

# Influence of suffering in the workplace in health, occupational safety, and professional performance.

Sheila Liberal Ormaechea<sup>1</sup>, Cristina Paredes<sup>2,\*</sup>, Eduardo Gismera<sup>3</sup> Javier Sastre<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Francisco de Vitoria University (Spain) [s.liberal.prof@ufv.es](mailto:s.liberal.prof@ufv.es)

<sup>2</sup> Complutense University (Spain); [ciparedes@ucm.es](mailto:ciparedes@ucm.es)

<sup>3</sup> Pontificia Comillas University (Spain); [egismera@comillas.edu](mailto:egismera@comillas.edu)

<sup>4</sup> Esic Business School (Spain); [jsaster@esic.edu](mailto:jsaster@esic.edu)

- Correspondence: [ciparedes@ucm.es](mailto:ciparedes@ucm.es); Tel.: 34 678145420

## Influence of suffering in the workplace in health, occupational safety, and professional performance.

**Abstract:** Suffering in the workplace is probably a more common occurrence than expected in everyday life. In the interests of both, employee wellbeing and company performance, it must be taken seriously in consideration. However, poor knowledge exists concerning the effects of suffering on health and occupational safety because neither the current human management systems, nor the specialized literature directly address this problem. As a consequence there is a lack of evidence regarding how to manage suffering in organizations. Rooted in human resources managers postulates, this work is a thoughtful analysis of data collected from focus group discussions with Top Human Resources Managers of selected companies in Spain. The article offers an innovative look at the under-researched topic of suffering in the workplace to discover what has been done, what has to change and what is to come in the field of suffering.

**Keywords:** suffering; employee wellbeing, workplace, health, human resources managers

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### 1. Introduction

Individual, family, economic, and other forms of people suffering impact organizations. Suffering takes so many different forms. For instance, and according to the World Health Organization, 300 million people worldwide struggle with depression and close to 800.000 people die due to suicide every year, which is in average one person every 40 seconds (Who, 2009). Data from the United States Census Bureau shows that 71 million US adults have debt in collections reported in their credit files (2019). And also, the workplace itself is a source of suffering. Concretely, the increase of competition and the derived new forms of work organization are even causing harm employees' mental health (Hirigoyen, 2009).

43 The liberation produced in our global world has resulted in an unconstrained consumerism in  
44 which everything is measured from a quantitative point of view in favor of the principle of  
45 performance and profitability as the only valid parameters. We forget in our time, however, that the  
46 so-called standard of living must include other qualitative factors such as gratitude for what we  
47 possess, the release of the global feeling of guilt, health and well-being, safety at work, or the  
48 suppression of some unfounded fears of yesteryear (López Sáenz, 2010).

49  
50 The current economic model, beyond ideological biases of ever lesser depth, is based on the  
51 objectification, planning and use of resources, objectives to which the life of the human beings is  
52 subordinated (Levinas, 1991). The existence of technology, industry, the objectification of what  
53 happens, the manipulation of individuals around work and the possession of material things, make  
54 up the state of things and constitute the predominant sphere of power (Sánchez Meca, 2010).

55  
56 This is an absolutely simple matter that should make us think in order to understand together  
57 the processes that take place and that must be understood in order to transform the causes that  
58 produce suffering in people. It is also a challenge undoubtedly ethical, that can and should contribute  
59 to the improvement of employees health, all with the intention of returning the vitality of people who  
60 are affected by situations of mental wasting that cause suffering (Seligman-Silva, 2014).

61  
62 The logical concern about the profitability of companies does not take into account that, to  
63 improve it, it is necessary to consider the number of people who say they suffer in them. The  
64 improvement of the well-being and health of people, both those within it, and within the rest of  
65 society, can and should be an end in itself, and also a guarantee of greater profitability (Pinto de  
66 Almeida & Da Costa Leao, 2012).

67  
68 The objectives of this work arouse its effort to analyze what has been written about suffering in  
69 companies and what their human resources managers think about it. Having verified the lack of  
70 content and protocols in existing people management models, it is suggested how to manage  
71 suffering at work.

72  
73 This study begins by a brief review of the concept of suffering in the work place and follows by  
74 reviewing extant academic literature, and the managing models on Human Resources Management  
75 linking suffering with health, occupational safety and work performance. Later, the theoretical  
76 propositions are developed reflecting the current situation, and are tested with qualitative analysis.

