Rethinking HR in Nonprofits: Prioritizing Employee Well-being for Sustainable Impact in South Africa and Nigeria

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Abstract

Employees are central to organizational success, and their well-being significantly impacts productivity and organizational growth. However, Human Resource (HR) practices that support employee well-being in for-profit organizations often differ from those needed in nonprofit sectors, particularly within African contexts. This study investigates the influence of well-being-related policies, practices, and products on employees in African nonprofits, specifically focusing on organizations in Nigeria and South Africa. Through literature reviews and assessments of four nonprofits, the research reveals that traditional HR practices covering staffing, performance management, compensation, training, and career development often do not align with established HRM theories. Many organizations lack dedicated HR roles, and there is a notable scarcity of policies and tools to promote employee well-being. Furthermore, leadership accountability and a well-defined organizational culture are frequently minimal. Given the donor-dependent nature of these nonprofits and the importance of maintaining HRM standards, this study develops a framework for integrating employee well-being as a key performance indicator (KPI). This framework redefines HR practices as a functional role rather than merely a position and emphasizes gradual investment in employees. It introduces practical tools, such as an employee well-being charter and a visioning matrix, and encourages nonprofits to implement these tools, set measurable targets, and ensure accountability through metrics like employee satisfaction surveys. This approach aims to enhance transparency and foster a culture of continuous improvement in employee well-being within African nonprofits.

Keywords: employee well-being, nonprofit organizations, human resource management, Africa

1. Introduction

Gary Dessler defines Human Resource Management (HRM) as "the process of acquiring, training, appraising, and compensating employees, and of attending to their labour relations, health and safety, and fairness concerns" (Dessler, 2017). Central to this definition is the recognition of employees as whole individuals with diverse needs that contribute to their overall sense of fulfilment.

The critical role of employees has become especially apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted how essential a thriving workforce is to organizational success. The connection between employee well-being and organizational performance is well-documented, with research indicating that well-being can boost productivity by approximately 10% and reduce turnover, which is crucial for maintaining a positive organizational image.

However, the challenges faced by African nonprofits are more pronounced compared to their global counterparts. According to the Wills Towers Watson (2021) survey, African employers face severe issues such as employee stress, burnout, and mental health concerns, exacerbated by poor financial health among employees. Sub-Saharan Africa reports the lowest percentage of employees living comfortably on their current income, highlighting the acute financial strain faced by workers.

African nonprofits, often reliant on donor funding, struggle to offer comprehensive employee benefits and job security, exacerbating issues of burnout and stress. Unlike their private sector counterparts, many African nonprofits lack dedicated HR departments, and existing managers may lack the knowledge to effectively address well-being issues beyond basic salary.

This research article aims to explore HR practices within local African nonprofits, focusing on Nigeria and South Africa, and to propose innovative methods for integrating employee well-being as a key performance indicator (KPI). By critically examining the current HR models and developing a framework to enhance well-being, this study seeks to improve both employee satisfaction and organizational performance within these challenging contexts.

The motivation behind this research stems from a commitment to using HRM as a tool for fostering systems and cultures that positively impact employee well-being. The project seeks to translate theoretical HR ideals into practical, culturally relevant practices that elevate employee well-being in nonprofits, ultimately contributing to more effective and resilient organizations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Labor Standards and Nonprofit Compliance

Nonprofit organizations, by their very nature, seek to address societal gaps left by government or private sectors. Their core mission is to deliver public benefits without profit motives, as outlined by Crosta (2022). Despite their mission-driven focus, nonprofits must adhere to labour standards that ensure job security, provide adequate training, offer reasonable wages, and

maintain health and safety protocols. Implementing these standards can be particularly challenging due to often limited resources and varying operational contexts. The absence of formal HR structures in many nonprofits raises critical questions about their capacity to meet these standards effectively and the potential impacts on employee performance and retention.

Nonprofits frequently operate under financial constraints that can limit their ability to hire dedicated HR personnel, leading to potential gaps in compliance with labour standards. Research indicates that these constraints can result in inconsistent application of labour laws and standards, which may negatively impact employee morale and performance (Smith, 2021). Moreover, the informal nature of HR practices in many nonprofits can lead to ambiguity in employee rights and expectations, further complicating compliance efforts (Jones & Taylor, 2020).

2.2 HRM Theories and Nonprofit Realities

Traditional Human Resource Management (HRM) theories, such as those proposed by Henri Fayol and Max Weber, emphasize structured management and clearly defined roles. Fayol's principles of planning, organizing, and controlling, along with Weber's bureaucratic approach characterized by fixed rules and hierarchical structures, are often less applicable to nonprofits. These organizations frequently function with a blend of paid staff and volunteers, starting with informal HR practices and evolving as financial resources allow (Fayol, 1916; Weber, 1922).

In contrast to the structured approaches recommended by Fayol and Weber, nonprofits often operate with fluid organizational structures that adapt to their changing needs and available resources. The reliance on a mix of paid employees and volunteers introduces variability in employment practices, challenging the straightforward application of traditional HRM theories (Wilson & Meyer, 2023). The need for adaptable and context-sensitive HRM practices is therefore critical in nonprofit settings, where formal HR practices may be underdeveloped or evolving.

2.3 HRM and the Donor-Dependence Challenge

The dependence on donor funding presents a significant challenge for HRM in many African nonprofits. Batti Rehema (2014) highlights that the unpredictable nature of donor funding can lead to issues such as mismatched qualifications, insufficient HR policies, and ethical concerns over salary disparities. These challenges often result in low staff morale and high turnover rates. Nonprofits may lack dedicated HR departments, and those responsible for HR functions, such as project managers, might not possess specialized HR expertise, exacerbating the difficulties in managing employee relations and performance (Rehema, 2014).

