

## SUSTAINABLE HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN AN ORGANISATION AS THE INDICATOR OF WORK PROCESS PRODUCTIVITY

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this article is to present the sustainable health management in the context of shaping high organisation productivity.

**Design/methodology/approach:** It is an opinion article, the attempt to interpret the correlation between proactive sustainable health management in an organisation and the employees' ability to work as well as the level of work process productivity. The article is based on the review of literature in this scope using the results of secondary empirical research describing the analysed issue.

**Findings:** The considerations presented in the article show that the sustainable health management in the work place based on the sustainability values together with the well-being culture is a crucial element of the business strategy in the modern human-oriented organisation.

**Originality/value:** The value of this article is theoretical. It was shown that the healthy organisation focuses its strategic activities on health and well-being of workers and the new models of work potential management, treats the well-being as the value anchored in the organisation culture, redefines work processes taking into consideration human-oriented attitude and offers the active and engaged support of the management. The work is original considering the multi-aspect approach to the scientific issue and the obtained results may be useful both for the management practitioners as well as constitute an inspiration for further research.

**Keywords:** sustainable health management, healthy organisation, well-being, presenteeism.

**Category of the paper:** general overview, point of view.

## 1. Introduction

Productivity, performance and efficiency of work processes are ones of the most important indicators of economic growth being at the same time the reliable information about the health condition of the whole society<sup>1</sup>. They describe the professional possibilities of the given population, are helpful to indicate the key factors indicating the level of health of workers in the production age.

The workers' productivity and in a consequence the efficiency of the whole organisation, even though it is difficult to assess precisely, starting from the classical approach of the management theory, has always been a significant area of explorations. In particular, in the era of post-globalisation, in the time of modern flexible economy in the world of VUCA 3.0 and BANI<sup>2</sup> it is not surprising that the issues of proactive, sustainable health management of workers and maintaining their full ability to work for the whole period of professional life in order to shape high organisational process productivity is particularly interesting for researchers.

The economic practice confirms that the active care and promotion of health in an organisation, support of well-being culture increases the work process productivity, limits the phenomenon of absence contributing to the reduction of the potential time period of absence in the work place (Van Amelsvoort et al., 2006; James et al., 2002) as well as minimises the undesired phenomenon of presenteeism contributing to eliminating the phenomenon of ineffective presence of sick workers at work.

It should be stressed that pandemic Covid 19 had a negative influence of workers' well-being in various sectors of economy (Buchelt, Kowalska-Bobko, 2020), redefining the perception of professional life quality (Wicka, 2021). There was the growth of sick leaves<sup>3</sup>, as well as the reluctance to create new positions and employ new workers (Kol, 2021), at the same time accelerating the changes in human resource management (e.g. home office or hybrid work, development of digital competences, cooperation in the model of distributed team work, reorientation of talent management, extension of OHS systems by new professional risk factors (Carnevale, Hatak, 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> In literature there co-exist the term efficiency and work productivity whereas the work productivity is a narrower term and specifies the result of live work and its key condition is its use in the area of production and services. It means that the wider term – work efficiency refers to the result generated from any work which is socially useful. The effective operation which is based on the rule of rational activity specifies such proceedings thanks to which the result maximally connected with the assumed aim is obtained with the given cost or the accepted aim is performed with the possibly lowest cost (Tyrańska, 2008, p. 245).

<sup>2</sup> VUCA Volatility; Uncertainty; Complexity; Ambiguity; BANI Brittle; Anxious; Nonlinear; Incomprehensible.

<sup>3</sup> Areas with the highest absence growth in years 2019-2020 comprise the diseases of movement system and mental disorders (Report of Medicovert prospect, 2021. Work. Health. Economics).

Statistical data show the importance of this issue. As it results from the analyses, over 55% of people who suffered from the Coronavirus disease complain about the chronic tiredness, 32% have breathing problems and 23% complain about chronic cough and muscle pain. According to the data of the Ministry of Health 5.3 million Poles suffered from this disease, which means that many workers of Polish organisations fight with the challenges of so called long Covid-19 (Dublanka, 2022).

Also the results of the report on the conditions of workers in Polish organisations carried out by Human Power titled "Tired with tiredness" present interesting data. 2152 respondents expressed their opinions about their mental and physical conditions assessing the period of the last four weeks before the test. It was conducted with the use of CAWI method in June 2022. The mentioned report presents quite grim picture.

