiness management has emerged as a managerial approach that positions employee happiness as a strategic factor in organisational success (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2023).

Despite increasing scholarly attention, a theoretical gap remains regarding how happiness management interacts with key organisational behaviour constructs such as justice and



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commitment (Jha *et al.*, 2023). Prior research confirms that perceptions of justice influence employees’ commitment (Park *et al.*, 2022). However, few studies have empirically examined organisational justice as a mediating mechanism linking happiness-oriented strategies with affective organisational bonds, particularly in higher education institutions (Alwali and Alwali, 2025; Nanjundeswaraswamy *et al.*, 2025).

This knowledge gap is especially relevant in emerging economies such as Mexico, where the higher education sector faces distinctive challenges—informal working arrangements, limited resources, and high socio-emotional expectations among academic and administrative staff—that remain underexplored in the literature (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, although foundational, Colquitt’s (2001) organisational justice model has rarely been expanded to incorporate emotional or psychological variables such as happiness management, leaving a 24-year gap in empirical extensions within Latin American contexts (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2024).

To address these gaps, this study examines the effect of happiness management on organisational justice and organisational commitment, analysing the mediating role of justice in this relationship. It proposes an explanatory model that empirically and contextually integrates these variables, advancing theoretical development in emotional talent management and informing fairer, wellbeing-oriented organisational policies. The paper is structured into four sections: literature review, methodology, results and discussion, and final reflections encompassing conclusions, implications, and future research directions.

2. Literature review

This study examines how happiness management influences perceived organisational justice and, in turn, the different dimensions of organisational commitment. The variables are based on recent literature and are integrated into a theoretical model illustrated in Figure 1.

2.1 Organisational commitment

Since its origins in organisational behaviour theory, organisational commitment has been essential for understanding the affective, normative, and behavioural bonds between human talent and their work environments (Kolb *et al.*, 1975). Historically, pioneering studies such as those by Mowday, Porter, and Steers in the 1970s positioned commitment as a predictor of performance and job retention (Mowday *et al.*, 1979). Over the following decades, research on organisational commitment expanded considerably, incorporating diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives. This evolution led to a three-dimensional conceptualisation— affective, continuance, and normative commitment—proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990), which remains one of the most widely accepted frameworks in contemporary organisational research.

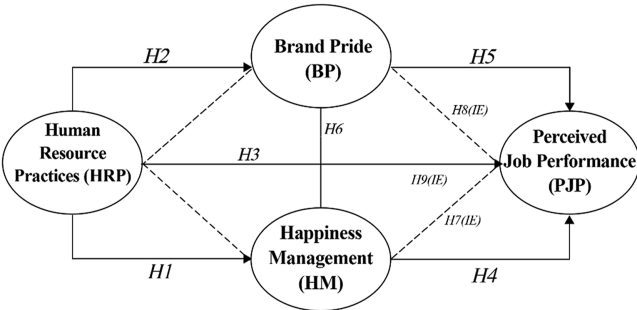


Figure 1. Proposed theoretical model. Source(s): Own elaboration

Conceptually, organisational commitment refers to the degree to which an employee identifies with and wishes to remain in an organisation (Mowday *et al.*, 1979). It has become a key indicator of the emotional and rational connection between individuals and institutions, influencing behaviours such as turnover, absenteeism, organisational citizenship, and innovation (Galvan-Vela *et al.*, 2024). This construct is increasingly relevant in today's dynamic work environments as organisations face new psychological and motivational challenges (Hidalgo-Fernández *et al.*, 2020). Recent studies confirm its importance for attracting and retaining talent, supporting productivity, and fostering organisational resilience (Bashir and Gani, 2020). Likewise, leadership styles and organisational climates have been found to shape attitudinal orientations into commitment-related behaviours, reinforcing the role of people-centred management in sustaining engagement (Alwali, 2024a). Identifying the drivers and inhibitors of commitment is a strategic priority for social and administrative sciences, particularly in emerging economies where working conditions remain structurally constrained (Bentaleb, 2024).