The donor-dependence challenge also impacts the stability of employment conditions, with temporary or short-term contracts often being the norm in donor-funded projects. This instability can undermine efforts to develop long-term HR strategies and contribute to a cycle of staff turnover and disengagement (Osei & Opoku, 2019).

2.4 HRM and Employee Motivation in Nonprofits

Akinlade and Shalack (2017) argue that traditional HRM practices, such as performance-based bonuses, may be less effective in nonprofits where intrinsic motivation is a significant driver. Volunteers and staff are often motivated by a commitment to the organization's mission rather than financial incentives. Effective HRM in nonprofits should therefore focus on aligning practices with the mission and values of the organization. This includes emphasizing non-monetary forms of recognition, such as meaningful work experiences and opportunities for personal growth (Akinlade & Shalack, 2017).

Furthermore, research suggests that creating a supportive and inclusive work environment can enhance employee motivation and retention. Nonprofits that foster a culture of appreciation and alignment with their mission tend to experience higher levels of staff satisfaction and commitment (Harris & White, 2022).

2.5 HRM Practices Aligned with Nonprofit Objectives

The alignment of HR practices with nonprofit objectives is crucial for organizational success. Both Akinlade and Shalack (2017) and Mazhawidza (2022) emphasize the importance of HR practices that reflect and support the mission of the organization. Akinlade and Shalack stress the need for HR practices that create a meaningful experience for volunteers, which can enhance recruitment and retention. Mazhawidza highlights the benefits of formal HRM systems that can offer predictability and bolster organizational culture (Mazhawidza, 2022).

Effective HRM practices in nonprofits should focus on transparency, good governance, and stakeholder engagement. Such practices contribute to improved performance and sustainability by fostering a positive organizational culture and enhancing the alignment between staff activities and the organization's mission (Bryant & Allen, 2021).

2.6 Culture and Leadership as Drivers of Employee Well-being

The role of organizational culture and leadership in promoting employee well-being is well-documented. Research indicates that a strong, accountable board and transparent policies create a supportive work environment conducive to employee well-being (Johnson & Lee, 2020). Effective leadership should prioritize creating a culture of empathy and collaboration, moving away from competitive performance appraisals towards systems that enhance both individual and collective performance.

Implementing HR policies that address work-life balance, job security, and career advancement can significantly improve employee motivation and well-being. Leaders who are committed to fostering a positive organizational culture and providing adequate support for their staff contribute to a more engaged and satisfied workforce (Turner & Harris, 2019).

2.7 Contextualizing the Concept of Employee Well-being

Employee well-being is a multifaceted construct that encompasses several dimensions, each contributing to an individual's overall quality of life and mental health. According to Gallup (2022), employee well-being is defined through five key dimensions: career, social, financial, physical, and community well-being. These dimensions are deeply interrelated and collectively influence an individual's overall mental health and daily emotional experiences.

1. **Career Well-being**: This dimension relates to an individual's satisfaction and engagement with their work. It includes factors such as job fulfilment, growth opportunities, and alignment with personal and professional goals. Employees who find their work meaningful and who have clear pathways for advancement are likely to experience higher levels of career well-being. Gallup's research highlights that employees with high career well-being are more productive, motivated, and engaged (Gallup, 2022).

2. **Social Well-being**: Social well-being refers to the quality of relationships and social interactions an individual experiences. Strong, supportive relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and other social networks contribute significantly to an individual's sense of belonging and emotional health. Positive social interactions at work can enhance job satisfaction and reduce stress, thus improving overall well-being (Gallup, 2022).

3. **Financial Well-being**: Financial well-being encompasses an individual's financial stability and the stress or security they feel regarding their financial situation. Adequate compensation, job security, and financial planning support contribute to financial well-being. Employees who feel financially secure are less likely to experience anxiety and stress related to their financial status, which can positively impact their overall well-being (Gallup, 2022).

4. **Physical Well-being**: Physical well-being involves an individual's health and wellness, including factors such as nutrition, exercise, and overall physical health. Work environments that promote physical well-being through health programs, ergonomic workspaces, and a healthy work-life balance contribute to reduced absenteeism and higher levels of energy and productivity (Gallup, 2022).

5. **Community Well-being**: Community well-being pertains to an individual's sense of connection and contribution to their broader community. This dimension includes involvement in community activities and a sense of purpose derived from contributing to the greater good. In the nonprofit sector, where community engagement is often a core mission, fostering a sense of community well-being among employees can enhance motivation and satisfaction (Gallup, 2022).

2.8 Integration of Well-being Dimensions in Nonprofits

In the nonprofit sector, addressing these dimensions of employee well-being is of paramount importance. Nonprofits often operate with limited resources, which can pose challenges in supporting all aspects of employee well-being. However, integrating well-being considerations into strategic HRM practices is crucial for fostering a supportive and productive work environment.

Ward (2021) emphasizes the relevance of Human Relations Management Theory in this context. According to Ward, this theory underscores the importance of creating positive social bonds and enhancing working conditions to improve employee productivity. In nonprofits, where resources may be constrained, prioritizing these aspects can help mitigate some of the challenges associated with limited budgets.

1. **Promoting Positive Social Bonds**: Nonprofits should cultivate a work environment that encourages strong interpersonal relationships and social support among staff. This can be achieved through team-building activities, open communication channels, and fostering a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. Strong social bonds not only enhance job satisfaction but also contribute to a supportive organizational culture.

2. **Enhancing Working Conditions**: Improving working conditions, even within resource constraints, can have a significant impact on employee well-being. This includes ensuring a safe and healthy work environment, providing flexibility where possible, and supporting work-life balance. Small investments in ergonomic improvements, mental health resources, and professional development can yield substantial benefits for employee well-being.

