



An Exploratory Inquiry: The Influence of Line Management on an Employee's Wellbeing

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Abstract

Line management plays a significant role in influencing the employee's experience of the workplace. Managers' behaviour towards employee wellbeing is critical, as it manifests in factors such as employee performance, productivity, absenteeism, job satisfaction, attrition, motivation, engagement and morale in the workplace. The study purposes to explore the extent in which line manager practices (leadership styles) influence employee wellbeing on an emotional, mental, physical and spiritual level. The insights from the study will advance the cause of workplace wellbeing at mental, emotional, spiritual and physical levels. In addition, best practices which improve, and guide line management practices will be illuminated to support the learning and development of line management. Exploratory qualitative research design was followed. Purposive sampling was adopted to select and identify the ten research participants. The primary data was collected through the semi-structured interviews, and the secondary data was collected through the documentation in the form of policies and research publications. The data were analysed through the content and thematic analysis methods. Based on the findings, the following management practices were identified as key in promoting employee wellbeing: communication and information sharing, ethical conduct and living the values, development of people, empowerment, building healthy relationships, supportive and caring attitude, and recognition. Effective management behaviour and practices which promote and enable employee wellbeing should be assessed through the performance systems, rewarded and recognised through various motivating mechanisms. The research findings corroborates the literature with an emphasis on the importance of management styles and practices in promoting wellbeing.

Keywords: Employee wellbeing, emotional, mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing, management practices, leadership styles.

Introduction

Background to the study

Herbert (2016) asserts that highly successful and progressive companies need to engage and retain highly skilled and productive employees, and the promotion of wellbeing is critical in this regard. Van De Voorde, Paauwe and Van Veldhoven (2012) broadly equate 'employee wellbeing' to the optimal functioning of an employee who is experiencing the quality of wellbeing at the same time. Currently, there is a drive to champion the overall wellbeing of employees within organisations through better human resource strategies, practices and policies (Patel, Goetzel, Beckowski, Milner, Greyling & Da Silva, 2013). Employee assistance



programmes, or sometimes referred to as wellness programmes, were introduced into the workplace to support and assist employees experiencing psychosocial, physical, financial and legal problems. These programmes are positioned to enhance business productivity, performance and profitability (Matlhape, 2003). From a business perspective, the investment in employee wellness programmes relates to competitiveness. Sigalas (2015) defines 'competitiveness' as the organisation's ability to first provide high-quality products and services and high-quality standards and customer care, and, secondly, to gain financial strength and increase productivity and organisational capabilities.

According to Baptiste (2008), one of the factors affecting employee wellbeing is the quality of line management interaction with employees. Line management is primarily responsible for shaping culture and creating a conducive work climate (Joo & Nimon, 2014). Based on Gilbreath and Benson (2007), there is a positive relationship between line management behaviour and employee wellbeing. Therefore, it is argued that the manner in which line management execute their duties and interact with the employees has a direct impact on employee wellbeing. In their study, Dickson-Swift, Fox, Marshall, Welch and Willis (2014) confirmed that healthy interpersonal relations by management, expressed through care, trust and respect, promote overall employee wellbeing.

Research purpose

The current study gathered employees' experiences of line management practices which influence their wellbeing in the workplace. The impact of line management practices which enhance employee wellbeing will be highlighted. The insights from the study will advance the cause of workplace wellbeing at mental, emotional, spiritual and physical levels. In addition, best practices which improve and guide line management practices will be developed to support the learning and development of line management.

Literature review

The dimensions of employee wellbeing

Furness-Smith (2015) views wellbeing primarily as the extent to which each person feels that their unique life aspirations, dreams and expectations are being met. The concept of 'wellbeing' is thus associated with some level of contentment, wellness and happiness with one's life. Singh and Arora (2010) argue that wellbeing is a subjective perception of individuals about their overall satisfaction with their life aspects, taking into account and aggregating both negative and positive life experiences. Caan (2016) broadly defines 'wellbeing' with regard to how well one is doing in relation to the natural environment one lives in, one's occupation, economics and personal finances, health, social relationships, education and skills. Personal wellbeing also seems to be related to emotional and mental states and a feeling of a sense of purpose and fulfilment. Singh et al. (2010) highlight that the life domains, or dimensions, where wellbeing is experienced are the physical health, spiritual, occupational, social and environmental dimensions.

Juniper, White and Bellamy (2009) confirm the link between employee wellbeing and aspects such as mental and physical health, organisational environment, relationships, a sense of purpose and direction, and being in control. According to Maxwell, Day and Casey (2013), optimal wellbeing is experienced when one has physical, mental and social health, expressed through full functioning, productivity, energy and vitality. The elements, or dimensions, of wellbeing mainly refer to physical, mental, emotional, financial, social and spiritual aspects (Sieberhagen, Pienaar & Els, 2011).



Emotional Wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing entails the awareness and management of one's emotions in a conducive and constructive manner (Verrier et al., 2005). Smith (2009a), contends that emotional wellbeing is expressed when one is aware of one's emotions, the impact of one's emotions, and how to direct them constructively in both action and word. This includes the correct interpretation of and appropriate response to emotions. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2010) defines 'emotional wellbeing' as a collection of multiple emotional experiences at a given time and a reflection of the varying emotional states of an individual. According to Vanhove and Herian (2015), wellness implies optimal mental functioning and the collection of experiences leading to an overall positive emotional state.

