



SUFFERING IN THE WORKPLACE FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW

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KEYWORDS

Suffering
Philosophy
Employee wellbeing
Workplace
Health

ABSTRACT

Suffering in the workplace is a more common occurrence than expected. The European Survey on Working Conditions in EU shows that almost half of the 22.000 workers surveyed in the 27 member countries stated uneasiness due to work conditions. In the interests of employees and companies, suffering must be taken into account. Poor knowledge exists concerning the effects of suffering on occupational safety. Current human management systems do not address this problem. Rooted in philosophical postulates, this work analyses qualitative data collected from deep interviews to discover what is to come in the field of suffering management in organizations.

Received: 15/ 09 / 2022

Accepted: 10/ 10 / 2022

1. Introduction

"I am a man, and no human aspect I consider strange," said the Latin comedian. And I would say rather "I am a man, and to no other man I consider strange". Under the influence of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, this is how Miguel de Unamuno began his work *On the Tragic Feeling of Life in Men and People* (Unamuno, 1913). That is also the reason that inspires the present work. As long as human beings participate in the business activity, it is inevitably impregnated with human characteristics. The main distinguishing sign of humans is that of the emotional experience, in addition to the rational one. No emotion is therefore excluded from the professional activity. Nor suffering as a consequence.

Thus, the intention to study in depth the experience of suffering of people in current business organizations and with a special character of those individuals who are responsible for managing people in them. It is also about applying the knowledge of the philosophical field to the management of people with the object, not only to alleviate, but also to prevent such suffering. For this, and after addressing the concept of suffering, an analysis of the interpretation of this term has been made in the different stages of philosophical thought and some of its most important bastions, trying to extract lessons applicable to the problems of the management of current people and whose appearance in organizations could be susceptible of causing episodes of pain in their workers.

The current economic model, beyond ideological biases of ever lesser depth, is based on the objectification, planning and use of resources, objectives to which the life of human beings is subordinated (Nelson, 2018). The existence of technology, industry, the objectification of what happens, the manipulation of individuals around work and the possession of material things, make up the actual situation and constitute the predominant sphere of power (Baudrillard, 2019). This is an absolutely simple matter that should make us think in order to understand together the processes that take place and that must be understood in order to transform the factors that produce suffering in people. It is also, no doubt, a challenge of an ethical nature, which can and should contribute to improve the health of society, all with the intention of returning the vitality of people who are affected by situations of mental suffering (Seligmann-Silva, 2014).

The logical concern about the profitability of companies does not take into account that, to increase it, it is necessary to consider the number of people who say they suffer in them. The improvement of the well-being of people, both those who are in it, and the rest of society, can and should be an end in itself, and also a guarantee of greater profitability (Baudrillard, 2019). The current way of considering human beings as resources in organizations has resulted in an increase in suffering in jobs and therefore a decrease in the effectiveness of the intended profitability (Baudelot & Michael, 2011).

Jobs digital economies are creating a more intensified labor rate and higher rates of stress (Green, 2001; Zeytinoglu et al., 2007). For decades, there have been studies linking health problems resulting from stress with increasing errors, worse decisions, loss of motivation, reduced levels of commitment, etc. (Harnois & Gabriel, 2000). The aforementioned intensification gets worse by the fact that the border between the hours of work and rest has been broken since information technology and mobile devices have allowed workers are in constant contact with work still out workplace (Schieman & Young, 2013; Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Gadeyne et al., 2018). The use of information technologies for work purposes, after hours, can lead to emotional exhaustion (Li et al., 2018), with very important consequences for the well-being of workers such as greater dissatisfaction in couple relationships, greater conflict appearance, etc. (Paulin et al., 2017).

It could be assumed, therefore, that many of the current methods of work put at risk the mental, psychological and social health of a large number of people. This is what Han (2014), influenced by Foucault (2002), calls "the disciplinary power, which consists of confinement environments and facilities. The disciplinary subject changes from one environment of imprisonment to another" (Han, 2014, p.18). Of all these environments, as regards the professional, the conception of work is quite different from the predictable career and routine of yesteryear. At present, workers are part of a very flexible work environment in very dynamic organizations in which loyalty is not forever and in which the templates and objectives are constantly adjusted (Gregg, 2013).