77  
78 Once the study is finished, we will be able to develop proposals that aim at contributing to  
79 improve the situation of people in actual companies from the point of view of their discomfort and  
80 health in a broad sense.

80

## 81 **2. The concept of suffering in the workplace**

82 Most authors who have tried to define suffering argue for its complementarity with the term  
83 "pain" (Montoya et al, 2006) although they accept as a general rule the definition proposed in the year  
84 1982 by Eric Cassell who affirms that it is "a state of severe stress associated with threatening events  
85 for the integrity of the person" (Cassell, 1982 p. 639). He also affirms that the suffering of people is  
86 conditioned by the society and the culture of every moment and place. This is even more important  
87 today given the growing need to reconcile professional and family life and the fact that an increasing  
88 number of organizations are interested in promoting the well-being of their employees. (Galvez  
89 Mozo, 2020). Although the concepts "pain" and "suffering" are not exactly identical, we will therefore  
90 consider them as similar for the practical purposes of this research work.

91 We are in any case with Briner when he affirms in his work entitled "The carelessness and the  
92 importance of emotions at work", that emotions constitute nonspecific affective states and therefore,  
93 its definition entails difficulty. Suffering is one of those emotions and its definition and study can not  
94 be approached in a simple way (Brinner, 1999). This is produced, not so much by its subjectivity, as  
95 by the non-specificity of its essence and, therefore, of its definition. Thus, the result of a review of the  
96 different meanings that are known, some other authors say that "suffering is a state of pain more or  
97 less permanent experienced by the subject within a specific society and culture, when facing a  
98 perceived threat as capable of destroying their own physical or psychosocial integrity, and before  
99 which they feel vulnerable and helpless " The globalized world we live in, suggests to look for a  
100 definition of suffering that can be transcultural, although the non-specificity of the concept, as it is  
101 said, makes it a very complex task (Montoya et al, 2006).

102 As an extreme example we can mention the attempt that based on matching the experience of  
103 pain in the perception of temporality of the subject a posteriori. That is, if a subject suffered, the time  
104 passed more slowly and vice versa (Bayés, 2000). This attempt does not have, as it seems, the  
105 necessary objectivity, given that there may be other factors besides pain so that time passes slowly  
106 and anodynely.

107 It has been discussed in the past, although today it is to a lesser extent, if suffering comes  
108 exclusively from physical damage, or if the psyche also has something to say. Today it is established  
109 doctrine that pain can come from reasons of physical harm, or psychological reasons that also cause  
110 suffering to people. For the rest, it is also possible that psychic pain also produces somatic effects  
111 known as "symptoms" (Denault et al, 2004). It is not only the experience of physical pain that causes  
112 suffering, but we must take into account, more so in the business world, the threshold of subjectivity  
113 that concerns the concept of suffering and that makes it manifest greater or lesser measured in similar  
114 circumstances (Ridner, 2004). There is in that sense a component of the concept of suffering that must  
115 be taken into account to justify its subjectivity, and it is the individual's sensation of his own  
116 vulnerability. In other words, any subject that feels vulnerable suffers to a greater or lesser extent  
117 (Black & Rubinstein, 2004).

118 Professionals experience moments of pressure in which, the mere risk of losing their job, just  
119 that possibility, makes them feel extremely vulnerable due to the responsibilities we assume in  
120 today's society and that condition involve us in one way or another. We live here and now and we  
121 must pay attention to each of our movements trying to become fully aware that we do so. (Baer,  
122 Caldera et Nagy, 2020). Faced with this situation, some people defend themselves through the  
123 externalization of a position of personal hardening; Others suffer, however, from emotional suffering  
124 that society judges as a sign of the aforementioned vulnerability. In any of the options, the human  
125 being perceives the work that must be done for the rest of his professional life as an arduous and  
126 expensive task, a dead end in which the professional will always be accompanied by a form of  
127 suffering (Morse, 2000). This perception is clearly influenced by the ideological context and the  
128 structures of today's organizations, a matter awared, but which exceeds the objectives of this study.

129 The individual situation and in most of the occasions anonymous, of suffering, does not occur  
130 in a closed and hermetic environment, but within the group life to which all human beings are forced.  
131 Therefore, the greater or lesser degree of suffering will be influenced by our situation inside a group  
132 and will be greater or lesser depending on the situation of power or subordination of each person  
133 (Georges, 2002). Suffering, as we have pointed out, has a very broad nonspecific component, so that  
134 circumstances can influence whether the impact of an adverse situation on a person is greater or  
135 lesser. This feature is even more important in recession periods because companies need to adjust all  
136 departments, also human resources ones (Dolors and Martínez-García, 2021).