As many as 8 out of 10 surveyed expressed the opinion that they felt tired whereas as many as 47% of them indicated the high level of felt tiredness. The next 7 out of 10 workers said that a few days free from professional duties did not regenerate their vital forces. The majority of respondents, as many as 60%, faced the unsatisfactory level of productivity and almost 24% of them made much more mistakes than usually. Additionally, almost 70% of the surveyed felt that they were overwhelmed with professional duties (Woszczyk et al., 2021).

The purpose of this article is to present the sustainable health management in the aspect of work process productivity. This purpose was performed on the basis of critical analysis of subject literature and the secondary analysis of empirical research.

## 2. Disturbances of the work process productivity

The absence connected with the disease or lowered work quality and productivity connected with the presence of sick workers at the work place, defined as presenteeism, are the consequences of the experienced health problems. The term presenteeism has been used in the literature for years and the phenomenon of ineffective presence at work is considered as the presence of people at work who despite the bad health condition and feeling about which they complain, are present at work all the time even though their health conditions require to rest and regenerate the forces (Aronsson et al., 2000).

Presenteeism is perceived as the danger both for the productivity as well as the safety of work processes<sup>4</sup>. As it results from the analysis of literature, two basic elements affect the occurrence of this undesired phenomenon and mainly (Baker-McClearn et al., 2010):

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<sup>4</sup> The extreme example of the influence of health problems on the level of functioning in the work process was the fatal accident of one of the pilots of Red Arrows, the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, in 2014. According to the researchers' suggestions, taking the medicine Night Nurse, which contained promethazine, by the pilot in the evening before the tragic event, contributed to the dramatic decrease in the worker's mental and physical fitness. It is important that the purchase of the medicine did not require the prescription and the medicine contained the promethazine which has antihistamine, anti-allergic, depressive to the central nerve system, cholinolytic, anti-vomit, sedative, hypnotic activity (Garrow, 2016, p. 30).

- personal motivations, i.e. personally mediated presenteeism which is visible in the conviction that nobody else is able to perform the obligations, fear for losing the image of a reliable worker, loyalty towards customers and other participants of an organisation. Personal motivation is a factor which determines mainly the behaviour of workers employed in the organisations of public sector;
- work place pressures, i.e. institutionally mediated presenteeism which is affected by the management style, values perceived by the management and behaviour promoted by the management, e.g. coming to work when you are sick; fear for negative consequences connected with the absence at work, e.g. dismissal from work; loss of bonus, fear for losing the promotion prospect; work place culture which convinces the workers that presence at work is more important than their health condition. Organisation pressure is a factor which determines the behaviour of workers in the private sector organisations more often.

The subject literature presents numerous arguments confirming the necessity to prevent the phenomenon of so called ineffective presence at work. Presenteeism lowers the worker's productivity by about 30% which is assessed that it generates higher costs than the worker's absence (Hemp, 2005). It is invisible in comparison to worker's absence. The reasons for this dysfunctional phenomenon, ineffective presence at work are harmless diseases both the chronic ones as well as the single problems such as: headaches, backaches, migraine, gastrointestinal problems, seasonal allergies, asthma, joints infections. Such problems affect both the work rate (workers work more slowly or start the begun tasks again) as well as the quality of work (frequent mistakes or mistakes of more serious consequences appear). The symptoms of presenteeism are the most often tiredness<sup>5</sup>, irritation, lack of concentration and physical problems which make it difficult to perform the work.

The influence of presenteeism on the level of productivity is difficult to negate. As the numerous analyses and empirical research suggest, the fall in the organisation functioning and the lower level of productivity occur more often in the case of presenteeism than in the situation of workers' sick leave (Grinyer and Singleton, 2000).