2. Article types

Original Research

3. Object, Methods and Materials

3.1. Object

The aim of the present work is to know how human resources managers perceive suffering within organizations and what do they do to manage it, and how philosophical thinking can help them to deal with it. This purpose is specified in the following aspects. First, to facilitate an analysis of the interpretation of suffering throughout the history of Philosophy so that it can be used by the areas of people management of current organizations. Second, to check how and how much the specialized literature deals with the issue related to suffering in current business organizations. And third, to analyze how professionals responsible for the management of people in organizations perceive and describe suffering, both from the point of view of exercising their responsibility towards third parties, and from the analysis of their own condition of employees in this regard.

This research contributes to the field reflecting about the notion of organizational malaise and suffering in organizations, enriched by the vision of Philosophy, given that suffering in organizations is seen today in an incomplete and limited way. The research is also an empirical contribution to the state of the art, based on the experience of those responsible for managing people regarding the presence of suffering and discomfort in human resources models and, where appropriate, how these realities are managed.

3.2. Method and Sample

To achieve the described object, in a first step, the method of approach is the documentary analysis. It is used in the part dedicated to the interpretation of suffering according to the history of Philosophy, as well as in the section dedicated to the specialized literature review. The documentary analysis, as a research technique, consists of studying, analyzing and interpreting diverse documents in a unified way to draw conclusions corresponding to a previously established objective (Molina Gómez & Dulzaides Iglesias, 2013).

Regarding the review of the specialized literature, the content of what has been published has not been studied, but the issues dealt with have been analyzed to assess whether suffering is an issue to which some attention is devoted. To choose the journals on which we have based the search, Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), which is part of the Thomson Reuters group, has been consulted. One of the services it provides is the so-called ISI Web of Knowledge, an online information base that includes the most important bibliographic databases.

The Scientific Information Institute is the creator of the so-called Impact Factor, which is also referred to as the Impact Index. This index is only a measure of the importance of a scientific publication, which is why ISI has been the Reference Institution chosen to search for journals that will be the subject of our research. The impact factor is calculated by the number of times articles published in a journal during the previous two years are cited by other journals, divided by the number of articles published in the said biennial period. That is why the selection criterion has been the Journal Impact Factor (JCR) and its order in the magazine ranking. Likewise, the consulted order refers to the list of Management magazines.

Secondly, the aforementioned documentary analysis gives way to a phase of empirical analysis dedicated to conducting in-depth interviews with persons responsible for people management. As several methodology treaties affirm, in-depth interviews are very appropriate for the exploratory phases of a study (Lucas, 2014). It consists of a private, professional and structured conversation with several previously selected people, in order to carry out an analytical study of the answers obtained, all in order to establish a diagnosis as accurate as possible in relation to a problem (Campbell et al., 2013).

To prepare the script for each interview, a questionnaire previously prepared was used, and sent to 50 experts in people management and business ethics, university doctors, professors and company managers. This is the usual way of proceeding in these cases, as stated in the literature on survey methodology and questionnaires (McLellan et al., 2003). As a consequence of the information obtained, a general interview script was prepared.

The decision of choosing persons responsible for managing people who helped us in this part of the work, was taken because those managers are most directly related to the future of employees in

companies, or at least with their superiors, who also have the status of workers and, therefore, susceptible to suffer. In this way, we tried to obtain a list of informants representative enough. Thus, people of both sexes, of different ages, different seniority in the position, who work in companies of different sizes, from different sectors and located in several geographical areas, were chosen (Table 1). Analyzed the apt profiles, we began to interview our first contacts and, from that point, we searched for the corresponding variability of sex, age, experience, seniority in the position, sector and location. With the help of the script presented, the interviewees were suggested to contribute their opinion and data on the issues raised, they were recorded in audio and field notes were taken. The idea was that the answers include specific cases of lived experiences and not only opinions. The interview process was started by selecting the next interviewee taking into account some diversity value and thus reached the final number of our sample, as no new content was found in their expressions.

Once the interviews were over, the audio recordings were transformed into documentary support and a copy was sent to each of the interviewees so that they could acknowledge their receipt and, in any case, make comments or modifications. The data obtained were analyzed by iteration using NVivo, a content analysis software. The most used terms that make up our study were counted, grouped by areas of interest. Then, the conclusions shared by all the interviewees were extracted. In this way, the saturation point was reached through the analysis of the responses we received from the people interviewed (Baker & Edwards, 2015). In this way, we verified that, in the interviews conducted, the answers tend to repeat themselves.