Regarding its link with happiness management, García-Contreras *et al.* (2022) found that organisational commitment partially mediates happiness management and social exchange relationships with leaders and colleagues, suggesting that organisational cultures based on happiness significantly strengthen employee commitment and performance. Similarly, Elayan *et al.* (2023) reported that organisational commitment partially mediates the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and happiness management, indicating that cultural context may influence these dynamics.

2.2 Organisational justice

Throughout its early theoretical formulations based on Adams' equity theory in the 1960s, organisational justice has been conceived as a relevant variable in human talent management and strengthening the work climate (Adams, 1965). Over time, the construct evolved beyond distributive justice to incorporate additional dimensions such as procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice, reflecting different perceptions of fairness within organisations (Steiner, 2020). This multidimensional perspective positioned organisational justice as a central element in explaining workplace attitudes and behavioural outcomes.

Recent studies emphasise that justice perceptions are essential for promoting ethical and transparent management practices that enhance employee trust and cooperation. According to Unterhitzberger and Lawrence (2023), these variables gain relevance in environments marked by competitiveness and uncertainty, where workers seek fair and transparent conditions that sustain performance and wellbeing. In this sense, organisational justice is a psychological mechanism linking managerial practices with employees' emotional and behavioural responses (Alwali and Alwali, 2025).

Contemporary literature defines organisational justice as employees' perceptions of fairness in the procedures, interactions, and outcomes they experience in their work environment (Pathardikar *et al.*, 2024). Empirical research consistently shows that these perceptions influence key outcomes such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Jha *et al.*, 2023). As stated by Nanjundeswaraswamy *et al.* (2025), in the post-pandemic world—where emotional wellbeing and a sense of belonging have become priorities—understanding justice perceptions helps organisations create inclusive and emotionally sustainable cultures.

Recent empirical evidence connecting organisational justice and happiness management offers mixed results. On the one hand, Wahba (2023) found that all dimensions of organisational justice positively and significantly influence happiness management in the tourism sector. On the other hand, Rahmaningtyas *et al.* (2022) reported no significant association between these variables in higher education, suggesting that contextual and cultural factors may moderate this relationship.

2.3 Happiness management

Happiness management has emerged as a strategic approach within contemporary organisational theory, linking emotional wellbeing with sustainable performance (Rando-Cueto *et al.*, 2023). It builds on the evolution of positive organisational behaviour and wellbeing research, positioning happiness not as an abstract emotion but as a managerial tool that strengthens culture, engagement, and productivity (Firmansyah and Wahdiniwati, 2023).

This approach promotes organisational environments that foster autonomy, belonging, recognition, and alignment between personal and institutional values (Salazar-Altamirano *et al.*, 2024). From this perspective, happiness management integrates ethical and emotional principles into leadership and decision-making processes, reinforcing mutual trust and respect within the workplace.

Theoretically, happiness management reflects an organisation's capacity to cultivate positive emotions through systems and practices that encourage commitment, resilience, and innovation (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2023). It represents a people-centred paradigm aligned with the principles of corporate social responsibility and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (Salazar-Altamirano *et al.*, 2025a, b).

Empirical studies have shown that happiness management enhances job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and justice perceptions by improving communication, fairness, and social support mechanisms (Alnuaimi and Abou Assali, 2024). In a global context characterised by uncertainty and digital transformation, fostering happiness-oriented practices improves employees' psychological wellbeing and strengthens organisational adaptability and reputation (Qamar *et al.*, 2024).

2.4 Research hypotheses

Although prior research has explored organisational wellbeing and commitment, limited evidence exists on how happiness management, organisational justice, and commitment interact, particularly in emerging economies. Recent studies identify organisational justice as a significant predictor of commitment (Ababneh *et al.*, 2021) and a mechanism influenced by ethical leadership and fairness perceptions (Suifan, 2019). This study introduces a model grounded in positive organisational behaviour, extending Colquitt's (2001) framework by positioning happiness management as a strategic and emotional antecedent. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed.

