

The Contribution Of Organisational Climate To Employee Well-Being


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ABSTRACT

There is ample space for further human resource based research in the service industry sector in South Africa. For that reason, this study developed and tested a conceptual framework that linked employee well-being to four organisational climate factors; namely, manager-employee relationships, working conditions, remuneration and work allocation. An adapted six section structured questionnaire was administered to a conveniently recruited sample composed of 164 employees drawn from seven service industry enterprises located in Southern Gauteng, South Africa. Hypotheses were tested using regression analysis. All four organisational climate dimensions were statistically significant, implying that they predict employee well-being in the service industry. The results of this study may be used by managers in similar environments as either diagnostic tools or as a reference benchmark for strategic interventions in solving employee well-being related problems.

Keywords: Management-Employee Relationship; Working Conditions; Remuneration; Teamwork; Work Allocation; Employee Well-Being; Service Industry; South Africa

1. INTRODUCTION

 Employee well-being in the service industry is an insightful and interesting area of study. Success in the services sector hinges on the quality of service provided by each establishment, and this to a large extent, is determined by employees who form the front line contact with clients. Having dissatisfied employees in the service industry may be equated to irresponsibility, since disgruntled employees are prone to pass on their dissatisfaction to clients. This obviously negatively affects customer satisfaction and loyalty, which has a ripple effect on profits and overall prosperity of enterprises in this sector. In light of this, it is paramount to direct attention to the well-being of employees in business enterprises operating in the service sector in order to generate current information on how to improve it for the benefit of each enterprise.

Against the above-chronicled backdrop, this study developed and tested a conceptual framework (refer to Figure 1) proposing that employee well-being is predicted by four organisational climate factors; specifically, manager-employee relationships, working conditions, remuneration, and work allocation. Employee well-being cannot be improved unless its antecedents are known. In this study, four of these antecedents are identified and their ability to predict employee well-being within the context of the South African service industry sector is tested. The study presents possibilities of either endorsing or contradicting previous results on the ability of these factors to predict employee well-being. The apparent paucity of studies that have developed and tested a similar conceptual framework in the context of developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa provided a fundamental impetus to this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

2.1. Employee Well-Being

In this study, employee well-being was considered to be a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1969). Employee well-being also pertains to an individual's perception and evaluation of his job and this perception is influenced by the person's unique circumstances such as needs, values and expectations (Buitendach & De Witte, 2005). It emphasises the general internal state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction within the individual (Thompson & Phua, 2012). High employee well-being is a product of such factors as affirmative social intercourse, adequate pay, remuneration, empathetic superiors as well as attractive

working conditions (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011). In other words, employee well-being increases when an individual's work environment fulfils his/her needs, values and personal characteristics (Yee, Yeung & Cheng, 2010). The results of employee well-being include higher commitment, higher employee productivity, increased organisational citizenship behaviours and decreased turnover/ intention to quit (Agarwal & Ferratt, 2001). It is widely considered wise for organisations to endeavour to ensure that their employees are happy, as this gives yield to an assortment of pertinent benefits to the organisation (Price, 2001).

2.2. Organisational Climate

Organisational climate is a description of the members' perception of their work environment (Zhang & Liu, 2010). It is a set of properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the employees, that is assumed to be a major force in influencing employee behaviour (Ivancevich, Konopaske & Matteson, 2007). Two basic perspectives of organisational climate are apparent. The first is the macro mode, which focuses on the organisational climate individuals perceive in the entire work environment (Hunter, Bedell & Mumford, 2007). The second is the micro mode, which is aimed at a certain dimension or a certain environment of the organisation (Tang & Chen, 2001). In the last two decades, human resources management situations have emerged as the climate issues that members of organisations were most concerned about (Bushell, 2007). These issues which include inter alia; recruitment, selection, training, remuneration, performance management relationship with managers, workplace conditions, management appraisal and benefits, are all closely associated with the crucial interests of employees (Rose & Waterhouse, 2004). For this reason, human resources management style and its operational approach are crucial to the way employees perceive organisational climate, and are regarded as significant factors affecting organisational climate (Jackson & Schuler, 1995).

2.3. Manager-Employee Relationships

There are a number of dominant internal relationships in any organisation, with relationships amongst employees, between employees and supervisors and between employees and functional departments being standard examples (Nielsen, Yarker, Brenners, Randall & Borg, 2008). Among these, the relationship between employees and their managers is arguably one of the most critical (Yeow & Sen, 2006). The right treatment of employees is the first market of the organisation (Bhattacharya & SankarSen, 2003). Hence, the creation and management of acceptable internal relationships between management and employees is regarded as a critical activity (Voss, Cable & Voss, 2006).

A study by Nielsen et al. (2008) found a positive relationship between management style and employee well-being through mediation from work characteristics. Consistently, Bono and Ilies (2006) concluded that proper management styles create a positive emotion and mood among employees. Gilbreath and Benson (2004) further opine that supervisory behaviour is the most overriding factor compared with other workplace factors that influence the happiness of employees. This challenges managers to positively acknowledge the role played by employees and to develop management styles and demeanours that facilitate the satisfaction of the needs of employees in order to ensure that the performance of the organisation is improved (Martins, 2005). Based on the aforementioned empirical results, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H1: There is a significant relationship between manager-employee relationship and employee well-being in the service industry

2.4. Working Conditions

Working conditions may be perceived as the circumstances under which the employee works (Forlan & Browne, 2005). These consist of the surroundings that influence an individual at work, with examples being facilities, physical environment, and the degree of safety and noise levels (Nurmala, 2010). Rethinam and Ismail (2008) suggest that working conditions involve promoting a work environment that is conducive to the satisfaction of employees' needs. Md-Sidin, Sambasivan and Ismail (2010) view working conditions as a comprehensive factor that includes an individual's job-related well-being and the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, fulfilling and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences. Yavari, Amirtash and Tondnevis (2009) further state that working conditions capture the degree to which the, job requirements, management behaviour, ancillary programs and the

general work environment in an organisation meet the needs of an employee. This demonstrates the import of working conditions to the well-being of both the employee and the organisation.