The information received was included, one by one and cumulatively in the qualitative information analysis system already referred. We also made sure that the speech in all the people interviewed was homogeneous. We introduced each interview in the system and made a count of the fifty terms most used by the interviewees in their conversations. Then interviews were accumulated in the system, as they were transcribed, in order to check the evolution of the speech. First the first, then the first plus the second, then the first three, and so on. The discourse of each new informant was compared with the previous ones to analyze the degree of similarity among them. As interviews were accumulated gradually and cumulatively as we have explained, it was little by little more difficult for the interviewer to perceive new content in a meaningful way; found a greater coincidence in the conversations. This fact was corroborated when we added the eighth interview to the first seven. Then we learned that 48 of the 50 most used terms were the same and that, of the first ten, on nine occasions the order of appearance also coincided. We considered then that the point of saturation was reached and that the veracity of the interpretation of the results was sufficiently guaranteed.

In every phase, we start from the premise that scientific knowledge is an inseparable part of each historical process, which implies an epistemological evolution and a constant adaptation of the paradigm at every moment and can -and should- study all aspects of it, whether they are measurable or just interpretable (Losada & López-Feal, 2003).

4. Discussion

4.1. Suffering in the history of humanity from the point of view of philosophical reflection

In the VI century before Christ, Kung Fu Tzu, Confucius, devoted to collecting and recovering the oral writings and teachings transmitted by the sages of Chinese antiquity to try to influence the customs of the people (Yu, 1997). We propose to imitate the Oriental thinker in an attempt to recover what was thought and written about human suffering in the history of Philosophy and apply it to the models that organizations use to manage people.

Suffering is one of the greatest fears of humanity. Any culture has tried to find a meaning with the main objective of avoiding it or, in its case, of diminishing its effects. Already Sophocles, in the V century before Christ, said that the most transcendent human tragedy is its inability to avoid pain. It is true that pain presents multiple faces depending on the most diverse circumstances, but it is also true that in all of them it produces either physical or psychological suffering. It can have its origin in the unreason of human actions and also in the face of what we do not understand and inevitably leads us to physical death. It cannot be denied either that Philosophy constitutes a dimension of culture from immemorial time and that, therefore, it dedicates in a deep way to the problem of pain in human beings. However, the philosophical process regarding pain does not end with its description in each

culture and era, but also aims to provide solutions, ideas that give light about its origin, its interpretation, its consequences, and possible solutions (Lewis Hall & McMartin, 2010).

Most authors who have tried to define suffering argue for its complementarity with the term *pain* (Pizzo & Clark, 2012) although they accept as a general rule the definition proposed in the year 1982 by Eric Cassell and that says that it is "a state of severe stress associated with threatening events for the integrity of the person" (Cassell, 1982, p.639). It also affirms that the suffering of the people is conditioned by the society and the culture of every moment and place. Thus, the result of a review of the different meanings that are known, some other authors say that

suffering is a state of pain more or less permanent experienced by the subject within a specific society and culture, when facing a perceived threat as capable of destroying their own physical or psychosocial integrity, and before which they feel vulnerable and helpless. (Montoya Juarez et al., 2006, p.117)

Both Psychology and Sociology, have tried to find tools to help people to alleviate their suffering in companies. However, philosophical thought has not been taken into account for this purpose at the best of our knowledge; even some current composed by formalist logicians and philosophers of science, feel animosity to do so because they consider that existential questions should not concern philosophical thought (Scrivener, 2016). It is in any case the inabarcability of the concept of suffering that leads us to opt for a wider umbrella than that of Psychology or that of Sociology to carry out its interpretation and study. That umbrella cannot be other than that of Philosophy, a discipline that studies suffering very deeply in all its historical stages. However, sometimes, the same philosophers have disdained their possible mission of helping a suffering community. They have even come to claim that thinkers must intentionally stay away from making, or proposing, practical applications to their work, at the risk of ending the moral integrity that they believe they owe to themselves and their readers and scholars (Peirce, 1898).

But there is another group of thinkers who advocate, in a determined way, to try to answer what Philosophy can do for human being and affirm that it can not renounce to understand what happens in the world it is in because that is the reason itself of its existence. Philosophical reflection, inasmuch as it asks about the being and its existence, has dealt throughout history with the experience of pain (Cantillo, 2010). This group of authors affirm that speculative knowledge, among which Philosophy stands, should seek consolation, relief to the recipients of its mission, either individually or collectively (Morera de Guijarro, 2010). Whatever the form and purpose of the philosophical process may be, this research raises the possibility of using its conclusions to be applied. Regardless of the approach of the different philosophers, we will analyze what business organizations can do to understand and try to alleviate the suffering of a part of their workers.

