



# THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON HAPPINESS

## Comparison of individualistic and collectivistic societies A South African / Indian – German Perspective



**European Conference on Positive Psychology 2022  
29 June - 2 July 2022 in Reykjavik, Iceland**

by

**Prof Dr Mike Hoffmeister**

Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Business  
Siegfried-Ehlers-Str.1, 38440 Wolfsburg, Germany

**Dr Roger Muller**

Nelson Mandela University, Faculty of Business  
2nd Avenue Campus, Second Avenue, Port Elizabeth, South Africa



# Content



1. Background
2. Aims and Method
3. Results
4. Conclusion

## Enclosure

- „Happiness” Workshop for students at Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences: Structure and Content
- Public Charity Event of Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences on Happiness and Fulfilled Life
- YouTube Channel on Happiness and Fulfilled Life of Prof Dr Mike Hoffmeister
- Sources / Further Readings
- Researcher Profile



# 1. Background Workplace Requirements

- Increasing **requirements in the workplace, new technologies,** and the expectation of **being always available** leads to **depressions** and **burnout**.
- **Sick days per 1000 insured persons; for example in Germany**
  - over **900 sick days** due to **depressions**
  - over **120 sick days** due to **burnout**
- **New work and leadership models are being developed and implemented to strengthen the energy management** in order to **support the individual well being**.