137

138 Byung-chul Han describes the current situation in the following way: "We live in a special  
139 historical phase, in which freedom itself gives rise to coercion. The freedom to be able to do generates  
140 even more coercion than the disciplinary duty. Duty has a limit. The power to do, on the contrary,  
141 has none. That is why the coercion that comes from being able to do is unlimited. We are, therefore,  
142 in a paradoxical situation. Freedom is the counter-figure of coercion. Freedom, which must be the  
143 opposite of coercion, generates coercion. Diseases such as depression and burnout syndrome are the  
144 expression of a deep crisis of freedom. They are a pathological sign that today freedom becomes, in  
145 different ways, coercion " (Han, 2014, p. 7).

146 Thus, we can affirm that suffering, as an emotion inherent to human beings, might take place in  
147 the spaces and, therefore, also in the business organizations of our days. If suffering, although non-  
148 specific, is a concept that refers to an emotion experienced by the human being by the mere fact of  
149 being, we can not remove it from its presence in whatever place it occupies, and therefore in its  
150 position of work.

151 The concept of suffering is closely related to others such as safety, occupational health and job  
152 performance. This leads us to the need to study them, although we must be aware that these other  
153 concepts do not obey the suffering itself, but rather the causes that produce it, some of its observable  
154 symptoms that could cause it, or the consequences that could occur. We must also attend, perhaps  
155 first, to the definition of job satisfaction as opposed to the concept of suffering. Although it is a  
156 complex concept due to the number of variables that influence its formation, it seems clear that job  
157 satisfaction can be "built", or at least it can be promoted among workers. Adequate orientation in the  
158 position and training aimed at favoring it, recognition, or progress expectations, contribute to its  
159 occurrence and its permanence over time (Tavbuma, Georgellis, & Thomas, 2015).

160  
161 Another concept that must be taken into account due to its relationship with that of suffering is  
162 that of the work environment. A study recently carried out by professors Van Woerkkom and Meyers  
163 (2015), shows that the perception that workers have of an organizational climate contributes to better  
164 professional results or hinders them, as well as the appearance of a proactive or reactive feeling in  
165 Workers. The aforementioned results are the result of the analysis of a sample of 442 employees  
166 belonging to 39 departments of eight Danish and Belgian companies and through it it is shown that  
167 up to 86 out of 100 workers carry out their activity better in a favorable climate and worse in one that  
168 without it.

169  
170 This leads us to the next point of analysis of this research work, insofar as it is considered  
171 essential to verify whether existing people management models, as well as specialized literature,  
172 contribute to favoring an adequate work environment and, therefore, to palliate the suffering of the  
173 workers.

174

### 175 **3. The presence of suffering on contemporary Human Resources Models and specialized** 176 **literature.**

177

178 The incorporation of the human factor to the analysis of resources in organizations is relatively  
179 recent. Under the heading "strategic human resource management", the importance of people in the  
180 creation of competitive economic value by developing specific skills that facilitate (Cappelli & Singh,  
181 1992) stands out. There are different works that affirm that there is a correlation between the  
182 economic success of companies and the existence of people management systems and affirm that  
183 effective management of human resources produces benefits that translate into greater profitability  
184 (Schuler & MacMillan, 2006).

185

186 However, we are at a key moment. On the one hand, there is no doubt about the growing  
187 inclusion of the management of people in the strategic "core" of companies. Trends appear constantly

188 and / or practices relating to the management of people in organizations and these are taken into  
189 consideration and supported, at least theoretically by senior management of the companies. Thus,  
190 we have created some models of people management literature called "hard" divided into five  
191 fundamental aspects (Fombrun, 1982): The selection and recruitment of people - Measuring  
192 performance - The performance assessment - The proposal of the rewards consequence of the  
193 obtained results - The future development of the employees.

194  
195 But, on the other hand, there are those who choose to understand the management of people  
196 placing the emphasis on human beings in themselves and not so much in its mere role as a resource,  
197 notwithstanding that inevitably we all are as long as we serve a cause and we carry out a mission.  
198 These authors have proposed a model of people management that considers a preponderant (Beer et  
199 al, 1984: - The influence of workers in the organization - The analysis of their personal development  
200 in the company as outside of it - The importance of adequate compensation systems - The constant  
201 analysis of the work systems used.

