

Well-Being at Work and Organizational Performance: Case of Small and Medium Enterprises of North Cameroon

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Abstract: At a time when companies are faced with numerous upheavals, they are more than ever in search of performance, and at a time when employees are denouncing working conditions and managerial practices, reconciling the well-being of employees and the performance of the company is a hot topic and a strategic issue for Small and Medium Enterprises of North Cameroon. The literature review and the results of Small and Medium Enterprises of North Cameroon lead us to consider "well-being at work" and "work performance. To do this, we conducted a qualitative study based on interview as concerns "working conditions". Our empirical results conclude that the factors making it possible to reconcile well-being at work and the performance of the company are good human relation strategies put in place, sustainable motivation by employers, culture of hard work from all stakeholders and peaceful climate in the organization. The researcher recommended a culture of peace and harmony in the organization and harnessing good human relation skills by all and sundry in the organization.

Keywords: well-being at work, company performance, working conditions, human resource management practices

Introduction

The world of work is changing. New forms of work have upset the organization of human capital. Faced with this new challenge, the human resources of function has a new mission within the company, that of supporting and deploying these sometimes very profound changes. Well-being occupies an increasingly important place in our modern societies and even on the performance of the organization (Balbo, 2019).

In a context where job satisfaction is growing, where the well-being of employees is also increasingly sought after, and especially in a situation where productivity at work is a major issue, issues related to the development of employees look extremely interesting.

The link between well-being at work and organizational performance has been the subject of much debate for several years now. The figures speak for themselves in the context of Cameroonian companies: "Happy employees are half as sick, six times less absent, nine times more loyal, 31% more productive and 55% more creative"

Today, we are more and more attentive to our health, our quality of life and our personal development. The emergence of postmodernity and its anthology of new values has upset the current business model. In addition to generating value by satisfying its employees, it must now take into account the desires of its employees who essentially participate in its success. Yes, we are no longer talking not only of employees but also of collaborators.

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The news of the France Telecom trial, the hearings of which ended on July 11, 2019 and the verdict issued on December 20, 2019, testify to this. If the former leaders of France Telecom are prosecuted for moral harassment on forty victims including 19 suicides between 2008 and 2011, the indictment spoke of managerial and moral harassment, paradoxical injunctions, and suffering at work faced with a management requiring employees an extreme and constant performance at the service of the company to develop its organizational performance and support its recovery.

Indeed, according to a study carried out in 2013 by the Society for Human Resources Management among human resources professionals (SHRM, 2013), it turns out that 59% of the professionals consulted affirm that the lack of commitment on the part of employees is an issue with a major impact on the United States workforce.

The employee referring to the concept of subordination no longer has a place in the modern company. This is a concept that we find in particular in liberated companies where everyone is considered as their own manager.

Digitalization and globalization force organizations to constantly adapt to this changing world. Companies must face the demands of a new generation that is looking for meaning and pleasure in their work. We are invaded by new tools and beyond the information they generate, our society has undergone transformations and many authors agree that we find ourselves in an era of transition, between modernity and postmodernity. 70% of employees had no diploma in 1980 and today we have more than 60% of graduates in companies. We have gone from a society focused on the individual to the collective, from obedience to trust.

The masculine/feminine dimension of well-being expresses the sensitivity of a culture to emotional (feminine) or factual (masculine) factors and the importance of gender in its structuring; a high score illustrates the primacy of values placed on performance, strength and distance between men and women.

For their part, employees are increasingly disengaged in their work. According to the Gallup study conducted in 2018, only 6% of employees surveyed claim to be engaged at work, that is to say very involved in the task and enthusiastic about their professional missions and one in five French people consider themselves frankly disengaged - that is to say unhappy at work - and actively expresses his dissatisfaction.

Perceived in a holistic way, improved well-being would be associated with many individual and societal advantages which today explain a proliferation of studies on this subject (Mick, 2006; Mick et al. 2011; Zhong and Mitchell, 2010 Boehm et al., 2011; Lyubomirsky and Layous, 2013; Guevarra and Howell, 2014; Devezer et al., 2014). However, it remains necessary to develop the conceptualization of well-being and organizational performance in the Cameroonian context (Gorge et al., 2015). Indeed, little research concerns its application to organizational performance, especially in Cameroon, and this research seeks to remedy this shortcoming.

This central issue of well-being is a real social issue. Countries like Bhutan refuse "the dictatorship of gross domestic product (GDP)" and economic growth at all costs, by proposing a new indicator of wealth: gross national happiness (GNH). As far as companies are concerned, well-being at work has become a major issue today.

More and more sociologists, work psychologists and experts in human resources management are dealing with this subject. The figures speak for themselves: a happy employee is 6 times less absent and 2 times less ill.

However, it is always easier to assess the cost of well-being than to try to measure the impact of a well-being policy on the performance of the organization.