- H1. Happiness management has a positive and significant effect on organisational justice.
- H2. Happiness management positively influences organisational commitment.
- H3. Organisational justice has a positive effect on organisational commitment.
- H4. Organisational justice significantly mediates the relationship between happiness management and organisational commitment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection

This quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional study enabled the empirical testing of hypotheses using structural equation modelling. Data were collected through an online questionnaire designed in Google Forms, distributed between January and February 2025 to personnel from Mexico's higher education subsystem. Although online distribution allows immediate dissemination, the two-month period reflects participation's voluntary and asynchronous nature; reminders were sent periodically to achieve an adequate and diverse response rate.

A purposive non-probability sampling technique was employed, as participants were required to work within the higher education subsystem in Mexico. The population included academic and administrative personnel such as full-time, adjunct, and part-time professors, department heads, and administrative coordinators. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and conducted per the CETYS University Code of Ethics, ensuring confidentiality and compliance with research integrity principles.

The final sample comprised 295 respondents aged between 22 and 72 years ($M = 44.1$, $SD = 10.2$), with an average job tenure of 9.84 years ($SD = 8.61$). Regarding gender, 60.70% identified as women and 39.30% as men. In terms of academic background, most held a master's degree (58.30%), followed by those with a doctoral degree (29.80%) and a bachelor's degree (11.90%). Regarding employment type, 69.83% were adjunct professors, 29.15% full-time, and 1.02% part-time. Finally, 34.60% reported having another source of income, while 65.40% did not (see [Table 1](#)).

Several procedural strategies were implemented to mitigate common method bias (CMB). Among them, participant anonymity was guaranteed, neutral wording was used in the items, and different scales were included in the questionnaire. In addition, Harman's single-factor test showed that the first factor explained only 28.47% of the variance, below the critical 50% threshold, suggesting that CMB did not pose a significant threat ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#)). Furthermore, full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs) were calculated below 3.3, confirming the absence of multicollinearity and CMB issues. The sample size was considered adequate for applying covariance-based structural equation modelling, ensuring robust estimates and sufficient statistical power for subsequent analyses ([Hair et al., 2019a, b](#)).

3.2 Measures

Data were collected through a structured digital questionnaire incorporating validated 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to assess Happiness Management,

Table 1. Demographic profile of participants

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	192	47.06%
	Male	216	52.94%
Generation	21–30 years	159	38.97%
	31–40 years	87	21.32%
	41–50 years	62	15.20%
	51–60 years	50	12.25%
	Under 20 years	38	9.31%
	Over 60 years	12	2.94%
Job position	Operational	257	62.99%
	Technical	59	14.46%
	Management	47	11.52%
	Supervision	45	11.03%
Seniority	More than 10 years	112	27.45%
	4–6 years	98	24.02%
	1–3 years	85	20.83%
	7–10 years	61	14.95%
Working hours	1 year or less	52	12.75%
	7–8 h	241	59.07%
	More than 8 h	115	28.19%
	4–6 h	45	11.03%
Job sector	Less than 4 h	7	1.72%
	Services	337	82.60%
	Industrial	71	17.40%

Source(s): Own elaboration

organisational justice, and organisational commitment. Happiness Management was measured using the Workplace Happiness Scale (Ramírez-García *et al.*, 2019), which operationalises the happiness management construct through dimensions such as organisational culture, wellbeing, and managerial support, aligning conceptually with the strategic and emotional scope of happiness management (Salazar-Altamirano *et al.*, 2025b).

The Niehoff and Moorman (1993) scale evaluated organisational justice by covering procedural, interactional, and distributive dimensions. Organisational commitment was assessed using the affective commitment component of Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-dimensional model, as it captures emotional attachment and identification with the organisation, consistent with the wellbeing orientation of happiness management. Although these scales were initially developed in the 1990s, they remain the most robust and frequently validated instruments in current literature (e.g. Jha *et al.*, 2023; Wahba, 2023; Alwali, 2024a).