202

### 203 **3.1 People Management Models and suffering.**

204

205 Whatever the model of people management chosen by an organization, it will be influenced in  
206 any case by the society in which it is developed. Thus, the models of people management that are  
207 being applied in today's business organizations can be grouped around two main approaches: an  
208 American one, characterized by a private and autonomous way of understanding organizations  
209 (Kaufmann, 2014), and another European, which includes other forms of social organization more  
210 guarantees of rights for workers (Brewster, 1995).

211

212 Either model must address current trends in human resource management that are, among other  
213 things, potential sources of employee suffering:

214

215 - People management models adjust the individual and organizational objectives of the group  
216 and offer employees rewards for their performance. This is one of the reasons why the management  
217 of people takes on greater importance in companies. It is no longer a matter of simply guaranteeing  
218 that a job is accomplished, but of obtaining sufficient commitment from the workers so that it can be  
219 done continuously over time and as effectively as possible (Dolan & Raich, 2010).

220 - A greater degree of flexibility in the management of people is included, so that a different  
221 performance can be compensated differently in different collaborators, even if they are part of the  
222 same work group and have similar tasks entrusted to them. The processes of internal communication  
223 are therefore very important. Each worker must know what he can do and what to expect depending  
224 on the result obtained (De Silva, 2007).

225 - The traditional personnel function evolves and is integrated as an important part of the general  
226 management strategy of the company. People management has a role as a planner, beyond mere  
227 mediation and / or problem solving.

228 - Cooperation among employees is sought and encouraged through the development of the  
229 necessary skills to seek cohesion between individuals and groups, the creation of programs to  
230 promote corporate culture, new remuneration models and the development of management  
231 programs for the people who best contribute to this end (Lawyer, 2002).

232 - Globalization has meant that the improvement of efficiency is not so much sought in the  
233 reduction of salary costs and the cheapening of products, as in innovation and the improvement of  
234 productivity. Quality has become the hallmark of organizations and people management models try  
235 to achieve this through increasingly complete and efficient training plans (Schuler, 2000).

236 - The constant updating of knowledge and information in real time, the result of the  
237 technological era we live in, conditions the management of people in organizations, which have had  
238 to eliminate traditional jobs and adapt the profiles and skills of them to the new working conditions  
239 characterized by constant and rapid change (Dolan & Acosta-Flamma, 2006).

240 - The management models must also take into account those workers called "peripherals", whose  
241 number is growing, and who are the people who do not belong to the company's workforce, but who  
242 perform functions that, although outsourced, form part of the day by day of the production system  
243 of products or services that make up the main activity. There is therefore an increase in problems and  
244 / or tasks that are solved by means external to each organization (De Silva, 1997).

245 - The supervision of the work of people has evolved to the measurement of results in the medium  
246 term, due, among other causes, to the greater training and skills of the generations that enter the labor  
247 market.

248 - Variations have been added to the management models that include a greater temporality in  
249 the employee, given the increase of the work systems for tasks, for specific projects. The management  
250 of people must be compatible with the necessary seasonal flexibility, especially in sectors related to  
251 tourism and / or commerce (De Silva, 1997). Hence, the management of people is becoming less  
252 homogeneous and must take into account the diversity of groups of people who cohabit in business  
253 organizations.

254 - The Temporary Work Companies have become very important in the business organization  
255 models, since they assume the same functions of personnel management that the companies that used  
256 to hire them used to perform. They are an important piece in the creation of employment and  
257 contribute in an outstanding way to the adaptation to the intense and constant changes of the labor  
258 market in the world, as regards both companies and workers (Moreno Pérez & Moreno Vida, 2004).  
259

260 The models of people management that are tried to apply in today's business organizations,  
261 could be grouped around two main models: one American (Kaufmann, 2014), from which the rest of  
262 conceptions are born, and another European one that deals with to adapt the private and autonomous  
263 conception of the Americans to a way of understanding organizations, that of the old continent,  
264 which includes other forms of social organization, more guarantees of rights for workers (Brewster,  
265 1995).  
266

