



Hope as a Mediator between Gratitude and Happiness at Work in Creative Industry Employees Yogyakarta City

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to prove the effect of gratitude on happiness at work in the hope that it can be a mediator for creative industry employees.

Methodology – This type of research is quantitative ex post facto. The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. The sample criteria are female or male, aged 18 - 28 years, and have worked for 1 year in the creative industry. The number of samples in this study was 384 employees. The scales used in the study were the gratitude scale, The Adult Dispositional Hope Scale, and the Happiness At Work Scale.

Findings – The results of this study suggest that gratitude affects happiness at work with hope as a mediator with a significance of 0.790 (> 0.05), which means the results of this study are fully mediated.

Originality – Gratitude as a positive emotion allows employees to see the positive side of life and work, strengthening expectations for achieving future goals and success. The hope that arises from this gratitude plays an important role in increasing motivation, perseverance, and happiness at work.

1. Introduction

Business progress in the current era of globalization requires every individual to be more innovative and creative in business development (Rofa et al., 2021). Moreover, in this increasingly advanced era, many businesses and enterprises are developing among young people. The young generation is a productive resource that, with its creative ideas, can open a business that can help the government reduce the unemployment rate during productive working times (Sunarta, 2023). With the advancement of technology, various businesses developed by today's young people can grow rapidly from Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to developing into a large creative industry company; especially in the fashion retail sector. Currently, the fashion world in Indonesia is very developed, especially because of the modernization factor that greatly influences

the fashion world, among young people it is usually called a distro (distribution store) (Fardiana Putri et al., 2022).

According to Krišukėnienė and Pilinkienė (2023) Creative industries are generally defined as industries that focus on the creation and exploitation of intellectual property works, such as art, advertising, music, and computer services. Creative industries play an important role in economic growth (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2022). Employees in the creative industry are usually required to be creative and innovative (Hernaes et al., 2024). Working hours for employees generally have 8 hours of work per day, but creative industry employees have more flexible working hours (Aura & Desiana, 2023). But it cannot be denied that jobs that have flexible hours make employees work at uncertain times (Bonello & Wanggren, 2023). Employees in the creative industry are not only young and single, but some are married. For single employees, they have a passion for work so they can spend their time working all the time because they love their work and are happy in doing their work (Wong & Chow, 2020).

Employees who are happy with their work will make themselves develop and the company will receive positive impacts such as increased employee performance, good work results, and even increased productivity (Bataineh, 2019). However, the facts in the field are that there are still many employees who are unhappy with their jobs, a Gallup survey found that in 2022 there were 44% and in 2023 it increased to 67% of workers in the world experiencing high levels of stress. This situation shows significant challenges in efforts to maintain mental well-being and happiness in the workplace, especially in the post-pandemic recovery period which brings many changes in work patterns (Joshnloo, 2023). In Indonesia, a 2020 JobStreet survey found that only 38% of workers were happy, a sharp drop from 89% before the pandemic. Another survey revealed that around 33% of Indonesian workers were unhappy with their working conditions, affected by work-from-home policies and economic fluctuations. Factors such as salary cuts, the elimination of bonuses, and stagnation in career advancement are the main causes of employee dissatisfaction in Indonesia (Hafid, 2020). Researchers also conducted initial data by distributing questionnaires online via Google Form to 70 employees in Yogyakarta on June 20, 2024 to see the happiness of creative industry employees, it was found that 70% of employees were not happy with the burden of tasks given, 68% of employees did not enjoy their current jobs, and 65% of employees did not like their work environment. It can be concluded that there are still many employees who often experience various problems, one of which is being unhappy at work.

