

# Are Spanish public employees happier in their job performance in the era of Industry 4.0?

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## ABSTRACT

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Since the end of the 20th century, economists have been attracted to the study of the economics of happiness (e.g., Singh, & Alexandrova, 2020; Crespo & Mesurado, 2015; Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2013). The use of the term happiness characterizes an essential volume of this bibliographical production as a synonym for the words satisfaction, well-being, or quality of life (Teixeira & Vasque, 2020; Carlquist et al., 2017). Under this umbrella, the culture of happiness management teaches us that a management model or direction oriented to the holistic search for happiness or job satisfaction of its employees is one of the essential axial pieces that organizations have to increase the commitment of their human capital, and therefore, their productivity and business performance (Ravina et al., 2019). Public administration employees are not exempt from this reality, a group that is characterized by job stability compared to private company employees. This article is dedicated to them. The era of Industry 4.0 is a period that is characterized, among other things, by the high precariousness of labor that is originated by the implementation of management models in advanced economies. This phenomenon is derived from the technological point of view by the automation and massive robotization of production processes and the supply chain. Together with the digitalization of companies, both factors are very present in the ecosystems of the Covid-19, and have come, perhaps, to stay in the future (Bragazzi, 2020; Ghadge et al., 2020). In line with the above, a more holistic examination of this issue seems likely to show that there is a keen interest among people to enter into Work mostly in public administrations, in search of a permanent contract for their entire working life. As is known, this is especially true in countries with high unemployment levels, such as Spain. Its unemployment rate is 20.1% in mid-2020. In the collective imagination of these individuals, there is the conviction that this type of Work constitutes ambrosia of eudaimonic happiness, job security, and quality of life, especially at present, in times of the Covid-19 pandemic (Fernández-Urbano, & Kulic, 2020).

In this sense, it should be noted that in the last decades of the 21st century, there has been a growing interest in researching public employees' job satisfaction (e.g., Ryu & Bae, 2020; Steijn & Van der Voet, 2019; Luechinge et al., 2010). Most of the studies carried out on this scientific topic to date show empirically that public sector workers are happier than individuals in the

private sphere. It's basically due to the intrinsic benefits (flexibility, vacation, or family reconciliation, among others) that this type of government entity offers concerning for-profit organizations (e.g., Lahat&Ofek, 2020; Sánchez-Sánchez, & Puente, 2020; Danzer,2019). In this context, this article aims to examine, as a priority in the era of Industry 4.0, whether there are observed differences in the levels of congratuations between human capital working in the private sector and that working in the public sector in Spain, by analyzing a set of variables that define positions: hours, salary, stability, promotion, and stress. Finally, we must indicate, on the one hand, that the choice of this spatial framework is motivated by the scarce literature investigating the happiness of Spanish public employees in an economy with high levels of youth unemployment (Núñez-Barriopedro et al., 2020). On the other hand, the results achieved in this study may be useful in the future for the implementation of public policies aimed at significantly promoting the welfare of working citizens through the happiness management approach (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2019), or for taking this management concept to private companies to increase the motivation of their employees (Foncubierta-Rodríguez & Sánchez-Montero, 2019).

**Keywords:** Happiness, human resources, Industry 4.0, public sector.