This includes, in a significant way, those responsible for the management of persons, judges and parties to the matter as a general rule. As mentioned, we will use documentary analysis to interpret what philosophy tells us about suffering, then contrast it with the opinion of those responsible for managing people through the process of in-depth interviews already described. For this, we must first of all be aware that the approximation of the rational study of suffering, and its conceptualization, has not been homogeneous, much less in the history of Philosophy and that it has even come up with contradictory proposals in one or the other time (González García, 2010). We try in the end to discover the ways in which thought has been articulated around the concept of suffering throughout the evolutionary process of humanity (Scrivener, 2016) with the intention of trying to influence on people managers.

Suffering has accompanied human beings whatever the moment we pay attention to, each with its nuances. Philosophy can guide us and advise us on the best way to develop our lives (Pizzi, 1999). In some of the historical epochs, suffering has been a primordial issue of human reflection, as in the Far East, China and Japan (Cavallé Cruz, 2010). Some advocate self-knowledge as a liberating balm, another wisdom as in Ancient Greece. Christians associate suffering with sin and guilt, a thought that prevailed during almost all of the Middle Ages. Islam, more fatalistic, considers suffering as a test of the inevitable patience before what happens. It is in the Renaissance when human beings return to be considered as the center of all things although wars do not allow the end of suffering (Marías, 1941). Rationalism will have to come, two centuries later, to try to put in order the dichotomy faith and reason for the attainment of harmony that does not emerge from suffering (Geyer, 1982). Human

desire, when it does not become a reality, is nevertheless what produces suffering for the empiricists, contemporaries of the rationalist movement.

The optimism with which the Enlightenment begins and its way of understanding the world, is frustrated by repentence before the inevitability of natural catastrophes against which nothing can be done (Villar Ezcurra, 1995). This motivates humanity to take refuge in irrational idealism to affirm that suffering arises from a negative and erroneous idea that meshes pain with death (Rivera de Rosales, 2010). It will take a few decades for human beings of the French Revolution not to try so much to interpret the world as to transform it (Engels, 1936) for the benefit of the majority (Stuart Mill, 2016). But what is said happens before philosophical thought returns to pessimism in the hand of Nihilism and Existentialism. For these movements, human existence has no meaning and the verification of this fact is what causes suffering. The more sensitive and aware, the more suffering (Schopenhauer, 2015). Life is opposed to inexorable death; That is why the Phenomenology seeks to find comfort to reality in an attempt to overcome the fears with which we live (Marías, 1941). These fears are accentuated by the rebirth of a feeling of guilt that runs throughout the twentieth century; human beings are responsible for the suffering that inflicts on his fellowmen (Pizzi, 1999).

Thus we arrive at our days. As individuals of the first quarter of the 21st century, we spend much of our time around the professional side, in the bosom of business organizations of one kind or another and of the most diverse sectors. The suffering of human beings can not be subtracted from us (Kelly, 2010; Brun, 1998).

4.2. Treatment of suffering in the specialized literature on people management

In order to know, as we have advanced, the treatment that the specialized literature gives to suffering in current business organizations, various high-impact journals on the subject at hand in recent years have been reviewed. More specifically, 1,164 articles have been analyzed in magazines specifically dedicated to people management, and another 650 articles published in business management magazines.

Regarding the search terms, we have based our choice on suffering itself as well as on synonym words, on opposite terms, on suffering causes and on observable symptoms. Thus, we have checked whether the titles and keywords of the articles published matched the following:

- a.- Suffering, pain and/or grief
- b.- The opposite term of satisfaction
- c.- Causes: Harassment at work, work environment
- d.- Observable symptoms: Stress, burnout, anxiety, anguish and/or depression.

The data obtained from the nine most important journals based on their impact are as follows:

1.- Academy of Management Review (2/193). It publishes articles whose contribution is based on disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology or social psychology. The contents try to contribute to a better understanding of management models in organizations. In the years analyzed, the aforementioned magazine published 138 articles. Of these, only one of them deals with the issue of satisfaction, a term opposite to that of suffering.

