

Original Research Article

Fun Fun Fun—The relationship between well-being activities and job satisfaction in high-tech companies

Yonatan Shertzer^{1,2,*}, Yuli Zur^{1,2}, Chen Ragonis^{1,2}

¹ Peres Academic Center, Rehovot 7610202, Israel

² Human Resources Program at Peres Academic Center, Rehovot 7610202, Israel

* **Corresponding author:** Yonatan Shertzer, yshertzer@pac.ac.il

Abstract: Job satisfaction is a goal of every organization and human resources department. Many studies have shown the relationship between employee satisfaction as a predictive factor for a variety of key organizational indicators such as employee commitment, employee engagement, productivity, attrition, and turnover. Engaging in well-being activities is one strategy that companies can use to boost employee satisfaction. The term “well-being” activities in Hebrew is a bit different from the common use of the word in the literature. It is a combination of the concepts of Fun Activities, Employee Experience and Perks and Benefits. In High-tech companies, there are many activities aimed at creating a positive employee experience and an attractive organizational culture. These activities include a vast range of activities such as: department events, happy hours, company events, holiday gifts, enrichment activities, sports classes (for example, yoga), and more benefits. Despite the considerable investment in this budget, there are not many studies illustrating the contribution of well-being activities to employee satisfaction and their ROI. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between workplace well-being activities and job satisfaction in the Israeli high-tech market. The hypothesis of this study was that there is a positive relationship between well-being activities in the workplace and satisfaction in the workplace, but also to identify which issues within the well-being policy will predict the highest level of employee satisfaction. The study was conducted among 91 employees from a variety of high-tech companies in the Israeli market. The study’s findings supported the hypothesis. Practical suggestions for organizations for the successful implementation of well-being policies are discussed.

Keywords: employee experience; well-being; perks; job satisfaction; high-tech

Received: 26 September 2022; **Accepted:** 25 October 2022; **Available online:** 7 November 2022

1. Introduction

In recent years, the issue of the importance of well-being activities in workplaces has become well-known and discussed among the public and has received great emphasis among organizations. Well-being activities that include benefits, events, and fun activities in the workplace have been studied over the years from different angles; however, few studies have specifically addressed the unique culture of well-being that is a characteristic of high-tech companies.

This study focuses on the Israeli high-tech market, where the use of well-being activities constitutes a managerial strategy and practice in the human resources field. The idea behind well-being activities is that workplaces that establish fun and enjoyment in the corporate culture will cause positive feelings among their

employees and will increase employee satisfaction. One can see the application of this in a variety of organizations, such as Pike Place Fish Market, Google, IBM, and Southwest Airlines, which have done it with great success^[1].

Past studies have shown that an atmosphere of fun in the workplace produces positive attitudes towards the workplace, as can be measured through job satisfaction^[2], which is defined as a person's positive feeling towards his or her work because of the set of factors that affect his or her feelings in the workplace^[3].

In this study, we will examine the relationship between a wide variety of aspects of the fun activities policy of organizations among high-tech workers in Israel and the degree of job satisfaction. We hope that the implications of this research will assist organizations in improving their well-being activities and policies. Additionally, this paper can assist in identifying the factors that have a bigger impact on job satisfaction by correctly identifying the parameters that affect well-being policies.

2. Literature review

Job satisfaction is defined as a person's positive feeling towards his work, because of the set of factors that influence his or her feelings in the workplace. "A person with a high level of job satisfaction holds positive feelings about his job, while a person with a low level holds negative feelings"^[3]. The topic of job satisfaction has been studied since 1935 but there is still no general agreement about what job satisfaction is^[4]. Researchers and writers define job satisfaction differently according to a variety of approaches.

According to Hoppock^[5], job satisfaction is defined as a psychological, physiological, and environmental combination that allows a person to feel that he is satisfied in his work. According to this approach, although work is affected by external factors, job satisfaction remains an internal thing related to the employee's feelings. Vroom^[6] pointed out that job satisfaction has seven aspects, which are: the reward, the supervisor, the colleagues, the work environment, the job content, the promotion, and the organization's self. Moorman^[7] emphasized in his research that there are two perspectives to interpret the definition of satisfaction. One claims that from the emotional point of view, job satisfaction is an overall positive emotional evaluation. The second claims that from a cognitive point of view, job satisfaction is a more logical and rational assessment of working conditions.

Well-being activities in the workplace

Well-being activities at work are one factor that has grown significantly in recent years and influences job satisfaction in the company. Managers, policy makers, and researchers have focused more on compensation strategies that best encourage and attract skilled technical workers in light of the intense competition for skilled labor that exists today^[8].