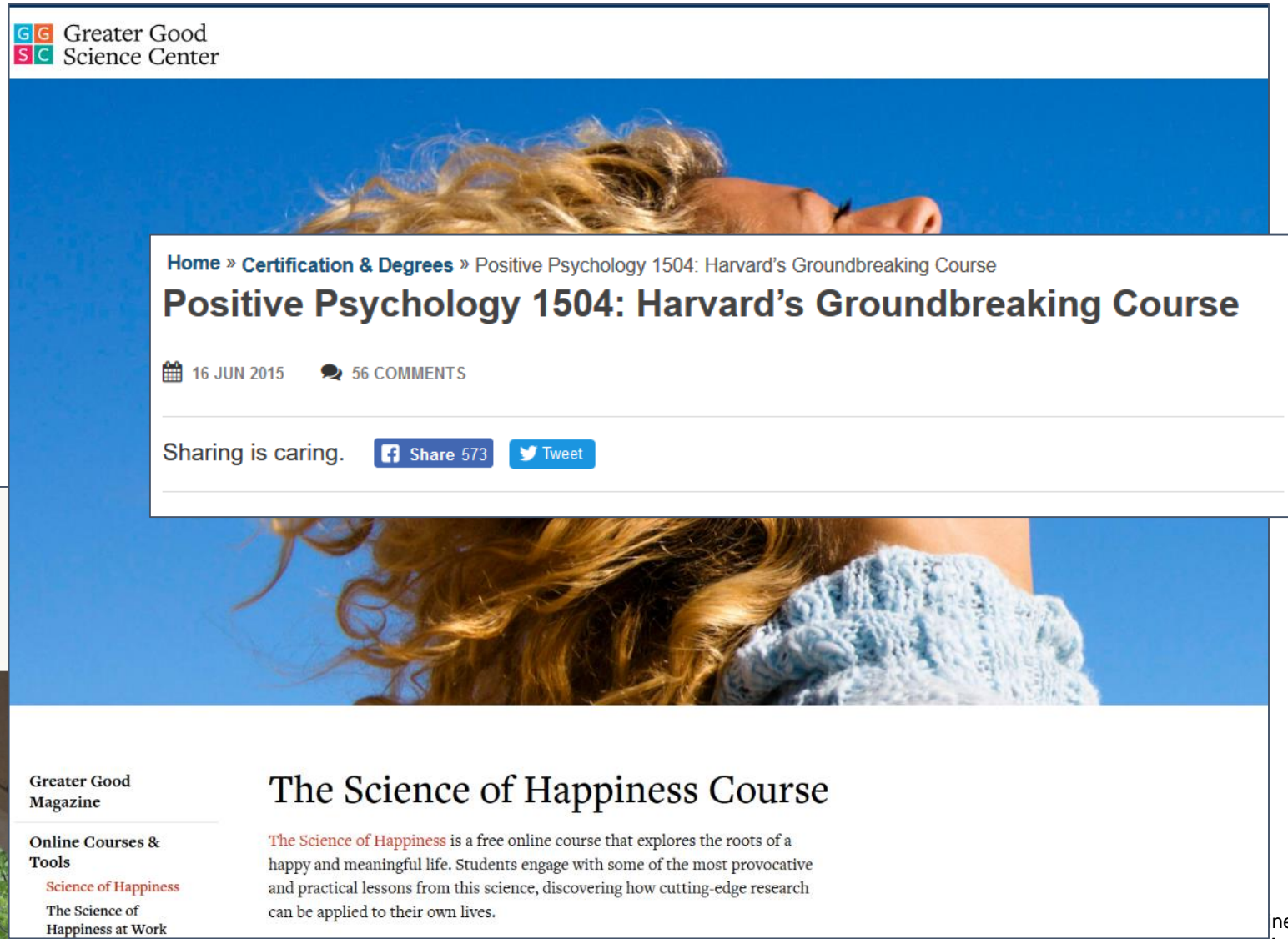


# 1. Background Happiness at University Education

- USA universities dominant
- Only a few implement the topic of happiness in their study curriculum as part of social and intercultural competencies
- Lack of guidance for students how to manage their life

## Yale's beloved happiness class is now on the internet for free

By Amy X. Wang • April 11, 2018



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### Positive Psychology 1504: Harvard's Groundbreaking Course

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Online Courses & Tools

**Science of Happiness**  
The Science of Happiness at Work

### The Science of Happiness Course

The **Science of Happiness** is a free online course that explores the roots of a happy and meaningful life. Students engage with some of the most provocative and practical lessons from this science, discovering how cutting-edge research can be applied to their own lives.

# 2. Research Aims and Method



## • Research Questions

- What is the impact of culture on happiness; focusing on individualism and collectivism?
- Is the topic of happiness be considered at the curriculum of universities?

## • Exploratory Conceptual Research Study based on:

- Literature research
- An empirical survey on emotional engagement with over 500 automobile salespeople across brands in Germany
- Over 20 expert interviews in Germany, the USA, South Africa and Dubai
- Two conferences on Happiness at Work in Copenhagen, Denmark
- Workshops conducted
  - in South Africa with a total of 30 South African and 30 German bachelor students (Nelson Mandela University and Ostfalia University OAS)
  - online in total with over 200 bachelor students from Germany, South Africa, the USA, Mexico, Sri Lanka and India
  - at Ostfalia University OAS in Germany workshops in total with over 350 German and 150 Indian bachelor and master students over the last 10 years



# 3. Results

## Definition of Happiness



- **Happiness by Fate „Luck“**
  - in German synonym for Glück = Happiness
  - by **accident / coincidence**
  - **“I was lucky”**
- **Well Being Happiness**
  - is a mental or **emotional state** of the human being
  - focus on **current life satisfaction** and living conditions
  - very **subjective**
  - it is the **current moment**
  - **“I feel happy”**
- **Value Based Happiness**
  - **purpose driven** actions in accordance with my **values**; service others
  - measure of **“flourishing”** in one's own life according to Seligman; personal development
  - **discover** and **develop** and using my **talents**, and my **strengths**
  - **“I have a fulfilled meaningful life”**