Physical Wellbeing

According to Verrier and Smith (2005), physical wellbeing is a state of health experienced in the physical and biological systems of the body. This includes healthy levels of energy, proper functioning of the vital organs, overall fitness, healthy eating habits, and sufficient rest and exercise. Smith (2009a) associates physical wellbeing with cardiovascular functioning, physical energy, muscular health and flexibility. Myers and Sweeney (2004) attribute physical wellness to exercise and adequate nutrition through a healthy diet. A lack of physical wellbeing is aggravated by, and linked to, social stressors and poor psychological health (Williams, Yu, Jackson & Anderson, 1997).

Mental Wellbeing

Based on Ganga, Kutty and Thomas (2014), mental wellbeing enables people to experience a meaningful life of creativity and productivity and implies much more than an absence of mental and psychological disorders (WHO, 2010). Mental wellbeing relates to having multiple strengths, resilience and competency. Flourishing, coping with life challenges, and having a sense worth and high self-esteem are all signs of mental wellbeing. The positive contributions of strengths associated with mental wellness, which a healthy person can make to one's life and to the community constitutes wellbeing Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy and Weisberg (2009) describe mental wellbeing as positive psychological functioning, continuous learning and growth, maintenance of healthy relationships, healthy assessment of one's quality of life, self-mastery and autonomy. In short, mental wellbeing is about having healthy self-worth, while living out one's purpose on earth.

Spiritual Wellbeing

Fisher, Francis and Johnson (2000) emphasise spiritual wellbeing as a heightened awareness of being whole and integrated in all aspects of life, including the spiritual dimension which is the inner core of one's being. At an interpersonal level, spirituality is expressed through the exchange of love, hope, sharing, joy, caring, fairness and justice, while at an environmental level spirituality entails the nurturing of the social environment and the ecological environment. Spirituality on the transcendental level is concerned with connecting with the Creator of the universe, the Essence and Source of Life, being God. Interestingly, Ayoun, Rowe and Yassine (2015) note that spirituality in the workplace positively affects the development of ethical practices in the organisation, as spiritual expressions are mostly based on moral and ethical values. Ayoun et al., (2015) state that spirituality brings interconnectedness to the entire life form and transcends the emotional, physical and mental dimensions of human life expressions and experiences.

Spiritual wellbeing is related to feelings of being integrated, whole and spiritually healthy in relation to all life aspects, while experiencing meaning, purpose and fulfilment. Fisher et al., (2000) associate spiritual wellbeing with concepts such as the celebration of life, valuing of self, the appreciation of life, justice, honesty, beauty of art, forgiveness, wisdom, belief,



reverence and admiration of God. Thus, it pertains to experiencing a sense of purpose, meaning and living one's values. De Klerk (2005) views spiritual wellness in essence as connectedness with the universe and the consciousness of life energy and force.

The Influence of Line Management Leadership Styles (Practices) On Employee Wellbeing

The literature emphasises the significant role of management in determining employee wellbeing (Robertson, Healey, Hodgkinson, Flint-Taylor & Jones, 2014). High-quality relationships between employee and supervisor are associated with improved wellbeing. Smith (2009a) explains that Interpersonal Leadership is about relating to others in a healthy and conducive manner in order to build and maintain healthy relationships. The practice leadership and management recognises the need for other people and the ability to relate to one another harmoniously, while addressing interpersonal challenges constructively. The quality of the social exchange between the manager and the employee was key to the study. Leader-member exchange determines the quality of social influence that the line manager has on the employee (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti & Van Den Heuvel, 2015). Management can exert high-quality influence on employees by providing support, motivation, opportunities to develop and participate in decision making, as well as other wellbeing enhancing practices.

Based on a literature analysis by Kelloway and Barling (2010), leadership affects overall employee wellbeing. These authors describe leaders as those who have direct reports to manage and supervise (Kelloway et al., 2010). Management and leadership studies have over the years focused on healthy and functional leadership behaviours that lead to effectiveness, for example, transformational leadership and charismatic leadership (Xiaqi, Kun, Chongsen & Sufang, 2012).

The literature defines several leadership styles and practices. However, for purposes of the study, specific leadership styles were selected, namely transformational, empowering, ethical, servant, and authentic leadership, due to their strong links with employee wellbeing outcomes. Nielsen, Yarker, Brenner, Randall and Borg (2008) associate transformational leadership with employee wellbeing through the creation of rich, purposeful and meaningful work. Authentic leaders are found to have positive values, characterised by ethics, morality and care for the wellbeing of their followers (Toor & Ofori, 2008). Empowering leadership, together with transformational leadership, fosters positive employee wellbeing and health, and promotes psychological wellbeing (Tuckey, Bakker & Dollard, 2012). Similarly, Kalshoven and Boon (2012) argue that both ethical leadership and human resource services play a vital role in promoting employee wellbeing by providing support and help. According to Kool and Van Dierendonck (2012), servant leadership has been positively linked to the psychological empowerment of employees, as well as enhanced employee self-esteem and wellbeing. Each of these practices will be explored in depth below. In addition, toxic and dark leadership styles will be discussed, together with their undermining effects on employee wellbeing.