It is challenging to locate an Israeli definition for the idea of well-being activities in the academic literature. These endeavors are referred to as "Welfare" in Hebrew, and literature generally associates this term with the relief industry rather than with how it is handled in Israel. Therefore, in this research we will use a variety of aspects that together constitute the essence of this concept as it is experienced in Israel in general and high-tech in particular. The concept has three main aspects:

First and foremost, the concept is defined in the literature as Fun Activities—activities in the workplace that aim to generate pleasure and fun for employees. This concept concerns a variety of practices such as fun days, happy hours, team building and more^[9,10]. According to studies, an enjoyable work environment not only provides a place for pleasure and relaxation but also helps to motivate employees at work^[11]. Fun in the workplace has been defined as any social, interpersonal activity or work task of a cheerful or humorous nature

that provides a person with amusement, or pleasure^[12]. Some researchers consider fun activities as a multidimensional aspect that includes, different types of social, playful activities and humor in the work environment^[13].

Secondly, another concept that helps to define the concept of well-being and is receiving more and more attention in recent years is the concept of Employee Experience - the way in which employees experience any process or experience within the organization, starting with their on-boarding process, their ongoing conversations with managers, performance evaluation and more. The idea behind this concept is to create a connecting and in many cases enjoyable experience for every process that employees experience^[14].

Thirdly, some consider the concept of well-being as Perks and Benefits—all kinds of elements at work that are not part of the salary but attract the employees and motivate them^[15,16]. The issue of non-traditional benefits such as subsidized lunches, dry cleaning, yoga classes, extended maternity leave and more, has become a topic of interest for the press, which covers the increasing prevalence of non-traditional benefits other than salary and bonus^[17]. In a general survey conducted by Ceridian Employer Services, out of 129 companies, 65% believed that benefits are important for attracting and retaining employees. Some of the most popular perks included parking, personal development training, sports activities, entertainment and product discounts, and free food and drink. Benefits exist because they supplement employees' salaries and influence them to work more^[18].

Based on social exchange theory^[19], the quality of the exchange between management and employees is associated with higher levels of trust between them. This explains why it is important for management to show concern and respect for employees by providing a fun workplace and enjoyable activities. The positive interactions of management and employees with each other create a level of trust^[20].

Past studies show that well-being activities have a positive effect on a variety of organizational outcomes. In a study conducted on the subject, well-being in the workplace had a positive effect on the creativity and innovation of employees, work performance and organizational commitment^[21]. Another study showed that the effects of fun in the workplace on job satisfaction depend on how employees experience well-being practices implemented in the workplace^[1]. Employees are more satisfied when they enjoy their work tasks and when they work in a fun environment. Thus, fun may change the effect of how the workplace relates to employees' trust in management and their job satisfaction^[21].

Additionally, well-being may be of strategic importance to employee retention and productivity. In one respect, well-being may promote camaraderie and the development of cohesive working relationships among employees. Furthermore, fun may motivate employees to work to their full potential by making work more enjoyable, reducing stress, and directing employees to achieve their performance goals^[22].

One of the interesting models in this context is the “play hard, work hard” conceptual model of fun in the workplace. This model examined the positive effect of work engagement. Fun in the workplace within the corporate culture created positive job satisfaction. A fun environment motivated employees to perform their job^[23]. Also, a fun culture shared by employees engaged in it is one of the characteristics of a work environment that fosters a positive atmosphere^[23] and job satisfaction^[24]. In addition, Karl et al.^[1] found that fun in the workplace is positively related to employee commitment, civic behavior and job satisfaction. Also, studies show that employees who experience a high level of fun at work provide better customer service and even increase their work performance^[1,10].

The concept of experiential fun is the individual's perception of the existence of fun in the workplace. Employees who enjoy a high level of fun in the workplace may help other employees develop trust in

management and ultimately experience job satisfaction^[1]. The more fun employees experience in the workplace, the more likely they are to engage in additional enjoyable activities. Employees will remember the pleasant experience of having fun at work, which may lead to higher trust in management and job satisfaction. In other words, a high level of fun in the workplace allows employees to recognize the importance of the workplace to increase their job satisfaction.

Many companies emphasize their social activities, free food and the relaxed and comfortable work environment. The main idea is to give every single employee a feeling of closeness, marketing the company's benefits is the way the company proves to the employee that he is like family. A key reason for creating these experiences is that organizations want to build a sense of community to increase loyalty within the group and retain valuable employees^[25].

Regarding the topic of benefits, Greenberg^[26] hypothesized that offices are status symbols that reflect the position of the employee within it. For example, a coveted corner office with windows is more desirable and coordinated with higher status employees. These researchers transferred employees to offices of higher, equal, or lower status compared to their individual position in their company. The results found that higher status workers were more productive than the control group while workers transferred to lower status offices were less productive than the control group^[27].

