Workplace well-being in the digital age: An exploratory study

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Abstract

Workplace well-being has been attracting the attention of the scientific community as well as practitioners for several years now. This topical subject is of paramount importance in the current context, marked by turbulence and the use of digital transformation of processes and the functioning of organizations, where we are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of "well-being" in the company on the behavior of employees at work, and consequently on the organizational performance.

A digital transformation can hardly succeed without taking up the human challenge: involve, motivate, ensure the rise in digital skills and lead the change, become the watchwords which technologies and digitalization must combine to succeed! This can only happen through involved, willing, passionate and above all fulfilled employees. This paper will focus on the importance of well-being at work in the era of digital transformation based on a literature review and an exploratory qualitative study, conducted with experts and middle managers. It aims to: (1) present the evolution of the well-being at work concept and its different dimensions; (2) highlight the theoretical and managerial implications through the study of the links that can exist between well-being at work and digital transformation; (3) demonstrate the interest of implementing programs aimed at promoting the well-being of employees in the digital era; and (4) understand the influence can have the psychological well-being employees on the digital transformation project success.

Through a literature review and an exploratory qualitative study conducted with experts and middle managers, we were able to highlight the importance of the PO fit (congruence between the person and the organization, particularly in terms of values) in the definition of well-being at work. The originality of this research paper lies in its managerial contribution, which explores the influence of the well-being of employees on the success of digital transformation projects as well as the role of middle management in driving change in the era of digitalization and the levers of success that enable it.

Keywords: Workplace well-being, Digital transformation, HRIS

I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital transformation of several functions in the companies, top management continues to invest in technology to increase the operational performance of its human capital. As a result, the question of the added value of the digitalization of processes and the use of technology is beginning to arouse the interest of employees, actors in these processes, who are observing their way of functioning and their well-being at work changing on

on several levels (psychological, economic, organizational, etc.).

The aim of this study is to (1) conduct an exploratory literature review based on previous research on well-being on the one hand, and digital transformation on the other; (2) examine through an exploratory qualitative study the influence that well-being at work can have on the digital transformation projects success in companies.

The digital transformation is a factor of change, which presents several technical, behavioral, and managerial challenges for the company. The emergence of modern technologies has influenced the various functions of the company, including the Human Ressources function (HR). In this context, the HR information systems market has undergone a considerable evolution centered on the democratization of data, connectivity between stakeholders, automation of activities and cybersecurity.

The findings of this paper should make an important contribution to the field of well-being at work and digital transformation by demonstrating a respond to both a theoretical and a managerial interest:

- For the scientific community: We aim - through this paper - to raise new questions related to the subject of well-being at work, thus allowing the extension and enrichment of the scientific literature in the fields of HRM Human Ressources Management), as the same as the digital transformation and change management.

- For practitioners: We aim to explore the role that employee well-being at work can play in the success of digital transformation projects.

II. EXPLORATORY LITERATURE REVIEW

In a constantly changing labor market, accentuated by major technological revolutions, companies are faced with economic and social hazards that directly and indirectly affect their social climate: burnout, psychosocial risks, the impact of work demands on employees' health and thus on their productivity levels, and finally the exponential costs related to psychological factors. These elements constitute major difficulties for the company which can only threaten its competitiveness. Consequently, the company has no choice but to guarantee a healthy and pleasant work environment, which integrates the health of its employees and their well-being. Dagenais-Desmarais et al (2010) distinguish five basic ingredients composing well-being at work: (1) willingness to commit to work; (2) recognition at work; (3) a sense of competence at work; (4) fulfillment in work; and (5) interpersonal fit at work. Dagenais-Desmarais et al (2010) also present concepts similar to well-being at work such as: mental health, psychological health, happiness at work, personal balance and well-being.

Ryff (1995) generally defines well-being as the set of six core dimensions (self-acceptance, personal growth and development, autonomy, positive social relationships, environmental mastery, and a defined purpose in life). Litchfield et al (2016) explain that the term well-being has the advantage of being the universal answer to the question "how are we doing?" As individuals, communities, or societies. Well-being is, therefore, an indicator of a person's satisfaction. Based on his individual perception of his health, happiness and personal purpose in life. Michel Guillemin (2018) and

Barel et al (2016) focus on a concept very close to well-being at work, namely happiness at work. For Michel Guillemin (2016), the concepts of happiness at work and health at work are similar and lead to a common goal: well-being at work. Indeed, happiness refers to "a state of complete satisfaction, of fullness", where the notion of health is defined as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not only an absence of disease[1] ".

