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WELL-BEING AT WORK: PERCEPTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGERS- AN EXPLORATORY CONTEXTUALIZATION STUDY

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Abstract

In a context where labor market competitiveness is intense and the quest for productivity is relentless, well-being at work emerges as a crucial pillar and strategic challenge for Human Resources Managers concerning employee performance and retention. HR professionals are increasingly viewed as strategic partners in driving organizational success. This study contributes to the field by deepening the research on HRMs' perceptions of workplace well-being from an employer's perspective. By focusing specifically on how HR professionals perceive and address well-being at work, this research offers valuable insights into their strategic role and the challenges they face. This perspective is crucial for understanding the employer's viewpoint on well-being and for developing targeted strategies that align with organizational goals in Morocco. This study explores the concept of well-being at work from

the perspective of HRMs in Morocco through a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with HR professionals across various sectors. The theoretical foundation is rooted in Karasek and Theorell's Demand-Control-Support model, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being model, and Seligman's PERMA model. We have chosen an integrative research model that combines these theoretical perspectives to offer a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. The study contributes theoretically by applying these models to the Moroccan context, revealing unique challenges and perceptions that enrich the global discourse on workplace well-being. The study emphasizes that focusing on well-being is crucial for enhancing organizational performance, strengthening employer branding, and reducing turnover. Adopting a strategic approach to well-being can significantly improve organizational outcomes and foster a more engaged workforce. By integrating theoretical models with empirical data, this study provides a robust framework for understanding and enhancing well-being at work, thereby contributing to both academic literature and practical management strategies within the Moroccan context.

Keywords:

Well-Being at Work, Moroccan Context, Organizational Performance, Employee Engagement, HRM

Introduction

In Morocco, the world of work is undergoing significant transformation, with new forms of human capital organization emerging. Human Resources (HR) now **has** the mission not only to support these changes but also to highlight team achievements, track employee performance, and maintain engagement. The main goal is to help each employee contribute to the organization's growth while evolving in a favorable environment, where workplace well-being plays a key role.

In 2012, a national survey conducted by the Haut-Commissariat au Plan aimed to collect data on citizens' perceptions and priorities regarding their quality of life. Among the dimensions assessed, working conditions and employee satisfaction were highlighted, offering a way to gauge the well-being of various population groups.

Academically, the topic has been widely studied (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Seligman, 2000; Keyes, 2002; Thévenet, 2009; Dagenais-Desmarais, 2010), yet there is no consensus on a clear definition of workplace well-being (Richard, 2012). In this context, our study explores how HR managers in Morocco perceive and manage workplace well-being by addressing the following questions:

- How do HR managers in Morocco define and perceive workplace well-being?
- What strategies are implemented to promote a favorable work environment for this well-being?

This research aims to enrich the existing theoretical framework and provide additional insights into workplace well-being within the Moroccan context, based on an exploratory study. The following sections present a literature review, study context, methodology, and a summary of the results obtained.

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF WORKPLACE WELL-BEING

1.1. History and Emergence of the Concept

The concept of well-being originated in Ancient Greece, where various philosophical schools viewed it as a state of mind in which an individual achieves a balance across physical, emotional, and social aspects of life, enabling them to reach their full potential and experience lasting satisfaction.

Over time, the concept evolved in various fields, notably with Martin Seligman's positive psychology in 1998. Two main approaches have studied well-being:

- **Hedonism:** This theory posits that happiness is tangible and felt through the balance of daily emotions, focusing on the idea of "Affect" or situational happiness.
- **Eudaimonism:** This approach views happiness as personal growth, achieved through long-term goals, considering it a "personality trait" or "disposition."

The connection between "well-being" and "work" only emerged in the 18th century (Baudelot & Gollac, 2002). Subsequent research demonstrated that work can increase risks such as stress and psychosocial disorders (Bourion & Persson, 2010; Dejour, 1993; Montaclair, 2010; Thévenet, 2010, 2011).

1.2. Theoretical Contributions to the Concept of Workplace Well-being

The table below highlights some of the pioneers who have significantly influenced and shaped modern notions of workplace well-being:

Table 1: Summary of Theoretical Contributions to "Workplace Well-being"

Author	Theoretical Contribution
Elton Mayo (1932)	Mayo was the originator of the motivation theory, stemming from the "Hawthorne Studies," which highlighted the importance of social and psychological factors in work performance. His work demonstrated that interpersonal relationships and social recognition have a significant impact on employee productivity and well-being.
Abraham Maslow (1954)	Maslow is known for his hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow, individuals first seek to satisfy physiological and safety needs before achieving levels of social, esteem, and self-fulfillment needs. This theory has influenced how organizations design work environments that support employees' personal and professional development.
Frederick Herzberg (1959)	Herzberg developed the two-factor theory (motivation-hygiene). According to Herzberg, some factors, such as recognition and accomplishment, are intrinsically motivating, while others, such as working conditions and salary, can prevent dissatisfaction but do not motivate by themselves. This theory led to a better understanding of the elements contributing to workplace well-being.
Douglas McGregor (1960)	McGregor proposed Theory X and Theory Y, which describe two management styles. Theory X is based on a pessimistic view of employee motivation, while Theory Y offers a more optimistic view, suggesting that employees are naturally motivated and seek to achieve self-fulfillment in their work. The latter theory encouraged more participative and individual-centered management practices.
Robert Karasek (1979)	Karasek developed the Job Demand-Control Model, which examines the impact of job demands and autonomy on work stress. According to this model,

	high levels of demands combined with low autonomy can lead to high stress, while stimulating but controllable work can promote well-being.
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1.3. Dimensions of Workplace Well-being

