

Article

Business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness: Gender-based differences

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between business ethics and workplace happiness, explicitly examining the role of technology use as a potential mediator and the moderating effect of gender within organizational contexts in an emerging economy. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional, and non-experimental research design, data were collected from a sample of 367 employees working in Mexican organizations across diverse sectors. The proposed theoretical model was tested through covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM), complemented by multi-group analysis to explore gender-based differences in the structural relationships. The findings provide robust evidence that business ethics exerts a significant and positive effect on workplace happiness, with this relationship being notably stronger among women, thereby underscoring the relevance of ethical organizational climates for employee well-being. In contrast, technology use neither demonstrated a significant direct effect on workplace happiness nor functioned as a mediating mechanism between ethics and happiness, suggesting that technological tools alone are insufficient to enhance subjective well-being in the absence of a strong ethical foundation. These results indicate that, in emerging organizational contexts, ethical culture and values outweigh the instrumental role of technology in shaping employees' happiness at work. From a theoretical perspective, the cross-sectional nature of the study constrains causal inference, highlighting the need for future longitudinal and cross-cultural research to assess temporal dynamics and contextual generalizability. Practically, the findings emphasize that organizations seeking to enhance workplace happiness should prioritize ethical leadership, fairness, and integrity, while adopting gender-sensitive approaches to digital transformation. Socially, fostering ethical organizational cultures may contribute to more inclusive, emotionally sustainable, and human-centered workplaces. Overall, this research offers original value by proposing and empirically validating an integrative model that links business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness, incorporating gender as a moderating factor within the organizational behaviour literature.

Keywords: business ethics; workplace happiness; technology use; gender differences; emerging economies

1. Introduction

In an era defined by the accelerating pace of change, where technology continuously reshapes the boundaries of human and organizational interaction, new questions arise concerning the deeper meaning of work, business ethics, and the pursuit of well-being (Bankins & Formosa, 2023). Twenty-first-century organizations can no longer be understood merely as productive entities; rather, they are living systems in which values, emotions, and digital tools converge, and when effectively

integrated, these elements can enhance both efficiency and employee happiness (Yaroğlu, 2025). As companies increasingly adopt advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and automation, a pressing question emerges: can these tools, when combined with strong ethical principles, serve as catalysts for a more meaningful and fulfilling work life?

Within this scenario, business ethics has become a cornerstone of organizational sustainability, promoting responsible decision-making and fostering trust among stakeholders (Carmine & De Marchi, 2022). However, alongside the rapid technological transformation, there is growing scholarly interest in understanding how technology use affects employees' perceptions of well-being (Deng et al., 2023; Sadeghi, 2024; Salazar-Altamirano et al., 2025). Despite this growing attention, studies that simultaneously integrate business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness remain scarce, particularly those aiming to understand the interactive dynamics among these constructs (Martínez-Falcó et al., 2024).

Recent literature also reveals a significant research gap regarding the mediating role of technology use in the relationship between business ethics and happiness (Mu et al., 2023). This study is relevant because it ventures to examine three variables that have been analyzed independently, yet in business practice, they occur simultaneously (Lu et al., 2024). In this sense, technology can be understood as a channel through which organizational ethics impacts employees' happiness (Gloor, 2022). For example, a company may promote ethical values; however, if it uses technology in an invasive manner, through excessive control, surveillance, or digital pressure, workplace happiness may be reduced. Conversely, when technology is used ethically to facilitate flexibility, autonomy, and support for employees, workplace happiness may increase. Hence, the importance of analyzing the mediating role of technology use in the relationship between business ethics and workplace happiness.

The lack of integrative models limits our understanding of whether technological tools amplify or weaken the positive influence of an ethical environment on individual well-being (Dutta & Mishra, 2023). Furthermore, most studies have been conducted in corporate settings within developed economies, leaving a notable void in emerging regions such as Mexico, where labor conditions, technological adoption, and ethical frameworks present distinct cultural and structural characteristics that may substantially influence the outcomes (Mercader et al., 2021).