Wong et al (2020) assess the relationship between personal/work balance and organizational performance of employees. Through a meta-analysis that combines six factors: work motivation, attendance, recruitment, employee retention, organizational commitment, and productivity. The researchers found that there is a positive relationship between personal/professional balance at work and organizational performance. This relationship is particularly evident in work motivation, attendance, recruitment, and employee retention. This relationship is also affected by secondary factors such as: gender, industry, and organizational hierarchy. Samuel Mérineau et al (2020) distinguish between three sources of social support that directly contribute to employee well-being. Colleagues, supervisors, and the organization itself. Staw et al (1994) explain that positive emotions help employees achieve a favorable work outcome. They enhance their independence from other employees, facilitate the overgeneralization of good habits within the organization, and encourage their empathy towards their colleagues. Schneider et al (2019) argue that the instability of employees' work schedules can have harmful impacts on their mental health. Namely, sleep disorders, psychological distress, and job dissatisfaction. Consequently, the temporal dimension of work plays a significant role in well-being at work.

Regarding digital transformation, Hagbarg et al. (2016) defines it as "the integration of technology into everyday life; into all things that can be digitized." [2]The researchers see that digital transformation affects the different actors of the same organization. It impacts their daily life, changing their behavior and trying to incorporate new values through technology. Employees are confronted with a new language, which they must assimilate and communicate if they want to adapt to the new corporate reality. All the processes, trades, regulations and standards that create the cultural fabric of the organization are modified by the digitalization of the company. But not only that, the Digital Transformation influences the relationship of the internal actors of the company to their environment. In other words, the relationships with the various stakeholders. It also corresponds to a transformation of the competitive landscape, paving the way for the new expectations of the company's internal and external customers. This leads to the emergence of new business models, which create the difference between companies. It is therefore a remarkable asset, which should be taken into consideration during the various stages of the business strategy. Andy Main et al (2018) propose five steps to integrate digital transformation into the company's strategy: (1) Define the framework of one's digital strategy; (2) Orient

one's digital strategy to the interests of the company; (3) Identify the assets of one's digital strategy; (4) Have the courage to embrace the change due to digitalization; and (5) Imagine the end goal of one's digital strategy. According to Gicquel (2014), the company must work closely with information and documentation professionals and information systems departments, considered as valuable partners. Gicquel (2014) categorizes the key competencies needed for this project: (1) Documentary skills; (2) IT skills and (3) Management skills.

The HR function has grown within the company, hence the shift from a purely administrative logic to a HRM [1] that constitutes a strategic function at the organization level (Peretti, 2016). Hence the need to outsourcing and automate recurring administrative tasks through HRIS[2], thus focusing on the creation of global value. Storhaye (2013) lists three types of HRIS functionalities: (1) Basic functionalities. Advanced functionalities and (3) Front office and mobile functionalities. These functionalities make it easier for employees to access the previous functionalities and encourage their interactivity by presenting them with common communication spaces.

III. Methodology

Our work is part of a qualitative approach and follows an interpretivist paradigm which is an interdependent relationship between the researcher and the research subject. It is necessary when the meaning is not given by the observed values. Otherwise, it is necessary for the researcher to immerse him/herself in the field of research to understand the collective behavior from an individualistic point of view. In the context of our qualitative approach, the researcher can mobilize a multitude of data collection techniques: individual interviews; focus groups; non-participatory observation (Roche, 2009). For our part, we opted for semi-structured interviews. The construction of the interview guide goes through three stages: listing all the questions inspired by the documentary research (theoretical part), which will guide the semi-structured interview thereafter; grouping the questions under precise themes, to keep a methodological thread; integrating open-ended questions which will encourage the interviewee to express himself more freely on the interview topics. After having defined the field of the empirical study, we will describe a focus on the participants profile in the end of this paper (Appendix 1: Experts in change management, HRIS, well-being and middle managers who have accompanied digital transformation and/or well-being projects). Within this framework, we developed an interview guide consisting of 13 questions, structured around four axes: Digital transformation; Competencies accompanying digital transformation; Well-being a core of digitalization; Definition of well-being in the era of digitalization (Appendix 2).

To collect and assess the responses obtained from the experts, The data was recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed. The number of interviewees was set according to the principle of theoretical saturation.

IV. Findings and Discussion

In this section, we will present the main findings of the qualitative study conducted with our sample of experts and middle managers in the field of digital transformation, change management and well-being at work. The study was conducted with the objective of understanding the influence of well-being at work on the level of success of digital transformation projects in Moroccan context. We present these results according to four axes of analysis that follow a funnel approach.