In accordance with the above, we hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between welfare activities and employee engagement.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The research used a convenience sampling method. The research participants were 91 employees in various hi-tech companies in Israel. There were 47 women (Mean age = 33.28, SD = 7.5) and 44 men (Mean age = 33.29, SD = 7.5) in the study. The general average age in the study was 33.28. Regarding tenure, 14 individuals had worked for the company for less than a year, 39 had been there for one to two years, 25 had been there for two to four years, and 13 had been there for more than four years. Of the participants, 65 possess a bachelor's degree, while 25 have a master's degree.

3.2. Research process

The research was done by using the connections of the research editors in a variety of high-tech companies in Israel. The research questionnaires were distributed in a Facebook group of HR managers in high-tech companies. The human resources managers in the Facebook group received a promise to maintain absolute confidentiality, anonymity of the participants and sharing of the research results.

3.3. Research instruments

Our research tool consists of two questionnaires - the satisfaction questionnaire (MSQ-SF; Weiss et al.^[28]) and the welfare activities questionnaire in the organization. The satisfaction questionnaire in the abbreviated version (MSQ-SF; Weiss et al.^[28]), which consists of 20 items designed to assess job satisfaction from various aspects such as: promotion opportunities, salary, sense of achievement, etc. The subjects are required to rate on a Likert scale between 1 ("not satisfied at all") and 6 ("satisfied to a great extent") their level of satisfaction with the various aspects of their work, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of job satisfaction. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 20 examine the intrinsic satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.84-0.91$), an example item: "To what extent are you satisfied with the opportunity to do something that allows use in your abilities". Items 5, 6, 12,

13, 14, 19 examine extrinsic satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.77-0.82$), an example item: “To what extent are you satisfied with your salary in relation to the work you perform”. In addition, items 1–20 as a rule examine general satisfaction as one part ($\alpha = 0.87-0.92$).

The Well-being Questionnaire consisted of 15 items designed to examine the level of existence and impact of welfare activities in organizations. The subjects were required to rate on a Likert scale between 1 (“do not agree at all”) and 6 (“agree to a great extent”) their level of agreement with the statements that positively describe the existence and impact of welfare activities in their organization, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of positive impact and existence at a high level of welfare activities. Items 1–15 as a rule examine the level of existence and impact of welfare activities in organizations, an example item: “At my place of work there are activities that are not specifically related to the position they perform.” Reliability testing was done by Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.903$).

4. Results

The descriptive statistics are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Mean	SD
Well-being	3.65	0.88
Job satisfaction	4.55	0.72

A simple regression was conducted to examine the results. The regression analysis shows that satisfaction can be explained based on the variable welfare activities in the organization. $F = 42.84 (1.89) p < 0.001$. The welfare activities variable in the organization explained 32.4% of the satisfaction variable (R^2).

In addition, the results of the study were used to build a predictive model of what aspects of welfare activities best predict job satisfaction. First, it is worth noting that all the correlations of the welfare questionnaire items with job satisfaction were significant apart from one item: “welfare activities have more value than financial incentive”, an interesting finding in itself.

Using of hierarchical regression (Stepwise method), we offer an optimal model for job satisfaction through well-being:

According to the model, the three items that ideally predict job satisfaction were:

- 1) At my workplace they understand the importance of welfare activities ($t = 3.425, p < 0.001$).
- 2) My workplace advocates a policy that supports and encourages fun in the workplace ($t = 2.735, p < 0.001$).
- 3) My workplace does activities of a cheerful and humorous nature for pleasure purposes ($t = 2.141, p < 0.001$).

5. Discussion

This study examined the effect of well-being activities in the high-tech market on one of the most important elements in the workplace, job satisfaction. The results of our study confirmed the research hypothesis, that there is a correlation between the existence of well-being activities in the organization and job satisfaction. In addition, we located the variables that optimally predicted the relationship between well-being policy and job satisfaction.

The field of well-being in the Israeli high-tech market occupies a significant part in the day-to-day conduct and organizational culture of high-tech companies in Israel. Since this field is developing only in recent years, there are not many studies on the subject, in general and in the Israeli high-tech market in particular. This study reinforces past studies^[14,21] that examined the relationship between pleasure activities and fun in the workplace and indicators such as satisfaction and illustrates that this relationship also exists in the Israeli high-tech market.