Happiness in the work environment is a positive state felt by an individual all the time, where the individual has an understanding, and ability to manage and influence his work environment so that it can improve performance and provide satisfaction in the work (Charles-Leija et al., 2023; James et al., 2020). Based on the previous context, happiness in the work environment is a situation of positive emotions and positive experiences that are subjectively felt by individuals when assessing whether they feel happy or not in carrying out work activities (Cahyaningtyas et al., 2020). Job happiness is the positive feelings and satisfaction experienced by individuals regarding their work. This happiness involves the emotional, cognitive, and evaluative aspects of the work experience, including how a person perceives meaning, satisfaction, and well-being in their work environment (Salas-Vallina et al., 2018). Happiness at work can be influenced by several factors including gratitude and hope (Bellamkonda & Pattusamy, 2024; Dinanti & Mangundjaya, 2023).

Gratitude is a feeling of appreciation and respect for something that has been received, whether in the form of material things, support, experiences, or small positive things in life (Locklear et al., 2023). Gratitude is an emotion that arises when someone realizes that there is help or benefit coming from others. Gratitude is seen as a form of emotional response that makes someone feel connected and bound to the person who gave the help (Niemic & McGrath, 2019).

Gratitude is an attitude that reflects an appreciation for life, where individuals focus on positive aspects and feel satisfied with their life experiences (Tang et al., 2022). Gratitude can also be considered as an attitude that can be cultivated and developed, which has been shown to have various psychological benefits, such as increasing happiness, reducing stress, and strengthening social relationships (Diniz et al., 2023).

Gratitude influences employee happiness. When employees are grateful, they tend to focus more on the positive things in their lives rather than the shortcomings or problems they face. In line with the research Watkins et al. (2020) The results showed that the group that focused on gratitude reported higher levels of happiness and experienced fewer negative physical symptoms than the other groups. Then the study Loi and Ng (2021) The results of the study showed a positive influence between gratitude and happiness in those who were working part-time. Then the study Hameed and Khwaja (2023) The study found that gratitude plays a role in strengthening social relationships in the workplace. Gratitude can help employees build better relationships with coworkers, increasing feelings of mutual respect and support between teams. These good social relationships contribute to employee well-being and happiness, as they create a positive work environment (Alshurideh et al., 2023). Gratitude also has an influence on employee expectations. This is in line with Salsabila and Asyanti (2024) Research shows that gratitude has a positive effect on employee hope. Gratitude, which involves recognizing and appreciating positive experiences or support received, can strengthen hope by increasing employees' positive outlook on the future (Witvliet et al., 2019).

Hope also plays a role in shaping the happy emotions that exist in employees (Wang et al., 2024). According to Niemiec and McGrath (2019) Hope is energy that is focused on effort, involving drive, desire to act, and belief in the possibility of achieving goals. In addition, it also believes that there are various effective strategies to achieve desired goals. Hope is a driving force in life and people with high hope maintain a challenging and positive psychological state that focuses on success rather than failure (Chernyak-Hai et al., 2024). Hope is an employee's positive belief or expectation of the future in the context of their work, including career development, goal achievement, and fulfillment of personal and professional needs (Lee & Kim, 2023). This expectation includes optimism that the efforts made will produce satisfactory results, as well as the belief that the organization supports growth and success (Hirschi et al., 2015).

Hope encourages employees to face challenges with a more positive attitude, thus making employees happy in the work environment. This is in line with research Julianto et al. (2020) The results of the study showed that hope has an influence on the level of happiness. This means that a person's happiness will be high if he has high hopes. Then the study Witvliet et al. (2019) It was found that the research results showed that employees with high levels of hope tend to have clearer goals, which makes employees more motivated and happy in achieving work targets. Then the research Satıcı et al. (2023) Hope can improve performance through its effects on attitudes and well-being. When employees feel that hopes can be realized (e.g. hopes of promotion or self-development) it has an impact on employee happiness.

Hope can act as a mediator between gratitude and happiness in the workplace. Hope that is strengthened by gratitude helps employees become more resilient when facing work-related challenges and contributes to a greater sense of happiness (Bellamkonda & Pattusamy, 2024; Eckhaus, 2021). Based on expectancy theory developed by Victor Vroom, individual expectations regarding work outcomes influence employee motivation and happiness. Gratitude in the workplace encourages hope by reinforcing the belief that effort will lead to rewards or satisfaction, which ultimately enhances happiness at work (Talwar et al., 2021).