Transformational leadership

Transformational leaders have a strong influence in directing employees through inspiration, motivation, and a considerate and caring attitude, while simultaneously helping them grow and develop (Achua & Lussier, 2013). Chan and Mak (2014) concur by stating that transformational leaders motivate and inspire their followers by sharing a positive vision of the future and, in this way, creating a sense of hope and optimism. Transformational leaders also display care for employees by being considerate, encouraging and supportive. Employees are further stimulated intellectually by being involved in problem solving and innovative projects. These leaders also influence their followers by displaying exemplary ethical conduct and high moral standards.



Chan et al., (2014) found that transformational leadership brings about positive outcomes in employee behaviour such as employee empowerment, trust in the leader, commitment to the organisation and pride in being associated with a positive leader. Liu, Zhang, Liao, Hao and Mao (2016) regard positive and empowering leadership as a significant contribution towards enhancing employee innovation, creativity and problem solving. Innovative qualities in employees are critical to organisational competitiveness and market positioning. The more the employees feel psychologically safe in the organisation, the more freely and positively they will communicate, participate, contribute and identify with the organisation.

Overall, transformational leaders grow, develop, empower and support direct reports towards the achievement of their personal career goals and purposes. It can be said that transformational leadership is a positive leadership style supportive of employee wellbeing.

Empowering leadership

According to Tuckey et al., (2012) empowering leaders foster a positive working environment and the wellbeing of employees by empowering employees to perform their roles successfully. They delegate responsibility and authority and provide the necessary resources and support for employee success. They also provide employees with opportunities to grow their decision-making skills, experience and knowledge. The healthy functioning of employees is associated with both empowering and transformational leadership (Liu et al., 2016). Good leaders are concerned with employee wellbeing, which results in the need for employees to be motivated to perform and go the extra mile in their job (Joo et al., 2014). Liu et al., (2016) associate empowering leadership with the enhancement of employee creativity and innovation. Similarly, Cho, Leem and Shin (2008) attribute business growth and competitiveness to innovation, product development and process improvements.

Ethical leadership

Kalshoven et al., (2012) state that ethical leaders are honest, truthful, faithful, caring and respectful towards employees. These leaders also allow employees to contribute towards decision making and problem solving. Cheng, Chang, Kuo and Cheung (2014) identify ethical leaders as those who display ethical values, behaviours, standards and decision making. Their ethics are demonstrated through their behaviour, action and interpersonal relations. Kalshoven, Van Dijk and Boon (2016) note that an ethical leader plays a role in guiding employees where ethics are concerned. This guidance is provided through communication, coaching and feedback. In addition, ethical leaders are fair, consistent, and demonstrate integrity in their actions. Cheng et al., (2014) support the notion that ethical leadership results in desired employee behaviour such as high performance, motivation, job commitment and trust in the leadership. Employees with an ethical leader display high levels of work engagement and put extra effort into their work. In general, ethical leaders express positive behaviour and develop an ethical work environment and climate, which is conducive to employee wellbeing.

Servant Leadership

Kool et al., (2012) describe the characteristics of a servant leader as follows: empowering, humble and authentic, and focused on development, mentorship, guidance and engendering healthy interpersonal exchanges. Dutta and Khatri (2017) view servant leadership as a countermeasure and antidote to the challenges of employee burnout, high employee turnover and unethical corporate corruption and behaviours faced by organisations today. The servant leader is inclined to promote ethical values and fairly apply power which, in turn, promote healthy and trusting work relationships. Achua et al., (2013) add that servant leadership involves going beyond self-serving behaviour to serving others, supporting their growth and development, both personally and professionally. Servant leaders have a strong moral sense



and desire to be of service and work towards the greater good in their leadership and management roles. Traits associated with servant leaders are helping others discover their true potential, as well as trustworthiness, integrity and honesty. They also have a desire to promote others and encourage employee input to problem solving. Psychological wellbeing of employees is enhanced when they experience interpersonal justice (Kool et al, 2012).

Authentic leadership

Nichols and Erakovich (2013) describe authentic leaders as those who hold high moral values, have a strong sense of self-awareness, and act upon their values and beliefs. In leading their followers, they display high levels of honesty, goodwill and care, and they develop, motivate, grow and engage employees driven by genuine and unselfish motives. Rodriguez and Brown (2016) define 'authentic leaders' as self-actualised individuals with highly developed self-leadership qualities. They act and live from owning their emotions, life experiences, thought processes, values and life vision. Their strong moral code, integrity and truthfulness make them effective in building credible and trustworthy relations with others. Moreover, authentic leaders promote hope, confidence, ethics, transparency, optimism and overall wellbeing.

Aforementioned leadership approaches highlighted the wellbeing enhancing practices critical in managing people.