3. **Aligning HRM Practices with Well-being Goals**: Strategic HRM practices should be designed to address and integrate the different dimensions of well-being. This includes creating policies and programs that support career development, financial security, physical health, and community involvement. For nonprofits, aligning HRM practices with well-being goals can enhance employee engagement, retention, and overall organizational effectiveness.

In conclusion, contextualizing employee well-being within the nonprofit sector requires a holistic approach that considers the interconnected nature of the five dimensions of well-being. By integrating well-being considerations into HRM strategies, nonprofits can create a more supportive and effective work environment, ultimately contributing to their mission and sustainability.

2.9 Employee Well-being and HRM in Nonprofits

This project adopts the principle of equifinality, recognizing that no two nonprofits are identical. Their diverse visions, missions, funding sources, and operational environments necessitate tailored HRM practices. The proposed approach involves a graduated scale of managing employee well-being, which includes setting performance indicators, tracking progress, and reporting findings.

By focusing on fit-for-purpose practices rather than adhering to standardized best practices, nonprofits can better align HRM with their specific needs and resources. This adaptive approach is designed to enhance both employee well-being and organizational performance by acknowledging and addressing the unique challenges faced by each organization (Jackson & Lang, 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Population and Sample

The study targeted nonprofits in Nigeria and South Africa, focusing on three Nigerian and one South African nonprofit. Participants were selected through professional networks, resulting in fourteen (14) employee responses and interviews with four (4) managers/HR leads.

3.2 Study Instruments & Techniques

A mixed-methods approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative data. Employees completed a digital questionnaire with thirteen (13) questions on well-being, while management/HR leads were interviewed via Zoom using a question guide on leadership, culture, and well-being initiatives. The questions were informed by literature on well-being and HRM practices.

3.3 Data Analysis Technique

Interview data were analysed using Microsoft Word to create word clouds and identify common themes. Verbatim quotes highlighted key well-being issues and successes. Survey data were processed in Microsoft Excel, and graphs were generated to illustrate responses. The analysis was framed around HRM models and well-being themes identified in the literature, aiming to propose an effective HRM and well-being interaction framework for Nigerian and South African nonprofits.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

According to Collis and Hussey (2003), ethical considerations include acknowledging other researchers' ideas and clearly citing the original work, ensuring the anonymity of the respondents, clearly stating the scope of the proposed research, clearly stating items on the questionnaire and observation checklist, avoiding leading and bias questions, among others. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and accurate results representation. Participants were aware of the study's purpose, and personal data were not collected. Confidentiality agreements were signed with participating nonprofits. Hence, this research study gives special attention and consideration to be in accordance with research ethicalities.

3.5 Limitations of Study

The study aimed to include five (5) nonprofits but was limited by difficulties in recruiting South African participants due to lack of HR units. The data from South Africa were supplemented with information from a similar study in Cape Town.

4. Discussion

The study highlights a disconnect between formal HR practices and employee well-being in nonprofits. While job descriptions are provided, the informal nature of recruitment and project-based contracts contribute to stress and job dissatisfaction. Effective HRM in nonprofits should integrate well-being strategies tailored to their unique contexts, ensuring alignment between job expectations and support mechanisms to enhance overall performance and employee satisfaction.

Using Gallup's well-being elements as a framework, the study examined HR practices in four nonprofits (Nonprofits A, B, C, and D) and their impact on employee well-being.

4.1 Staffing

Recruitment practices varied significantly:

- **Nonprofit A**: Relied on local volunteers with informal recruitment based on convenience and mission alignment.

- **Nonprofit B**: Employed a mix of full-time staff and consultants, with recruitment tied to project needs and short-term contracts.

- **Nonprofit C**: Started with volunteers and transitioned them to staff based on project funding, occasionally bypassing formal qualifications and background checks.

- **Nonprofit D**: Followed a more structured process, including job profiles and interviews, though only able to offer contracts until project completion.

These practices impacted employee well-being:

- **42%** of employees reported handling multiple roles, leading to high-stress levels.

- **43%** experienced high stress due to workload.

- Despite having clear job descriptions, **79%** felt the disconnect between these descriptions and actual performance management.

4.2 Compensation and Benefits

Compensation in the nonprofits studied is influenced more by donor restrictions than by legal standards or union guidelines. Donor projects often specify salary limits and the number of positions funded, leading to discrepancies in pay for similar roles. To address this, some nonprofits implement internal standardization for salary equity.

Nonprofit B exemplifies this approach: "...despite different project budgets, we standardize salaries through a fixed structure." Research by Renard & Snelgar (2015) supports this, noting that equitable salary structures can enhance employee retention. Given that local nonprofit salaries are significantly lower than those in the private and international sectors, nonprofits in Africa need alternative strategies for employee satisfaction.

The nonprofits in this study offer various benefits, such as long-service awards, paid leave (annual, sick, maternity, paternity), health insurance, and life insurance. Despite a focus on intrinsic motivation, **55%** of surveyed employees valued extrinsic benefits for job satisfaction. For instance, **Nonprofit C** faced a challenge when a promising employee considered resigning due to poor pay, highlighting the need for competitive compensation amidst rising living costs.

The **Work Trend Index (2022)** reinforces the demand for flexible work arrangements, with employees preferring results-based assessment over rigid hour tracking. Nonprofit B's strategy of negotiating with donors to include health insurance is an example of adapting to this trend.

4.3 Performance Management

Effective performance management relies on regular feedback. The nonprofits studied varied in their performance management practices. Three had formal systems involving annual reviews, while one was developing a reward-based system. **Nonprofit C** faced delays in

feedback delivery, which hindered employee development:

"For example, an appraisal conducted in January 2022 was not followed up with one-to-one meetings until August/September 2022" - Nonprofit C.

