

Well-Being in the Workplace: Do Christian Leaders Behave Differently?

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Abstract : Leadership plays a vital role in organizations. Leaders provide directions and facilitate the processes that enable organizations to achieve their goals and objectives. However, while productivity and financial objectives are often given the greatest emphasis, leaders also have the responsibility for instituting standards of ethical conduct and moral values that guide the behavior of employees. Leaders' behaviors such as support, empowerment and a high-quality relationship with their employees might not only prevent stress, but also improve employees' stress coping meanwhile contributing to their affective well-being. Stemming from Girard's Mimetic Theory, this study aims at understanding how leaders can foster well-being in organizations. To do so, we explore which is the role leaders play in conflict management, resentment management and negative emotions dissipation. Furthermore, we examine whether and to what extent religiosity impacts the way in which leaders operate in relation to employees' well-being. Indeed, given that organizational values are crucial to ethical behavior and firms' values may be steered by a deep sense of spirituality and religious identification, there is a need to take a closer look at the role religion and spirituality play in influencing the way leaders impact employees' well-being. Thus, religion might work as an overarching logic that provides a set of principles guiding leaders' everyday practices and relations with employees. We answer our research questions using a qualitative approach. We interviewed 27 Christian leaders (members of the Christian Entrepreneurs and Leaders Association - EDC, a non-profit organization created in 1926 including 3,000 French Christian Leaders & Entrepreneurs). Our results show that well-being can have a different meaning in relation to the type of companies, size, culture, country of analysis. Moreover the values and beliefs of leaders influence the way they see and foster well-being among employees. Furthermore, leaders can have both a positive or negative impact on well-being. Indeed on the one side, they could increase well-being in the company while on the other hand, they could be the source of resentment and conflicts among employees. Finally, we observed that Christian leaders possess characteristics that are sometimes missing in leaders (humility, inability to compare with others, attempt to be coherent with their values and beliefs, interest in the common good instead of the personal interest, having tougher dilemmas, collectively undertaking the firm). Moreover the Christian leader believes that the common good should come before personal interest. In other words, to them, not only short -termed profit shouldn't guide strategical decisions but also leaders should feel responsible for their employees' well-being. Last but not least, the study is not an apologia of Christian, yet it discusses the implications of these values through the light of Girard's mimetic theory for both theory and practice.

Keywords : Christian leaders, employees well-being, leadership, mimetic theory

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