Similarly, studies adopting a gender perspective are limited. Although it is recognized that men and women may experience and interpret ethical practices, technological engagement, and workplace happiness differently, few investigations have placed these gender-based distinctions at the center of analysis (Stenseng et al., 2023). This gap is relevant, as the literature has documented differences in relational orientation, sensitivity to interpersonal justice, and the valuation of workplace well-being (Gloor, 2022). For example, the same technology tool oriented toward monitoring may be interpreted as a mechanism for efficiency and results control, or as a source of surveillance, pressure for constant availability, and disruption of work–life balance (Mettler, 2024). Consequently, incorporating a gender perspective allows for a better understanding of why the same ethical and technological environment does not produce equivalent levels of workplace happiness.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address these research gaps by examining the effects of business ethics and technology use on workplace happiness, while also exploring the mediating role of technology in this relationship. In addition, a multi-group analysis by gender is incorporated to identify potential differences between men and women, offering a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. This study proposes an integrative model that, to the best of our knowledge, has not yet been empirically tested: business ethics as a predictor of workplace happiness, with technology use as a mediator and gender as a differentiating factor. This represents a novel theoretical and empirical contribution within emerging contexts. In line with this aim, the article is structured into seven sections: the introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, results, discussion, and finally, conclusions and future research directions.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Business ethics

The notion of business ethics has evolved from its philosophical conception in classical thought to become a core pillar of modern organizational management (Calabretta et al., 2011; Rabetino et al., 2020). Initially associated with universal moral principles such as justice, responsibility, and honesty, its application to the business domain gained relevance during the rise of industrial capitalism, when tensions emerged between economic profit and social welfare (Crane & Matten, 2007). As organizations integrate into an increasingly globalized and technologically advanced environment, business ethics has moved beyond a merely normative discourse to become a strategic tool for generating trust, reputation, and long-term sustainability (Di Maddaloni & Sabini, 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, business ethics can be defined as the set of principles, values, and norms that guide organizational behavior in both internal and external relationships (Thelen & Formanchuk, 2021). This encompasses decision-making processes and interactions with employees, customers, suppliers, and the wider community (Böhm et al., 2022). Its foundations lie in normative theories such as utilitarianism, deontology, and contractualism, but also in contemporary frameworks such as stakeholder theory, which emphasizes moral responsibility toward all groups affected by organizational actions (Weiss, 2021). In practice, its most tangible expressions are reflected in codes of conduct, compliance policies, and ethical organizational cultures that promote integrity and accountability (Wolfgruber & Einwiller, 2024).

In this sense, organizational ethics becomes operational through policy frameworks that translate values into formal rules, decision criteria, and everyday behavioral expectations. These frameworks are important because employees do not experience ethics only as an abstract principle, but through concrete policies that regulate fairness, transparency, accountability, and the responsible use of organizational resources, including technology (Henández-Cuadra & Fernández-Fernández, 2024).

Given this context, the relevance of studying business ethics today stems from the profound transformations organizations are experiencing, driven by digital

transformation, the demand for transparency, and growing civic empowerment (Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023). Under these conditions, ethical behavior is no longer optional; it has become a prerequisite for attracting talent, retaining customers, and ensuring organizational continuity (Luna-Arocas & Danvila-Del-Valle, 2022). At the academic level, business ethics has consolidated as an interdisciplinary field that interacts with organizational psychology, corporate social responsibility, and technology studies (Laasch et al., 2022).

Regarding its relationship with happiness, empirical findings have been mixed. For example, Deniz (2024), in a study conducted in Turkey with 302 participants from private hospitals, examined the relationship between business ethics, employee voice, and workplace happiness. The results showed that business ethics has a positive effect on both employee expression and well-being, and that employee voice mediates the relationship between ethics and happiness. In contrast, Al-Ameedee and Moradi (2023), in a comparative study of 615 auditors in Iran and Iraq, found that while business ethics was positively related to happiness, the effect was contingent on adverse sociopolitical contexts, suggesting that its influence may weaken in environments characterized by high uncertainty.

Concerning the connection between business ethics and technology use, Ranga (2023) conducted a study in India focusing on competitive organizations. The findings indicated that companies with strong ethical practices are more likely to adopt technology responsibly, enhancing consumer trust and strengthening public legitimacy. However, more critical research, such as that by Castellanos-Redondo et al. (2020) in Spain, warns that the intensive use of technology without an ethical framework may undermine perceived happiness by introducing excessive surveillance and depersonalization of work.

At this stage, it is important to note that no empirical studies have yet been identified that simultaneously integrate business ethics, technology use, and happiness. This theoretical gap limits a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, particularly in emerging contexts and from a gender-based perspective.

2.2. Technology use

From its origins, technology was conceived as a neutral instrument designed to increase productivity and enhance organizational control (Benson et al., 1978). However, in today's context of accelerated digitalization and disruptive technologies, its role has evolved far beyond a purely functional tool (Choi et al., 2021). Technology now structures the very fabric of work life, reshaping production processes, social relations, ethical frameworks, and the emotional experience of labor (Andersson et al., 2021). This transformation raises new questions about its impact on the quality of work life, particularly related to employees' happiness.

