



## Effects of a MapHR Training Program on Promoting Happiness in Private Organizations

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### Abstract

This quasi-experimental research aims to develop a training program adopting the MapHR model and evaluate its effects on the promotion of happiness in private organizations in Thailand. The sample was comprised of 175 human resources development (HRD) staff from 85 organizations. The implementation of the training program was carried out in three stages, namely preparation, training, and follow-up. The research instruments were the Happy Workplace Index checklist and a questionnaire for evaluating the creation of happiness promotion processes covering four aspects. Mean scores were significantly higher in all four happiness areas after the implementation of the program ( $p < 0.001$ ,

$p < 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and  $p < 0.01$ ). A follow-up also suggested that the participants were able to embrace the factors leading to happy workplaces, including workplace atmosphere and environments, happiness promotion processes, and physical and mental health. On the other hand, the findings on happy workplace management and organizational results show no statistically significant improvement. The support system should follow participants after the training program in order to continually improve the process and its effects promoting factors leading to personal happiness in the workplace.

**Keywords:** happy workplace, MapHR training program, private organization

## Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) has set forth its goal of promoting healthy workplaces (HWP) with the following definition: "A healthy workplace is one in which workers and the employer collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety, and well-being of workers and the sustainability of the workplace"<sup>1</sup>. The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (TPF) has supported this goal since 2007, stipulating a paradigm shift from 'healthy workplaces' to 'happy workplaces.' They have used the concept of Happy to communicate with their staff. In addition, the TPF stresses the importance of enhancing the quality of one's work life<sup>2</sup> in a supportive environment that involves friendly and positive relationships between workers, families, and society. Ultimately, this will lead to behavioral changes that sustain and promote happiness that cover physical, mental, social, and spiritual health.

Former studies have suggested several factors that can promote happiness during working hours, including organizational climate<sup>3, 4, 5</sup>, organizational environment<sup>6, 7</sup> and factors related to management systems<sup>7, 8</sup> and organizational results<sup>5, 9</sup>. Based on the results of their systematic review of the literature, Goldgruber and Ahrens go a step further, stating that workplace health promotion as

well as primary prevention and intervention should incorporate variety<sup>10</sup>. According to Egan *et al*, for instance, activities should be held to enhance behavior and healthy practices<sup>11</sup>. Marshall recommended the inclusion of educational programs that will help to promote desirable behavior and job motivation<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, social working environments were found to have important and generally beneficial effects on health<sup>13, 14</sup>. Bambra *et al* suggested that organizational level interventions may have the potential to reduce health inequalities amongst employees<sup>6</sup>.

In Thailand, researchers' work has gathered momentum in devising measures for promoting happiness in the workplace. The TPF itself has developed the Happy Workplace Index (HWI)<sup>15</sup>, an instrument for happiness assessment on the organizational level with a total of 37 items encompassing happy workplace management, atmosphere and environments within the workplace, happiness promoting processes, physical and mental health, and organizational results. All this reflects the extent to which resources are managed in order to promote happiness factors in one's working life<sup>9, 16, 17, 18</sup>.

According to a review of HRD literature, it is important to devise a program that enhances the knowledge, understanding, and skills of HRD officers and those involved in promoting happiness in the workplace. The



present study, therefore, aims to develop such a training program and evaluate its effects on the promotion of happiness in private organizations in Thailand in four areas: the creation of happy workplace visions, knowledge and understanding of the processes of assessing happiness and designing happiness promotion, leadership in happiness promotion processes, and learning and sharing abilities.

To this end, a training program for promoting happy workplaces was developed adopting the MapHR model. The model incorporates five happiness promotion factors, namely management (M), atmosphere and environments (A), process (P), health (H), and result (R), and hence its name. These five factors are considered essential for continual and sustained happiness promotion processes<sup>16</sup>.

## Methods

This study employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest and follow-up design. Purposive sampling was used to select 85 private organizations from a list of participants who completed the Happy Workplace Index data during February to November 2013, and two subjects from each organization were invited to participate in the MapHR training

program. There were 175 HRD officers from 85 organizations and participation was voluntary.

### Inclusion criteria

Two subjects from each participating organization were invited to take part in the research before being provided with an explanation of the procedures and signing a consent form. The inclusion criteria include the following: 1) Being HRD officers responsible for happiness promotion in their workplace. 2) Being able to participate throughout the program. 3) Being allowed by their supervisor to take part in the program.

The participants were tested before the implementation of the MapHR training program, trained, tested after the implementation, and followed up on. HWI data of 85 organizations was completed from the respondents who participate in the training program.