New managerial practices are emerging, placing the employer at the center of the debate. We can even see the emergence of happiness officers in some companies whose role is to make employees happier. Thus the role of the human becomes more and more central.

For employees, digitalization has opened up their vision of the world and enabled them to compare and approach work in a totally different way. Their expectations are no longer the same as before. We are in an era of change with a change in the behavior and desire of employees. We can see that the boundary between professional and personal life tends to be thinner and thinner. We spend a large part of our lives in our workplace.

It is therefore important that it is a pleasant environment, both for employers and for their employees. As naturally as an organization is in search of performance, man seeks to be happy and to take pleasure in his work. *Because a fulfilled employee is a successful employee, promoting well-being at work is a win-win strategy that tends to increasingly improve business performance* (Bachelard O., 2017).

The success of a company is closely linked to the professional satisfaction of its employees. A professional environment where employees feel valued, protected, involved and listened to is conducive to well-being.

The manager must seek to optimize all the levers that lead to the performance of his team; well-being at work is an integral part of these levers. Thus, organizations must adapt by proposing new modes of operation, through new managerial practices. The main difficulty lies in accepting change: employee expectations are different and companies must adapt to remain efficient. Today, they cannot imagine evolving without taking these new expectations into account.

The study of well-being is now the subject of an increasingly abundant empirical literature (Easterlin, 2018 and 2020; Frey and Stutzer, 2016). However, the work focuses mainly on developed countries. The recent extension of analyzes on this theme to developing countries stems from the junction that has been established between two analytical veins: the literature on well-being at work (well-being and happiness) and that which deals with the link with organizational performance. Thus, the well-being at work and the organizational performance of Cameroonian SMEs constitute a field of research that interests a very small number of researchers in management sciences, especially in the Cameroonian context.

In the first part of our work, we will present a theoretical background of the study and present the empirical background in the second part.

Contributions of psychology

Beyond the hedonic and eudemonic approaches, well-being was also influenced by the field of psychology during the course of the 19th century. Psychology has conditioned modern conceptualizations of psychological well-being whether through psychological theories of emotions, the humanistic approach, positive psychology or health psychology.

The psychological theory of emotions initiated from the end of the 19th century later led, in the 1980s, to the modeling of emotions which considerably influenced work on psychological well-being (Ekman, 1982; Watson & Tellegen, 1985; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). According to Watson et al. (1988), psychological well-being can be considered as a sum of positive and negative emotions.

The humanist approach, born in the 1940s (VandenBos, 2007) from a split between the psychoanalytic approach and the behaviorist approach, recognizes the capacity for self-determination of the individual considered as a unique person. In the continuity of the eudemonic approach, the humanist current considers that the individual has a capacity to develop according to his personal choices and to readjust according to his experience. Maslow's theory of needs (1943) has abundantly infused this humanist current and the current study of psychological well-being. This theory, nevertheless focusing more on needs than on psychological well-being, gives a central place to self-esteem, social affiliation and self-actualization in relation to physiological needs.

Positive psychology, created in 1998 by Martin Seligman, then President of the American Psychological Association (APA), is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of individuals, groups and institutions. (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Happiness and well-being are the main themes of this current which studies the concept, its causes, its consequences and its measurement. Positive psychology is concerned with the positive aspects of subjective experience and human functioning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), the more enjoyable aspects of life, and is concerned with making people's lives more satisfying (Seligman, 2004). In contrast to the humanistic approach, positive psychology emphasizes the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and positive institutions for accessing them (Seligman, et al., 2005). In order to measure happiness, Seligman (2004) proposes a division into three distinct parts (three lives):

- **The pleasant life:** the individual seeks to experience as many positive emotions as possible, with a certain ability to amplify them, to be aware of them and to appreciate them at their fair value;
- **The life of commitment:** the individual is completely committed to his work, his family, his couple, his hobbies and time no longer exists. With a maximum level of concentration, the individual does not feel more positive than negative emotions and does not see the time spent (cf. the Flow theory of Csikszentmihalyi, 1990);
- **Life full of meaning:** the individual is looking for meaning in his life. He adopts a behavior consistent with his values and commits to goals larger than him

Health psychology developed more recently in the United States in the 1980s and studies the psychological, social and emotional factors involved in health behaviors and which may have a role in the onset and progression of disease. Thus, the psychology of health offers a new understanding of health and disease moving from a "curative" vision of treatment of disease to a "preventive" vision of treatment and improvement of health (Maddux, 2002). Psychological health, also called mental health, a major field of psychiatric research, has long been defined as an absence of negative symptoms or illnesses (Keyes, an absence of illness).