From a conceptual standpoint, technology use is understood as the integration of digital tools by individuals and organizations to execute or transform professional tasks (Haleem et al., 2022). Traditionally, this phenomenon has been examined through models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which focuses on perceived usefulness and ease of use. However, more recent approaches incorporate psychosocial, cultural, and affective dimensions that influence adoption and

experience (Wallace & Sheetz, 2014). The relevance of studying this construct is amplified by the ambivalences of digital work: while it increases flexibility and connectivity, it can also generate digital overload, technostress, and social exclusion (Karlsen & Ytre-Arne, 2021). As Ravina-Ripoll et al. (2022) emphasize, understanding the effects of technology on happiness has therefore become a global academic priority.

Empirical findings on this relationship have been mixed and context-dependent. For instance, in Indonesia, Bangun et al. (2021) conducted a study with 315 university lecturers from the Institut Teknologi and found that a positive attitude toward digital technology was associated with greater workplace happiness, which in turn significantly mediated the relationship between technology use and job performance. In contrast, a more recent study by Alshammery and Hilmi (2024) in Saudi Arabia, involving 247 healthcare professionals, revealed that excessive technology use leads to digital overload, consequently diminishing happiness at work.

2.3. Workplace happiness

Happiness, historically conceived as the ultimate goal of human existence, has gained growing relevance within the social sciences and organizational studies (Martínez-Arvizu et al., 2025). Its definition has evolved toward a multifactorial understanding that integrates positive emotions, a sense of purpose, and personal fulfillment (Tay et al., 2023). In this regard, workplace happiness transcends mere job satisfaction to encompass a broader sense of overall well-being (Galvan-Vela et al., 2024).

In a global context characterized by heightened stress and rapid digital transformation, the study of workplace happiness has become increasingly urgent (Ahmad & Zulkifli, 2022). Organizations that actively promote happiness at work tend to experience higher levels of employee commitment, creativity, and retention, alongside reduced turnover and burnout (Chenshu et al., 2024). This growing recognition has given rise to the concept of “happiness management,” a strategic approach that positions happiness as a core objective of organizational management and sustainable performance (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2023).

2.4. Mediation of technology use, gender differences, and theoretical contribution

Despite the growing academic interest in understanding how business ethics influences workplace happiness, studies that explicitly examine the mediating role of technology use in this relationship remain virtually nonexistent. In the current literature, technology use has rarely been modeled as a mediating variable between ethics and happiness at work. After an exhaustive review, it becomes evident that no empirical studies indexed in Scopus or Web of Science directly evaluate the mediation of technology use in the relationship between business ethics and workplace happiness. Likewise, no research has been identified that examines this model while considering gender differences, revealing a critical knowledge gap in how these dynamics manifest across men and women.

To address this gap, the present study proposes an integrative model in which technology use functions as a mediator between business ethics and workplace happiness, while simultaneously incorporating a multi-group analysis by gender. Theoretically, this approach draws on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which explains how organizational resources contribute to employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013, 2017). Within this framework, business ethics is conceptualized as an organizational resource that shapes trust, fairness, and psychological safety, whereas technology use is understood as a contextual mechanism whose effects on well-being depend on how it is implemented and experienced in everyday work. From this perspective, technology may facilitate the translation of ethical climates into workplace happiness, but it may also weaken that link when associated with surveillance, overload, or pressure for constant availability.

This proposal is justified by the binding nature of the variables analyzed, since organizational ethics is materialized in practices that shape the everyday experience of work. While technology is a tool through which these ethical principles are translated into concrete dynamics that can influence employee well-being. For this reason, technology cannot be conceived as an instrumental resource, but as an element that can distort the ethical environment. Various studies have analyzed the impact of technology use on well-being, recognizing it as a variable with high significance in this configuration (e.g., Herutomo & Ginting, 2025; Kortsch et al., 2022), while other studies address the impact of business ethics on happiness, finding positive relationships (e.g., Al-Ameedee & Moradi, 2023; Mercader et al., 2021; Rokhman et al., 2025). Given the nature of these variables, we strongly defend the possible mediating effect of technology use.

Moreover, by integrating a gender-based perspective, this research aims to provide an intersectional understanding of how men and women may differentially experience and interpret the combined effects of ethics and digitalization on workplace happiness. Such an approach opens new theoretical avenues for developing more inclusive organizational models that reflect cultural and gender-based nuances in the experience of well-being at work.

Derived from the theoretical analysis and the arguments presented, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: Business ethics has a positive and significant effect on technology use.

H₂: Business ethics has a positive and significant effect on workplace happiness.

H₃: Technology use has a positive and significant effect on workplace happiness.

H₄: Technology use mediates the relationship between business ethics and workplace happiness.

H₅: There are significant gender-based differences in the relationships among business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness.

These hypotheses outline the conceptual model presented in **Figure 1**.