267 It could be thought that management models of people of American origin should not worry  
268 about the possible suffering of people in organizations due to the degree of freedom they allow  
269 individuals and companies, who contract with them, but do not protect them at all. However, the  
270 European model, which is more concerned with the rights and duties of employees and business  
271 organizations, would seem more favorable to assessing people in the face of anomalous situations  
272 that originate in people. There are few academic contributions that focus attention on suffering in  
273 organizations and the truth is that in any case, in one or the other model, there is no clear reference  
274 to the detection, management and / or prevention of suffering in business organizations. current,  
275 reason why we understand that it is necessary to investigate in this problematic and growing issue  
276 in today's business organizations.  
277

278 It is not perceived in any case, in one or the other model, any reference to the detection,  
279 management and/or prevention of suffering in current business organizations. We will try, therefore,  
280 in the following point, to find out if the suffering in the business organizations, beyond being  
281 considered or not in the models of people management, is cause for study and concern for the  
282 specialized literature of greater impact in the last years.  
283

### 284 **3.2 Specialized literature and suffering.** 285

286 In order to know, as we have advanced, the treatment that the specialized literature gives to the  
287 suffering in the current business organizations, several publications of high impact on the subject that  
288 occupies us in the last years have been reviewed. We refer to the chapter dedicated to explain the  
289 method to justify your choice and the results obtained. At this point we give an account of said  
290 obtained results:  
291

292 In the years in which we have based the analysis of publications just presented, the nine selected  
293 journals jointly published 1,814 articles. Twenty-eight times they deal with issues related to the  
294 suffering of people, such as the work environment, job satisfaction, work stress and professional  
295 harassment. Only once do they address the issue of the suffering of people as such.

296  
297 The terminological quantification, based on the concepts studied in the conceptual map on  
298 which we have been based, are the following:

- 299  
300 - Suffering or synonyms: 1 article published  
301 - Opposite terms. Satisfaction: 5 articles published  
302 - Causes of suffering. Harassment and / or climate: 9 articles published  
303 - Observable symptoms. Stress, anguish, burnout: 13 articles published  
304

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

307  
308 The article published specifically related to the suffering of people in companies is as follows:

309  
310 - Turning their Pain to Gain: Charismatic Leader Influence on Follower Stress Appraisal  
311 and Job Performance. It is an article published in the Academy of Management Journal in the  
312 month of June 2016. Its authors are Marcie LePine, Yiwen Zhang eean Crawford and Bruce Rich.  
313 The work consists in analyzing the influence of the charismatic leader in the stress of their teams  
314 and how both can affect the performance in the workplace (LePine et a, 2016). Note in any case  
315 that, from the reading of the article that we highlight, it can not be assumed that we should  
316 understand stress as a necessary facilitator of suffering, or that it necessarily comes from it.

317  
318 - In addition to the chosen journals, and the number of articles they have published, we  
319 have found an article that is worth highlighting for its content. It is titled Protocol for evaluating  
320 a Consultation for Suffering at work in French-speaking Switzerland (Bontemps et al, 2018). It  
321 affirms that suffering at work implies human, social and economic costs. He also says that in  
322 Switzerland, 34% of workers say they feel stress related to work. We must reflect again that the  
323 observable symptoms of possible suffering, such as stress, do not necessarily have to produce it,  
324 which is why we must maintain the necessary caution in the face of any attempt to understand  
325 suffering in organizations. That is why in the conclusions of the aforementioned article it is  
326 stated that the impossibility of approaching such an asymmetric concept is a limitation of it.

327  
328 From what has been said up to this point, let us remember that we cannot say that current  
329 management models include a reference to the suffering of people in business organizations and  
330 therefore, how to prevent, alleviate or trace it. Similarly, from the review of the literature described  
331 we cannot infer that there are publications that advocate addressing the issue that concerns us in  
332 depth, which is why we consider it important to do so in this research work.

333  
334 Moreover, few studies have highlighted the effect of suffering on health, occupational safety or  
335 work performance. MacIntosh et al. (2007) argued that suffering in the workplace can detrimentally  
336 affect the body and mind of employees. Consequently, health and occupational safety should be in  
337 risks as well as a firm's financial health. The solution should be to provide and implement any kind  
338 of organizational program that attempts to target and help promote a positive organizational climate  
339 Gibbs & Cooper, 2011) Quick and Henderson (Quick & Henderson, 2016) reviewed the evidence  
340 concerning the health risks associated with occupational stress. Their arguments and final  
341 conclusions, that were developed from roots in preventive medicine and public health, highlighted  
342 the application of preventive management.