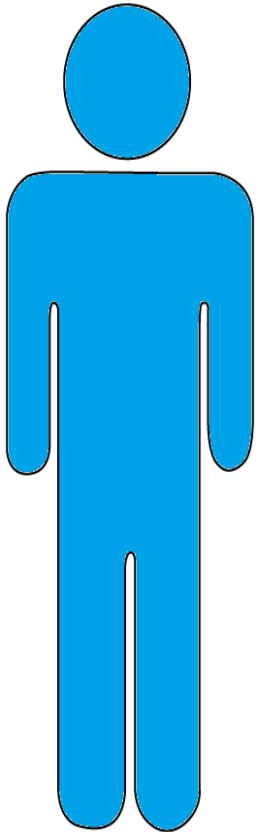


# 3. Results

## Definitions Individualism vs Collectivism

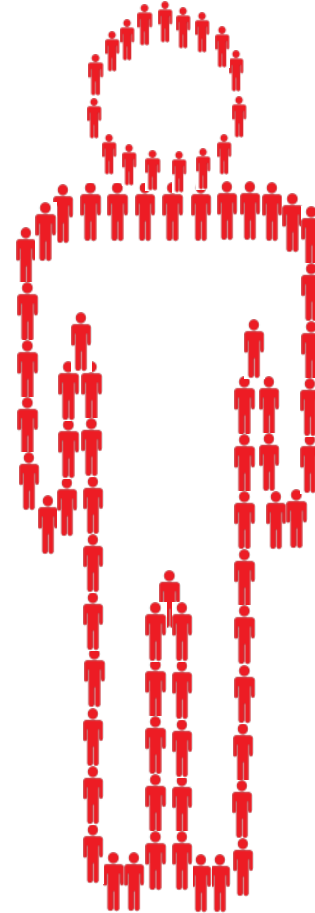


**Degree** to which individuals are **integrated into groups**



### Individualist Orientation

- **I** identity
- societies in which the ties between individuals are loose
- everyone is expected **to look after him/herself** and his/her immediate family
- preference of **personal motivation** and goals over group interests
- values of **freedom, honesty**, self-actualisation
- **individual responsibility**
- **trust in yourself**
- examples: USA, UK, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany



### Collectivist (group) Orientation

- **WE** identity
- societies in which people from birth onwards are **integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups**
- unquestioning **loyalty to the group**
- values of **harmony, face-saving**
- **preference of group goals** and responsibility
- empathy with the unfortunate
- **trust in your group**
- examples: India, China, Japan, Mexico, Arab Countries, South Africa



### 3. Results

## Manifestation: African vs Western Cultural Practices

Practice	African	Western
• Baby-sleeping	• Mother's back	• Baby Cot
• Family	• Extended (many parents & siblings)	• Nuclear family
• Elders	• Remain part of family	• Retirement homes
• Burials /weddings	• Mass community participation	• Small, private event
• Greeting	• Informal, heartily	• Formal
• Time concept	• Tolerance	• Rigid, punctual

### 3. Results

## Factors for a **Happy And Fulfilling Life**

**Workshop results demonstrate significant differences with regards to culture**

Associations of collectivistic cultures: South African / Indian Students	Overlapping associations	Associations of individualistic cultures German Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• spending <b><u>time with family</u></b> and relatives</li><li>• to <b><u>serve others</u></b> within your community</li><li>• <b><u>spirituality</u></b></li><li>• good education</li><li>• be married</li><li>• <b><u>harmony: indirect</u></b> communication</li><li>• food</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• professional career</li><li>• work-life balance</li><li>• social commitment</li><li>• to travel</li><li>• democracy</li><li>• love, relationship</li><li>• time for hobbies</li><li>• enjoy the moment</li><li>• health</li><li>• money</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• self-realization</li><li>• <b><u>independence</u></b></li><li>• <b><u>personal responsibility</u></b></li><li>• financial security</li><li>• privacy</li><li>• <b><u>being fair:</u></b></li><li>• <b><u>direct communication</u></b></li><li>• <b><u>pets</u></b> (dogs, cats, ...)</li></ul>

### 3. Results

## Major differences between South African / Indian and German students with regard to dealing with failure

#### South African / Indian Students

- Family back up
- Spirituality – praying, visiting temples
- Music / dancing / singing
- Meditation (especially in India)













#### German Students

- Meeting friends
- Belief in yourself
- Treat yourself good, eg. sports
- Spend time in nature



# 3. Results

## Topic Happiness at Universities Curriculum

	Bachelor / Master of ARTS Faculty of Business	Bachelor / Master of SCIENCE Faculty of Engineering
<b>Professional Competencies</b>		
<b>Methodical Competencies</b> Presentation techniques, time management , ...		
<b>Well Being Happiness</b>		
<b><u>1. Social Competencies</u></b> • team work, communication skills, conflict solving		
<b><u>2. Personal Competencies</u></b> • stress management, dealing with failure, coaching • mindfulness / meditation techniques,		
<b><u>3. Intercultural Competencies / Diversity</u></b>		
<b>Value Based Happiness</b> • life goals, concepts and strategies in accordance to students values • purpose /meaning • strengths and talents		

# 4. Conclusion

## Recommendations for Universities



1. Raise **awareness** of the **importance to lecture on happiness** to enable students to deal successfully with the **challenges of studying, working and of life** in general
2. Train **ALL university staff** including their **managers** on happiness as well – **top to down**  
It will have a very positive **impact on employees' engagement**
3. Offer happiness workshops and seminars for students **interdisciplinary** and **across all faculties**
4. Consider the different **cultural background** of participants when designing the workshop or seminar
5. Offer (more) individual **coaching** session for students and staff