- **Physical Health and Well-being:** Involves the work environment, ergonomics, and initiatives that promote physical and mental health (e.g., wellness programs, sports facilities).
- **Psychological Well-being and Personal Experience:** Focuses on subjective aspects such as leisure, social and emotional life, and cultural or spiritual environments.
- **Social and Professional Well-being:** Centers on the quality of interactions among employees, recognition of efforts and achievements, and career development opportunities.

Theoretical Models:

- **Karasek and Thorell's Model (1990):**
 - **Demand:** Workload and job requirements.
 - **Control:** Decision latitude and autonomy.
 - **Support:** Social support from colleagues and supervisors.
- **Ryff's Psychological Well-being Model (1989):**
 - **Dimensions:** Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life, Self-Acceptance.
- **Seligman's PERMA Model (2012):**
 - **Components:** Positive Emotions, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments.

1.4. Study Approach:

- **Integration of Models:** The study combines Karasek and Thorell's Model, Ryff's Psychological Well-being Model, and Seligman's PERMA Model to offer a comprehensive view of workplace well-being.
- **Focus:** It examines how HR managers in Morocco perceive and manage job demands, employee autonomy, social support, and the implementation of practices to foster a positive work environment.
- **Objective:** To enrich the theoretical understanding of workplace well-being by addressing cultural variations and perceptions, particularly in a Moroccan context, which is often underrepresented in research focusing on Western settings.

1.5. Integrative Research Model

Our study aims to explore HR managers' perceptions of workplace well-being and how HR practices and policies influence employee well-being. We will use an integrative research model, which combines various theoretical perspectives to offer a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. This approach will integrate the perspectives of the three models to provide a nuanced view of workplace well-being.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Methodological Choice: Qualitative Study

This study is a qualitative exploratory research with an interpretative scope. This method will address our research problem by filling the gap identified in existing studies, which often focus solely on the employee's perspective. The aim is to enrich the database on workplace well-being from the HR managers' perspective. As stated by Miles and Huberman (2003), "Qualitative research provides rich, well-founded descriptions and explanations of processes embedded in the local context."

We used semi-structured interviews as our data collection method because it is "one of the most commonly used qualitative methods in management sciences" (Romelaer, 2005). To ensure effective data collection, we developed an interview guide (see Appendix) to delineate the scope of our study and obtain comprehensive and detailed information.

Rousel and Wacheux (2005) define this tool as "a method of interviewing in which the researcher leads the respondent to provide numerous, detailed, and high-quality information on the research topic, with minimal influence and thus ensuring a lack of bias, which contributes to scientific rigor."

2.2. Presentation of the Population and Sample

As previously mentioned, our study aims to understand the perceptions of HR managers regarding workplace well-being across different industry sectors. To achieve this, all interviewees were part of HR teams at various hierarchical levels from diverse economic sectors. This approach helps to define their perspectives, ranging from operational to strategic levels, ensuring a range of views on workplace well-being.

The table below summarizes the characteristics of the interviewees:

Table 2: Characteristics of the Chosen Sample

Respondent	Position	Years of Experience	Company Size	Industry Sector
P1	Human Resources Director (HRD)	18 years	300 employees	Automotive Industry

P2	Human Resources Manager (HRM)	15 years	Group of companies (Over 1000 employees)	Hospitality Sector
P3	HR Department Head	8 years	900 employees	Offshoring
P4	Human Resources Manager (HRM)	6 years	100 employees	Services
P5	HR Development Manager	5 years	250 employees	Transport and Logistics
P6	HR Manager	4 years	100 employees	Healthcare
P7	HR Manager	5 years	350 employees	GC, Telecom, Sanitation
P8	HR Development Manager	4 years	200 employees	Aerospace Industry
P9	HR Officer	3 years	150 employees	Construction
P10	HR Coordinator	2 years	89 employees	Services

« Source : Authors »

2.3. Structure of the Interview Guide

To carry out our study effectively, a series of interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via telephone or video call. The average duration of each interview was between 30 and 45 minutes. With the interviewees' consent, we recorded the interviews to facilitate transcription, which was then done exhaustively and thoroughly before being subjected to content analysis.