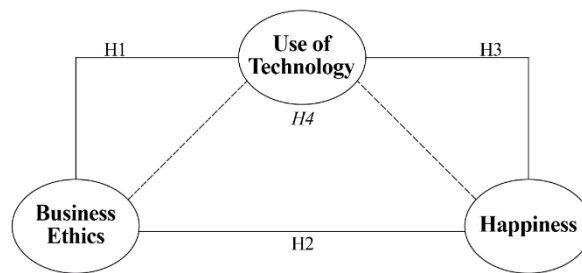


Figure 1. Source: Own elaboration.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and procedure

This study adopted a quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional design aimed at analyzing gender-differentiated effects of business ethics and technology use on workplace happiness. Data were collected between November and December 2024, through a structured online questionnaire distributed using a non-probabilistic convenience sampling approach. This sampling strategy was adopted because access to employees from multiple organizations and sectors was limited, and the study sought to obtain heterogeneous responses from active workers in real organizational settings. Although this approach does not allow statistical generalization, it is suitable for theory testing in exploratory organizational models and for identifying structural relationships across diverse employment contexts, especially in studies that use the JD-R theory (Hossain et al., 2023). Participation was voluntary, and respondents were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality in full compliance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

The final sample consisted of 367 employees from various organizations in Mexico. Gender distribution was nearly balanced, with 49.30% women and 50.70% men. Regarding educational level, 77.16% held a bachelor's degree, 21.17% a master's degree, and 1.67% a doctorate. Participants primarily came from the industrial sector (52.33%), followed by services (23.02%), commerce (12.05%), education (10.68%), and the primary sector (1.92%). The sectoral diversity of the sample is relevant because ethical climates, digital practices, and employee well-being may vary across organizational environments; therefore, including respondents from different sectors increases the contextual breadth of the analysis.

In terms of organizational size, 46.72% worked in companies with more than 500 employees, while the remainder were employed in micro, small, or medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, 77.38% were employed in private organizations, 14.99% in public institutions, and 7.63% in other types of entities. Participant ages ranged from 20 to 64 years ($M = 36.5$, $SD = 9.05$), while work experience varied between 0 and 40 years ($M = 11.4$, $SD = 8.38$). **Table 1** summarizes the demographic and organizational characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	181	49.30%
	Male	186	50.70%
Educational level	Bachelor’s degree	277	77.16%
	Master’s degree	76	21.17%
	Doctorate	6	1.67%
Sector	Primary	7	1.92%
	Industrial	191	52.33%
	Commerce	44	12.05%
	Services	84	23.02%
Company size	Education	39	10.68%
	1–10 employees	48	13.11%
	11–50 employees	33	9.02%
	51–250 employees	59	16.12%
	251–500 employees	55	15.03%
Type of organization	More than 500 employees	171	46.72%
	Public	55	14.99%
	Private	284	77.38%
Variable	Other	28	7.63%
	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	20–64 years	36.5	9.05
Experience	0–40 years	11.4	8.38

Source: Own elaboration.

To minimize Common Method Bias (CMB), several procedural and statistical controls were applied during data collection and analysis. First, participant anonymity was ensured to reduce the likelihood of socially desirable responses. Furthermore, all items were worded clearly and neutrally, avoiding evaluative or ambiguous phrasing to limit interpretation bias. Finally, Harman’s Single-Factor Test was conducted, revealing that no single latent factor accounted for the majority of variance, indicating that CMB was not a significant threat to the validity of the study’s results (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

3.2. Instruments

The data collection instrument consisted of a digital questionnaire composed of validated scales, selected for their strong theoretical foundation and suitability for measuring the study’s central variables: business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness. All items employed a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7), allowing for a more precise capture of individual perceptual nuances among participants.

Business ethics was measured using the scale developed by Mercader et al. (2025), which assesses perceptions of ethical practices, corporate social responsibility, and innovation promotion as factors linked to workplace well-being. Technology use

was evaluated through the classical scale by Moore and Benbasat (1991), designed to measure perceptions regarding the adoption of technological innovations across dimensions such as usefulness, ease of use, and compatibility with the work environment. Finally, workplace happiness was assessed using the scale proposed by Mercader (2019), which focuses on subjective well-being, motivation, and positive emotional experience within the organizational context

3.3. Data analysis technique

The statistical analysis was conducted using Jamovi software (version 2.3.28), a platform recognized for its accessibility and ability to perform advanced procedures in applied quantitative research (Şahin & Aybek, 2019). In the first phase, a univariate exploration of the variables was performed, calculating measures of central tendency, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, with the aim of verifying compliance with statistical assumptions prior to inferential testing (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). This stage enabled an assessment of data normality and the internal consistency of the items associated with each construct.