Axis 1: Digital transformation, a trend, or a necessity

Although our interviewees are divided into two profiles, "Experts" and "Middle Manager", the question of the interest in digital transformation projects (on the technological and organizational level) in the Moroccan context finds a unanimous response; the experts explain that "Digital transformation has begun to grow with the outsourcing of support functions that the company is now able to manage remotely through digital tools in order to focus on the core of its business" Expert 1 (Expert Digital Transformation and Change Management).

In multinationals and complex organizations (matrix organizations) that operate in project mode, digitalization facilitates operational processes, saves time, and provides traceability and transparency of information. In the same register, the digital transformation is accentuated with the introduction of telecommuting on the one hand, and on the other hand, "the need to catch and align with competitors who reach a more advanced level of digitalization is a challenge to be taken up perpetually" Expert 2. We add to this, the need to respond to internal needs to better track and control the traceability of information to have a certain speed in decision making in an efficient way at lower costs.

By confronting this result with the research work already done on the question of digital transformation as a necessity or just a teenage trend in Moroccan organizations. Several recent studies have shown that "digital transformation is present as a necessity to adapt to external changes in the company and an opportunity to strengthen competitiveness and ensure its sustainability. It is a major challenge for companies that strive to be ahead of their competitors while transforming their threats into opportunities. (Victo & Babaci-Victor, 2017). Thus, in the oldest records on the subject, we found that "Processes are centralized, rigid, and are in line with the major IT projects of the 1990s (Expert systems, management software) that aimed at rationalization through standardization of activities (Muhlmann, 2001).

Axis 2: Competences accompanying the digital transformation

In the context of digital transformation, companies should ask themselves about the necessary skills accompanying this change on a technical, functional, managerial, and behavioral level (Gicquel, 2014). In this perspective, we asked the same question to our interviewees and the answers collected in this sense, are articulated around three bases:

-Technical skills base: Ability to develop and implement digital solutions

-Soft Skills: Ability to federate the team around a project, listening skills, communication skills, proximity, agility and organizational skills
-Managerial skills base: Team management, project management, change management

Indeed, the HRIS expert insisted on the development of soft skills as a condition for successful digitalization. ... In terms of skills, there are several dimensions to consider, first of all you need to have a base of technical skills to implement and maintain digital solutions over time, but reality has shown us that this is not enough to succeed in a digitization project, because if you do not manage to get the support of the project's stakeholders, you will surely fail at the time of implementation or post-implementation. Therefore you need to take the project to the highest level of the hierarchy and communicate around it through the implementation of a change management plan that includes in its actions a communication plan that will accompany the implementation of an HRIS".

From these results, our study revealed that to succeed in digital transformation, it is not enough to have only a willingness to implement digital solutions, but behind this willingness, the company has an interest in developing the skills that will carry this digital shift by focusing on soft skills as a core competency and similarly for technical skills as a basic foundation. In the same vein, the work of Main et al (2018) shows that "digital transformation is not only about the use of technology. But about the ability of the company-using technology-to be more competitive in the marketplace."

Axis 3: Workplace well-being in the core of digital transformation

The records collected in relation to the relationship between well-being at work and digital transformation are mixed. According to the experts and middle managers interviewed, there are two sides to the equation in Morocco. The first side, which is a major reality, concerns the introduction of digitalization in companies and HRIS as well as the digitalized way of working in order to improve the life of employees in the company and consequently this contributes to the improvement of well-being at work due to access to information, time saving among other reasons that we mentioned in the first axis. ... The HRIS allows us to save time and automate time-consuming and monotonous tasks, if we manage to free up time and make processes more fluid, the employee could eventually feel better at work" Expert 3.

In the same vein, middle management should play a key role in bringing about change and represent a relay of the digital transformation between general management and end users. In this context, the middle manager should have a certain autonomy, legitimacy, and recognition from his hierarchy to be able to fully play his role, get his teams to adhere to the change and give meaning to digitalization and its usefulness for improving working conditions in the long term. At this stage, middle managers and experts agree on the perceptions they have observed in their experiences regarding employee support for digitalization projects. They distinguish two cases. In the first case, employees claim that their freedom is infringed upon, and their skills are being

questioned because of the difficulties encountered in using the modern digital tool, as they develop a psychological block because of their attachment to old habits and they feel threatened and think that technology will replace their usefulness at work and their remuneration will drop accordingly. These behaviors are present in older employees who show a strong resistance to change in the context of digitalization projects. The second scenario consists of accepting change and adhering to digitalization projects by default and by curiosity. This perception is omnipresent among young executives who are used to manipulating digital tools and seek to discover the functional utility of each element.