Our interview guide was designed following three phases:

- Introductory Phase: Crucial for establishing a climate of trust (Gavard-Perret et al., 2008). Before starting the questions, we provided a brief overview of the study, mentioning its purpose and importance.
- Development Phase: This phase includes a set of varied open-ended questions focused on the subject related to the interviewee's area of expertise. This phase may encompass several sub-themes (Gavard-Perret et al., 2008).
- Conclusion Phase: Dedicated to summarizing the main ideas expressed by the respondent and asking if it aligns with their views (Gavard-Perret et al., 2008).

The table below outlines the dominant themes and associated items used in the interview guide:

Table 3: Themes of the Interview Guide

Theme	Objective
General Information	- Role, tenure, company size
General Perception of Well-being in the Company	- Interviewee's personal definition - Subjective perception - Components of well-being at work - Individual experience
Factors of Well-being at Work	- Internal policies - Programs implemented for employee well-being and their effectiveness - Work-life balance - Career development - Salary - Working conditions
Challenges and Opportunities	- Interviewee's perception of limits, difficulties, and opportunities related to enhancing well-being in the company
Monitoring and Evaluation	- Indicators used by the interviewee to assess well-being in the company - Programs in place
Future Perspectives	- Interviewee's expectations regarding strategies to enhance employee well-being: - Career development policies - Development strategy - Stability - Retention

3. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analysis of the results was based on a cross-reading of the various interviews to identify key points, variations, and similarities in the respondents' statements. After a thorough examination of the interviews, several key themes emerged which will serve as the pillars of our analysis:

- Definition of Well-being at Work According to Experts
- Factors of Well-being at Work

- Monitoring and Evaluation of Well-being at Work
- Initiatives and Challenges Related to the Concept

3.1. Definition of Well-being at Work According to Experts

Experts view workplace well-being as encompassing good working conditions, a healthy environment, and sustained satisfaction, which leads to high engagement and motivation. While this concept is becoming more prominent in Moroccan business discourse, it is still seen as avant-garde and not fully implemented. The terms used by experts, such as "happiness" and "motivation," often replace "well-being at work," indicating some confusion about the concept. The definition aligns with the Karasek and Theorell model's dimensions, including working conditions and social support, and reflects aspects of Ryff's Psychological Well-being model and the PERMA model. However, the practical application of these models remains limited, though well-being is increasingly recognized for its benefits, including enhanced employer branding, talent retention, and reduced turnover.

3.2. Factors of Well-being at Work According to Experts

Experts highlight several factors crucial for workplace well-being, such as social benefits, salary motivation, and a positive work environment. Effective management, autonomy, personal development programs, and mental health support are essential. These factors align with the Karasek and Theorell model's dimensions and are crucial for fostering a supportive and motivating work environment. The factors also resonate with dimensions from Ryff's model and the PERMA model. Despite recognizing these factors' importance, practical application to enhance emotional well-being is still evolving.

3.3. Initiatives to Implement and Challenges

HR managers emphasize creating a healthy work environment through work-life balance initiatives, salary incentives, and mental health support. Challenges include organizational culture, financial constraints, and managing tensions, which are not fully addressed by theoretical models. To measure effectiveness, HR professionals use indicators like absenteeism and turnover rates and recognize the need for better communication and tailored development programs. Challenges also include vertical communication issues and aligning expectations with achievements.

3.4. Monitoring and Evaluation of Well-being at Work

Monitoring and evaluation typically focus on traditional indicators such as absenteeism and performance rates, with some organizations using social barometers for employee feedback. While these practices align with Ryff's Psychological Well-being model

and the PERMA model, there is room for improvement in data collection and analysis, suggesting a need for innovation through digitization and more comprehensive measures.

CONCLUSION

The perception of workplace well-being by Human Resources Managers (HRMs) is crucial, as it directly influences the strategies and policies they develop and implement within organizations. HRMs play a central role in promoting a healthy and productive work environment, and their perception of well-being can shape the overall employee experience.

HRMs often view workplace well-being not only in terms of employees' physical health but also their mental and emotional well-being. This includes aspects such as work-life balance, stress management, recognition of efforts, and employee engagement. HRMs increasingly recognize that well-being needs can vary significantly from one employee to another. Therefore, they may promote personalized approaches, allowing employees to choose from various well-being programs and resources that best meet their personal and professional needs.

However, perceptions of well-being can be influenced by challenges such as budget constraints, organizational resistance to change, difficulties in measuring the results of well-being programs, and the diverse needs of employees. HRMs often have to navigate these obstacles to maintain or improve workplace well-being. This responsibility for enhancing workplace well-being is shared between both stakeholders: the employer (including executives and managers) and the employees (from operational roles).

To overcome these challenges and maximize the effectiveness of well-being programs, it is essential to involve employees in the design of these programs. HRMs should regularly gather employee feedback through surveys, focus groups, or interviews to understand their real needs and preferences concerning well-being. Creating well-being committees that include employee representatives can also help in designing and evaluating well-being initiatives. Additionally, offering modular well-being programs that allow employees to select activities that interest them can increase personal engagement. Implementing digital platforms that provide easy access to well-being resources, track progress, and connect with advisors or mentors is also crucial.

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