Research design

Research approach

An exploratory qualitative inquiry was conducted, which allows for the collection of rich descriptive data in respect of the phenomenon with the aim to provide an in-depth understanding (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In this study, the researcher's ontology was based on the interpretive paradigm which postulates that reality is socially constructed and subjective (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The ontological basis of interpretivism is relativism, which is rooted in subjectivist principles (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Research strategy

In this exploratory interpretivist inquiry, the ten employees who participated in the study voiced their views on how they understand and experience their world, as well as the meaning they ascribe to these experiences. The face to face interactions between the researcher and the participants were instrumental for exploring a phenomenon in all its complexities, multiple layers and dimensionalities (Leedy et al., 2010).

Research method

Sampling

Purposive sampling was adopted to select and identify participants from employees in a selected organisation, as they are in a position to share their experience of the line management practices with regard to their wellbeing (Leedy et al., 2010). The total number of participants was ten, consisting of five females and five males between the ages of 27 and 50 years, from African, white and Indian ethnical groups. They represented various occupational categories, namely skilled, professional, supervisory management and senior management. All the participants had tertiary qualifications, including a national diploma, bachelor's degree, honours degree and master's degree. Their work experience ranged from six to 30 years including previous employment in other companies.

Research setting

A case study was used, namely of a single organisation in the motor parts distribution industry. In a case study, the researcher collects extensive data about a specific phenomenon (Leedy



et al., 2010). The Johannesburg based private company was conveniently identified and sourced for the purposes of the study.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The entrée process began by identifying organisations where potential participants could be approached. Upon the identification of such an organisation (the case in point), the gatekeeper who holds a senior executive role was approached in order to obtain permission for conducting the study.

The criteria for the selection of participants were agreed upon with the gatekeeper. The company granted the researcher permission to conduct the research on the company premises during office hours only. Ten participants were purposefully approached based on the set criteria. The semi-structured interviews were organised by a designated company coordinator who acted as the liaison and contact between the researcher, the company and the participants. The participants were contacted via email two weeks prior to the semi-structured interviews. An information letter and consent letter to give permission to conduct and audio record semi-structured interviews were made available to them, as well as the interview schedule which was organised internally by the company coordinator via internal e-mail.

Data collection methods

The data was collected through primary and secondary sources. In order to source primary data for the study, ten semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2009), were conducted with selected employees from a company based in Johannesburg. Besides the literature review, secondary data in the form of four documents regarding wellbeing were analysed by the researcher complementary to the semi-structured interviews. The interviews of 45 to 60 minutes were conducted during August 2017. The questions asked during the interviews included the following topics: 1, Workplace wellbeing, 2. Experiences of emotional, mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing, and 3, The impact of line management practices (leadership styles) on employee wellbeing.

Recording of data

The interviews were recorded on an audio tape and the researcher made field -notes. The data were then transcribed verbatim using the Microsoft word processor, and this took place in-between the semi-structured interviews, as recommended by Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi and Wright (2010).

Data analysis

The primary and secondary data were analysed using content and thematic analysis. Elo and Kynga (2008) describe content analysis as a useful method to analyse verbal, audio and written texts. Content analysis allows for abstraction, in other words interpretations and descriptions on a higher level (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), for example, codes, themes, and sub-themes can be created at various levels. The data were subjected to thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis entails identifying, analysing and reporting the patterns, categories or themes within the data.

Strategies the authors used to ensure quality data and integrity

To ensure the quality of the data, strategies of trustworthiness and credibility were be adopted. Nieuwenhuis (2012) regards trustworthy qualitative research as being credible through the criteria of dependability, applicability and confirmability. In this study, the data collected and analysed were shared with the participants in order for them to verify that the data are authentic and represent their realities and experiences. Cresswell (2009) advocates the



interpretation and validation of data by going back to participants to check and determine accuracy. Based on Goffin, Raja, Claes, Szwejczewski and Martinez (2012), the dependability of research outputs is reflected in the degree of transparency outlined in the data collection, data analysis, theorising and reporting of the narrative.

Ethical considerations

The ethical guidelines outlined by the University of Johannesburg were adhered to in the current study. Richards and Schwartz (2002) assert that ethical research is based on the application of systematic and sound research principles. Botma et al., (2010) refer to the Belmont Report's ethical principles of respect, beneficence and justice. Moreover, the identity of the participants was kept anonymous and confidential when presenting the research findings (Fawcett & Shrestha, 2016).

Reporting

The themes and sub-themes emerging from both primary and secondary data will be unpacked. A high-level analysis and interpretation will be presented for the sub-themes. Extracts from the semi-structured interviews formed a basis from which the sub-themes and themes were generated and established.

Table 1. Three prominent themes (Source: Author's own)

Findings

NO.	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1.	Practices enhancing wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication and information sharing• Ethical conduct and living the values• Development of people• Empowerment• Building healthy relationships• Supportive and caring attitude• Recognition
2.	Impact of wellbeing-enhancing practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical – positive impact• Mental – positive impact• Emotional – positive impact• Spiritual – positive impact
3.	Best practices to promote wellbeing	Primary Data <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactive management of wellbeing Secondary Data <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Line management's role in managing wellbeing

Table 1 above provides the three prominent themes which emerged from both the primary and secondary data. These themes are underpinned by the sub-themes which were derived inductively from the data. The themes are as follows: i) Practices enhancing wellbeing; ii) Impact of wellbeing-enhancing ; and iii) Best practices to promote wellbeing.