2.- Academy of Management Journal. (2/193). Frequently cited in articles of analysis of the main newspapers of the United States, this magazine publishes articles that try to contribute to business management and to broaden the theoretical scope of knowledge. In the years analyzed, the aforementioned magazine published 265 articles. One of them deals with the issue of suffering; in two others the work climate is treated; and on another occasion it is published on stress at work.

3.- Personnel Psychology Journal (18/194). It is a magazine specialized in theories related to social psychology, and publishes articles that stand out for their creativity in advancing knowledge in this area. In the years analyzed, the aforementioned review published 159 articles. On one occasion an article referring to the work climate was published and on another one an article related to stress could be read.

4.- International Journal of Management (121/194). It is a worldwide review magazine on business organization and management studies. It publishes articles that make conceptual contributions and

offer an analysis of current paradigms with the intention of advancing current and future research in areas of business management. In the analyzed years, the referred magazine published 88 articles. No reference to the subject matter of this research work can be seen in them.

5.- Human Resource Development Quarterly. Created by the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater School of Business and Economics in the United States, and distributed in Europe through the Portsmouth Business School at the University of Portsmouth, this quarterly journal was the first peer-reviewed. This journal dedicates exclusively to deal with the evolution of the development of human resources management. It has an impact factor of 2,441. In the years analyzed, the aforementioned magazine published 191 articles. Of these, work satisfaction and burnout have been published on three occasions. Two of them, stress and burnout, as observable symptoms of suffering. The term satisfaction, on the other hand, as its opposite.

6.- Human Resource Development Review (154/192). It is a Journal edited by George Washington University in collaboration with the universities of Maryland and Texas. Of quarterly publication, it is dedicated to the review of the development and management of human resources and specifically to seek theoretical contributions, construction of research methods and reviews and integration of the literature. It also studies philosophies of development of human resources, historical bases, field definitions and their organization, and their ethical foundations. In the years analyzed, the magazine we are dealing with published 140 articles. An article referring to stress at work has been found as the only reference to issues related to the one that occupies this research.

7.- Human Resource Management (73/192). Edited by Wiley and Sons, it contains publications related to modern human resource management and offers specialists the latest concepts, tools and information necessary for problem solving and decision making. In the years analyzed, the aforementioned magazine published 343 articles. We face the most active publication on the subject at hand. In the period analyzed, thirty-six authors have published ten articles referring to job satisfaction, burnout or exhaustion, stress, anxiety, burnout and the work environment.

8.- Human Resource Management Journal (71/192). This journal aims to promote the theory and practice of human resource management and to provide an international forum for discussion and debate, and to emphasize the critical importance of people management. It is the basic link between academic research and its practical application. In the years analyzed, the aforementioned magazine published 230 articles. Seven of them refer to issues related to this study, four of which are related to workplace harassment.

9.- Human Resource Management Review. It is a journal with an impact factor of 2,236, created by Elsevier, a world leader in information content whose objective is to improve the performance of professionals. The referred journal JCR is a quarterly publication dedicated to the publication of conceptual and theoretical articles related to human resource management that include new knowledge aimed at promoting empirical research, the critical examination of existing concepts and the role of human resources in organizations. In the years analyzed, the aforementioned magazine published 260 articles. However, no reference to the subject of this research work can be seen in them.

In the years on which we have based the analysis the nine selected journals together published 1,814 articles. From them, twenty-eight occasions deal with issues related to people's suffering, such as work environment, job satisfaction, job stress and professional harassment. Only on one occasion do they address the issue of people's suffering as such.

The terminological quantification results are as follows:

- Suffering or synonyms:	1 article published
- Opposite terms. Satisfaction:	5 published articles
- Causes of suffering. Harassment and / or weather:	9 published articles
- Observable symptoms. Stress, anguish, burnout:	13 published articles

As a result of the review carried out, it can therefore be stated that, of the cited 1,814 articles reviewed, only twenty-eight of them deal with matters related in some way to the suffering of people in organizations.

4.2. Professionals of people management in the face of suffering

Regarding the consideration that human resources managers give to suffering in organizations, It has been tried to interpret the statements of the people interviewed in relation to the matter that concerns the present research work, and to add support to their affirmations based on philosophical knowledge about it. We used for this the most frequent terms and concerns, as well as the conclusions that emerge from the discourse, read and interpreted by iteration as already mentioned. We connected the literality of the formulations of the interviewees with simultaneous references to philosophical thinkers and currents that affect similar aspects or ideas.