In line with Eckhaus (2021), employees who experience higher levels of gratitude tend to have higher expectations regarding their work outcomes. These positive expectations arising from gratitude play an important role in increasing happiness at work. Employees with strong expectations are generally more motivated, better able to overcome challenges, and more satisfied with their work, which supports their overall well-being in the workplace. The research framework of this study is presented in Figure 1.

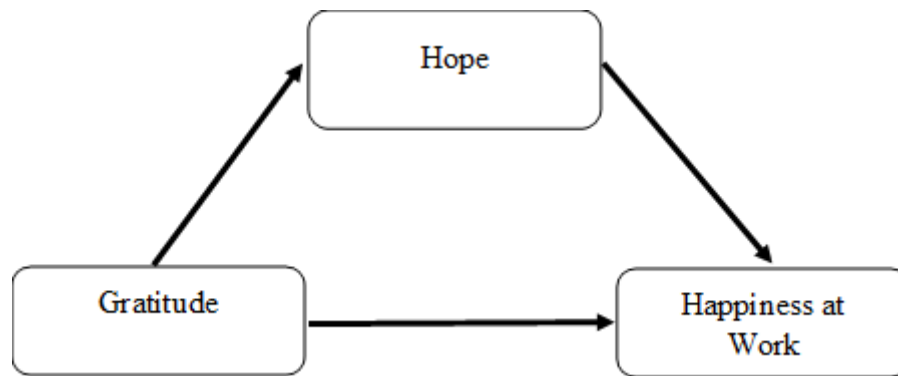


Figure 1. Research Flow

Various studies have examined happiness at work, and several workplace phenomena related to employee well-being have been explored by previous researchers. However, limited research has specifically examined happiness at work as influenced by gratitude with hope as a mediating variable among creative industry employees. Considering the rapid growth of the creative industry and its increasing demand for employees, this study is motivated to investigate the effect of gratitude on happiness at work with hope as a mediating variable.

2. Research Methods

This research is quantitative research with an ex post facto design. Ex post facto research is a research method used to identify or trace the factors or reasons behind events that have already occurred in the research subjects (Aristana et al., 2023; Goodman-Scott et al., 2022). This study involves three variables, namely gratitude as the independent variable, happiness at work as the dependent variable, and hope as the mediating variable. The research subjects were employees working in the creative industry. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involves selecting samples based on specific criteria. The sample criteria included male or female employees aged 18–28 years who had worked in the creative industry for at least one year. The sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula with a 5% error rate, as the population size was unknown or infinite, resulting in a total of 384 employees.

The researchers used three scales that had been adapted into Indonesian. Gratitude was measured using the Gratitude Scale developed by Listiyandini et al. (2020) based on the theory of Watkins et al. (2003). This scale consists of 30 items covering three aspects: 10 items measuring a sense of appreciation, 10 items measuring positive feelings toward one's life, and 10 items measuring the tendency to act positively as an expression of positive feelings and appreciation. The validity indices of this scale were CFI = 0.95, IFI = 0.95, and RMSEA = 0.056, with a reliability coefficient of 0.870. Hope was measured using the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale adapted by Novrianto and Menaldi (2022), based on Snyder's theory (2002). This scale consists of 12 items comprising three aspects: four items measuring goals, four items measuring pathway thinking and agency thinking, and four filler items. The validity indices of this scale were CFI = 0.953, AIC = 4936.888, and SRMR = 0.056, with a reliability coefficient of 0.831. Happiness at

work was measured using the Happiness at Work Scale adapted by Wulandri and Coal (2023), based on Fisher's theory (2010). This scale consists of 12 items covering three aspects: emotional well-being, cognitive well-being, and social well-being in the workplace, with four items for each aspect. The validity indices were CFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.95, IFI = 0.97, and SRMR = 0.067, with a reliability coefficient of 0.820. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

Descriptive analysis and prerequisite tests were conducted using SPSS version 25 to determine the number of respondents and to perform normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. Inferential analysis was also conducted using SPSS version 25 with a mediation analysis technique employing the PROCESS macro version 4.2 by Hayes (Model 4) to examine the relationships among variables and to test the mediating role of hope in the relationship between gratitude and happiness at work.