343

344

#### 345 4. Object and Methodology

346 The aim is to know how human resources managers perceive the suffering within organizations and  
347 what they do to manage it, and if people management models and specialized literature help them  
348 to deal with it. This purpose is specified in the following aspects:

349 a.- A conceptual contribution on the notion of organizational malaise and suffering in organizations,  
350 given that, as we will see, suffering in organizations is seen today in an incomplete and limited way.

351 b.- A complementary conceptual contribution of management models of current people in order to  
352 suggest the inclusion of the prevention, detection and / or management of suffering.

353 c.- An empirical contribution based on the experience of those responsible for managing people  
354 regarding the presence in these models of suffering and discomfort; and, where appropriate, how  
355 these realities are managed.

356 To achieve these objectives, it will be necessary to examine the management models of people in  
357 companies, as well as specialized literature on the subject to check whether the Human Resources  
358 discipline addresses the discomfort and suffering in organizations.

359 As regards the methodology used to achieve the described objectives, it should be noted beforehand  
360 that the work has been distributed in a first phase of documentary analysis, to take place at a later  
361 time to an empirical analysis as we will see. We will therefore make reference to these two parts of  
362 which its structure consists:

363 1.- In a first step, it is the documentary analysis that occupies the method of approach used to  
364 approach the study of human resource management models and the review of specialized literature.

365 2.- Secondly, the aforementioned documentary analysis gives way to a phase of empirical analysis  
366 that includes the collection of data around a discussion group made up of human resources directors  
367 to analyze the correlation between the suffering of workers and his influence on his health, his safety  
368 and his professional performance.

369 The choice of a qualitative methodology has much to do with our dynamic position between the  
370 facts and their interpretation in a process that is necessarily circular. We elaborated an analysis of  
371 existing knowledge about the management of people, and an interpretation that emerges about  
372 human suffering. We try to understand (verstehen) the social variables, and at the same time consider  
373 the subjective meanings and the understanding of the context where the phenomenon occurs.

374 In that sense, Luis Enrique Alonso, in his work *The Qualitative View in Sociology*, states that  
375 "Hermeneutic interpretation tends to capture the deep senses of the processes of social interaction,  
376 beyond their manifestations or conventions. In principle, such senses are the concretion of a projective  
377 definition of the subject researcher, mediator for their own culture, situation and perception ... "  
378 (Alonso, 1998, p. 32-33).

379 Thus, the documentary analysis used in this thesis has adopted different aspects depending on  
380 the different parts of the work:

381 - In the first of these, a bibliographic review has been carried out as regards the management  
382 models of people, both the evolution of thought in this regard, and the current systems used in  
383 organizations.

384 - Likewise, this study tries to review the specialized literature in order to try to know to what  
385 extent it deals with suffering in companies. To choose the journals on which we have based the search,  
386 we have gone to the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), which is part of the Thomson Reuters  
387 group. One of the services it provides is the so-called ISI Web of Knowledge.

388 Regarding the empirical part of the work, we participated in a discussion group composed of  
389 human resources directors. It is a method of gathering information that facilitates the transmission of  
390 ideas and opinions in an open manner, if the climate that is created is adequate and offers sufficient  
391 confidence (Kruger & Casey, 2008).

392 The decision that they were responsible for people management reporting subjects is because  
393 they are most directly related to the future of employees in companies, or at least with their superiors,  
394 who also have the status of workers. In addition, if measures of detection, prevention and elimination  
395 are studied or implemented, as far as possible, the discomfort at work, they are responsible for  
396 promoting and carrying them out.

397 In addition, managers of people management are or may be subject patients of suffering in the  
398 workplace. They are also workers, and they are the ones who know how far they can implement the  
399 policies they would like and how far they do what they dictate. On the other hand, there is evidence  
400 that they are a good subject of analysis for this type of studies. For instance (Open, 2018) examined  
401 variations in manager reactions and support for people with depression among employees across 15  
402 diverse countries. They found that manager reactions were at least as important as country GDP  
403 financial resources.