29% of employees reported infrequent feedback, and **37%** rated their organization's performance evaluations as insufficient. Despite these issues, **86%** of employees felt confident in their abilities and meeting targets. Some nonprofits, like **Nonprofit B**, offer in-house and external training, while **Nonprofit A** relies on collaborations for employee training. Overall, there is a consensus on the need for improved personal development opportunities, with personal growth scoring lowest among organizational values.

4.4 Policies and Procedures

Manuel (2018) emphasizes the importance of policies for accountability and employee retention. The nonprofits in this study had varying levels of formal policies. For example, **Nonprofit C** had a stress management and wellness policy, while **Nonprofit B** had standard operating procedures and health and safety policies. However, not all nonprofits had clear practices for employee travel or welfare, despite **36%** of employees reporting travel as part of their work.

Nonprofit C has a succession plan that needs further implementation, and some nonprofits have only recently established formal systems. Policies related to employee welfare and development are still evolving in these organizations.

4.5 Culture and Leadership

Organizational culture, reflecting an organization's beliefs and behaviours, plays a crucial role in employee satisfaction. The nonprofits described their cultures as open, collaborative, and family oriented. Employees valued empathetic and cooperative coworkers most, with this parameter scoring **2.8 out of 5** in terms of job satisfaction. Other factors such as supportive management and flexible work were also significant but scored lower:

- Supportive manager: **2.7**

- Conducive work premises: **2.5**

- Flexible work: **2.5**

- Access to training: **2.4**

- Fair policies and access to justice: **2.4**

- Benefits other than salary: **2.3**

Nonprofit D fosters a culture of gratitude, encouraging staff to appreciate each other. Some nonprofits acknowledge a need for cultural improvements and better alignment of policies with actions. **Nonprofit B** highlights a shift towards recruiting individuals who align with their desired culture, noting that over **40%** of their team has changed in the past two years:

"Passion and commitment are essential. We are now recruiting for cultural fit beyond just

competence, especially after recent high turnover" - Nonprofit B.

5. Health, Safety, and Security

5.1 Impact of Health on Job Performance

Employee health is crucial for job performance and overall organizational effectiveness. Stress, a significant factor affecting both mental and physical health, has been identified as a major concern in the workplace. According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2023), approximately 60% of employees report experiencing stress at work. Stress is frequently exacerbated by factors such as high workloads, financial pressures, and personal responsibilities.

5.2 Recent Statistics on Employee Stress

- **Prevalence of Stress**: A recent survey by the International Stress Management Association (ISMA, 2024) found that 43% of employees experience frequent stress, with a higher prevalence among those aged 31-50. This age group often deals with increased financial responsibilities, career pressures, and family commitments, which contribute to elevated stress levels.

- **Stressors and Ratings**: Key stressors impacting employee well-being include financial responsibilities (average rating 3.5/5) and workload (average rating 3.4/5). Other significant stressors are family responsibilities, health challenges, and relocation (Employee Well-being Report, 2024).

5.3 Mental Health and Organizational Support

While many employees feel generally positive about their physical and mental health, there is a notable gap in workplace support for mental health issues. Recent findings highlight the following:

- **Comfort Discussing Mental Health**: According to a study by Mind (2023), 36% of employees feel comfortable discussing mental health issues at work. This suggests a barrier to open communication and support within organizations.

- **Perception of Resources**: A survey by Deloitte (2024) revealed that 71% of employees rate their organizations poorly in providing adequate resources for managing stress and mental health. Despite high awareness of employee well-being programs (79% of employees have heard of such programs), nonprofits often lack comprehensive strategies and resources beyond basic awareness.

5.4 Workplace Safety and Security

Workplace safety and security are critical for maintaining overall employee well-being but are sometimes overlooked in discussions about mental health. Key areas of focus include:

- **Crisis Management**: Effective crisis management plans are essential for ensuring employee safety during emergencies. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA, 2024) emphasizes the importance of having clear procedures

for various crisis scenarios, including natural disasters, violence, and health emergencies.

- **Physical Safety Measures**: Basic safety measures such as proper ventilation, fire alarms, and ergonomic workspace design are fundamental for maintaining a safe working environment. The National Safety Council (NSC, 2024) stresses the need for regular safety audits and updates to ensure that physical safety measures meet current standards.

5.5 Recommendations for Improving Health, Safety, and Security

1. **Develop Comprehensive Well-being Strategies**: Nonprofits should create and implement comprehensive well-being strategies that address both mental and physical health. This includes programs for stress management, mental health support, and physical wellness initiatives.

2. **Enhance Communication and Support**: Improve efforts to create a supportive environment where employees feel comfortable discussing mental health issues. Implement training for managers on handling mental health conversations and provide easily accessible resources for employees.

3. **Improve Workplace Safety Measures**: Invest in regular safety audits and updates to ensure physical safety measures are up-to-date. Develop and communicate clear crisis management plans for various emergency scenarios.

4. **Leverage External Resources**: Utilize external resources such as consultancy services, training programs, and best practice guidelines to develop and enhance well-being strategies. Engage with experts in occupational health and safety to build a more comprehensive approach.

By focusing on these recommendations, nonprofits can significantly improve their support for employee well-being, resulting in enhanced job performance, reduced stress levels, and a safer, more productive work environment.

6. Nonprofits' Current Challenges and Opportunities

In the nonprofit sector, enhancing support for employee well-being is an ongoing challenge. Many organizations express a desire to improve their approach to health, safety, and security but often lack the resources and structured strategies to do so effectively.

- **Desire for Improvement**: Interviews with nonprofit leaders reveal a strong desire to enhance support for employee well-being. However, many organizations are uncertain about how to implement effective strategies and seek guidance and resources to develop comprehensive well-being programs.

- **Openness to Guidance**: Nonprofits are generally open to receiving guidance and resources to better support their employees. Providing tailored resources, training, and best practices can help these organizations develop more robust health, safety, and security frameworks.