On the one hand and first of all, we asked ourselves whether those responsible for people management do something to prevent, manage, or try to alleviate the suffering they claim to recognize exists. They assure that they would do something more if they knew to whom it happens to him, but they say that what usually happens is that people suffer in silence, and that they do not dare to denounce what happens to them. In fact, in a deeper conversation, they recognize that, in fact, it is possible that there is suffering in some of their employees. One of the reasons that respondents refer to justify the silence of their employees, is the fear of "what they will say", to which it is a shameful situation. In general, it is not usually recognized that the psychologist is visited.

This recognition of fear of failure is studied by existentialist thinkers. These are basically concerned with suffering that has no apparent cause and that is not justified by any understandable reason; and they explain that this pain comes from fear, from fear of failure as human beings and from the anguish produced by our knowledge of finitude. Suffering becomes the messenger of a constant inner restlessness of the conscience, without it depending on the suffering -be it physical or psychological- because any of them is, in short, painful (López Sáenz, 2010).

On the other hand, the people interviewed recognized that if someone suffers, they will pay less and that will affect the profitability of the company. In effect, returning to the existentialist thinkers, we can affirm that the person who suffers is not capable of living normally. That circumstance prevents him/her from living his/her day to day and can even annul the person in the world. They place those who suffer in a world that is parallel and different from that of other human beings (Schutz, 1971). It would be a world in which the past and the future disappear for the individual, and in which everything becomes an eternal present, from which suffering does not let it go: "Things are entirely what they seem and behind them ... there is nothing" (Sartre, 1938, p.137).

It is said that the best trained people express their situation more easily, in cases of suffering. It is what Nietzsche called "talent for suffering" in the sense that the preparation of man produces a better acceptance of suffering (1886). Only when we go through suffering do we get to know ourselves according to Hegel. In his Phenomenology of the Spirit (Hegel, 1966), one of the most important of the German philosopher, he affirms that reality is shown to us as a process of self-knowledge and knowledge of an infinite reason.

People who are silent, in large part, and in the opinion of the interviewees, are people who have no hope for improvement, for further development. A vicious circle is thus produced, so that the suffering subject does not consider that the future will be better, and this same situation is again the origin of suffering. In the Greek case, even with the importance of their discoveries, and with all that the human being advanced during his preponderance in the world, human beings suffered due to the reason given (Marías, 2005).

Another of the reasons they use to make people who suffer decide to hide their situation is, in some cases, the excessive desire to try to reach a position that is unattainable for them. Some people keep silent when they have a hard time because, if they show their limitations, this would interfere with their personal ambitions. Another cause considered by those responsible for managing people that generates suffering that is not counted, is that of daily quarrels and very frequent in the templates. They believe that it is their mission to try to avoid them in order to help the workers in this way. We see how, once again, those responsible for managing people recognize that they must take responsibility in matters that may cause suffering or discomfort. They do not deal with the result of their activity as responsible, but with the possible causes regardless of the result. Managing directors consider their mission fulfilled when they act to improve the lives of workers, regardless of the result obtained.

In the Renaissance, prominent thinkers, such as Erasmus of Rotterdam or Thomas More, considered that the struggle against the suffering of people had much to do with the fight against wars, provocative of it (Erasmus, 2007).

In any case, it is not easy to face this problem, say the directors of people management. They recognize a complex reality in which human beings do not have it simple. Thus, suffering nowadays is more than ever influenced by the circumstances that surround individuals, changing as never before. The human being becomes a constant becoming of desires and illusions always with the present anguish of knowing that he is going to die (Ortega y Gasset, 1957).

In view of the complex situation described, those responsible for the management of the people interviewed try to make us understand that facing the matter directly would be a problem for their position. They consider that if there is too much talk about how badly some people do it, what is provoked is an unnecessary increase in the prominence given to the suffering of professionals. This statement recalls the Poem on the Lisbon disaster of Voltaire (2006). This one is criticized by Rousseau, in spite of considering it his teacher, because of his reading so much misery and pessimism is deduced that instead of offering consolation it causes an even greater suffering in spite of having been written at his judgment with a sense of humanity.

This is, perhaps, the reason why those responsible for managing people are optimistic about the gallery, which, they acknowledge, does not always coincide with the intimate feeling, or with that of the professionals. It is a way of managing people in which it is done, but you do not look at it, or you do not want to look at it. However, in private, in an environment of in-depth interview, the statement is quite different. If the problem of suffering were faced in people, it would be to focus on the people who suffer, and not so much on projects that may seem healthier from the point of view of the company.