Theme 1: Practices Enhancing Wellbeing

The participants clearly articulated their views regarding the most positive and desired management practices. They shared mainly how they desire to be managed, which is mostly in a healthy, functional and positive manner which would allow for connection and interaction with employees in order to build healthy and conducive interpersonal relations.

The Sub-Themes for Practices Enhancing Wellbeing

Communication and information sharing

Participants identified communication, feedback and information sharing from line management as critical in enabling and unlocking task performance and productivity. Clear, honest and balanced communication is desired by the employees:

“Discusses issues and address issues with people ... Monthly meetings need to be scheduled to discuss things and share ideas and allow all to contribute. Making time for employees to address issues. Assist employees.”(P1)

“Wellbeing of employees is important. A line manager need to keep an open door and allow freedom to discuss issues with employees. ... Open relationship through communication with the people.”(P7)

Clear communication and also managing by expectations.”(P9)

Good manager can give information, allow asking of questions by employee”(P8)

Ethical conduct and living the values

According to the participants, it is critical that a leader live the values and display ethical conduct. They expressed a clear need not only for managers to guide employees with regard to ethics, but also for them to live and demonstrate ethical conduct. Participants indicated a willingness to mimic the behaviour of an ethical leader.

“Has shared the importance of ethics about information disclosure, sharing information, honesty and matters relating to conflict of interest. Has good values as a leader.”(P2)

“Ethics are important, the corporate ethics guide what is acceptable and not acceptable. Having a conscience (awareness) about the impact of one in leading people.”(P9)

“Personal values need to match with that of work environment like honesty, ethics and openness. Honest communication is important.”(P4)

Development of people

The participants expressed aspirations and a desire to be given opportunities to grow and develop in their careers. There also seemed to be an appreciation among the participants that career development opportunities and promotion are and should be granted on merit.

“Believe in training and development and give opportunity to grow. See the potential of people and identify the skills they have. Employee feeling trusted and has motivation that they believe in me ... To understand the ability of employees, the capability and stretch them. Give them (employees) assignments in other departments. Encourage the people to study, develop and give opportunities. You know they care and believe in you.”(P1)



“They share and articulate how they got where they are in the career/role. They identify potential of the talent in a person. They ignite a sense of purpose and future for the direct report. Someone invests in you and puts time to coach and guide you. They build a relationship and develop your expertise and apply skills development. They also help you to balance experience and academic development in parallel.”(P2)

“Be more involving and expose them by providing work experience for the next level role. Role clarification and career development. Essentially upskill people.”(P10)

“Management may conduct assessments to understand capacity and capability of people. This enables people to understand themselves, their competence and inputs which translate into results. Mental development can be enhanced through self-study, and business literature. Updating of knowledge in best practices. Building strategic capability of people and also the business acumen.”(P9)

The participants brought up the need to be coached, mentored and developed. They articulated the need for someone to guide, teach, and allow growth and development.

“Managers must have compassion, believe in people and that people can learn and grow. Coach by taking people along with you. Educate, share knowledge, empower and teach people. Be development focused. Coaching and mentoring is important. Open relationship through communication with the people.”(P7)

Empowerment

A competent manager is skilled in utilising employees' competence to deliver results through delegation and empowerment. Delegation requires a belief and trust that the employee is able to do the task. Empowered managers support employees with skills and knowledge and offer guidance to develop their potential.

“Management can grow employees through challenge, allow them to improve customer experience and relations. Be given responsibility and opportunity when they search for it. Challenge them and minimise boredom. Allow them to contribute to the business and they contribute towards sustainability and growth of the business – growing product and also the market. Allow people to impact the bottom line and overall company performance. Allow autonomy in improving customer relationships. Being encouraged to and be given opportunities. Education and promotion when one is deserving. Involve people and indicate interest in their wellbeing.”(P10)

“Management is to help people to shift to how to fix things to move and grow. Challenge people towards growth. Provide resources, mentor, train, empower and enable. Provide performance coaching and planning ahead. Assist employees socially and offer emotional support.”(P7)

Active participation and a desire to contribute to the organisational vision and mission were prominent concepts from the participants' experiences of a positive and functional line manager. Their drive to want to contribute and actively participate was voluntary, self-motivated and self-inspired as opposed to reacting out of compliance.

“Empowering the team to deliver strategic results is critical. Line manager needs to support, challenge the team. Share wisdom and insight. Give people exposure, resources and sources of information.”(P9)

“Empowering, trusting and allowing people to do the work. Give reasonable autonomy and freedom ... Being given opportunity to run projects and solve



complex work activities. It brings optimism and hope as one feel like they are succeeding.”(P8)

Building healthy relationships

Without healthy interpersonal relationships, it will be difficult and impossible for management to successfully influence, engage, motivate and inspire employees, thus the strong articulations of the research participants. A clear need became evident among the participants to have healthy relationships with line management and their teams.