# 4. Conclusion

## Next Research Steps

- Empirical research
  - Topic **Happiness@Work**
  - Sample: **MBA part time students** in South Africa, Germany, and the USA
- Aims
  - What are universal and **culture-specific happiness success factors**?
  - What is the impact of other **additional cultural dimensions** on happiness (dealing with hierarchy, rules, relationships, emotions ...)?
  - What is the **impact of different personality types** on happiness?
  - How can **universities** include happiness within their **curriculum**?





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# „Happiness Workshop“ for Students at Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences: Structure and Content

## Key Questions of the Workshop

- What are the success factors for a happy and fulfilling life?
- What are my personal values?
- How can I recognize my most important and unfulfilled values and derive concrete options for action for myself?
- How do I deal with conflicts and defeats?
- What is the importance of personal preferences (based on the MBTI) and which ones do I have?
- Which beliefs determine my life?
- How do I transfer my negative into positive beliefs?
- How can I gain strength and make clearer decisions?
- How to gain energy and keep a positive attitude?
- What are my short und long term goals
- How to create a better life according to my values?

## Structure and Content

- Interdisciplinary; students from various faculties
- Many exercises and discussions

### Part 1: Introduction to Happiness and Mindfulness

- Definition of happiness and fulfilled life
- Impact of happiness on business and society
- Happiness factors (“PERK” – University of California, Berkeley)
- Practice:
  - Mindfulness / mediation
  - Identifying my happiness factors
  - Discussion of death and what dying people regret in life

### Part 2: Recognizing my own values and dealing professionally with conflicts

- “Who I am”: personal preferences (MBTI)
- Sources for conflicts and conflict management
- Tools to overcome defeats
- Dealing with personal beliefs
- Practice:
  - Learn about yourself and others by applying MBTI preferences to different conflicting situations
  - Develop solutions for those situations
  - Affirmation exercises to turn negative into positive beliefs

### Part 3: Strengthening my personal resilience

- Concept of resilience, resilience factors and skills
- Practice:
  - Apply resilience factors to your student and private life
  - Exercises on optimism, sources of energy, thankfulness,

### Exercise: Developing my own life vision and concept

- What are my most important values: Write speeches from the perspective of given people for your 80th birthday or your own funeral. What should those people say about you?
- Identify your most important values. Do they correspond with my life? If not, why and how to overcome them.
- Create a life vision, goals and strategy with concrete milestones



# Public Charity Event of Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences on Happiness and Fulfilled Life initiated and moderated by Prof Dr Mike Hoffmeister

- **Goals**
  - Inform about latest research on happiness
  - Motivate people to be a creator of their life
  - Collect donations for kids who live in difficult situations, (already over 10,000Euros collected)
- **Different topic at each event**
  - Happiness@Work, fail successfully, confidence, gain energy...
- **Panel discussion and interviews with experts**
  - Managers, coaches, psychologists, researchers, artists, church representatives, ...
- **Takes place once or twice a year**
  - Evening event at Ostfalia Audimax and Wolfsburg Art Museum
- **Since 2021 Hybrid event**
  - Participation at the event location or via YouTube live streaming
  - Last event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tERJ4FoKPt4&t=662s>
- **Partners**
  - Rotary International, City of Wolfsburg (health region Wolfsburg), Action for Happiness Germany; International Circle of Friends Wolfsburg
- **Press statements**



## Über Vertrauen geht`s zum Glück

In der Ostfalia stellen vier Studenten Forschungsergebnisse vor.

von Hans Karweik

## Dem Glück auf der Spur

120 Zuhörer kommen zur Diskussionsrunde von Ostfalia

„Glück kann man nicht auf Vorrat kaufen“

Prof. Dr. Mike Hoffmeister moderiert im Interview über das Glück. Am 16. Oktober veranstaltet das Event eine Online- und Live-Stream-Veranstaltung.

Erfolgreiches Scheitern Thema bei Ostfalia-Glücksreihe

In der Ostfalia wird ein Workshop geleitet. In der Ostfalia wird ein Workshop geleitet. In der Ostfalia wird ein Workshop geleitet.