5.1. Research limitations

One of the main limitations we faced in this study is the difference between the perception of the well-being field between Israel and the United States, where there is a large and established high-tech market. This difference was mainly expressed in research and theoretical grounding on the subject since the concepts in Israel well-being (which is called welfare) is very different from the concept of welfare in the American market. In the United States, the concept of welfare includes many topics such as pension funds, workers' rights, etc. On the other hand, in Israel, the concept of well-being in the field of work is treated in a different way, mainly to the fun activities and in addition benefits of various kinds.

Another limitation we faced during the research is that our research topic is niche in relation to the overall labor market. In the different markets that exist in the labor market, there is a different reference to the field of well-being activities at work. In the high-tech market specifically, more emphasis is placed on these activities and more resources are invested in them, which makes the research more relevant to this sector. On the other hand, in different markets there may be different results depending on the attitude towards the field of well-being activities.

In addition, since there are no valid research tools on the subject, we used a research tool that examines well-being activity that is new, and we do not have a sufficient basis for content or structure validity. The reliability of the questionnaire was also tested using Cronbach's alpha internal consistency index which was very high.

5.2. Recommendations

According to the results of our research, in our opinion, there are many ways to raise the level of job satisfaction using various well-being activities in the organization. First, we saw that the factors that most predict job satisfaction are the organizational understanding of the importance and centrality of this issue, meaning that it is something on the organizational agenda that must be considered and planned for. In this context, not surprisingly, the second factor that predicts organizational satisfaction is the creation of policies and work plans around the issue of well-being. Well-being activity should be well planned, and it is important that the person or the team that leads the field of well-being activities in the organization will be well acquainted with the employees in the organization, their needs, and the existing dynamics in the organization.

Through an in-depth acquaintance with the organization's population, the types of well-being activities in the organization can be adjusted more accurately and correctly, for example: in an organization with a younger population, it is possible to hold events in the style of theme parties that include alcohol, music and dancing, activities that the younger population usually likes more.

It should be remembered that the field of well-being activities consists of various factors such as benefits, events and fun in the workplace. Organizations can divide their resources among the various factors and examine what their employees enjoy more and what they connect with more, for example: in some companies a fitness benefit will be very relevant, and the employees will take advantage of it, and in other companies the employees would prefer to hold more social events than receive personal perks. It is important that the team

that manages the field of well-being activities monitor and measure job satisfaction with well-being activities in the organization and know how to adjust the activities according to their needs.

Another element we identified as a predictor of job satisfaction is the issue of using activities of a humorous nature or that create a light and fun atmosphere. This finding is consistent with past findings that found a relationship between the use of humor and job satisfaction^[29], performance^[30] and reduced burnout^[31]. In this context, we recommend creating well-being experiences that emphasize a light and fun atmosphere in the workplace.

5.3. Future research

Our recommendation is to carry out additional studies focused on the Israeli organizational culture and an in-depth examination of the types of benefits that increase the level of job satisfaction compared to other benefits. We believe that an in-depth understanding of the impact of certain benefits may help organizations to conduct themselves in a focused and efficient manner in order to increase job satisfaction and give a higher value to this field characterized by considerable budgets when the organizations strive to truly enhance job satisfaction. In this context, we recommend examining the effectiveness of well-being activities according to different populations (with an emphasis on age, gender, seniority, education).

In addition, we recommend expanding the research related to creating humor in the workplace, identifying practices that produce humor in the workplace and a fun atmosphere that produces positive aspects such as employee commitment, employee engagement, organizational belonging and of course job satisfaction. We believe that this can be a central feature of the corporate culture of any company and be a safeguarding factor for organizations.

In conclusion, we recommend creating a uniform, reliable, valid research tool that examines the field of well-being activities in the organization in order to create a uniform and equal picture of the situation among all the organizations and the various markets. It is also possible to carry out additional studies focusing on different labor markets in Israel, for example the retail market, and investigate whether there is a similar effect between the variables.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, YS, YZ and CR; methodology, YS, YZ and CR; formal analysis, YS; data curation, YZ and CR; writing—original draft preparation, YS, YZ and CR; writing—review and editing, YS; supervision, YS; project administration, YZ and CR. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Karl KA, Peluchette JV, Harland L. Is fun for everyone? Personality differences in healthcare providers' attitudes toward fun. *Journal of Health & Human Services Administration* 2007; 29(4): 409–447.
2. Chan SCH. Participative leadership and job satisfaction. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 2019; 40(3): 319–333. doi: 10.1108/loj-06-2018-0215
3. Robins PS, Judge AT. *Organizational Behavioral*, 15th ed. Pearson; 2013.
4. Zhu Y. A review of job satisfaction. *Asian Social Science* 2012; 9(1). doi: 10.5539/ass.v9n1p293
5. Hoppock R. *Job Satisfaction*. Harper and Row; 1935.
6. Vroom VH. *Work and Motivation*. Wiley; 1964.