3.3 Data analysis technique

Data analysis was performed using Jamovi (version 2.3.28). Descriptive statistics and normality tests (skewness, kurtosis) were initially calculated to verify data distribution and internal consistency. Subsequently, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to examine the dimensionality and reliability of the scales (Cronbach's α).

Next, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and the estimation of the structural equation model were conducted using a covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) approach. Although both EFA and CFA were carried out on the same dataset, this sequential process verified construct validity before testing the theoretical model, following Hair *et al.* (2019a, b). CB-SEM was selected over PLS-SEM because the primary objective was testing and validation, rather than prediction, and the model was grounded in well-established theoretical relationships (Dash and Paul, 2021).

Model fit was evaluated using the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.956), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = 0.947), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.077), and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = 0.052), all within acceptable thresholds for good fit. Fit indices were evaluated following the recommendations of Hair *et al.* (2019a, b), considering the CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR.

4. Results

4.1 Data analysis

The analysis process included the evaluation of model fit and construct validity using the Jamovi software, applying the covariance-based structural equation modelling approach (CB-SEM). This technique allowed for an in-depth analysis of the relationships between happiness at work, organisational justice, and organisational commitment, providing a solid foundation for interpreting the results and better understanding the underlying dynamics among the variables studied.

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted on the same dataset. The EFA was a preliminary structure check to verify item grouping and reliability. At the same time, the CFA functioned as the confirmatory validation step to assess construct validity before estimating the structural equation model.

4.2 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Additionally, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the validity of the constructs and the internal consistency of the scales used in the study: happiness at work, organisational justice, and organisational commitment. The results showed factor loadings higher than 0.60, adequate communalities, and significant correlations between items, indicating a coherent factor structure and strong relationships between the indicators and their respective factors (Hair *et al.* (2019a, b)). Moreover, the analysis revealed that the items of each scale were correctly grouped, with no evidence of cross-loading, which reinforces convergent validity.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy index values were above the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating excellent suitability for factor analysis (Field, 2013). Likewise, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the correlations among items were sufficiently significant to justify the use of this technique. Finally, the variance explained by each construct exceeded 50%, which is considered an acceptable criterion for establishing construct validity Hair *et al.* (2019a, b). Together, these results support the psychometric quality of the instrument and its ability to reliably and validly measure the proposed constructs.

4.3 Evaluation of the measurement model

The validity of the measurement model was assessed using the convergent and discriminant validity criteria, using the methodological recommendations proposed by Hair *et al.* (2019a, b). In addition, the reporting of psychometric properties adheres to current standards of transparency and robustness in SEM research, as recently emphasised by Alwali (2024b). Regarding convergent validity, the internal reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were analysed (see Table 2). All constructs exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70 for Cronbach's alpha, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). Likewise, CR values were above 0.85, reflecting high consistency among the items of each variable. Finally, AVE values were above the 0.50 threshold, suggesting that the constructs explain a sufficient proportion of the variance of their respective indicators (Hair *et al.* (2019a, b)).

Regarding discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria were applied. According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE of each construct (shown on the matrix diagonal) was greater than the inter-construct correlations, indicating adequate discrimination among the latent variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Similarly, the HTMT index showed values below the conservative threshold of 0.85 in all combinations, supporting the discriminant validity of the constructs (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). These results confirm that the scales used exhibit adequate psychometric properties to validly and reliably assess the relationships proposed in the structural model.