„Wir brauchen keine Happiness-Manager wie bei Google, sondern happy Manager.“

Mike Hoffmeister, Professor an der Ostfalia

## So werden wir glücklicher - auch in der Coronakrise

Glücksforscher Mike Hoffmeister von der Ostfalia gibt Tipps, um sich nicht nur in Krisenzeiten auf das eigene Glück zu besinnen.

# YouTube Channel on “Happiness and Fulfilled Life” of Prof Dr Mike Hoffmeister



- YouTube Channel  
Glück und erfülltes Leben

- Content

- Public Charity Event of Ostfalia on Happiness and Fulfilled Life
- Panel discussions
- Speeches
- Exercises with the audience such as meditation

- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC T23axcesBLf3zxktiVVXXQ/videos>

The screenshot displays the YouTube channel page for 'Glück und erfülltes Leben', which has 191 subscribers. The channel is categorized under 'Videos' and features a search bar and navigation tabs for 'ÜBERSICHT', 'VIDEOS', 'PLAYLISTS', 'KANÄLE', and 'KANALINFO'. The video grid includes:

- Kann man „Glück“ studieren? Ja, an der Fakultät Wirtscha...** (14:21, 109 views)
- Rotary Action Day 2022 des Rotary Clubs Gifhorn...** (22:32, 104 views)
- 10 Tipps zum Schutz für die psychische Gesundheit in...** (11:57, 183 views)
- Tipps zum Kraft schöpfen in Krisenzeiten** (35:47, 123 views)
- Resilienz Umgang mit Krisen - BäreesGästeOstfalenTV** (1:29:52, 64 views)
- Gesprächsreihe Glück & erfülltes Leben: Interview...** (42:31, 220 views)
- Glück und erfülltes Leben: Kraft schöpfen...** (2:06:11, 1312 views)
- Wie werde ich glücklich? Experten diskutieren TOP...** (1:37:56, 208 views)
- 10 Tipps zum Loslassen von Glücksforscher Prof. Dr. Mik...** (17:44, 719 views)
- Tipps zum Loslassen und Zuversicht von Action for...** (12:39, 225 views)
- Impact of South African lifestyle Ubuntu on Covid19,...** (19:33, 98 views)
- Eine kurze Betrachtung der Achtsamkeit (7....** (9:22, 168 views)
- Mit Humor Krisen meistern - Tipps von der Humorlotsin...** (19:09, 247 views)
- Fünf Tipps zur Corona-Krise von Prof. Dr. Mike...** (5:09, 138 views)
- WIE WERDE ICH GLÜCKLICH? Glücksforscher Prof. Dr. Mik...** (1:07:04, 421 views)
- Sechste Ostfalia-Rotary-Veranstaltung der Reihe...** (1:25:26, 1227 views)
- Spendenaufruf** (2:27, 101 views)
- Glück kann man trainieren: Interview mit Tobias Rahm...** (5:55, 257 views)
- Glücksfaktoren: Interview mit Tobias Rahm Teil 2** (8:02, 183 views)
- Motivation von Prof. Dr. Mike Hoffmeister zur...** (2:51, 563 views)
- Ostfalia Veranstaltungsreihe Glück und erfülltes Leben** (0:27, 291 views)

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# Researcher Profile



## Prof Dr Mike Hoffmeister



- Over 12 years work experience in international sales and marketing at Volkswagen Group; last positions: Area Sales Manager of the Arabian Gulf Countries; Head of training for the VW sales organization;
- Professor for International Management at the Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Business, Germany since 2003.
- Organizes and hosts the public event *Happiness and Fulfilled Life* twice a year. Conducts workshops on *Fulfilled Life* and *Happiness @Work* for companies and nonprofit organizations.
- Guest lecturer in South Africa at both the Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth and the Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria

## Dr Roger Muller



- Lecturer for Business Management, Employee Engagement, Six Sigma, Ubuntu Leadership at the Nelson Mandela University, Faculty of Business, Management Practice, Port Elisabeth, South Africa, since 2010.
- Over ten years of work experience at Johnson Controls in Uitenhage, South Africa; last position: Improvement Manager.
- Guest lecturer at the Faculty of Business at the Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences, Germany.
- Muller and Hoffmeister host very successfully a joint elective with German students from Ostfalia and South African students from the Nelson Mandela University in South Africa on *Intercultural Intelligence* once a year.