7. Monitoring and Evaluating Well-being Initiatives

Effective implementation of health, safety, and security strategies requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Establishing mechanisms to regularly assess the effectiveness of well-being initiatives is crucial for ensuring that they meet employees' needs and contribute to organizational goals.

i. **Regular Assessments and Surveys**

- **Conduct Employee Surveys**: Regularly administer surveys to gather feedback on various aspects of employee well-being, including mental health support, physical safety, and job satisfaction. Surveys should be designed to measure the effectiveness of existing programs, identify areas for improvement, and gauge employee perceptions of workplace safety and support (Gallup, 2024).

- **Monitor Stress Levels**: Implement tools and methodologies to track stress levels and overall well-being. This can include stress assessments, pulse surveys, and data analytics to identify trends and potential issues before they escalate.

ii. **Evaluate Program Effectiveness**

- **Analyse Data and Feedback**: Use the data collected from surveys and assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of well-being initiatives. Analyze patterns in employee feedback, identify common concerns, and assess whether the interventions are achieving their intended outcomes.

- **Adjust Programs as Needed**: Based on the evaluation results, make necessary adjustments to well-being programs. This may involve refining existing initiatives, introducing new support mechanisms, or reallocating resources to address emerging needs.

iii. **Benchmarking and Best Practices**

- **Benchmark Against Industry Standards**: Compare the organization's well-being programs against industry standards and best practices. This benchmarking process can provide valuable insights into how the organization's initiatives stack up relative to peers and highlight areas where improvements can be made.

- **Adopt Best Practices**: Integrate best practices from successful well-being programs in other organizations. This can include adopting innovative approaches to mental health support, implementing effective safety measures, and using evidence-based strategies to enhance overall employee well-being.

iv. **Reporting and Accountability**

- **Develop Reporting Mechanisms**: Establish clear reporting mechanisms to communicate the results of well-being assessments and evaluations to stakeholders. Regularly report on progress, achievements, and areas for improvement to ensure transparency and maintain accountability.

- **Create Accountability Structures**: Designate specific roles or committees responsible for overseeing the implementation and evaluation of well-being initiatives. These structures should ensure that there is accountability for the effectiveness of programs and that any issues are promptly addressed.

v. **Continuous Improvement**

- **Foster a Culture of Continuous Improvement**: Encourage a culture of continuous improvement where feedback is actively sought and used to enhance well-being programs. Promote open communication channels and a proactive approach to addressing employee needs and concerns.

- **Invest in Professional Development**: Provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for those managing well-being initiatives. This will help ensure that they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to effectively support employees.

By implementing robust monitoring and evaluation practices, nonprofits can ensure that their health, safety, and security initiatives are both effective and responsive to the needs of their employees. Continuous improvement in these areas will contribute to a more supportive and productive work environment, ultimately enhancing overall organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

8. Re-thinking Human Resource Practices in African Nonprofits

Local African nonprofits often face financial constraints and lack structured HR functions. Despite these limitations, effective HR management is crucial for promoting employee well-being. Nonprofits should leverage their goodwill and passion to find innovative ways to address employee needs.

Figure 4: Illustrates a framework for prioritizing employee well-being in African nonprofits. It emphasizes that nonprofits should view HR not as a position but as a role that aligns with organizational and employee interests. The framework, inspired by Vijay P. (2007) and Guest D.E. (2017), focuses on five HR objectives:

1. Investing in employees

2. Providing engaging work

3. Creating a positive social and physical environment

4. Giving employees a voice

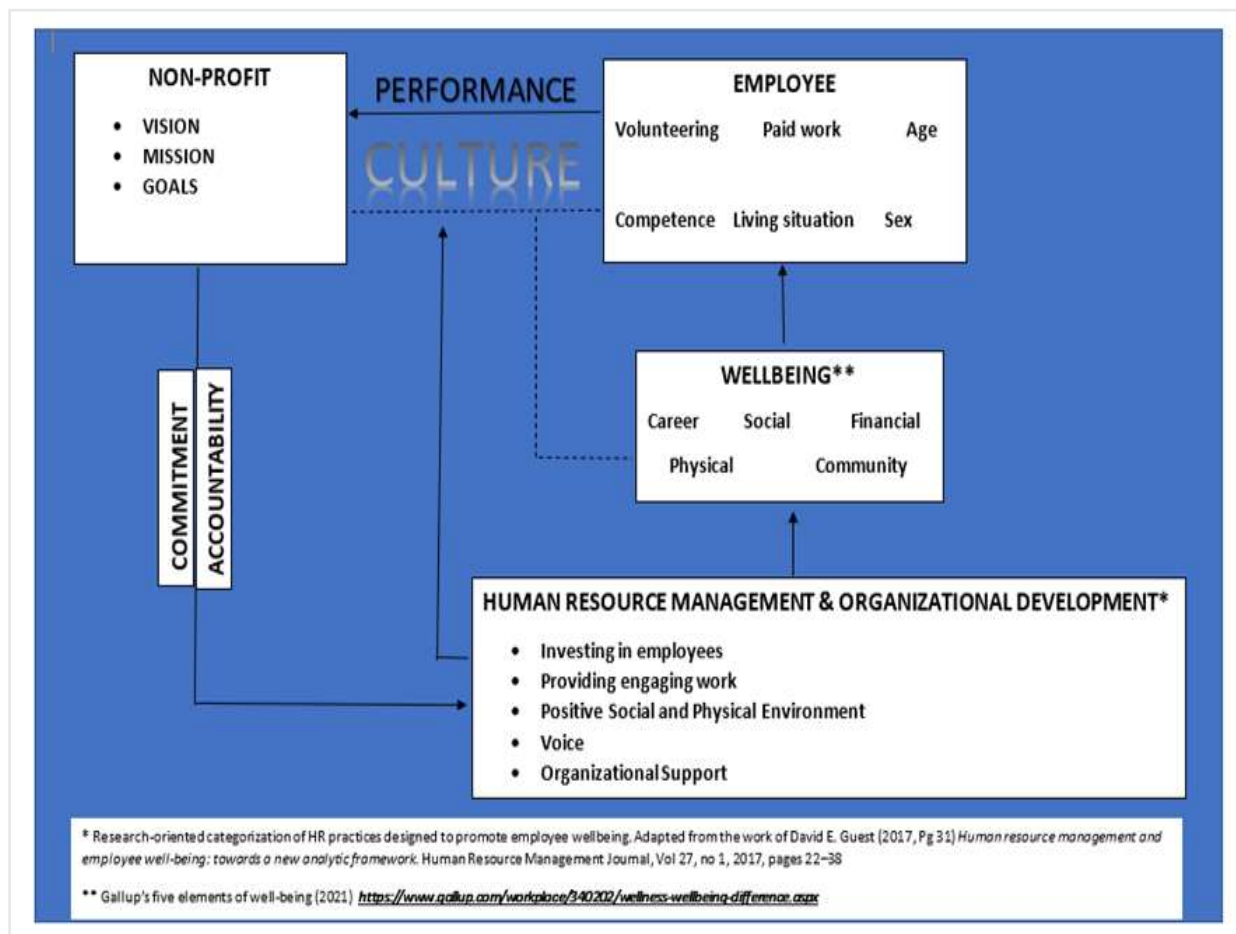5. Offering consistent organizational support