### MapHR training program

The MapHR training program involves five happiness promotion stages, namely the creation of happy workplace visions, workplace diagnosis, MapHR design, implementation, and learning and sharing, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

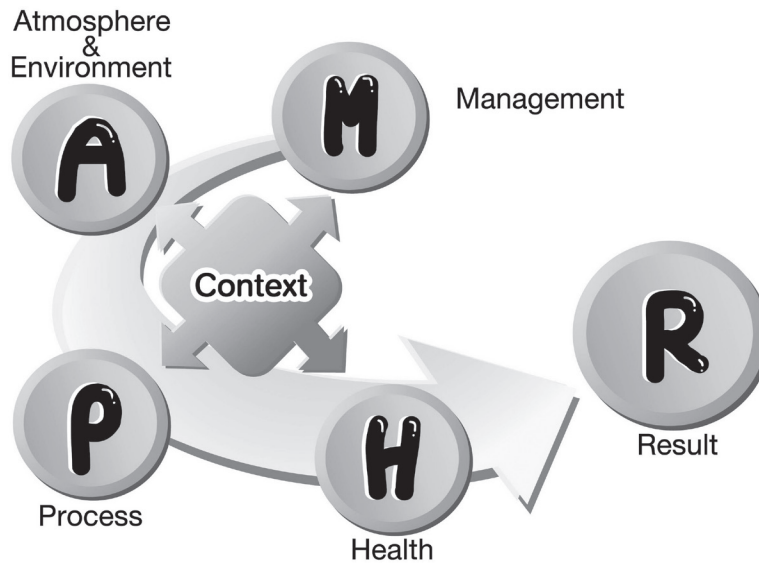


Figure 1 MapHR Model for Creating a Happy Workplace.

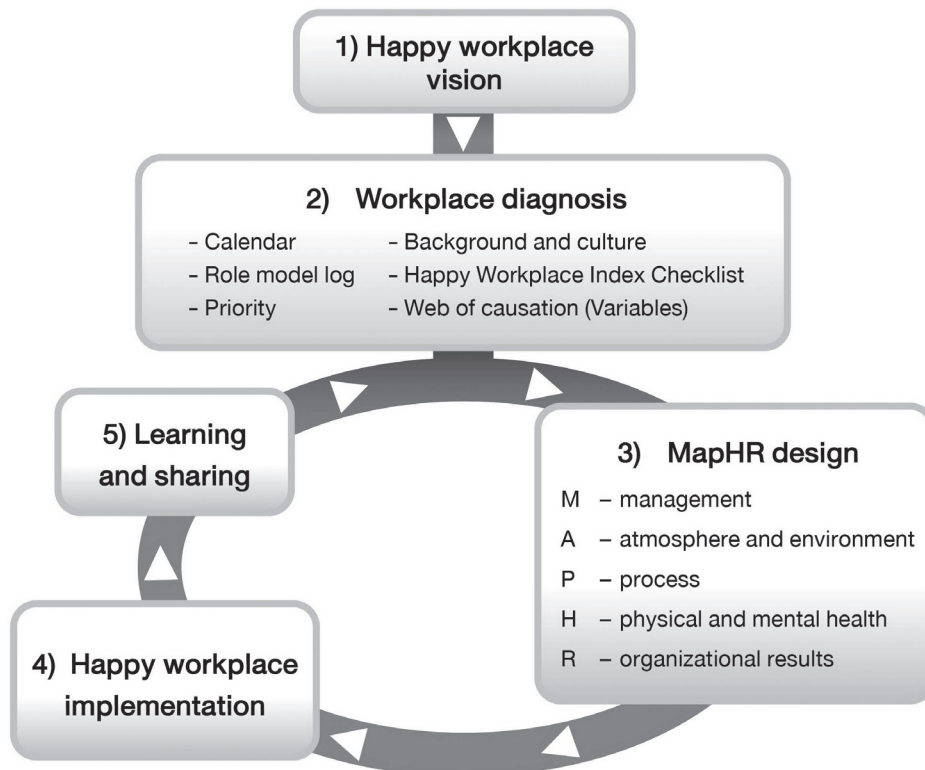


Figure 2 Creating a Happy Workplace in 5 Stages.



**Procedures**

The implementation of the training was divided into three stages: preparation, training,

and follow-up/empowerment, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Summary of the Training Procedure.