Subsequently, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and a Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) approach were applied. This technique is appropriate for validating theoretical models with latent variables and for examining complex structural relationships with a confirmatory emphasis (Kline, 2016). In addition, a Multigroup Analysis (MGA) was conducted to identify differences in structural relationships according to gender, a recommended method for examining moderating effects across subpopulations (Cheah et al., 2020). Model quality was assessed through goodness-of-fit indices such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), following the criteria established by Hu and Bentler (1999). These analyses collectively reinforced the robustness, reliability, and theoretical validity of the findings.

4. Results

4.1. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs used in this study: business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness. The results revealed significant correlations among the items of each scale, all ranging from moderate to high levels, indicating adequate internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). Moreover, the determinant values of the correlation matrix were within acceptable thresholds, thereby ruling out the presence of severe multicollinearity (Field, 2013).

Sampling adequacy was confirmed through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) indices, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), justifying the suitability of the EFA (Hair et al., 2014). The communalities exhibited appropriate values, and the total variance explained by the extracted factors exceeded 60% in all cases, ensuring that the constructs adequately represented the proposed dimensions.

4.2. Structural equation modeling

To evaluate the proposed theoretical model and the relationships among business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness, a Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) approach was employed using Jamovi software (version 2.3.28). This method allowed for an in-depth examination of the model’s validity, internal consistency of constructs, and the strength of structural relationships among latent variables. Furthermore, a Multigroup Analysis (MGA) was conducted based on participants’ gender to identify potential differences in direct and indirect effects across subgroups. This analytical design provided a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how these factors interact and diverge across gender categories.

4.3. Convergent and discriminant validity

The convergent validity of the measurement model was assessed through Cronbach’s alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with the results presented in Table 2. In the overall sample, Cronbach’s alpha values ranged between 0.795 and 0.902, while gender-specific analyses also exceeded the recommended 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2019), indicating strong internal consistency. Composite reliability displayed equally robust levels, ranging from 0.795 to 0.899 in the total sample and up to 0.957 among men, surpassing the 0.70 benchmark. Regarding AVE, all constructs exceeded the 0.50 threshold, supporting the model’s convergent validity in accordance with Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criteria.

Table 2 also reports the results for discriminant validity, assessed using both the Fornell–Larcker and HTMT criteria. According to the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE was higher than the inter-construct correlations in all cases, except between business ethics and happiness, where the correlation (0.763) slightly exceeded the square root of the AVE for business ethics (0.752), suggesting a minor conceptual overlap. However, the HTMT criterion indicated values below the critical threshold of 0.85 across all comparisons (Henseler et al., 2015), confirming adequate discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table 2. Convergent and Discriminant Validity.

	Cronbach’s alpha			Composite reliability			AVE		
	Full sample	Female	Male	Full sample	Female	Male	Full sample	Female	Male
1. Business ethics	0.795	0.736	0.841	0.795	0.874	0.924	0.566	0.529	0.639
2. Use of technology	0.844	0.834	0.853	0.845	0.91	0.905	0.579	0.563	0.596
3. Happiness	0.902	0.887	0.916	0.899	0.934	0.957	0.598	0.554	0.645
	HTMT criterion						Fornell–larcker criterion		
	1	2	3				1	2	3
1. Business ethics							0.752		
2. Use of technology	0.143						0.136	0.761	
3. Happiness	0.758	0.132					0.763	0.103	0.773

Note. Source: Own elaboration. AVE = Average Variance Extracted; HTMT = Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio.

4.4. Model fit evaluation

The evaluation of the structural model fit was conducted using absolute, incremental, and parsimony indices, with the results summarized in **Table 3**. The values of SRMR (0.032 and 0.043) and RMSEA (0.046 and 0.050) indicated an acceptable fit for both samples, even though the p-value associated with the chi-square statistic (CMIN) was significant, an outcome commonly observed in large samples (Hair et al., 2019). Regarding the incremental indices, the CFI, IFI, and TLI values all exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.900 across both analyses, thereby supporting the model's goodness of fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Finally, the parsimony index (PGFI) also surpassed the minimum acceptable level of 0.500, confirming a robust and parsimonious fit of the proposed structural model.

Table 3. Model Fit.

Type of fit	Fit measure	Acceptance level	Full sample	MGA	Acceptability
Absolute or global	CMIN	CMIN = double of DF	105	173	Marginal
	P value	>0.05	0.000	0.000	Marginal
	SRMR	<0.08	0.032	0.043	Acceptable
	RMSEA	<0.08	0.046	0.05	Acceptable
Incremental	CFI	>0.900	0.981	0.977	Acceptable
	IFI	>0.900	0.981	0.978	Acceptable
	TLI	>0.900	0.975	0.971	Acceptable
Parsimony	PGFI	>0.500	0.575	0.574	Acceptable

Source: Own elaboration.