Figure 1. The Humanists Framework for Managing Employee well-being in African

Non-profits

Source: Adapted from Guest (2017) and redesigned by The Humanists (2023) to suggest that employee well-being should be embedded in the organizational culture, rather than treated as isolated initiatives.

Effective HR practices should reflect the organization's vision and be supported by leadership commitment. Employee well-being strategies should consider demographic factors, such as age and work experience, which influence stress management and job dedication.

9. Recommendations

i. Establish a Human Resource Role

- **Assign HR Responsibilities**: In situations where a dedicated HR position is not feasible due to budget constraints, nonprofits should assign HR responsibilities to one or two existing managers. This approach ensures that HR functions are still managed effectively without requiring a full-time HR specialist. It is essential to clearly define these responsibilities in job descriptions to avoid ambiguity and ensure accountability.

- **Define Responsibilities and Incentives**: Responsibilities for the HR role should be explicitly outlined in the job descriptions. This includes tasks such as managing recruitment, overseeing compliance with labour laws, and handling employee relations. Providing financial or non-financial incentives, such as recognition or additional training opportunities, can help motivate those taking on these extra responsibilities.

- **Capacity Building**: Regular capacity building is crucial for those in HR roles to stay updated with best practices and regulatory changes. Offering periodic training sessions, workshops, and access to resources will enhance their skills and effectiveness, thereby improving overall HRM within the organization.

ii. **Promote Accountability and Leadership Development**

- Effective governance and leadership are pivotal for the success and sustainability of nonprofit organizations. To enhance these aspects, several strategic actions can be undertaken to ensure that both the board of directors and senior management are well-equipped to fulfil their roles. These actions include restructuring the board, investing in comprehensive training, and implementing rigorous performance review processes.

iii. **Restructure the Board**

- **Assess the Composition and Effectiveness of the Board**: A thorough evaluation of the board of directors is essential to ensure its alignment with the organization's strategic objectives. This assessment should focus on both the composition and the functional efficacy of the board. Restructuring may be warranted to optimize board effectiveness. This process involves scrutinizing the skills, expertise, and commitment of board members to ensure that they possess the requisite knowledge and dedication to advance the nonprofit's mission. According to research by Brown and Guo (2023), boards that are actively engaged and possess relevant sector-specific expertise are more likely to contribute positively to organizational outcomes.

- **Select Members with Relevant Expertise and Commitment**: The selection process should prioritize individuals with both substantive experience and a strong commitment to the nonprofit's goals. This strategic alignment ensures that the board can provide informed guidance and effective oversight. Research by O'Regan and Oster (2022) underscores the importance of matching board members' expertise with organizational needs to enhance governance and strategic decision-making.

iv. **Invest in Board and Leadership Training**

- **Provide Regular Training for Board Members and Senior Leadership**: Continuous professional development is crucial for enhancing the capabilities of both board members and senior leadership. This training should encompass a broad range of topics, including governance best practices, strategic planning, and leadership competencies. Theoretical frameworks suggest that targeted training improves decision-making and organizational stewardship (Kraatz & Zajac, 2024).

- **Focus on Governance, Strategic Planning, and Leadership Skills**: Training programs should be designed to address the specific needs of the board and senior leadership. For example, governance training can enhance understanding of fiduciary responsibilities, while strategic planning workshops can equip leaders with tools for long-term organizational success. According to Hejka and Eddleston (2023), ongoing education in these areas helps to ensure that leaders are adept at navigating complex challenges and driving organizational performance.

v. **Implement Performance Reviews**

- **Establish a Comprehensive Performance Review Process**: A structured performance review process for top management is essential for holding leaders accountable for their roles. This process should include the development of clear performance metrics that align with both program management and employee well-being objectives. Implementing regular evaluations and providing constructive feedback is crucial for ensuring that leadership is accountable for achieving organizational goals while fostering a positive work environment.

- **Set Clear Performance Metrics and Conduct Regular Evaluations**: Performance metrics should be developed to measure both the effectiveness of program management and the impact on employee well-being. Regular evaluations based on these metrics will provide a comprehensive view of leadership performance and organizational health. Research by Cummings and Worley (2022) indicates that systematic performance reviews and feedback mechanisms are integral to improving leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes.