Stage	Processes and activities	Data collection
1. Preparation stage Two weeks before the training	1.1 Delivery of the preparation guideline 1.2 Self-study through the website www.happyworkplaceindex.com	1. Online completion of the Happiness Workplace Index checklist
2. Training stage Three-day training program	2.1 Creation of happy workplace visions 2.2 Workplace diagnosis 2.3 MapHR design	2. Pre- and post-training evaluation of the participants' happiness promotion potential
3. Empowerment stage At least two months after the implementation	3.1 Happy workplace implementation 3.2 Learning and sharing	3. Online completion of the Happiness Workplace Index checklist

**Preparation stage.** Two weeks prior to the commencement of the training program, the participants studied a handout with the Happy Workplace Index, recorded their assessment of the happiness level of their organization through www.happyworkplaceindex.com, the results of which were used during the training, and requested their supervisor to sign the happiness promotion declaration.

**Training stage.** The training took place over three days and two nights. The activities, revolving around the MapHR model, were as follows: 1) the promotion of happiness through atmosphere and interpersonal relationships (45 minutes), 2) the creation of happy workplace visions (one hour), 3) contemplation for happiness (two hours), 4) getting to know the Happy Workplace Index (one hour),

5) measuring happiness in the workplace (one hour, 45 minutes), 6) sharing experiences of happiness promotion in the workplace (two hours), 7) designing happiness promotion processes (three hours), 8) sharing experiences of happiness promotion processes in the workplace (three hours), and 9) reflecting on and evaluating the training (one hour, 30 minutes).

All the activities were centered on enhancing interpersonal relationships and teamwork in the process of designing a model happiness promotion project. In addition, the participants got to exercise early in the morning every day as well as make merit on the last day of the training and listen to a dharma talk on the topic of 'Promoting Happiness in the Workplace.'

**Follow-up / Empowerment stage.** Upon the completion of the training, the participants wrote a happiness promotion project plan or improvement plan for any existing happiness promotion measures, (that is, stage 4 of the MapHR training program: implementation). Two months after the training took place, participants were invited to share their experiences in a one-day seminar entitled 'Happiness Promotion in the Workplace Stage' (i.e., stage 5 of the MapHR training program: learning and sharing). The seminar was made up of the following activities: 1) presentations of happiness promotion projects in the workplace based on the MapHR model and related articles, 2) presentation of awards to the winning projects and articles, and 3) learning and sharing with the guest speakers. The training procedures are summarized in Table 1.

### Research instruments

The research instruments were as follows.

1) The MapHR training program for happy workplaces. The program was devised based on data collected through the Happy Workplace Index following the MapHR model. To ensure its responsiveness to organizational contexts and conditions in designing happiness promotion processes, the program drew upon a review of the literature and related happy workplace reports,

was validated by five happy workplace experts, and was discussed in two workshops with happiness promotion personnel from participating organizations.

2) The questionnaire for evaluating the formulation of happiness promotion processes. The questionnaire covers four areas: happy workplace creation concepts (five items on a Likert scale from lowest to highest), understanding of happiness evaluation and promotion design processes (20 items with four answer choices), leadership in happiness creation processes (five items on a Likert scale from lowest to highest), and learning and sharing abilities (five items on a Likert scale from lowest to highest). The questionnaire was developed based on a literature review before being validated by five happy workplace experts. A pilot study found a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83.

3) The Happy Workplace Index checklist<sup>9</sup>. The checklist was comprised of 37 items on a 5-point Likert scale representing five dimensions, namely happy workplace management, atmosphere and environments, happiness promotion process, physical and mental health, and organizational results. The plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle<sup>19</sup> was also adapted in the development of the checklist.

The research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee for Human Research, Faculty of Public Health,



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## Results

The majority of the individuals responsible for promoting happiness in their organizations

were male employees (56%) aged 41-45 (43.43%) with one to five years of work experience (62.86%). Over half of them were personnel or human resources development (HRD) staff (52.00%) (Table 2).

**Table 2** Demographic Characteristics of the Sample.

Demographic information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	98	56.00
Female	77	44.00
Age (Mean = 45.5, SD = 7.105)		
35-40 years	53	30.28
41-45 years	76	43.43
46-50 years	31	17.72
51-60 years	15	8.57
Work experience (Mean = 4.82, SD = 11.672)		
1-5 years	110	62.86
6-10 years	42	24.00
>10 years	23	13.14
Positions		
Personnel/HRD staff	91	52.00
Department managers/heads of division/supervisors	43	24.57
Labor relations/corporate communications/public relations officers/safety officer	41	23.43

The findings in the four happiness areas under investigation showed that the creation of happy workplace visions improved most with an average score of 16.22 and 22.83 before and after implementation of the program, respectively. This was followed by

knowledge and understanding of how to assess happiness and design happiness promotion measures (9.87 vs 14.18), and leadership in happiness promotion processes (16.02 vs. 22.09) (Table 3).