“A good relationship with the line manager is important. Line manager can help you unleash love and passion for the job.”(P3)

“Management must be aware of where people are....life. Then build trust and relationships. Manager needs emotional intelligence to connect to others. A balance between people and task orientation is important. Without people, management cannot perform”. (P7)

“Making leaders to move from good to great is through a good relationship. Understanding people. Influencing and guiding people to take care of themselves. Use the relationship, opportunity to guide.”(P9)

“Bond in order to understand each other. They(manager) should see if an employee shuts down. People should feel comfortable enough to talk and open up emotionally and a line manager may offer advice. Give an ear, with sympathy and empathy. Wear the employee’s shoes and intervene to help with work related queries.”(P1)

“A transactional relationship at work is not good enough, as in the workplace relationships are important. Socialising, speaking to each other and getting along.”(P5)

The participants indicated a strong need to be recognised, acknowledged and included as part of the team. They also strongly articulated the important role management play in making people or employees feel welcome, included and part of the team.

“Trust people ... Make people feel they belong ... Ensure that people buy in and are important, they belong and are part of the team. Connection and understanding is important Retain individuality of people. Avoid disconnection as it disengages people and makes them not want to come to work.”(P10)

Supportive and caring attitude

The participants deemed benevolence, empathy, understanding and receiving support from managers as good experiences which build good quality relationships between managers and employees.

“The line manager need to understand where employees come from ... you know. Also ... understand when they are experiencing pressure. Also ...understand and accommodate employees. Employers need to be able to advise and support. People should feel comfortable enough to talk and open up emotionally and a line manager may offer advice. Give an ear, with sympathy and empathy. Yet the manager need to put boundaries and takes corrective action where needed in a constructive and good way.”(P1)

“There is a need for support and encouragement. Employees need encouragement, thank you and acknowledgement. One needs to feel they are doing something worthwhile... Supportive towards career helps employee to get where they want to grow and be where you want to get to... Supportive manager makes you feel wanted and included.”(P3)



“Do not hinder people but rather help them before they fail. Help, and show them what is right. Give proper guidance ... Demonstrating that they belong makes them feel better about their jobs. Interaction is important.”(P10)

“Wellbeing is about a good working environment- which is pain free. During stress and challenges there must be communication and sharing of difficulties. Assist people in coping with stress. Ask people what do they require in terms of resources and support. Manager needs to know employee personal issues and provide counselling where needed. Trust, caring approach is good. Relating to people with empathy and compassion.”(P7)

Recognition

Apart from financial incentives and good remuneration practices in the organisation, the participants seemed to view recognition and reward as critical. Recognition could even be express in a thank you, or acknowledgement. The employees need to know that an authority figure is aware of their good work and appreciates their efforts.

“Approval and acknowledgement is important. With a physical handshake. Provide support and including people. We need to receive grooming, guidance and delegation.”(P10)

“Managers promote employees by identifying potential of people and put a good word. They develop grow and speak for their people. See and notice the good work people do and what they put in. Hard work is noticed when one pushes themselves.”(P1)

“Grow people and also be able to trust people. Recognition of people for work they do... Grow capability and stretch people. Involve them in new projects and allow their initiatives to succeed.”(P6)

“Managers need to give compliments where they are due ... Promote people and also grow them ... Pay people fairly.”(P5)

“Decisions and ideas being supported is very important. Trusting and recognising people who have proven themselves. Recognitions and rewards – was given through international exposure. It created a feeling of being wanted, recognised, part of the team. Given networking and opportunity to collaborate and work with industry stakeholders. Strategic exposure and full participation and input to strategic planning.”(P6)

The theme of ‘practices enhancing wellbeing’ comprehensively emphasises the management practices which employees consider to be enabling and empowering towards their wellbeing.

Theme 2: The Impact of Wellbeing-Enhancing Practices

This theme consists of the following sub-themes: Emotional – positive impact; Mental – positive impact; Physical – positive impact; and Spiritual – positive impact.

Positive emotional impact

It became clear from the participants’ statements that good management practices support and promote the emotional wellbeing of employees.

“Feeling happy ... The surrounding environment in the department must lift people up... the team lift each other up. There must be good energy in the other departments.” (P1)

“Challenge them and minimise boredom. Engagement increases satisfaction, emotional benefit.”(P1)



“Sharing of insights and wisdom in everything they know in the profession. When I have such a leader (manager) emotionally I want to go an extra mile, and engaged and very motivated, and a hype.”(P2)

“Involvement makes one feel empowered, happy and cheerful.”(P8)

The participants indicated that they experience improved and enhanced confidence and self-esteem when they are thriving in a conducive and healthy work climate. Furthermore, success in completing work projects, with feedback and recognition from management, reinforces a sense of competence and belief in one’s abilities (self-efficacy).

“Giving employees new projects and roles. Give on-the-job learning. Employee will be emotionally confident and have a self-esteem.”(P4)

“When the workplace is peaceful one will feel happy, content and at peace at home. Work stress can be handled better even if there is still work pressure, a person can plan and remain self-motivated, drive achievement and also continue to work hard.”(P6)

Positive mental impact Mental wellbeing, according to the participants, is enhanced through positive involvement in development-related initiatives, engaging work projects, and learning and development.