The structural model fit was evaluated through a combination of absolute, incremental, and parsimony fit indices, following the methodological recommendations proposed by Hair *et al.* (2019a, b). This assessment allowed for the model to be adequate concerning the observed data to be determined using the Jamovi software as the estimation tool. The full results of these indicators are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Convergent and discriminant validity

		Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
1	Human Resource Practices	0.881	0.872	0.577
2	Happiness Management	0.929	0.93	0.641
3	Brand Pride	0.836	0.853	0.641
4	Perceived Job Performance	0.887	0.888	0.725

		HTMT criterion				Fornell-Larcker criterion			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1	Human Resource Practices	–				0.760			
2	Happiness Management	0.396	–			0.361	0.802		
3	Brand Pride	0.382	0.489	–		0.385	0.438	0.800	
4	Perceived Job Performance	0.309	0.413	0.5	–	0.311	0.403	0.475	0.851

Source(s): Own elaboration

Table 3. Model fit

Type of fit	Fit measure	Acceptance level	Model	Acceptability
Absolute or global	CMIN	CMIN = double of DF	271	Acceptable
	p value	>0.05	<0.001	Marginal
	SRMR	<0.08	0.053	Acceptable
	RMSEA	<0.08	0.076	Acceptable
Incremental	CFI	>0.900	0.941	Acceptable
	IFI	>0.900	0.941	Acceptable
	TLI	>0.900	0.929	Acceptable
	PGFI	>0.500	0.661	Acceptable
Parsimony	CMIN/DF	>2	2.130	Acceptable

Source(s): Own elaboration

Regarding absolute fit, the CMIN value was 436, with an associated *p*-value of <0.001, which indicates a marginal fit due to the sensitivity of this test to sample size (Schermele-Engel *et al.*, 2003). However, the SRMR was 0.052 and the RMSEA 0.077, both below the 0.08 threshold, indicating an acceptable fit between the observed and estimated matrices (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Regarding incremental fit, the CFI and IFI values were 0.956, and the TLI reached 0.947, all above the minimum criterion of 0.900, suggesting a good explanatory capacity of the model compared to a null model. Finally, the parsimony index PGFI obtained a value of 0.675, exceeding the 0.500 threshold, indicating that the model maintains an adequate balance between complexity and fit (Mulaik *et al.*, 1989). Taken together, these results confirm the overall acceptability.

The structural model fit was evaluated through a combination of absolute, incremental, and parsimony indices, confirming the adequacy of the CB-SEM estimation (CFI = 0.956; IFI = 0.956; TLI = 0.947; RMSEA = 0.077; SRMR = 0.052). These values meet the recommended good-fit thresholds (Hair *et al.*, 2019a; Hu and Bentler, 1999). The equality of the CFI and IFI values is due to the identical computational procedures employed by the Jamovi software (version 2.3.28), which can yield the same result when the model exhibits consistent incremental fit.

Indirect effects were estimated using a bias-corrected bootstrap procedure with 5,000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval, ensuring the robustness and reliability of the mediation paths (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). These indicators confirm that the proposed model fits the observed data well and supports the hypothesised relationships among happiness management, organisational justice, and organisational commitment.

4.4 Hypothesis testing

Once the structural model fit was confirmed, the hypothesised relationships were tested using the maximum likelihood estimation method. Standardised coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), critical ratios (CR), and significance levels (*p*) were computed for each path. The results in Table 4 show that all hypotheses were statistically significant and therefore supported.

The relationship between Happiness Management and organisational justice (H1) was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.638$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that happiness-oriented practices enhance perceptions of fairness in the workplace. Similarly, Happiness Management directly influenced organisational commitment (H2: $\beta = 0.455$; $p < 0.001$), confirming that emotionally positive environments strengthen employees' attachment to institutional goals. Organisational justice also exhibited a significant direct effect on commitment (H3: $\beta = 0.202$; $p = 0.005$), underscoring that perceptions of fairness reinforce affective and normative bonds with the organisation.