404 The meeting took place as part of a research project on welfare and humanity in today's  
405 companies. Several meetings were held beforehand to prepare a script for the development of the  
406 discussion group, as well as to organize the sending of an invitation letter to human resources  
407 managers with the criteria mentioned. The list of companies to whom the mail was sent was  
408 determined by the available prior information on their good practices in the matter to be considered.  
409 All of them were informed that the research is exploratory in nature. Once selected, the discussion  
410 was recorded and confidential; therefore none of the participants will be identified, and the  
411 destination is strictly academic, with no commercial purpose.

412 Among the applications sent, the twelve people management managers of some of the main  
413 Spanish companies, nationals and multinationals elected of both sexes, different ages, different  
414 sectors, different sizes and with different seniority in the position were selected. The selection was  
415 the following:

- 416 1.- O.N. Woman. Telephony Sector
- 417 2.- S.G.M. Woman. Education Sector
- 418 3.- J. A.F. Man. Energy Sector
- 419 4.- F.A.R. Man. Electric sector
- 420 5.- L.M.M. Woman. Energy Sector
- 421 6.- S.P. Woman. Great Consulting Sector
- 422 7.- J.C. Man. Industrial Sector
- 423 8.- J. B. L. Man. Insurance Sector
- 424 9.- B.R.G. Woman. Insurance Sector

- 425 10.- A. R. Woman. Energy Sector  
 426 11.- M. S.A. Woman. Publishing Sector  
 427 12.- M.L.V. Woman. Energy and Distribution Sector

428

429 The meeting took place as part of a research project on well-being and humanity in today's  
 430 companies. This business may seem distant, even opposite to our work. It is no less true, however,  
 431 that it is common to pose questions to a group in an indirect way, even hidden to elicit more frank  
 432 responses. For this reason, the object of the discussion group seemed appropriate a priori to try to  
 433 investigate it.

434 The session was carried out in compliance with the script previously established, and could be  
 435 completed in its entirety. The conversation that the participants had in the thread of the questions  
 436 that were asked and transcribed later. Said writing was sent to the participants so that they could  
 437 make as many qualifications as they considered.

438

439 **5. Results**

440 This point is dedicated to try to interpret the statements of the participants in the focus group in  
 441 relation to the matter that concerns the present research work. We will use for this the most frequent  
 442 terms and concerns, as well as the conclusions that emerge from the discourse, read and interpreted  
 443 by iteration. Note that in the table that can be seen below, the minutes dedicated to each question in  
 444 the discussion group that serves as an evidentiary reference to this research work are indicated on  
 445 the right side.

446

447 To obtain answers, the following script was followed:

448

449

450 *5.1 Focus Group Guideline*

451

452

Welcome and presentations of the participants (fast round)		10'
Brief description of the objective of the investigation (Emphasize that it is not about "presenting" their companies, but their personal experience and sharing their knowledge, as experts in the subject)		5'
Introductory question	<i>I would like, in the first place, that you share with us what you understand by HEALTHY ENTERPRISE, in your own words</i>	15'
Key issues	- Main question 1: In your experience as human resources managers, what is the use of this concept? What does it contribute to the company as a whole? And to its different interest groups?	15'
	- Main question 2: Is the person really the center of the organization, around which their actions and decisions revolve? What priority does this matter occupy in the companies? And in the specific case of your company?	15'

	- Main question 3: Could you share with us a case of success, of a company or of a country, that you consider especially at the forefront in this area? Why?	15'
Closing issues	- Closing question 1: Finally, do you consider that this topic of healthy business is a trend, a passing fad ?, Or, on the contrary, do you think it is here to stay? Are we facing the new health bubble in companies or is this a business strategy that is going to stay and grow?	15'
	- Closing question 2: would you like to make any additional comments? Has anything remained in the inkwell?	15'
Thanks and farewell (Indicate the following steps - sending good practices and future lines of research)		5'

453

454 5.1. Suffering in organizations

455

456 The managers participating in the reference discussion group agree that suffering in the  
457 workplace exists, although it is difficult to be detected. On the other hand, they recognize that if  
458 someone suffers, they will underperform and that will affect the profitability of the company.

459

460 *"It is much more profitable for people to be well and it doesn't cost you more money but the other way*  
461 *around; having people who are having a bad time costs you more money because it costs you much more*  
462 *effort to carry out each process. If people are in your favor and if they are all in the same direction,*  
463 *everything is much easier; also much more profitable" G.D.M.L.*

464

465 We wonder at this point if those responsible for managing people do anything to prevent,  
466 manage, or try to alleviate the suffering that they recognize exists. They affirm then that they would  
467 do something more if they knew to whom it happens, but they say that what usually happens is that  
468 people suffer in silence, and that they do not dare to denounce what happens to them. In fact, on  
469 deeper conversation, they acknowledge that there may indeed be suffering in some of their  
470 employees. In addition, those responsible for managing people take refuge in the obligatory respect  
471 for privacy so as not to inquire into possible cases of suffering.