4.5. Multigroup analysis

A Multigroup Analysis (MGA) was conducted to determine whether the structural relationships proposed in the model differed significantly between men and women. Prior to this comparison, metric invariance across groups was verified to ensure the equivalence of measurement and the validity of cross-group comparisons. Subsequently, the structural hypotheses were tested by gender to identify potential differences in the effects of business ethics and technology use on workplace happiness. This analysis deepened the understanding of gender as a moderating variable, providing a contextualized interpretation of the factors shaping well-being within organizational environments.

4.6. Invariance analysis

An invariance analysis was performed to examine model equivalence across gender groups at three levels: configural, metric, and scalar. The results demonstrated adequate model fit across all levels (CFI \geq 0.974; RMSEA \leq 0.050; SRMR \leq 0.050), with minimal variations between models (Δ CFI \leq 0.004; Δ RMSEA \leq 0.003), meeting the criteria proposed by Chen (2007). These findings confirm that measurement invariance holds between male and female participants, validating the comparative results obtained in the multigroup analysis (see **Table 4**).

Table 4. Fit Indices for Measurement Invariance Models.

Model	X ²	ΔX ²	CFI	ΔCFI	RMSEA	ΔRMSEA	SRMR	AIC	BIC
Configural	173		0.977		0.050		0.043	12709.328	13050.569
Metric	181	-8	0.978	-0.001	0.047	0.003	0.048	12696.837	12999.300
Scalar	201	-20	0.974	0.004	0.049	-0.002	0.050	12696.991	12960.677

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. ΔCFI and ΔRMSEA represent changes in fit indices between successive models. According to Chen (2007), measurement invariance is supported when $\Delta\text{CFI} \leq 0.01$ and $\Delta\text{RMSEA} \leq 0.015$. Source: Own elaboration.

4.7. Hypothesis testing

As presented in **Table 5**, the direct effects revealed significant relationships among the variables proposed in the structural model. Regarding H1, a positive and significant relationship was found between business ethics and technology use in the full sample ($\beta = 0.1403$, $p < 0.01$). When examining the subgroups by gender, the effect was slightly stronger for men ($\beta = 0.1641$, $p < 0.05$), whereas for women, although positive, it did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = 0.0934$). This difference ($\Delta = 0.0707$) suggests that the perception of business ethics exerts a greater influence on technology use among male employees.

Table 5. Hypothesis testing.

Direct effects									
Hypothesis	Variable			Full sample	Female	Male	Difference MGA		
H1	ETH	-->	TECH	0.1403**	0.0934	0.1641*	-0.0707		
H2	ETH	-->	HAW	0.7584***	0.8414***	0.6924***	0.1490		
H3	TECH	-->	HAW	0.0297	-0.0272	0.0924	-0.1196		
Indirect effects									
H4	EK	-->	HC	-->	WTP	0.004	-0.003	0.015	-0.0180

*, ** and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively. Source: Own elaboration.

Concerning H2, which assessed the relationship between business ethics and workplace happiness, a strong and significant effect was observed for the overall sample ($\beta = 0.7584$, $p < 0.001$). When comparing groups, the effect was more pronounced among women ($\beta = 0.8414$, $p < 0.001$) than among men ($\beta = 0.6924$, $p < 0.001$), with a difference of $\Delta = 0.149$. These findings indicate that ethical perceptions in the workplace contribute more strongly to well-being among female employees, possibly reflecting greater emotional sensitivity to relational and ethical climates at work.

With respect to H3, the relationship between technology use and workplace happiness was not statistically significant in the full sample ($\beta = 0.0297$), nor in the female subgroup ($\beta = -0.0272$), although a slight positive trend was noted among men ($\beta = 0.0924$) without reaching significance. This suggests that technology use alone does not serve as a reliable predictor of workplace happiness in either gender group.

Finally, the analysis of H4, which tested the indirect effect of business ethics on workplace happiness mediated by technology use, revealed a weak overall influence

($\beta = 0.004$), negative for women ($\beta = -0.003$), and slightly stronger yet still modest for men ($\beta = 0.015$). These results indicate that the mediating role of technology use is weak and likely non-significant, although marginally more evident among male participants.

4.8. Structural model

Similarly, **Figure 2** illustrates the estimated structural model for the full sample, depicting the direct effects among business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness. The model clearly shows that business ethics exerts a direct and positive influence on both technology use and workplace happiness. In contrast, technology use did not exhibit a significant effect on happiness, suggesting that it does not function as a relevant mediating mechanism within this relationship.