Even enlightened thinkers did not face the problem directly. They were far from solving the problem of suffering from the perspective of the victims, although they contributed their controversies to the process of secularization of suffering and the necessary elevation of suffering beyond the culture in which it occurs. At that time, as in the current one, some insist on their indignation at suffering, while others, leave room for hope. All tried at that time, yes, to analyze in depth the reality in order to evolve from mere compassion for human beings, to the incorporation of Justice (Villar Ezcurra, 2010). In view of what has been said, it could give the impression that not only those responsible for the management of people should be responsible for compassion for those who suffer, but also and above all, they should do so for reasons of justice.

It is about promoting a change in the way of understanding and, therefore, addressing, a real problem. If the suffering exists in companies, sooner or later it will have to be faced by those responsible for managing people, and they are aware, they say, of their leading role in this respect. Thus, suffering for Christians has a moral and moralizing sense. It is not something avoidable, or that we should try to avoid (Skeel, 2014).

An important fact to keep in mind, our informants say, is that they do not face the problem of suffering because it has never been done, because they would be the only ones and also the first and that would be a problem for them. For classical Islam, suffering does not necessarily come from human nature, but also has to do with habit, with the customs that a culture, society or organization imposes on its individuals (Ayoub, 2011). This way of thinking is of Aristotelian influence. It is when it states that the habit builds a way of acting, resulting from the repetition of a certain behavior, and implies a certain will in one direction or another (Escobar Gómez, 2010). For Foucault (1978), habit is the maximum representative of power structures.

Although they claim not to deal with suffering, the current managers of people recognize that suffering is an avoidable problem, and that, if approached, the situation in companies would improve. That is the interpretation of the suffering that was done in the Renaissance. Then, it was affirmed that suffering is avoidable insofar as it is caused by human beings (González García, 2010).

The reflection offered by the informants regarding the partial, merely intuitive knowledge that exists regarding suffering in companies is unanimous. The one considered as the first Muslim philosopher, Al-Kindi, says that in order to counteract suffering we must know its causes and always bear in mind that we live in a material world in which it exists and there will always be pain and suffering (Al Kindi, 1986).

We can then affirm that, of the two forms of knowledge that exist, reason and intuition, the interviewed executives opt for reason, for the proven explanation of what happens with respect to suffering. This must also be the case for the rationalists. Everything that exists, and therefore also suffering, must have a rational explanation. For Leibnitz, suffering must be able to be explained by reason and done in a manner compatible with the existence of intuition (Leibnitz, 2008).

Thus, the participants, who recognize that they do not deal with suffering, nevertheless affirm that people are a priority and that, if they have the necessary tools, they would devote the importance they deserve to the problem of suffering in the organizations. It is, therefore, a challenge; suffering is a challenge because they want to get rid of melancholy compassion and fall into a pessimism without remission because they understand, as Nietzsche, that when pain oppresses us we run the risk of resorting to childlike pity and transform it into a crippling obstacle (Nietzsche, 2014). They also question the existing reality and discover that there is a gap in the management of people. It must consider suffering as an essential part of its mission, and they consider something similar to the *Epojé* described by Edmund Husserl in his transcendental phenomenology, a form of thought that completely transforms all doctrine about reality and therefore also about suffering (Husserl, 2012).

Suppose the people interviewed, that their superiors would not be sensitive to the implementation of policies directly aimed at diagnosing and mitigate in their case, the suffering of employees. According to the people interviewed, senior managers believe that the person who performs satisfactorily in an adequate environment does not have to suffer. But if we take into account the analysis of suffering performed by Emmanuel Kant, Transcendental Idealism, and its interpretation of evil, we see how it states that nature has placed suffering in human beings as "impulse of activity", as an engine that drives them to change the current world to create a better one (Kant, 2007). That is, if someone has a bad time in the company, it can serve as an incentive if it is for a "healthy" reason, or teaching to learn, if it is for reasons product of their misguided will. However, informants recognize that they need clearly established leadership in order to get organizations to work. Said leadership, in his opinion, should pursue the common good. It does not distinguish, however, this affirmation between the common good, the good of the majority, and the good itself.