The research conducted by Dixon in the United States showed that 56% of employers indicated the problem which is generated by the phenomenon of presenteesim in their organisations and the fall in productivity connected with the ineffective participation in the

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Army Safety Center noticed that as many as 4% of mishaps in years 1990-1999 were connected with the phenomenon of tiredness (Caldwell, Gilreath, 2002). It is interesting that during the war in the Persian Gulf, about 9% car accidents which contributed to the body injuries or death of soldiers were caused by the sleepiness or tiredness of the driver (Peters et al., 1999). There are no exact statistical data determining the influence of dream deprivation on the occurrence of incidents connected with the friendly-fire whereas the soldiers' consciousness, directing fire on the enemy troops, specification of the aim and its control, deteriorated proportionally to the tiredness and lack of sleep, contributing to the incidents of the fire of own forces and resources. The analysis of the military actions during the Operation Desert Storm indicated that 24% of soldiers killed in the action and 15% of injured soldiers were the effect of friendly fire. Moreover, as many as 77% of all friendly combat vehicles lost during this conflict were destroyed by the forces of the United States which confirms the significance of tiredness, sleepiness, monotony and dream deprivation (Steinweg, 1995).

work process turned out to be 7.5 times stronger than in the case of worker's absence at work (Dixon, 2005, after: French et al., 2011, p. 55).

The nature of presenteeism depends both on individual context<sup>6</sup> as well as the context of organisation, is conditioned by the priority values belonging to the culture of a given company which exist in the organisation.

The companies should adapt their organisational solutions<sup>7</sup>, considering the peculiarity of the possessed human resources, team work or nature of the organisation preparing various methods of assessing the effectiveness which do not focus only on the use of data referring to the sick absence as the indicator of work efficiency but sensitize the management to the health issues in the work place and the workers' attitudes towards the phenomenon of presenteeism.

Thus, care for health, safe and friendly work environment covers widely understood health prevention and promotion, creating the culture of well-being, implementation of the best management practices in the scope of shaping the idea of healthy organisation<sup>8</sup>.

### 3. Sustainable health management and organisation productivity

The modern perception of organisation success exceeds only its financial dimension drawing the researchers' and practitioners' attention to the aspect of sustainable human resources management referring not only to the effective solutions of social problems and continuity of economic activity but also on the indicators of workers' ability to work, staff's health condition and workers' well-being (Dorenbosch, 2014). The sustainable human resource management based on sustainability values<sup>9</sup> obliges directing the organisation to the sustainable

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<sup>6</sup> The individual worker's well-being should be considered in three equivalent dimensions: physical, mental and relation ones as a result of collective interdependencies, quality of interpersonal relations in the work environment which specifies the workers' lifestyle affecting the level of risk that such diseases as: colds, heart attacks, strokes, depressions occur. Their negative influence on the length of life is greater than of the traditional risk factors such as e.g. lack of movement, obesity (Stelmasiak, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> The good practice comprises the programmes of worker's energy management, so called programmes of personal regeneration consisting in training the workers to cultivate healthy habits and behaviour as conditions contributing to higher and permanent worker's performance (sustainable performance). The dependencies between production abilities of particular workers and the results obtained by organisations may be pictured on the basis of the case study of American banks building the Wachovia network. The participants of the group being subject of the training in the energy management obtained better results at work that the members of the control group considering the value of sold credits, better relations with customers and higher level of work and private life satisfaction (Schwartz, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> The good practices of the proactive health management in the work place in which the idea of workers' empowerment were introduced encouraging them to take responsibility for their health and well-being comprise global companies such as Mondial (Jenneh, 2006), Toshiba (Pollitt, 2006) and Cadbury Trebor Bassett (Pollitt, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> In literature it is possible to find numerous attempts to define the issues of sustainable human resources management and they stress various issues e.g. human resource development; R. Kramar (2014); influence on the internal and external interested parties (Ehnert et al., 2016); organizational aims in the context of obtained economic results (Müller-Christ, Remer, 1999); or organizational aims referring to the workers' well-being (Cohen et al., 2012; Macky, Boxall, 2008; Chillakuri, Vanka, 2021).

development at each level of human resources process, considering at the same time shaping the friendly conditions of work environment (Cohen et al., 2012; Macky, Boxall, 2008; Chillakuri, Vanka, 2021).

Health management together with the supporting culture of organisation well-being should become a critical element of the adapter business strategy. The concept of healthy organisation structure should be based on the consecutive key pillars being the basis to introduce the idea of a healthy organisation in the company and mainly (Josh Bersin Company, 2021):

- Physical Health (prevention).
- Mental Well-being (Coaching, interpersonal communication, work-life balance).
- Financial Fitness (remuneration system, salary benefits).
- Social Health and Community Service (interpersonal relations, support of the organisation, partnership, empathy).
- Safe Workplace (safety and health are the priorities).
- Healthy Culture (well-being culture, human-oriented approach).