Table 4. Hypotheses supported in the structural model

Hypothesis	Variable	Estimate	SE	CR	<i>p</i>	Acceptability
<i>Direct effects</i>						
H1	HRP → HM	0.226	0.0698	2.77	0.006	Not Rejected
H2	HRP → BP	0.385	0.0828	4.62	<0.001	Not Rejected
H3	HRP → PJP	0.101	0.0841	1.24	0.214	Rejected
H4	HM → PJP	0.218	0.0993	2.65	0.008	Not Rejected
H5	BP → PJP	0.340	0.0899	3.94	<0.001	Not Rejected
H6	BP → HM	0.351	0.0721	4.2	<0.001	Not Rejected
<i>Indirect effects</i>						
H7	HRP → HM → PJP	0.049	0.026	1.95	0.051	Marginal
H8	HRP → BP → PJP	0.131	0.044	3.08	0.002	Not Rejected
H9	BP → HM → PJP	0.077	0.034	2.35	0.019	Not Rejected

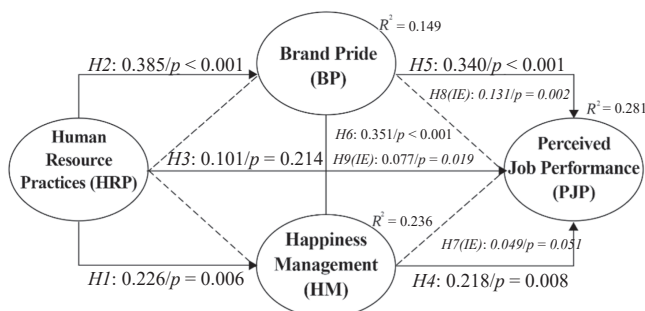
Source(s): Own elaboration

Finally, the indirect effect of Happiness Management on organisational commitment through organisational justice (H4: $\beta = 0.129$; $p = 0.006$) was significant, indicating partial mediation. These results explain 40.7% of the variance in organisational justice and 36.4% in organisational commitment, representing moderate explanatory power within the social sciences Hair *et al.* (2019a, b).

The figure shows the structural model resulting from the structural equation analysis, where the direct and indirect relationships between Happiness Management, organisational justice, and organisational commitment are represented (see Figure 2). The arrows indicate statistically significant direct effects, while the dotted line corresponds to the identified indirect effect (H4). Each relationship is accompanied by its standardised coefficient (β) and p -value, allowing for the evaluation of its magnitude and significance. Likewise, the R^2 values show the percentage of variance the model explains: 40.7% for organisational justice and 36.4% for organisational commitment, moderate levels in social sciences Hair *et al.* (2019a, b).

5. Discussion

The results provide robust empirical evidence of the strategic association between happiness management and organisational commitment, with organisational justice as a key mediating mechanism. This outcome supports prior research indicating that happiness-oriented management enhances affective engagement and retention by fostering positive emotional climates and mutual trust within organisations (García-Contreras *et al.*, 2022; Wahba, 2023). The findings also extend this literature by demonstrating that such emotional management practices can be effectively institutionalised through fair and transparent processes, thus transforming subjective wellbeing into organisational attachment.

**Figure 2.** Structural model. Source(s): Own elaboration

The mediation of organisational justice reinforces Colquitt's (2001) multidimensional framework, which conceives fairness as a structural and relational process influencing employee attitudes and performance. In this sense, the present results advance the understanding of justice as an active transmission channel (rather than a passive outcome) within happiness-based management systems. Studies have observed similar mechanisms linking ethical leadership and HRM practices to justice and commitment outcomes (Alwali and Alwali, 2025), confirming that emotionally intelligent governance fosters procedural fairness and affective bonds.

From a comparative perspective, the significant associations between happiness, justice, and commitment observed in the Mexican higher education context align with results from Egypt and Turkey, where perceptions of fairness strengthened wellbeing and engagement (Bahat and Işik, 2023; Wahba, 2023). Conversely, Rahmaningtyas *et al.* (2022) found non-significant links among these constructs in Indonesian universities, suggesting that organisational culture and leadership styles moderate the connection between justice and commitment. These divergences highlight the importance of contextual sensitivity when applying emotional and ethical management models across regions.