For example, top management is interested in the implementation of an HRIS in order to improve the return on investment, while end users are interested in the functional usefulness that the tool offers. Young people accept the new change and adhere to the digitalization project, and in some companies, they even demand the need for its implementation, given that their social life is facilitated by digital technology. Contrary to the second category of generation X employees who show a strong resistance to change due to technical and cultural constraints" Expert 3.

"... the resistance at the beginning of any change process is phenomenal and almost generalized in the public sector, but this behavior changes gradually, when we improve internal communication and motivate the employees while also involving the social partners". Middle Manager 1 (Public Sector)

What is curious in these findings is that digital transformation, whether it is in the context of HRIS implementation or in organizational change with the accentuation of the digitalized work mode, is a double-edged sword with respect to employees' well-being at work, and the reluctance to this change varies according to the age of the employees, their background, and their technical skills.

In this sense, we have found several studies that confirm the influence of well-being on the success of digital transformation projects. In this regard, we recall the work of several researchers (e.g. Davis et al, 1989) who provide empirical evidence that "the beliefs of individuals and their attitudes towards an information system, influence their intentions to use it. And vice versa. We can predict employee use of HRIS before we implement it in an organization. But these predictions are not always correct and definitive, especially if use is mandated by management" (Brown et al, 2002).

In the same vein, the study by Maier et al (2012) demonstrates the impact of the direct relationship between job satisfaction, turnover, HRIS implementation and its impact on work behavior. HRIS is perceived as useful, easy to use and effective by employees with high job satisfaction.
And this, even in a context of mandatory use. On the other hand, if the HRIS is perceived by employees as a threat that will jeopardize their work, the level of satisfaction declines.
If we come back to the role of middle management, the results of our qualitative study show that the middle manager must

fully play his role of ambassador to carry and accompany the digital transformation. In this context, we find that the well-being at work of this population is also essential for the success of the latter, because the middle manager needs more autonomy and recognition...so that they can have legitimacy regarding their teams and be able to help them accept the change.

More previous studies have confirmed this observation. Indeed, if the role of middle managers is part of the classic trend in supporting transformations (Alber, 2015; Martin, 2013), other types of relays seem more original. A study at Phonetel, shows that "digital ambassadors", play the role, in addition to their main function (which may or may not be related to digitalization and may or may not be added to the responsibility of management), of helping employees to become familiar with digital tools or to better master them (Benedetto-Meyer, M. & Boboc, 2019).

Axis 4: Definition of well-being at work in the era of digitalization

With the digital maturity and the mass introduction of technology in the life of employees in the workplace, the representation of well-being at work could not keep the same dimensions. We retain different propositions from our experts and middle managers interviewed in the framework of this study, following the question we asked them:

With hindsight, and following your various experiences in supporting companies in digital transformation and/or well-being at work, how do you define well-being at work?

Definition 1: "I would say that it is difficult to define the concept of well-being at work, knowing that human beings are complex and complicated. But if I should try to give a rough definition that has matured from my own experience: Well-being will depend for someone on the salary aspect, for another it will depend on the social climate, for another it will depend on the absence of quarrels and political problems within the work. therefore, if the company takes care to reconcile these dimensions (equal salary, ergonomic factors, good social climate, reasonable working hours, social peace), it will contribute to the well-being of its employees" Middle Manager 2

Definition 2: "There is no single definition of well-being at work, the definition differs from one person to another according to his or her personal and professional experience. For me, I can define it because of the following dimensions: feeling fulfilled in what one does on a daily basis, having autonomy, having visibility on one's career path, being in an environment marked by respect as a value, and finally having flexibility. (Expert 3).

Definition 3: "Well-being at work is an inner state that is provided through a climate of trust between the company and the employee and that allows the employee to adhere to the values of the company, to feel part of the team and to contribute to the results of the company" (Expert 2).

Definition 4: "...The concept of well-being at work is not a new concept, well-being has surfaced, because ill-being has taken space in the professional environment. It is only

from this moment that we started to be interested in the well-being at work that the company could have it and develop it by defining a common base of the collective intelligence which emanates from the individual emotional intelligence, because the feelings and the emotions have their place in the working space. In this context, the adhesion of the collaborators to the company culture plays a primordial role, it must be shared between the actors and lead to the same finality of the company especially in environments marked by a perpetual change of the technology, the organization, the operating mode and the processes which result from it. (Expert1).