In explanatory terms, the R^2 value for technology use was 0.1318, indicating a low explanatory capacity. Conversely, the R^2 value for workplace happiness reached 0.5824, representing a moderate-to-high explanatory capacity according to the standards established by Hair et al. (2013). These results reinforce the central role of business ethics as a key predictor of workplace happiness.

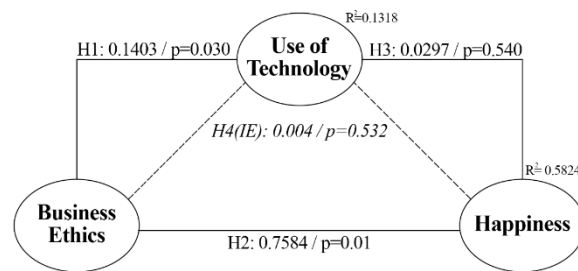


Figure 2. Structural Model (Full Sample). Source: Own elaboration.

5. Discussion

The findings provide evidence on the interrelationship among the interrelationship among business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness, incorporating a gender-differentiated perspective rarely addressed in prior research.

First, the results confirmed that business ethics exerts a positive and significant influence on both technology use and workplace happiness, supporting previous studies that emphasize ethical environments as key organizational resources that enhance employee well-being (Deniz, 2024; Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023). This relationship was particularly strong among women, suggesting that female employees are more attuned to the emotional and relational dimensions of ethical climates, which may amplify the effect of perceived ethical practices on their workplace happiness (Stenseng et al., 2023).

In contrast, the relationship between technology use and workplace happiness was not statistically significant, despite the dual nature of this association documented in earlier literature (Bangun et al., 2021; Alshammary & Hilmi, 2024). This finding implies that, in emerging contexts, technology may be perceived more as a functional instrument than as an emotional facilitator or stressor, and its impact on happiness

likely depends on contextual and institutional factors such as technological infrastructure, training, and organizational culture. This interpretation aligns with the argument that the value of digital tools is contingent upon the ethical and cultural frameworks that govern their use (Andersson et al., 2021; Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2022).

Regarding mediation, the indirect effect of technology use between business ethics and happiness was weak and statistically non-significant, though a small positive trend was observed among men. This suggests that technology might function as a latent mechanism through which ethical organizational climates influence well-being, but its mediating role remains unstable and context-dependent. Within the theoretical framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013), these findings support viewing business ethics as a central organizational resource that enhances employee well-being, while technology plays a secondary or conditional role as a potential channel of resource transmission.

Finally, the gender-based differences identified in this study introduce a critical dimension to the discourse on organizational well-being. Men and women do not appear to experience or respond to ethical and technological environments in the same way, underscoring the importance of developing gender-sensitive and culturally grounded organizational models. This differentiation not only enriches theoretical discussions on employee happiness but also reveals new paths for the integration of ethics and technology in inclusive management practices, particularly in emerging economies where these dynamics remain underexplored.

6. Conclusion

This study contributes to organizational research by offering an integrative model to organizational research by offering an integrative model that simultaneously examines business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness through a gender-differentiated lens—a combination not previously addressed in the literature.

The results confirm that business ethics is a decisive predictor of workplace happiness, reinforcing its role as a foundational organizational resource capable of shaping employee well-being beyond material or technological conditions. Conversely, the limited influence of technology use suggests that digital tools, without an ethical framework, fail to translate into emotional or motivational gains, reaffirming the primacy of ethical climates in contemporary work settings.

From a theoretical perspective, this research extends the JD-R model by proposing that technology may function as a conditional or context-dependent mediator rather than a universal resource. This conceptual nuance advances understanding of how technological and ethical dimensions jointly contribute to well-being.

Moreover, the identification of gender-based asymmetries provides a breakthrough in the study of organizational happiness, challenging the traditional assumption of homogeneous employee responses. By demonstrating that women derive stronger well-being outcomes from ethical climates, while men respond more to instrumental dimensions of technology, this study opens new research pathways for inclusive and contextually sensitive organizational theory.

Ultimately, the absence of prior empirical studies that jointly analyze these three constructs under a mediated and multigroup model underscores the originality and theoretical value of this research. The proposed framework offers a pioneering lens for exploring how ethical values and digital transformation interact to foster happiness at work—particularly in emerging contexts such as Mexico, where ethical and technological maturity coexist with cultural complexity.

This study, therefore, contributes not only to the refinement of ethical and technological integration theories but also to the global dialogue on human-centered, equitable, and sustainable management.