This research thus contributes to the consolidation of Happiness Management as a context-responsive governance approach that integrates affective, ethical, and structural dimensions of organisational behaviour. The model empirically demonstrates that promoting transparent communication, recognition, and equitable procedures strengthens perceptions of justice and, consequently, employees' affective commitment. The study bridges a gap in Latin American organisational scholarship by linking emotional wellbeing and fairness within a single explanatory framework. Happiness-based governance can generate sustainable engagement even under resource-constrained institutional conditions.

6. Conclusions

This study provides robust empirical evidence confirming the associational (not causal) link between happiness management, organisational justice, and affective organisational commitment. The results demonstrate that justice serves as a partial mediator and strategic mechanism that connects happiness-oriented practices with employees' emotional attachment to their institutions. These findings are consistent with research conducted in Egypt and Turkey, where perceived fairness has been associated with higher levels of commitment and wellbeing (Bahat and Işik, 2023; Wahba, 2023).

By addressing a recognised gap in Latin American scholarship (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2022; Galván-Vela *et al.*, 2024), this study contributes to developing a new managerial paradigm: the "Emotional Governance and Organisational Justice Model (GEJO)". This proposal integrates happiness management and justice principles into institutional governance systems, emphasising transparency, participatory decision-making, and psychological wellbeing as strategic levers of commitment. The GEJO framework advocates that governance in higher education should evolve from administrative efficiency toward emotional legitimacy, where leaders are evaluated not only by performance outcomes but by their ability to foster fairness and collective happiness.

Given the cross-sectional design, the relationships identified represent statistical associations rather than causal effects. Future longitudinal research could test the predictive validity of the GEJO framework and assess how emotional governance practices contribute to sustainable organisational commitment over time.

7. Implications

7.1 Theoretical implications

Theoretically, the findings extend Colquitt's (2001) model by introducing happiness management as an antecedent of justice and commitment, integrating emotional and ethical dimensions into organisational behaviour. The study also conceptualises emotional governance (GEJO) as an emerging theoretical construct that connects happiness management with justice-based

management systems. This theoretical innovation bridges gaps between wellbeing studies, organisational justice, and governance theory, offering a new avenue for interdisciplinary research.

7.2 Practical implications

Practically, the GEJO framework provides actionable guidance for leaders and policymakers.

- (1) Transparency and equity in governance: Implement participatory workload and promotion systems to enhance distributive and procedural justice.
- (2) Emotional leadership training: Develop managerial development programmes focused on empathy, emotional intelligence, and fairness in decision-making.
- (3) Institutional fairness metrics: Create justice-based indicators (e.g. grievance resolution speed, recognition equity, and respect audits) to monitor and reinforce ethical climates.
- (4) Wellbeing governance boards: Establish internal committees responsible for aligning institutional policies with happiness and justice objectives.

These practices operationalise the HM→OJ→OC mechanism identified in this study, translating research evidence into sustainable governance innovations.

7.3 Social implications

Socially, the GEJO model positions happiness and justice as twin pillars of institutional governance, aligning with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). By fostering fair and emotionally intelligent environments, higher education institutions can become agents of social transformation, promoting trust, inclusion, and wellbeing across broader communities.

8. Limitations and future research

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report instruments, and non-probabilistic sampling, constraining causal inference and generalisability. Consequently, the relationships between happiness management, organisational justice, and organisational commitment should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than causal effects. This limitation does not detract from the robustness of the observed patterns but clarifies that they reflect correlations grounded in the current empirical context. Therefore, the findings apply to large higher education institutions in Mexico operating under a non-probabilistic sampling framework. Future longitudinal or experimental studies could further validate the directionality and causality of these associations. However, these constraints open opportunities for future research to explore additional mediators or moderators, such as leadership style or organisational climate, and to employ longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches. Expanding the scope to other educational levels and cultural contexts would further strengthen the external validity and depth of understanding of how happiness management, justice, and commitment interact in academic settings.

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