- **Provide Constructive Feedback**: Feedback should be actionable and aimed at fostering continuous improvement. Constructive feedback helps leaders to identify areas for development and to implement strategies that enhance both program effectiveness and employee satisfaction. This approach ensures that leadership is continuously evolving and adapting to meet the needs of the organization and its stakeholders.

By undertaking these actions restructuring the board, investing in targeted training, and implementing robust performance reviews nonprofits can enhance their governance and leadership capabilities. This, in turn, will contribute to the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the organization, ensuring that it remains responsive to its mission and supportive of its employees.

vi. **Align and Drive the Organizational Culture**

- **Define Organizational Culture**: Conduct a strategic meeting with key stakeholders to articulate the desired organizational culture. This process should involve defining the core values and behaviours that the organization aspires to embody. Identifying three to five key terms that encapsulate the desired culture will provide a clear and focused direction for cultural initiatives.

- **Promote Cultural Alignment**: Once the desired culture is defined, develop and implement strategies to embed these cultural values into everyday practices. This may include revising internal policies, integrating cultural values into recruitment and onboarding processes, and fostering an environment where these values are regularly communicated and celebrated.

- **Monitor and Adjust**: Regularly assess the alignment between the organizational culture and the lived experiences of employees. Use surveys, feedback sessions, and performance metrics to gauge the effectiveness of cultural initiatives and make necessary adjustments to ensure ongoing alignment and improvement.

By implementing these recommendations, nonprofits in Nigeria and South Africa can strengthen their HR practices, enhance leadership effectiveness, and cultivate a supportive and mission-driven organizational culture. These steps are critical for improving employee well-being, operational efficiency, and the overall sustainability of these organizations.

vii. **Develop a Well-being Charter or commitment statement**

To articulate how this culture supports employee well-being (see adaptable Well-being Charter).

Figure 2. The Humanists - Outlines the journey to achieving comprehensive employee well-being and organizational effectiveness

Source: Adapted from Gallup (2022) and redesigned by The Humanists (2023) to appear employees are to experience the various factors to ultimately sum-up to employee wellbeing

viii. **Develop and Track Your Employee Well-being Visioning Matrix**

- **Create a Visioning Matrix:** Develop a matrix to outline your vision for employee well-being, tracking progress against the Gallup five elements of well-being.

- **Measure Progress:** Regularly update and review the matrix to ensure alignment with well-being objectives and track improvements over time.

ix. **Track and Report Employee Well-being as a Key Performance Indicator**

- **Define Outcomes:** Establish clear employee well-being outcomes to be measured periodically.

- **Data Collection Tools:** Develop digital or manual tools to capture data, such as the Employee Satisfaction Survey Tool.

- **Review and Discuss:** Conduct team meetings to discuss survey results and determine subsequent actions.

- **Action Plans:** Create and implement action plans to address any emerging issues related to employee well-being.

- **Documentation:** Include progress and developments in employee well-being in annual reports to ensure transparency and accountability.

10. Conclusion

The findings highlight the pivotal role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in promoting employee well-being and ensuring the long-term sustainability of local nonprofits in Nigeria and South Africa. Effective HRM practices are crucial for addressing the unique challenges faced by these organizations, such as resource constraints and varying operational contexts. The ability to attract, retain, and motivate staff both paid and voluntary while ensuring compliance with labour standards, is essential for organizational success.

The current analysis emphasizes the need for structured HR roles and processes, robust accountability mechanisms, and a strong alignment with organizational culture. By addressing these areas, nonprofits can enhance their operational effectiveness, improve employee satisfaction, and better fulfil their missions.

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Annexures 1

CAPSTONE PROJECT EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT

QUESTION GUIDE FOR NONPROFIT MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS

1. How does your organization recruit employees and retain them?
2. Do your employees have fixed-term contracts or long-term contracts? Explain the scenario.
3. Is there a performance management system? Describe how it works.
4. Do you have a training and development plan based on outcomes of performance assessment?
5. Do you have processes in place to help employees manage travelling or relocating for work?
6. What initiatives are in place to motivate staff? What means do you use to increase staff motivation?
7. Do your employees enjoy other benefits aside from Salary? (Health insurance, Pension, Gym, Transport, 13th salary, leave allowance, maternity/parental leave, remote working etc.)
8. How would you describe the culture of the organization? Are there any actions/steps you take to preserve or promote the culture?
9. What impressions do you have of your staff as a whole? Are they content? Do they truly believe in the vision?
10. Do you do employee satisfaction surveys? How frequently?
11. Are there any wellbeing related policies in the organization?
12. If you had the tools, know-how and resources to make it happen, will you make employee wellbeing a key performance indicator for your organization and report it in your annual reports?
13. If you wanted to do more for your employees and general organizational development, what are the core limiting factors for you?

Annexure 2

[Name of the Organization]

Employee Satisfaction Survey
Introduction
Welcome to [**Name of Non-profit**] Employee Satisfaction Survey for [**Year**]. The purpose of this survey is to collect information about the level of fulfilment, engagement, and satisfaction of employees. The Managers can then act and make decisions based on the identified gaps in order to increase employee satisfaction and promote a positive working environment. This survey is voluntary and anonymous: no personal data will be collected. Please complete the survey no later than [**Date**]. It would be greatly appreciated if you could answer all questions. Please do not share this survey with anyone outside the organization. The results from the survey will be shared with you in due course. We appreciate your time and honest feedback. Thank you for your cooperation!
Management Team
[**Name of Non-profit**]

QUESTIONS
Organizational values and culture

Q1. My organization has a great reputation/image in the community.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Q2. I would encourage others to work for this organization.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Q3. The organization provides a supportive environment to all employees.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Q4. The organization shows commitment to improving compensations and benefits.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Personal Motivation

Q5. I feel engaged and motivated.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Q6. I have a good work-life balance.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Q7. My organization supports me in taking care of my mental and physical health.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Q8. What worries you most at work right now? Please select up to three options only.