The idea of the healthy organisation obliges the companies to become mentors for the workers in the identification, analysis, assessment and mainly to preventing the health problems. According to the Health Organisation Maturity Model (Josh Bersin Company, 2021), four levels of organisation maturity should be separated which are conditioned with the health management practices used in the company and namely:

- level one – work safety – perceiving workers as the labour force, concentration on benefits and OHS, slight pressure on mental and financial well-being, slight or no support of the management,
- level two – workers' well-being – perceiving workers as human beings, concentration on feeling the well-being, beginning of personalisation of actions, joining the programmes supporting mental and physical health,
- level three – healthy work – removal of any barriers at work, recognition of achievements and results, promotion of cooperation and development, pressure on equality and availability,
- level four – healthy organisation – strategic holistic treatment of well-being as a value belonging to the organisational culture, focus on the work process from the human-oriented point of view, active and engaged support of the management.

As it results from the analyses conducted by John Bersin Company (2021) – the propagators of healthy organisation concept, the companies which are at the third or fourth level in the discussed model, notice almost 11 times lower level of absenteeism in comparison to the companies from the first two levels, moreover they are 220% more likely to meet their financial targets and twice as likely to be the greatest work places and 540% more effective at recruiting top workers.

The next research confirms the importance and validity to create a healthy organisation the values of which are permanently anchored in the organisational culture of a given company, its strategy as one of the key success factors. The analysis of the level of organisational culture in the top American companies presented in the ranking Culture 500 makes it possible to compare over 500 organisations, analysing nine differentiated culture dimensions in order to be able to identify these key factors which determine its exceptionality and efficiency. The interactive index illustrates how the organisations take care of the values which are the most important for workers such as respect, collaboration, diversity and well-being (Sull, D., Sull, C., 2020a). During the Covid 19 pandemic 50 organisations having the highest profits were differentiated from this list. They stood out in the three areas (Sull, D., Sull, C., 2020b):

- Communication – the effective communication in a team, transparency of leaders, transparency of organisation, clarity of strategy.
- Workers' well-being – health and safety, mental feeling, family friendly politics.
- Agility – concentration on external surrounding, experimenting with new work methods, performance of strategies, flexibility of processes.

#### 4. Conclusion

The document published by the European Commission titled “Industry 5,0: A Transformative Vision for Europe” stressed that the industry era 5.0 (as the successor of industry 4.0 which requires development) promotes the human-oriented approach to the worker, considers social moods, resistance to changes, pays attention to the well-being of the working class, emphasising the significant role of interested parties in the context of sustainable development (Dixson-Declève et al., 2021).

Thus, designing the conceptual and practical model of sustainable work place, the following organisation dimensions should be considered:

- Organisational culture and employer's brand (work place is a brand).
- Well-being (healthy work environment means higher efficiency).
- Democratisation (co-participation induces innovations).
- Technology (intelligent workplace supports organisation agility).

At present when the crises are of chronic nature, the organisational ability to implement changes enables to create the anti-fragility model based on the sustainable work potential management, parallel concentration on results and transformation of the work environment supporting people creating company societies.

Thus, the organisational support should cover changes in the organisational culture, values promoted by it<sup>10</sup> and contribute to the company policy. Good management practices cover both investment in development of abilities, knowledge and professional competences as well as refer to creation and maintenance of “workers’ capacity” keeping the high level of engagement at work processes. At the same time it is necessary to notice that before the period of Covid-19 pandemic, the management of well-being processes referred mainly to the support of worker’s physical well-being. The period of pandemic intensified the occurrence of dangers in the mental and relation well-being in the work environment connected with the workers’ adaptation to the completely new digital reality, organisation of remote work, creating relations in the virtual world and team integration remotely. The organisations which dealt with the pandemic challenges the best concentrated their strategic activities on three areas and namely: workers’ health and well-being; business fitness and change management and new models of work potential management. Well-being, mental and physical health of workers are not the only elements of sick absenteeism analysis. The healthy and effective organisation, efficient team and productive worker are also not only the matter of benefits and privileges.

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<sup>10</sup> The basic values comprise the most important and stable rules observed by the organisation which create the set of unorganised in time main rules of the company without external justification, they reflect the internal convictions of the organisation participants (Collins, Porras, 2013).



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