3. Results and Discussions

The study was conducted in Yogyakarta City with a total of 384 students as the research subjects. These students were selected based on predetermined criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The table provides a general overview of the distribution of respondents based on gender, age, and length of service. This information is used to describe the profile of the research sample.

Table 1. Subject Demographic Data

Demographic Data	N (384)	Percentage
Gender		
Man	226	58.9%
Woman	158	41.1%
Age		
18 years	14	3.6%
19 years old	24	6.2%
20 years	30	7.8%
21 years	6	1.6%
22 years	1	0.3%
23 years	172	44.8%
24 years old	24	6.3%
25 years	11	2.9%
26 Years	24	6.3%
27 Years	62	16%
28 Years	16	4.2%
Length of work		
1 year	62	16.1%
2 years	219	57%
3 years	103	26.8%

Source: processed data

Based on Table 1, there were 226 male employees (58.9%) and 158 female employees (41.1%). In terms of age, the youngest respondents were 22 years old, with one employee (0.3%), while the majority were 23 years old, accounting for 44.8%. Regarding length of service, 62 employees (16.1%) had worked for one year, and most respondents, 219 employees (57.0%), had worked for two years. Furthermore, the results of the normality test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

	Z	Significance (P)	Information
Gratitude	2.251	0.549	Normal
Hope	1.297	0.069	Normal
Happiness At Work	1,024	0.246	Normal

Source: processed data

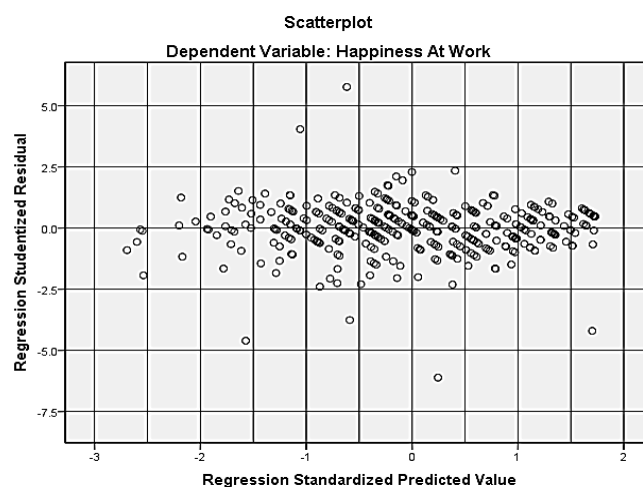
In Table 2, the results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test show that the gratitude variable has a value of 2.251 with a significance value of 0.549 ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the data are normally distributed. The hope variable has a value of 1.297 with a significance value of 0.069 ($p > 0.05$), which also indicates a normal distribution. In addition, happiness at work has a value of 1.024 with a significance value of 0.246 ($p > 0.05$), meaning that the data are normally distributed as well. Furthermore, the results of the multicollinearity test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test Results

	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Gratitude	0.972	1,029
Hope	0.972	1,029

Source: processed data

In Table 3, the multicollinearity test shows that the tolerance value for gratitude is 0.972 (> 0.10) and the VIF value is 1.029 (< 10). Similarly, the tolerance value for hope is 0.972 (> 0.10) and the VIF value is 1.029 (< 10). These results indicate that there are no symptoms of multicollinearity in the regression model. This study also conducted a heteroscedasticity test to examine whether there was inconsistency in the variance of residuals across observations in the regression model. Heteroscedasticity was identified using a scatterplot, where randomly distributed points around zero on the Y-axis indicate that the model does not exhibit heteroscedasticity.