7. Practical implications

The findings of this study hold important managerial implications for the design of organizational strategies, workplace well-being policies, and leadership practices in digitally transformed environments. The confirmation that business ethics positively influences both workplace happiness and technology use, with significant gender-based differences, highlights the need for context-sensitive management approaches that integrate both normative and emotional dimensions of organizational life.

For female employees, the results suggest that ethical leadership, transparency, and participatory decision-making significantly enhance emotional well-being and happiness at work. Consequently, organizations should emphasize ethical climates as psychological resources to foster motivation, loyalty, and commitment among women. In contrast, men seem to benefit more from the instrumental and performance-oriented aspects of technology, particularly when these are embedded within a credible and ethically grounded organizational narrative.

This differentiation provides a practical roadmap for developing inclusive human resource strategies that align technological adoption with ethical legitimacy. Tailored approaches in leadership development, employee retention, and digital training may therefore serve as key levers to build equitable and emotionally resilient workplaces in the digital era.

8. Theoretical implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this research extends and refines the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model by introducing an integrative perspective where business ethics operates as a structural resource that activates emotional and motivational mechanisms linked to well-being. While technology use did not emerge as a direct determinant of workplace happiness, it appears as a latent or conditional mediator, whose impact may depend on cultural context, ethical climate, and gender composition within organizations.

This conceptual expansion challenges the traditional view of technology as a neutral enabler of performance, proposing instead that its influence on happiness is contextually mediated by ethical and relational factors. Moreover, the integration of an intersectional lens questions the assumption of homogeneity in employee experiences and responses. By highlighting gender-specific pathways of ethical and technological influence, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of

digital well-being and broadens theoretical frameworks addressing ethics, technology, and happiness within organizational research.

9. Social implications

At the societal level, these findings emphasize the critical role of ethical organizational cultures as engines of collective well-being, particularly in emerging contexts such as Mexico, where structural inequalities persist in labor and technological access. The observed gender differences in the ways employees interpret and experience ethics and technology underscore the importance of inclusive and empathetic organizational communication and training programs that integrate both universal ethical values and gender-sensitive approaches.

In this regard, the study reinforces the principles of happiness management, advocating for the creation of human-centered, inclusive, and emotionally healthy workplaces where ethical decision-making and digital innovation coexist harmoniously. By embedding happiness and ethical reflection into organizational policies, institutions can strengthen trust, engagement, and social cohesion in the face of rapid technological change.

Finally, public policies and regulatory frameworks that promote technological progress with a human and ethical focus can play a decisive role in building sustainable, equitable, and resilient organizations, contributing to broader social welfare and a renewed ethical vision of digital transformation.

10. Limitations and future research

Although this study provides valuable empirical evidence on the relationship between business ethics, technology use, and workplace happiness, it is not exempt from certain methodological and contextual limitations that should be acknowledged. The use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causal relationships, limiting the temporal interpretation of the observed effects. Future research would benefit from employing longitudinal or experimental designs to capture how these relationships evolve amid ongoing organizational and technological transformations. Likewise, the exclusive focus on the Mexican context may constrain the generalizability of findings, as ethical, technological, and happiness-related dynamics can vary across cultural, institutional, and economic environments. Comparative and cross-national studies, especially across economies with differing levels of digital maturity, could further validate and refine the proposed model.

Regarding gender-based analyses, while the study uncovered meaningful differences, it did not explore the underlying mechanisms driving these disparities. Future research could integrate mediating and moderating variables such as perceived gender roles, professional identity, technological capital, industry type, and hierarchical level. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported measures may introduce bias; therefore, complementing future analyses with qualitative, mixed-method, or technology-assisted approaches could enrich the robustness of the findings.

Finally, an emerging line of inquiry involves examining the ethical and emotional implications of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, algorithmic management, and automation, in shaping perceptions of fairness and happiness at

work. Exploring these phenomena could lead to a reconceptualization of organizational ethics as a guiding principle in technological design and governance, transcending its traditional human-centered scope. Such an approach would position ethics not merely as a reactive framework but as a proactive driver of sustainable and humanistic digital transformation.

11. Artificial intelligence generated content (AIGC) disclosure

The authors declare that artificial intelligence tools were used solely for language editing, grammatical correction, and stylistic refinement of the manuscript. Specifically, ChatGPT (OpenAI) was employed to improve the clarity and correctness of the English language. No artificial intelligence tools were used in the research design, experimental procedures, data analysis, interpretation of results, or generation of original scientific content. All intellectual contributions, analyses, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Declaration of AI Use: Artificial intelligence (AI) was used exclusively for the purpose of grammar and style revision. All content related to conceptual development, instrument design, data analysis, interpretation of results, and writing was entirely produced by the authors. No generative AI tools were employed to create or modify the academic substance of this manuscript.

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