7. Moorman RH. The influence of cognitive and affective based job satisfaction measures on the relationship between satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior. *Human Relations* 1993; 46(6): 759–776. doi: 10.1177/001872679304600604
8. Andersson F, Freedman M, Haltiwanger J, et al. Reaching for the stars: Who pays for talent in innovative industries? *The Economic Journal* 2009; 119(538): F308–F332. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0297.2009.02277.x
9. Ford RC, McLaughlin FS, Newstrom JW. Questions and answers about fun at work. *Human Resource Planning* 2003; 26(4): 18–33.
10. Michel JW, Tews MJ, Allen DG. Fun in the workplace: A review and expanded theoretical perspective. *Human Resource Management Review* 2019; 29(1): 98–110. doi: 10.1016/j.hrmmr.2018.03.001
11. Plester B. Healthy humour: Using humour to cope at work. *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* 2009; 4(1): 89–102. doi: 10.1080/1177083x.2009.9522446
12. Fluegge ER. *Who Put the Fun in Functional? Fun at Work and Its Effects on Job Performance* [PhD thesis]. University of Florida; 2008.
13. Plester B, Hutchison A. Fun times: the relationship between fun and workplace engagement. *Employee Relations* 2016; 38(3): 332–350. doi: 10.1108/er-03-2014-0027
14. Soni K, Chawla R, Sengar R. Relationship between job satisfaction and employee experience. *Journal of General Management Research* 2017; 4(2): 41–48.
15. Marino AM, Zábojník J. Work-related perks, agency problems, and optimal incentive contracts. *The RAND Journal of Economics* 2008; 39(2): 565–585. doi: 10.1111/j.0741-6261.2008.00028.x
16. Cheng LTW, Chan RYK, Leung TY. Impact of perk expenditures and marketing expenditures on corporate performance in China: The moderating role of political connections. *Journal of Business Research* 2018; 86: 83–95. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.01.046
17. Ye X, Tambe P. Why do high-tech firms offer perks at work? Available online: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2015/proceedings/EconofIS/13/> (accessed on 18 August 2022).
18. Kuntze R, Matulich E. Google: Searching for value. *Journal of Case Research in Business and Economics* 2010; 2: 1–10.
19. Blau PM. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. Wiley; 1964.
20. Cohen A. Antecedents of organizational commitment across occupational groups: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 1992; 13(6): 539–558. doi: 10.1002/job.4030130602
21. Chan SCH, Mak W ming. Have you experienced fun in the workplace? *Journal of Chinese Human Resource Management* 2016; 7(1): 27–38. doi: 10.1108/jchrm-03-2016-0002
22. Tews MJ, Michel JW, Allen DG. Fun and friends: The impact of workplace fun and constituent attachment on turnover in a hospitality context. *Human Relations* 2014; 67(8): 923–946. doi: 10.1177/0018726713508143
23. Fluegge-Woolf ER. Play hard, work hard. *Management Research Review* 2014; 37(8): 682–705. doi: 10.1108/mrr-11-2012-0252
24. Newstrom JW. Making work fun: An important role for managers. *SAM Advanced Management Journal* 2002; 67(1): 4–10.
25. Sun KK. *The Power of Perks: Equity Theory and Job Satisfaction in Silicon Valley* [Bachelor's thesis]. Scripps College; 2016.
26. Greenberg J. Equity and workplace status: A field experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 1988; 73(4): 606–613. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.73.4.606
27. Berg PO, Kreiner K. Corporate architecture: Turning physical settings into symbolic resources. In: Gagliardi P (editor). *Symbols and Artifacts*. Routledge; 2017. pp. 41–67. doi: 10.4324/9781315130538-2
28. Weiss D, Dawis RV, England GW, Lofquist LH. Minnesota satisfaction questionnaire--Long form. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1037/t05540-000> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
29. Robert C, Dunne TC, Iun J. The impact of leader humor on subordinate job satisfaction. *Group & Organization Management* 2015; 41(3): 375–406. doi: 10.1177/1059601115598719
30. Abidi SFB. *Impact of Workplace Fun on Project Task Performance with The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement and Moderating Role of Positive Humor* [Master's thesis]. Capital University; 2020.
31. Wang CC, Godecker A, Rose SL. Adaptive and maladaptive humor styles are closely associated with burnout and professional fulfillment in members of the society of gynecologic oncology. *Gynecologic Oncology Reports* 2022; 42: 101020. doi: 10.1016/j.gore.2022.101020