472

473 In any case, it is not easy to face this problem, they say. They recognize a complex reality in  
474 which human beings do not have it easy. Companies today are an impersonal environment, more  
475 the bigger they are. The objectives are global and people are a resource; important, but resource  
476 without more:

477

478 *"In general, the perception that we have is that mental illnesses are not known: they remain*  
479 *silent. It is very difficult to detect them first because the information that the medical systems that*  
480 *exist do not specify what the real reason for the discharge is because the data protection law does not*  
481 *allow it."*

482

483 *"The problem is the disconnection between the sick employee and the company. Nobody cares*  
484 *about this person. Sometimes no middle manager calls this person... There is the case of someone who*  
485 *spends a month off due to a chemo treatment and does not receive any calls from the company. G.D.*  
486 *JA:*

487

488 This is, perhaps, the reason why those responsible for people management are optimistic  
489 about the gallery, which, they admit, does not always coincide with the intimate feeling, nor with  
490 that of professionals. Campaigns are carried out that do not pose a risk to the people management  
491 position, but that do not address suffering directly. It is a way of managing people in which you  
492 do it, but you don't look at it, or you don't want to look at it. Due to the fact that the prospective  
493 discussion group that we carried out had its own public character, we went to it to verify if the  
494 statement just exposed is fulfilled. Here are some examples:

495

496

497 *"We have promoted a Runners Club, in which there is an emotional part that links you with others.*  
498 *There is a sports club, paddle tennis tournaments, which are very well received by the employees. G.D J.L:*

499

500 *"... we have vaccinated all the women who have voluntarily wanted to be vaccinated against the*  
501 *human papilloma virus. Social security only offered free vaccination up to a certain age. That is why we*  
502 *decided to offer a vaccination campaign against this disease, which has considerable rates of affectation,*  
503 *G.D E.M:*

504

505 *"Five years ago we started a campaign against breast cancer. Our motto is: "think global and act*  
506 *crazy". We have carried out awareness campaigns on sexuality issues, for example, with the HIV platform".*  
507 *G.D.M.L:*

508

### 509 **5.3. Propositive Conclusions**

510 For all that has been stated, and as a result of our interpretation of the interviews carried out, we  
511 can affirm the following:

512 1.- Those responsible for people management affirm that there are people who suffer in their jobs.

513 2.- They perceive suffering in companies as a problem that they do not face.

514 3.- Even if they don't like it, it would have to be addressed and for this they would need tools

515 4.- It is a challenge for everyone, and also for senior management.

516

517 From the review of the literature carried out, we have verified that there is no explicit reference to  
518 suffering in people management models or, as a consequence, to how to alleviate it, despite the fact  
519 that we can count on several measurement scales that demonstrate the existence of suffering.  
520 symptoms of suffering.

521 Moreover, after reviewing the complementary literature, and the analysis of the reference discussion  
522 group, we have therefore verified that the problem of suffering is not dealt with in depth in  
523 companies. For this reason, we have carried out this research work and we believe we have  
524 discovered an important theoretical and practical limitation in the discipline of Human Resources -  
525 or People Management- in organizations.

526 This being the case, we suggest incorporating policies into the people management models that  
527 directly, individually, anonymously, and voluntarily address the problem of suffering in workers. It  
528 is a possible task, but even more so, it is a necessary mission.

529 - Knowledge systems of people in organizations must be improved. More and better tools are  
530 necessary, but also more human teams and a greater and better dedication of time to people's  
531 suffering.

532 - People management models must recognize the existence of suffering and try to accept it as a  
533 first step in order to later analyze, confront and prevent it.

534 - Once suffering is considered as such in people management systems, mechanisms for  
535 individualized analysis of its causes must be introduced, as well as points for improvement of  
536 the patient.

537

538 In short, it can be stated that people management models must consider human beings as the main  
539 center of their activity. Today they are subject to profitability, to costs. They are considered one more  
540 element at the service of growth. Workers are not resources for organizations; Rather, organizations  
541 should be understood as resources for the development of people.

542

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