**Table 3** Happiness Promotion Potential before and after Implementation of the Program.

Happiness promotion potential	Before the implementation of the program (n = 175)				After the implementation of the program (n = 171)			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1) Creation of happy workplace visions	16.22	3.223	5.00	24.00	22.83	1.824	18.00	25.00
2) Knowledge and understanding of how to assess happiness and design happiness promotion	9.87	2.511	3.00	14.00	14.18	2.107	6.00	17.00
3) Leadership in happiness promotion processes	16.02	2.758	5.00	22.00	22.09	2.006	16.00	25.00
4) Learning and sharing abilities	16.08	3.255	5.00	20.00	21.91	2.362	15.00	25.00

Paired t-tests revealed that the improvement in the creation of happy workplace visions as well as knowledge and understanding of how to assess happiness and design happiness promotion measures were both statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ . In addition,

the subjects' learning and sharing abilities as well as leadership in happiness promotion processes improved statistically significantly, but at only  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ , respectively (Table 4).

78

**Table 4** Paired t-test Analysis of Happiness Promotion Potential before and after Implementation of the Program.

Variables	n	Mean	SD	t	df	p
1) Creation of happy workplace visions						
Before	171	16.22	3.223			
After	171	22.83	1.824	31.379	170	<0.001
2) Knowledge and understanding of how to assess happiness and design happiness promotion measures						
Before	171	9.87	2.511			
After	171	14.18	2.107	22.064	170	<0.001
3) Leadership in happiness promotion processes						
Before	171	16.02	2.758			
After	171	22.09	2.006	32.907	170	<0.05
4) Learning and sharing abilities						
Before	171	16.08	3.255			
After	171	21.91	2.362	24.854	170	<0.01



As to the results of the happiness promotion project that the participants ran for two months, where HRD and staff were scoring HWIs in their organization, it was found that the improvement in the happiness promotion factors in their workplaces were remarkably similar to the improved scores before and after the implementation of the MapHR training program. This was followed by happy workplace management (69.84 vs 70.15), atmosphere and environment (60.49 vs 62.33), happiness promotion processes

(56.67 vs 58.36), physical and mental health (52.87 vs 53.77), and organizational results (61.11 vs 61.31)

The paired t-test results indicate that the improvements in the atmosphere and environment, happiness promotion processes, as well as physical and mental health were statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and  $p < 0.05$ , respectively. However, happy workplace management and organizational results improved, but not statistically significantly (Table 5).

**Table 5** Paired t-test Analysis of Happiness Promotion Factors before and after Implementation of the Program.

Variables	n	Mean	SD	t	df	p
1) Happy workplace management						
Before	85	69.84	19.773			
After	85	70.15	18.959	0.930	84	0.355
2) Atmosphere and environment						
Before	85	60.49	18.434			
After	85	62.33	17.261	3.654	84	<0.001
3) Happiness promotion processes						
Before	85	56.67	20.654			
After	85	58.36	19.097	2.850	84	<0.010
4) Physical and mental health						
Before	85	52.87	16.402			
After	85	53.77	15.580	2.394	84	<0.050
5) Organizational results						
Before	85	61.11	20.490			
After	85	61.31	20.204	1.338	84	0.185

## **Discussion**

The MapHR training program developed for the present study is based on the assumption that efforts to create happy workplaces require 'change leaders' with an understanding of happy workplace management (M), creation of atmosphere and environment (A), happiness promotion processes (P), and the effects of happiness promotion on physical and mental health (H) as well as organizational results (R). In the present research, the change leaders were personnel development and human resources development staff from various organizations due to their training, knowledge and skills, and direct involvement in happiness promotion processes. In addition to being fast and enthusiastic learners, the participants built positive interpersonal relationships and formed effective teams within and across organizations in designing happiness promotion projects during the three-day training program. Through the administration of the Happy Workplace Index<sup>9</sup>, the findings suggest that the MapHR training program can be effective in enhancing the happiness promotion potential of personnel in four areas, namely the ability to formulate happy workplace visions, knowledge and understanding of how to assess happiness and design happiness promotion measures, leadership in happiness promotion processes, and learning and sharing abilities.