**Figure 2.** Results of Heteroscedasticity Test with Scatterplot

In Figure 2, it can be seen that the scatter plot shows points spread randomly without a clear pattern around the diagonal line. Although the points vary above and below zero on the Y-axis, there are no visible signs of heteroscedasticity. Therefore, the regression model can be trusted to predict happiness at work based on gratitude and hope. Furthermore, a simple regression test can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Simple Regression Test

Path in the Mediation Process	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Gratitude to Hope	0.0529	0.0158	3.3381	0.0009	0.1684	0.0283
Hope for Happiness at Work	0.8690	0.0165	52.7054	0.0000	0.592	0.350
Gratitude to Happiness at Work	0.0602	0.0147	4.1019	0.0001	0.2054	0.0422

Source: processed data

In Table 5, the results show that path a indicates that gratitude affects hope with a coefficient value of 0.0529 and a significance value of 0.0009 ($p < 0.05$), explaining 28.3% of the variance in hope. Path b shows that hope affects happiness at work with a coefficient value of 0.8690 and a significance value of 0.0000 ($p < 0.05$), accounting for 35.0% of the variance in happiness at work. Furthermore, the direct path shows that gratitude affects happiness at work with a coefficient value of 0.0602 and a significance value of 0.0001 ($p < 0.05$), explaining 42.2% of the variance in happiness at work. The results of the regression analysis for the mediation model using the PROCESS Macro version 4.2 by Hayes are also presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Mediation Model Regression Test

Effect	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Indirect Effect	0.0459		0.0183	0.0754
Direct Effect	0.0143	0.0790	0.0041	0.0244
Total Effect	0.0602	0.0001	0.0313	0.0890

Source: processed data

In Table 5, the results of the mediation test indicate that there is no direct effect in the mediation model. This can be seen from the LLCI value, which is below 0 at 0.0041, with a significance value of 0.0790. These results suggest that the direct relationship between gratitude and happiness at work is not statistically significant when hope is included in the model. More detailed results are presented in Figure 3.

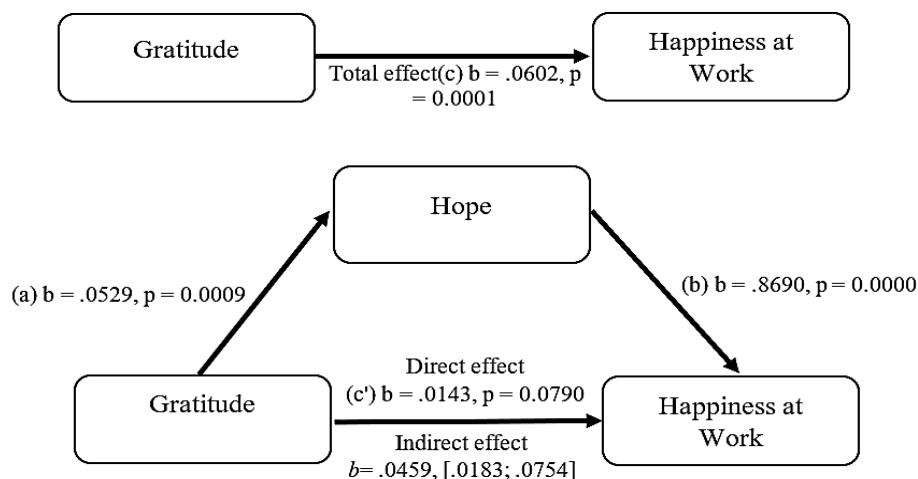


Figure 3. Mediation Analysis Chart of Hope Variable

Furthermore, the results show a significant indirect effect through the mediating variable, with an effect value of 0.0459. This indirect effect is considered significant because the LLCI and ULCI values exceed 0, namely 0.0313 and 0.0890, respectively. These findings indicate that gratitude influences happiness at work through hope as a mediator, leading to the conclusion that full mediation occurs in this relationship based on the mediation concept proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986).