Diener (1984), Ryff (1989), Waterman (1993) as well as Ryff & Keyes (1995) consider that mental health should be defined as a state of well-being, and not just the absence of disease. Their position echoes the definition given by the World Health Organization in 1948: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and does not consist merely of the absence of disease or infirmity. Mental health is a multidimensional concept presenting both negative manifestations (psychological distress) and positive manifestations (psychological well-being) (Voyer and Boyer, 2001, Achille, 2003; Keyes, 2006; Massé et al., 2006).

While the negative manifestations have been the subject of numerous research works (stress, psychosocial risks,), the positive manifestations of mental health with psychological well-being remain a little explored field of research (Dagenais-Desmarais, 2008).

Empirical background

A number of scientific studies tend to show that happier individuals will perform better in their missions. Well-being at work is, as we have seen, a mixture of hedonic well-being (that of pleasant sensations felt, positive emotions and cognitive evolutions) and eudemonic well-being (that which one feels during of carrying out a task that makes sense and that follows our values). This well-being influences commitment and performance and is itself influenced by performance. (Boniwell and Chabanne, 2017). Any improvement in mental health or psychological well-being leads to more presence and commitment in the company, and this state is given by both the meaning of the work (content) and the meaning of the work (context) (Morin, 2010).

People are the core of the company

“Let us conduct our businesses as much with the heart rather than with the head, and let us not forget that if the energy resources of the earth have limits, those of Man are infinite if he feels motivated”. Antoine RIBOUD, in 1972, founder of what was to become the DANONE group. People are at the heart of the company and its success is closely linked to the professional satisfaction of its employees. It is the engine of economic performance and without it, nothing can be created. Isn't it a bit naive or utopian to imagine that a company, like for example Google, very advanced on performance issues, and develops well-being at work only in a responsible approach?

Companies that have chosen to put people at the heart of their strategy find that this is a powerful lever for employee engagement and innovation, even if it does not protect them from difficulties. Managers are sometimes so caught up in the daily constraints linked to the life of the company and solicited by the search for short-term efficiency (productivity, reactivity, flexibility, quality) that they may be led to consider that the good -being of their salaries is a secondary concern, even a luxury that they cannot afford. However, this well-being is the foundation that will allow the company to operate efficiently and sustainably: commitment, responsiveness, fluidity, spirit of initiative... People are therefore the first strategic resource of companies, but at the same time Unlike other forms of capital, human capital is embodied. The link between well-being at work and overall performance too often passes, like any management object, through the evaluation of its financial dimension. Unlike financial capital, it cannot become the property of a third party; it is simply made available by the individual (it cannot be appropriated). This also poses a dilemma, since investing in the development of unappropriable capital will not necessarily have an obligatory return on investment because the capital being incorporated in the individual, the latter escapes the organization as soon as this last one leaves her.

Impact of well-being on organizational performance

According to some studies, well-being has an effect on creativity, quality of work (Iyubomirsky, & al. 2005), individual performance (Wright, & bonett, 1997), organizational productivity and job satisfaction. customer base. (Bietry & Creusier, 2013).

A climate that promotes well-being will have an impact on the quality of the service provided to the customer and, ultimately, on the overall performance of the company. To be successful, the company must offer an environment conducive to initiative. The challenge of motivating and mobilizing agents is important, especially with regard to skills development. This is the main lesson of a study by the consulting firm Oresys. The more employees have the opportunity to implement their ideas, the more they feel fulfilled in their work environment. Conversely, 61% of employees who do not have this freedom feel unhappy within their company.

According to the Barometer of French values established by the consulting firm Kea & Partners, fulfillment has become the fifth most desired value in business and the work environment has become the number 2 criterion for recruiting students in large school. Integrating well-being as an objective

can therefore also constitute a powerful strategic lever in terms of attractiveness. It makes the company much more attractive, which will allow it to attract more interesting profiles and therefore indirectly increase its overall performance. Today, it is the employees who choose their company, and those who do not want to change will quickly lose performance. Which brings us to talk about malaise and poor performance?

Wellbeing, a brake on organizational performance in Cameroonian SMEs

Soenen (2017) emphasizes "To understand the economic issues of occupational health, it is necessary to distinguish on the one hand the elements related to the costs of non-health and on the other hand the potential contribution of health capital to economic performance and social". (Bachelard, 2017)

So if we look the other way that is to say in the direction of ill-being, we realize quite easily that a company that does not integrate this concept has a lot to lose. This can translate to:

- The replacement of an employee which has a significant cost for the company and which involves different stages: prospecting, interviews, integration, training, etc.
- Absenteeism which generates a cost due to the disorganization it generates, delays in the performance of work or replacement by a temporary worker
- The cost is linked to disengagement in the work (errors, poor workmanship, delays, etc.)
- The deterioration of the image vis-à-vis external stakeholders which can impact recruitment, retention, etc.