These research results are in agreement with those of previous studies concluding that management, atmosphere and environment, happiness promotion processes, physical and mental health, and organizational results are all significant factors contributing to happy workplaces. Previous studies have demonstrated a near 50% reduction in turnover rate where an organizational intervention improved workgroup climate<sup>4, 5, 6, 7</sup>. From findings in Table 5, it seems that the MapHR training program addresses HWP process design, but the mean score of P (HWP Process) showed little increase after two months of implementation. We think that most participants ran the projects while some organizations didn't start immediately. These results point to the need to develop interventions through a participatory approach<sup>20</sup> so that line managers can drive the happiness promotion process and create appropriate behaviors for their own work environment<sup>5, 8</sup>. Additionally, the findings from the Happy Workplace Index checklist lend credence to the fact that organizations with systematic approaches to creating happy workplace environments and responsive happiness promotion activities will be able to enhance physical and mental health, alleviate the problems encountered by their employees, and eventually achieve desirable outcomes<sup>7, 8</sup>. Findings confirm that it is necessary to analyze the organizational



context before starting a HWP program<sup>10</sup>.

In order to maximize the results of the MapHR training program, regular follow-ups (the fifth stage of the program) should be conducted so participants have a chance to further strengthen their relationships as well as review and build on their knowledge through discussing and sharing their experiences. Cognitive-behavioral interventions showed the greatest effectiveness and relaxation interventions were most commonly used<sup>10</sup>. Particularly redesign of work, improved communication, psychosocial work environment, and the development of HWP intervention activities offered great potential for employee happiness<sup>20-21</sup>.

Finally, we recommended that the MapHR training program will be most successful promoting happiness in workplaces if support and collaboration are obtained through organization policy. There were difficulties in developing and maintaining the HWP intervention due to lack of support from employers and top managers. While we recognize the need for policymakers to evaluate and improve these procedures, we suggest that appropriate interventions targeting the orga-

nizational context are important to consider as well.

This study has some limitations. First, a pre-training assessment of the participants' happiness promotion potential was not carried out. This was deemed necessary because there was only one set of evaluation forms available. If the form had been seen by the participants, the outcomes of the program might have been influenced by their prior exposure to the form rather than the actual improvement in their happiness promotion potential. Second, the follow-up of participants was difficult since some had changed jobs and others were not able to participate. To deal with this problem, the researcher followed up on other personnel attending the training program with the participants (replacement subjects).

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## ผลของกระบวนการฝึกอบรมตามโมเดล MapHR เพื่อการสร้างเสริมสุขภาวะในองค์กรภาคเอกชน

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### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อพัฒนาและศึกษาผลของกระบวนการฝึกอบรมเพื่อการสร้างเสริมสุขภาวะในองค์กรภาคเอกชน โดยการประยุกต์ใช้ MapHR ใช้รูปแบบการวิจัยกึ่งทดลอง กลุ่มตัวอย่าง ได้แก่ นักพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ในสถานประกอบการภาคเอกชน รวมจำนวน 175 คนจาก 85 องค์กร โปรแกรมการฝึกอบรม แบ่งเป็น 3 ระยะ คือ ระยะเตรียมการ ระยะฝึกอบรม และระยะติดตามผล เครื่องมือที่ใช้ ได้แก่ (1) แบบตรวจสอบสุขภาวะระดับองค์กร และ (2) แบบประเมินศักยภาพการสร้างกระบวนการสร้างสุขในองค์กร 4 ด้าน ผลการศึกษาพบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างมีแนวคิดการสร้างองค์กรแห่งความสุข เกิดความรู้ความเข้าใจในการตรวจสอบสุขภาวะองค์กร และการออกแบบกระบวนการสร้างสุขในองค์กร มีการแสดงความเป็นผู้นำในการสร้างสุข มีศักยภาพในการแลกเปลี่ยนเรียนรู้สูงขึ้นเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับช่วงก่อนเข้ารับการฝึกอบรมอย่างมี

นัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$  ตามลำดับ) และการติดตามพฤติกรรม การสร้างสุขในองค์กร พบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างสามารถสร้าง การเปลี่ยนแปลงของปัจจัยการสร้างสุขภายในองค์กร ในด้านต่างๆ ได้แก่ บรรยากาศและสภาพแวดล้อม กระบวนการสร้างสุขในองค์กร สุขภาพกายและ สุขภาพใจของพนักงาน ส่วนปัจจัยด้านระบบการจัดการ และผลลัพธ์ขององค์กร พบว่า มีการเปลี่ยนแปลง อย่างไม่มีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ผลจากการศึกษา ควรมี ระบบการติดตามสนับสนุนผู้เข้ารับการอบรมอย่าง ต่อเนื่องเพื่อให้เกิดการปรับปรุงกระบวนการสร้างสุข ในองค์กรที่มีประสิทธิภาพส่งผลต่อการพัฒนาปัจจัย ที่มีความสำคัญต่อการสร้างให้เกิดความสุขของบุคลากร ในองค์กรต่อไป

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