3.1. Discussions

Based on the research results, there is an influence of gratitude on employee expectations. Gratitude as a form of positive emotion can improve employee psychological well-being which in turn strengthens employee expectations of achieving goals and success in work. This is in line with the research Salsabila and Asyanti (2024) The results show that gratitude has a positive effect on employee hope. Gratitude, which involves recognizing and appreciating positive experiences or support received, can strengthen hope by increasing employees' positive outlook on the future (Witvliet et al., 2019). Then the research Murniasih and Cebba (2024) The results show that gratitude has a positive effect on employee expectations. Gratitude felt by employees can increase positive feelings, strengthen optimism, and broaden employee perceptions of the possibility of success in the workplace. By understanding positive things, employees can set realistic goals and hope for a better future. Gratitude can increase happiness and hope because it shifts the individual's focus to the positive aspects of the employee's life, which has implications for increasing expectations and productivity in the workplace (Watkins et al., 2020).

Furthermore, expectations affect employee happiness at work. High expectations can motivate employees to achieve goals and deal with challenges in the workplace more positively, which in turn increases employee happiness at work. This is in line with the research Julianto et al. (2020) The results of the study showed that hope influences the level of happiness. This means that a person's happiness will be high if he has high hopes. Then the study Witvliet et al. (2019) It was found that the research results showed that employees with high levels of hope tend to have clearer goals, which makes employees more motivated and happy in achieving work targets. Then the research Satıcı et al. (2023) Hope can improve performance through its effects on attitudes and well-being. When employees feel that hope can be realized (e.g. hope for promotion or self-development) it has an impact on employee happiness. Last research Watkins et al. (2020) shows that employees who have strong expectations tend to be happier at work because employees feel more in control of the situation and believe that efforts will produce the desired results. High expectations affect employee perceptions of work, increase a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, and encourage employees to remain positive in the face of work pressure. Therefore, expectations not only affect performance, but also play an important role in creating happiness in the workplace (Junjuran, 2023).

Then gratitude affects happiness at work. Employees who regularly feel and express gratitude tend to have higher levels of happiness at work. Gratitude can strengthen social relationships among coworkers, increase job satisfaction, and promote positive perceptions of the work environment (Niemic & McGrath, 2019). This is in line with research Watkins et al. (2020) The results showed that the group that focused on gratitude reported higher levels of happiness and experienced fewer negative physical symptoms than the other groups. Then the study Loi and Ng (2021) The results of the study showed a positive influence between gratitude and happiness in those who were working part-time. Then the study Hameed and Khwaja (2023) The study found that gratitude plays a role in strengthening social relationships in the workplace. Gratitude can help employees build better relationships with coworkers, increasing feelings of mutual respect and

support between teams. These good social relationships contribute to employee well-being and happiness, as they create a positive work environment (Alshurideh et al., 2023). In addition, research by Seligman (2001) In positive psychology theory, gratitude can improve general well-being because it leads to a focus on the successes and enjoyment that have been achieved, rather than shortcomings or failures.