This is the view of utilitarianism, for which the end justifies the means if it is the common good that is pursued (or the lesser evil, as they express it). That is what the Christian humanists want, and that is what every thinker of the Renaissance also pursues; the common good, although the valid methods and the extent to which the suffering of the people is allowed is what distinguishes them from each other. The interviewees affirm that, if they explain themselves well to the direction that there are people who suffer, this would meet the needs of their staff. Today they think they would not pay attention because the circumstances described do not exist. That is what the irrationalist thinkers wielded, for whom compassion is a supreme principle of morality. Compassion is the great mystery of ethics because it does not even need to be based on being the very foundation of morality (Suances Marcos, 2010).

5. Results and conclusion

Philosophy constitutes a dimension of culture from immemorial time and therefore that cannot be alien to the problem of pain and suffering of human beings. For some, suffering comes from ignorance of reality or oneself. For others, it has its origin in human bad works, or in a fatalistic manifestation of destiny and consubstantial to the very essence of people. There are times when it is considered that the attachment and desire without limit for the perishable cause suffering insofar as it separates human being from the nature that makes it up. For others, it is the separation of moral behavior based on experience and intuition in equal parts that makes people suffer.

Be that as it may, nothing that happens to human being has been strange to philosophical reflection. However, the philosophical process regarding pain does not end with its description in each culture and era, but also aims to provide solutions, ideas that give light about its origin, its interpretation, its consequences (López Sáenz, 2010). That is why we believe we are in a position to make a conceptual contribution to the notion of organizational malaise and suffering of workers, complementary to that which exists, as well as to offer a new perspective to those responsible for the management of people from Philosophy.

To conclude, we have realized that today, specialized literature does not deal with suffering in business organizations with the profusion that would correspond to a matter of such importance. Further, the detection of a person who suffers in the professional environment, occurs, if produced, by intuition. It is necessary, therefore, to establish methods of observation and listening to the evolution of the situation of employees in organizations (Hard-Lord et al., 1999). This situation is reminiscent of the evolution that occurs from the self-knowledge that advocates thinking in the East as a way to the cessation of suffering. Self-knowledge gives way to knowledge per se, to wisdom, as a balm for the suffering of human beings in ancient Greece. The necessary step in those responsible for managing people, from intuition to knowledge,

refers to who is able to combine the domain over the theoretical and the practical, the combination of intellect and science as a way to achieve perfect knowledge, as Aristotle wrote in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 2012).

Therefore, those responsible for managing people should not flee from facing the problem, although it is true, as we have seen, that they have not taken it into account until now. This reflection is embodied by Seneca, who, in reference to Plato and Aristotle, writes that the suffering of the spirit has long been known, but it is our duty to learn and adapt the method of healing at every moment of history (Hadas, 1958). For the near future, we recommend the emergence of new studies based on philosophical principles regarding any kind of suffering at work, including stress, burn-out or mobbing for instance. Both, academia and practitioners, will appreciate the efforts to improve the existent knowledge to avoid social and medical problems in companies and to build and enhance more healthy business environments.

6. Tables

Table 1. Sample of Human Resources Director. Written, informed consent was obtained from the [individual(s) AND/OR minor(s)' legal guardian/next of kin] for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article

1.- P.M.I. Woman, 40 years old, 23,000 employees. Infrastructure sector. Madrid. Sixteen years of experience in people management. Ten years in the position.
2.- E.M.D. Man, 42 years old 250 direct and 10,000 indirect employees. Automotive Sector. Madrid. Eighteen years of experience in people management. Twelve years old in the position.
3.- L.C.M. Man, 52 years old, 15,000 contracts per year and 50 direct employees. Employment and Consulting Sector. Madrid. Thirty years of experience in people management. Twenty-one years in the position.
4.- A.G.G. Woman, 52 years old 1,000 employees Health sector. Barcelona. Twenty-six years of experience in people management. Three years of seniority in the position.
5.- S.M.P. Man, 56 years old 350 employees Food Sector. Castilla. Thirty years of experience in people management. Eleven years of seniority in the position.
6.- T.C.S. Woman, 51 years old 200 employees Legal Sector. Madrid. Twenty years of experience in people management. Two years of seniority in the position.
7.- M.P.G. Male, 44 years old 100 employees Banking Sector Madrid. Twenty-two years of experience in people management. Seven years of seniority in the position.
8.- F.D.C. Man. 41 years. 350 employees Industrial Sector Madrid. Fifteen years of experience in people management. Eight years of seniority in the position.

Source: Human Resources Managers interviews, Eduardo Gismera, 2021

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