“Mental development can be enhanced through self -study, and business literature. Updating of knowledge in best practices.”(P9)

“Getting involved on the job makes one feel like they are engaged, kept on their feet, alert to think and are allowed to apply their skills. Being given opportunity to run projects and solve complex work activities. Involvement makes one feel empowered, happy and cheerful.”(P8)

“Give people opportunity to improve. Allow them to make contribution Allow resolving of complex work problems for growth.”(P4)

Positive physical impact

The participants drew direct connections between their experiences in the workplace and the impact these experiences have on their sense of physical wellbeing. They could clearly link experiences related to physical wellbeing to the climate in which they work.

“Physically one feels healthy, things are going well and work is not exhausting. Coping with work load, that is physically requiring (manual work) but you have good energy.”(P1)

“Physically I am engaged, have energy and can work for long hours. Able to manage long hours to go an extra mile by starting very early and finishing work late. Sharing of experience leads to my productivity, work improvements, empowerment due to sharing of the technical skills...”(P2)

Positive spiritual impact

The participants expressed a need for a deeper sense of meaning, a search for something greater and meaningful, that is aligned to their mission, purpose and career aspirations.

“Manager is to guide, give direction and coach. Harness ambition, career aspirations, guide and polish that. Give a sense of purpose and direction. Do what you love, unleash your potential and what you are passionate about. Relationship is important, with communication and understanding ... Why do I wake up in the morning and come to work to do what I do?”(P1)

“There is a need for laughter and joy...(work environment) ... negative environment is not needed in life and not good for health. We seek meaning



in the work and also solutions to challenges”(P1) I seek meaning and find a fulfilling job. Line manager can help you unleash love and passion for the job.”(P3)

“Involve people and indicate interest in their wellbeing. People will enjoy the job and be engaged. Focus on future and long-term aspirations of people. Create a sense of hope for future and growth.”(P10)

“They identify potential of the talent in a person. They ignite a sense of purpose and future for the direct report. Someone invests in you and puts time to coach and guide you “(P2)

“ People will put extra effort and also have work engagement. Managers ... collaborate with employees on new ideas, and flow of ideas ... I am proud to contribute to innovation, creativity, problem solving and decision making. I am given responsibilities that are challenging.”(P6)

“Someone to benchmark with (as a role model). Ideal leader who inspires respect. They are who you want to be. They give direction and vision.”(P2)

“The person has power and influence. They are also humble and have wisdom and discourages pride, arrogance and being boastful.”(P2)“When people are trusted they contribute, are creative and can innovate and also have motivation.”(P8)

Clearly, the data outline the positive impact and influence of line management on employee wellbeing as far as positive and healthy management practices and behaviours are concerned.

Theme 3: Best Practices to Promote Wellbeing

This theme consists of the following sub-themes: From the primary data, Proactive management of wellbeing, and from the secondary data, and Line management’s role in managing wellbeing.

The Sub-Themes Relating to the Best Practices to Promote Wellbeing

Proactive management of wellbeing

Management need to keep the work environment ergonomically sound, safe, environmentally clean and free from hazards and potential health risks. Secondly, assessment of employees’ physical, emotional and mental states is critical in identifying the symptoms of a lack of wellbeing.

“Looking sincerely after people to the point of ensuring personal safety in the workplace. Assessing physical working conditions and environment to ensure that they are conducive for people to function in. Also check for signs such as physical wellbeing, hours of work, stress and exhaustion, taking into account that people rest sufficiently. Psychosocial services and medical practitioners on site to ensure physical, and emotional wellbeing of people. Management has an ethical responsibility for wellbeing of people. Line management needs to champion wellbeing of employees. Contribute and be an activist on matters of wellbeing.”(P7)

The participants recognised the individuality of employees with regard to preferred wellbeing interventions, as a ‘one size fits all’ approach is not suitable.

“Physical wellbeing can be improved through ensuring that physical activities are scheduled, that there is a promotion of sports activities Traveling employees are encouraged to book in hotels with gyms.

“Be open minded – consider multiple alternatives in managing people and promoting wellbeing. Understand what wellbeing means for each person – individually.”(P9)

Work–life balance and integration were brought into the equation of wellbeing improvement.

“Ensure that the people work hard, and also play hard.”(P9)

The participant below proposed a general organisational culture characterised by caring and nurturing. In such a culture, wellbeing should be prioritised at top management level and cascaded to the lower levels of management. The training of management on aspects such as spiritual leadership was also suggested.

“Top management may cascade caring culture to their direct reports so that this filters down to employees. Create career opportunities for people. Managers be developed in the skills of management, leadership, spiritual leadership.”(P8)

The theme pertaining to the best practices to promote wellbeing was presented and discussed above together with the sub-theme of proactive management of wellbeing.

Line management’s role in managing wellbeing

The day-to-day management of employees involves providing support to employees through the implementation of stress management interventions and advising those with health problems to seek medical and psychological services. Managers daily interact with employees who are experiencing a range of health problems, needing ill-health leave. They also have to deal with issues related to absenteeism and disability. Another role played by management is managing performance and, in doing so, clearly outlining of employee roles and setting realistic performance targets in order to mitigate stressful situations.