Finally, gratitude influences happiness at work with hope as a mediator. Gratitude can strengthen an individual's positive feelings towards the work environment and improve psychological well-being. When employees have gratitude towards their work, this influences an increase in employee expectations regarding goal achievement and future career development (Lupşa et al., 2020). This hope, as one of the cognitive and emotional factors, encourages individuals to have a more positive view of challenges and opportunities in work, which in turn increases employee happiness at work (Gautam & Pradhan, 2018). Based on expectancy theory, developed by Victor Vroom, it states that individual expectations of work results affect employee motivation and happiness. Gratitude in the workplace can encourage hope through the understanding that the effort given will result in rewards or satisfaction that have an impact on happiness in the workplace (Talwar et al., 2021). In line with research Eckhaus (2021) Employees who have high gratitude will have high expectations for their work. The expectations that arise from gratitude are what can then increase happiness. Employees who have high expectations tend to feel more motivated, better able to overcome challenges, and more satisfied with their work. Then the research Lam et al. (2021) shows that gratitude functions as an emotional resource that strengthens employee expectations, which then contributes to increased well-being at work, so that gratitude can strengthen expectations that function as a mediator that connects gratitude with happiness at work. These expectations strengthen a positive orientation towards work, reduce stress, and increase the level of employee satisfaction and happiness in the work environment. Therefore, gratitude contributes to increased expectations, which then strengthen happiness and well-being at work (Witvliet et al., 2019).

Theoretically, the results of this study strengthen the understanding that gratitude plays a role in increasing work happiness through hope as a mediator. The findings support positive psychology theory which emphasises that positive emotions can improve subjective well-being and individual performance, and fill a gap in the literature regarding psychological factors that influence employee well-being, especially in the creative industry which is full of work challenges and career uncertainty. From a practical perspective, companies can implement gratitude- and hope-based strategies to increase employees' work happiness, such as creating a culture of appreciation, rewarding achievements, and ensuring a work environment that supports professional growth. Leaders in the creative industry can also adopt a hope-based leadership style by providing motivation, clear direction and career development opportunities. In addition, work flexibility policies and mental wellbeing programmes can help employees manage stress and increase job satisfaction. For the general public, the findings emphasise the importance of building a habit of gratitude as a strategy to increase hope and happiness at work. As such, this research not only contributes to theory development, but also provides practical guidance for organisations and individuals in creating a more positive and productive work environment.

4. Conclusions

Based on the results of the studies that have been discussed, Gratitude as a positive emotion allows employees to see the positive side of life and work, which strengthens expectations for achieving goals and success in the future. The expectations that arise from gratitude play an important role in increasing motivation, persistence, and happiness at work. Gratitude not only

helps employees cope with work pressure but also strengthens social relationships with coworkers, creating a positive work environment. In this context, hope acts as a mediator that connects gratitude with employee happiness, facilitating the achievement of psychological well-being at work. Thus, gratitude and hope together play an important role in building employee happiness at work. To support the implementation of these findings in the workplace, organisations need to build a work culture that fosters gratitude through appreciation of employee contributions, whether in the form of formal awards such as 'Employee of the Month' or informal recognition from superiors and colleagues. Human resource management can also integrate gratitude elements in performance evaluation, promotion, and career development policies so that employees feel valued and more optimistic about their future in the company. In addition, companies can organise positive psychology-based training, such as gratitude journaling, weekly reflections, or optimism-based leadership training to increase employees' awareness of the benefits of gratitude in their work. Social support and collaboration in the workplace also need to be strengthened by creating mentoring programmes, experience sharing sessions, and corporate social activities that can strengthen relationships between employees and improve their psychological well-being. Organisational leaders also have an important role to play in implementing a hope-based leadership style by providing a clear vision, emotional support and positive encouragement for employees to achieve their goals. In addition, companies can adopt mental wellbeing programmes that include gratitude meditation, mindfulness and positive reflection sessions as stress management strategies that help employees cope better with work pressures. Work-life balance also needs to be addressed by implementing flexible work policies, such as hybrid work options, more flexible leave, and access to mental health services to improve employee well-being. Furthermore, companies need to evaluate and measure the impact of gratitude and hope-based programmes through regular surveys on job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and employee productivity, so that policies can be tailored to the real needs on the ground. Future research can deepen the understanding of the relationship between gratitude, hope, and work happiness by using an experimental approach to identify clearer cause-and-effect relationships. In addition, in-depth studies with a qualitative approach can provide insight into how employees develop gratitude and hope in the context of daily work and add other variables, such as organizational culture, social support, and stress management strategies.

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