☐ Uncertainty about employment/contract extension

☐ Burnout

☐ Limited incentives

☐ Lack of working tools

☐ No options to work remotely

☐ Financial (in)stability of the organization

☐ Staff turnover/decreasing number of volunteers

☐ Other (please specify) _____

Productivity

Q9. The training I have received helps me to do my job well.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Q10. I receive the mentoring I need to be more effective at my job (if not, please let us know what mentoring suggestions you have, in the comment box)

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Other comment _____

Q11. I am happy with the management style of my supervisor.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Q12. I receive regular feedback about my work from my supervisor.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Somewhat agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐   Somewhat disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Q13. How do you rate your co-workers' support in getting your work done?

Very low   Very high

1.☐   2. ☐   3.☐   4.☐   5.☐

Q14. How overwhelming is your workload?

Not at all   a little   quite   very   extremely

1.☐   2.☐   3.☐   4.☐   5.☐

Q15. How frequently do you experience stress at work in a week?

Never   Rarely   Occasionally   Frequently   Always

1.☐   2. ☐   3.☐   4.☐   5.☐

Management and Leadership Communication

Q16. Communication from Management is clear and helps me understand the organization's vision and mission.

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Somewhat agree

☐   Neither agree nor disagree

☐   Somewhat disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Q17. My direct supervisor and I clearly communicate our expectations to each other.

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Somewhat agree

☐   Neither agree nor disagree

☐   Somewhat disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Q18. I receive the information I need to effectively participate in decision-making.

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Somewhat agree

☐   Neither agree nor disagree

☐   Somewhat disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Q19. Travel, field work, distant offices and similar issues create communication difficulties (if so, please specify what type(s) of difficulties you have encountered in the comment box)

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Somewhat agree

☐   Neither agree nor disagree

☐   Somewhat disagree

☐   Not applicable

☐   Other comment _____

Q20. How do you perceive the overall morale in this organization?

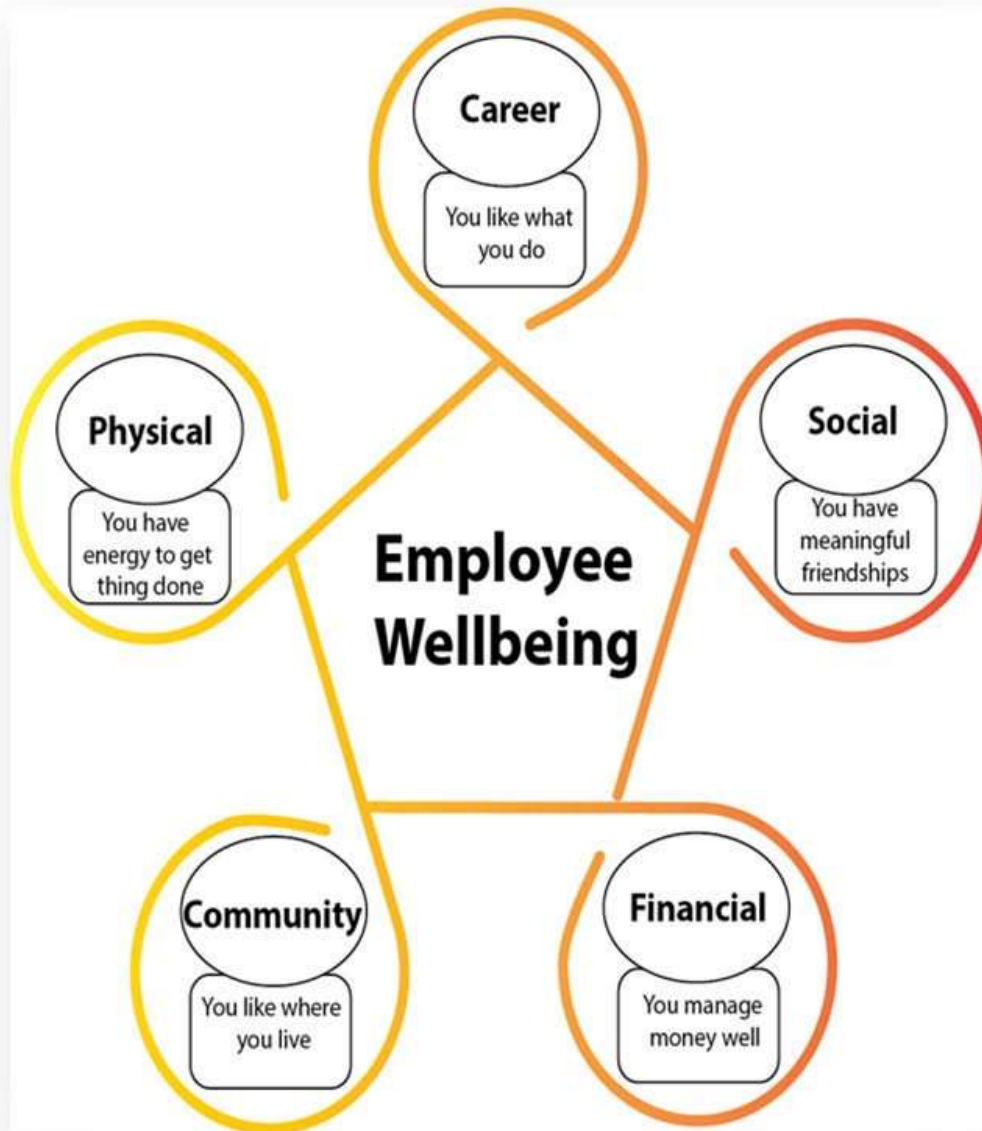Very low   Very high

1.☐   2. ☐   3.☐   4.☐   5.☐

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

Gallup (2022). Employee Wellbeing

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