The International Labor Office has estimated on the occasion of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work that the economic costs of work-related accidents and diseases represent the equivalent of 4% of gross domestic product worldwide. world. (Bachelard, 2017). Finding the root causes behind the phenomena of absenteeism and turnover improves both the working conditions of employees and the performance of the company. Of course, as we have seen, the study of well-being in the company is not an exact science and it even happens that in certain very specific cases, well-being can rhyme with poor performance, especially in a short-term view. For example, hairdressers with more negative emotions have higher turnover (Van Dyne, Jehn, Cummings, 2002). Well-being increases the commitment and involvement of the individual, which will increase their performance. This logic can then be stretched, the more the performance is improved the better one feels: this is the principle of the virtuous circle.

General objective of the study

The general objective of the study is to find out whether wellbeing at work influence good results in an organization particularly SME.

Specific objectives

1. Good salary package lead to workers wellbeing and better performance
2. Good human relation practices at work lead to workers putting more efforts at work place.
3. Favorable work climate and culture lead to workers putting their best in a work place.

General research question

Which work conditions make employees to be more performant?

What can be done by employers to make employees more performant?

Hypothesis

H1: There is a relationship between good working conditions and organizational performance

H2: There is no relationship between good working conditions and organizational performance

Methodology

The sample of this study was made up of 75 employees conveniently selected from 20 Small Medium Enterprises with were randomly selected in North Cameroon. A qualitative approach was used to conduct the research where interviews were conducted concerning working conditions. Out of a total of 75 employees that stood as sample, only 70 where interviewed given a response rate of 93,3 %. The results collected from interview were analyzed using the content analysis method by Paton (1990).

Validity of instrument

The interview schedule produced was validated by fellow researchers in my faculty (03 members) who adjusted the instrument to its final state fit to be used for the research.

The instrument was pilot tested in 3 Small and Medium Enterprises in the far North region of Cameroon and proven apt to carry on research.

Results

Based on the topic “well-being at work and organizational performance: Case of Small and Medium Enterprises of North Cameroon” an interview open ended interview schedule was produced as follows:

Please, could you clarify the researcher on the conditions listed below which can increase performance at work places?

Condition 1: Human relation skills of the manager

Condition 2: Salary package

Condition 3: Climate and culture of peace

Results of well-being at work and organizational performance relating to human relation skills

More than sixty participants of this study explained that this is most important factor increase workers' performance.

According to them, they will work better with a manager who has good feelings for the workers, attend their occasions, attend to them when they are side, see into their various difficulties and place them ahead of any other aspect. Some cited the human relation theory by Elton Mayo as it put human relation at the forefront in any endeavor.

Results of well-being at work and organizational performance relating to salary package

Participants agreed that a good salary increase performance at work. They said good salary motivated them to be performance. However, some explained that good salary is not enough to increase performance. That the work environment interns of the relationship and other factor like good climate would boost workers' performance. Some participants said good salary without good relationships in the work place will not give good performance.

Results of well-being at work and organizational performance relating to climate and culture of peace

About 57% of the participants agreed that favorable climate and culture of peace will increase performance. They accepted that peace is an essential ingredient for productivity to increase. According to them with a good climate worker will not put up their best in the work place.

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Hypothesis testing/ Results

Hypothesis 1 (Null Hypothesis): *there is a relationship between good working condition and organizational performance.*

Hypothesis 2 (alternative hypothesis): *there is not relationship between good working condition and organizational performance.*

From the results and analysis presented it is clear that there is a positive relationship between good working condition and organization performance, good human relation skills, good salary package and favorable climate and culture of the work place increase performance of workers, however those related to human relation skills increases workers' performance more than good salary package and favorable climate and culture of the place. Therefore, the H1(Null) hypothesis accepted while the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integrated consideration of the problem of well-being at work, of the quality of life in the company is, according to our research, a source of performance which companies can no longer do without in a competitive context which, like everyone knows it is very tense. At the end of this study, one question still remains unanswered: why, when they have everything to gain from it, aren't more companies committing to this approach? We all have a responsibility and a role to play in this regard, whether as managers, leaders or even employees and I am sure that the new generation, which particularly aspires to give meaning to its existence, will help to find the ways to achieve this.

Recommendations

Through this study, we have seen that well-being at work has become a major issue for Cameroonian SMEs. Thus:

- Leaders should first understand the working conditions in the organizations in order to preserve or develop the well-being of the employees.
- Managers should manage to change the paradigm, to apprehend the professional work of his company in a new way, to live and work together with his employees.
- Managers should seek to improve the living conditions of his employees and optimize all the levers that lead to the performance of his team.
- Leaders should provide support to employees to build good working conditions by putting flexibility in their organization to activate resilience strategies that allow them to preserve resources in the face of high work intensity.
- Managers should build a good human relation environment so as to make the workers to be very performant
- Salaries of workers should be systematically increase to motivate workers to be performant
- Managers should create an environment that is conducive for workers to be performant such as making the organization to always be peaceful and calm.

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