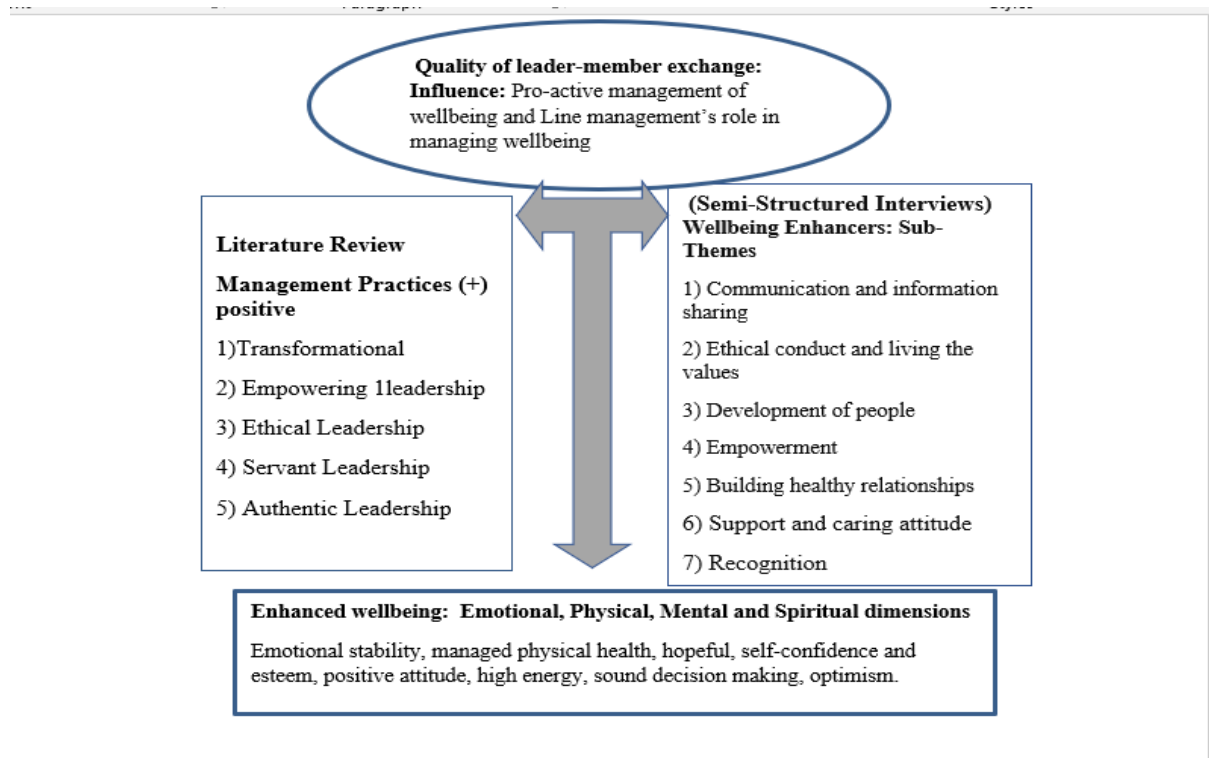


Figure 1: Presents a conceptual framework which illustrates the influence of line management practices on employee’s wellbeing based on the research findings and the literature review. (Source: Author’s own)



Discussion

The insights from findings indicated a need to drive healthy and functional management practices and behaviour, which would enhance employee wellbeing. In turn, employee wellbeing would result in positive organisational outcomes expressed in employee satisfaction, retention and productivity. Employees who experience optimal wellbeing, more specifically resulting from high-quality relationships with line managers (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) , will be engaged, motivated and committed employees who support the organisation by achieving its objectives. Typical organisational outcomes are productivity, financial growth, sales, market development, excellent customer service, product development, and overall high-quality performance. The objectives of the study were mainly to identify line management practices which are conducive to enhancing the wellbeing of employees at emotional, mental, physical and spiritual levels. The following management practices and competencies emerged from the findings as conducive to the protection and promotion of employee wellbeing: (1) communication and information sharing, (2) ethical conduct and living the values, (3) development of people, (4) empowerment, (5) building healthy relationships, (6) supportive and caring attitude, and (7) recognition. The conscious acceptance and embracing of the line management's role in managing wellbeing is a step towards advancing wellbeing.

Contribution of the study

The following management competence development guidelines are proposed. These guidelines aim to advance and enable management's contributing towards employee wellbeing. (1) Self-management practices (2) Emotional intelligence, (3) Social intelligence, (4) Workplace spirituality / spiritual intelligence, (5) Ethics, (6) Reflective skills, and (7) Wellbeing principles.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study pertain to the fact that only one case or organisation was used. This poses potential transferability challenges. Owing to time constraints in completing the research project, only one case could be feasibly studied in depth to meet the research objectives and sufficiently attend to the research questions of this particular study. Despite these limitations, the study provided in-depth insights towards the improvement of management practices that have an impact on employee wellbeing.

Recommendations

The promotion of wellness programmes and training of managers on wellbeing aspects (emotional, mental, spiritual and physical) are important for fostering a culture of wellbeing in organisations. Furthermore the management competencies identified as enhancing of employee wellbeing need to be adopted by management in organisations.

Conclusion

The findings corroborate the literature in that employee wellbeing at emotional, mental, physical and spiritual levels will enable and enhance employee engagement, motivation and commitment. Wellbeing can be improved first by investing in high-quality employee–line manager interaction and relationships. The practices which promote and enhance wellbeing can be adopted by management.

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