Through the analysis of the different definitions proposed by the researchers on the first hand, and on the other hand, the consolidation and analysis of the definitions proposed by our interviewees from their professional experience. **We suggest a new dimension that reinforces the components already present in the current literature, in this respect we introduce the cultural dimension as a new component incorporated by "adherence to the values"** of the company, this notion was raised by most of the interviewees in the context of our qualitative study. By comparing the results obtained in terms of definition, we recommend that the definition proposed by the researchers Dagenais-Desmarais et al (2010) is the closest to our reality which emanates from the Moroccan context. Indeed, they are particularly interested in psychological well-being at work and propose a definition based on five key ingredients previously mentioned in this paper and which are (1) willingness to commit to work: positive contribution to the company's efforts and success; (2) recognition at work; (3) interpersonal adequacy at work, which consists of fostering and maintaining positive interactions with one's professional entourage; (4) fulfillment in work; and (5) feeling competent at work.

V. CONCLUSION

By questioning the digital transformation not in its technological effects nor in its technical components, but through the perceptions and uses of the stakeholders and actors who support it, implement it, and use it through the HRIS and the various digital solutions. We wanted to emphasize the direct and indirect links that can exist between well-being at work and digital transformation with the help of answers from experts in the field who have experience, hindsight, and a global vision of the coexistence of this relationship in the Moroccan context. The originality of this work lies in its managerial contribution which explores the direct and indirect link between the two variables on the one hand, and on the other hand, it explains the role of middle management in the conduct of change in the era of digitalization and the levers of success that allow it. Thus, our study makes a theoretical contribution through the introduction of the cultural dimension (adherence to the company's values) in the definition of well-being at work. However, our study has certain methodological limitations due to the small sample of experts, justified by the principle of saturation in the context of an exploratory qualitative study. In the same vein, the results obtained through this study need to be confirmed by an in-depth study or by a quantitative study questioning the various actors in the digital transformation.

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: THE STUDY SAMPLE

Experts	Profiles	Companies / Reference organizations	Supported projects (Well-being at work and/or digital transformation)
Expert 1	• Expert in change management • Former Director of Support and Digitalization • Ex Project Delivery Manager • Certified Coach Therapist (Humanistic Psychology)	• ATOS France/Morocco • 3M France • ENGIE/GDF SUEZ • LA POSTE/France	• Implementation of Information Systems, SAP • Outsourcing • Support for change management
Expert 2	• HR Business Partner • Ex HR Consultant • Certified Coach Therapist (Humanistic Psychology)	• A digital services company	• Digitalized happiness at work device • Digitalized social climate device • Change management for the organization in remote mode "Telecommuting
Expert 3	• HRIS expert • E-learning consultant	• Consulting firm (Clients: hotel chains in Morocco, banks, ...)	• Implementation of HRIS • Implementation of e-learning platforms
Middle Manager 1	• Recruitment Manager • Manager of training and management • Management of proximity	• Renault Morocco • Lear Corporation • Eaton Corporation	• Implementation and post-implementation study of the efficiency of the HR Access software package for personnel data management.
Middle Manager 2	• Head of HR department (4000 agents perimeter) • HR Supervisor Regional Perimeter (18000 agents)	• Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training	• Implementation of the MASSAR platform (integrated IS for managing school and pedagogical affairs) • Implementation of the MASIRH program as the HRIS of the National Education and Vocational Training.

Appendix 2: Interview Guide Questions

1) Could you present us your professional background?

2) In the context of your professional career, can you tell us about the digital transformation projects in which you have participated or accompanied?

3) Why do you think private and public companies are more interested in digital transformation?

4) In your opinion, what are the behavioral and managerial skills necessary for the success of digital transformation projects in companies?

5) Do you think that the proficiency and development of these skills depend on the well-being of the employees, the working conditions and their professional fulfillment? Can you tell us about similar cases in Morocco?

6) Can we consider the HRIS as a digital transformation [10] project? If so, why is it interesting for employees at all levels of the hierarchy?

7) What is the perception of employees regarding the HRIS implementation process (or other digitalization projects) during all its phases? How do they react to this change?

8) Follow-up question: To what extent could the implementation of an HRIS (or other digitalization projects) have an impact on well-being at work?

9) On the human and relational level linked to well- being at work, what are the mistakes to avoid in the implementation of a digital transformation project such as the HRIS for example?

10) Follow-up question: With hindsight, and following your different experiences in supporting companies in digital transformation and/or well-being at work, how would you define well-being at work?

11) To what extent could improving well-being at work contribute to the success of digital transformation projects?

12) What do you need to do to get your employees to adhere to your digital transformation projects? In other words, how do you motivate them?