According to Mead, Witkowski, Gault and Hartmann (2003), working conditions are linked to the health and welfare of employees. Fabiano, Curro, Reverberi and Pastorino (2008) further opine that stress which leads to depressive and anxiety disorders may typically be a result of unsatisfactory working conditions. Working conditions possibly linked to employee health behaviours include working overtime, work fatigue, physically strenuous work and mentally strenuous work (Holcroft & Punnett, 2009). Moreover, Varonen and Mattila (2003) emphasise the importance of safety climate, showing that the more safety-conscious the climate of the company, the lower the accident rate. Issues such as physical workload, machine-paced work or the inability to take a break when tired, lack of training, absence of a lockout program, low seniority and gender are also associated with high injury risk through accidents (Tangen, 2004). It becomes advisable then for organisations to improve the working conditions of employees by ensuring that safety training is given to employees (Attwood, Khan & Veitch, 2006). In view of these results, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2: There is a significant relationship between working conditions and employee well-being in the service industry

2.5. Remuneration

Remuneration may be defined as the reward given to employees for performing their work (Schutte & Eaton, 2004). Most successes or problems in organisations can be traced back to the level of satisfaction with employee rewards as well as the competency of human resources (Katou & Budhwar, 2007). Guthrie and English (1997) specify that organisations recognise that people are the real agents in business and that all structures and assets, both tangible as well as intangible, are a result of human actions. This could explain why most organisations locally and internationally invest astronomical amounts of money in attracting and placing human talent (Ireland, Hoskisson & Hitt, 2009).

Remuneration remains an important source of motivation for employees since it defines their standard of living. Remuneration is a factor in employee retention because it is a component of job satisfaction (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). It is a factor in career choice, as well as the salary gradient between positions and practice opportunities in organisations (Beardsle, Matzke & Rospond, 2008). Salaries also determine the productivity and work performance of employees (Yang, 2008). Van Herpen, Van Praag and Cools (2005) substantiate that remuneration has a major impact on organisations' capability to catch, retain and motivate high potential employees, which determines the levels of performance within organisations. Furthermore, Estes and Micheal (2005) opine that well-remunerated employees are likely to perform the job efficiently and effectively. This demonstrates that the amount and method of remuneration is central to the company's production. The aforementioned aspects motivate the following hypothesis;

H3: There is a significant relationship between remuneration and employee well-being in the service industry

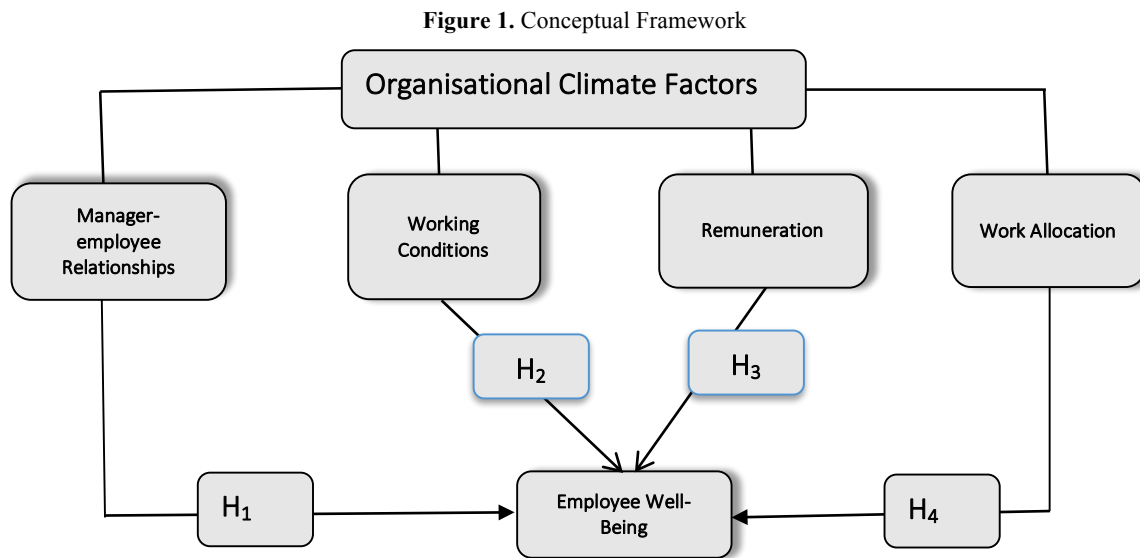
2.6. Work Allocation

Work allocation is the process of apportioning clear tasks, in numbers appropriate to the current situation, to specific workers (Duarte, Pen, Keller & Weissing, 2012). O'Donnell and Bulova (2007) point out that it is necessary to allocate work in line with the abilities of employees, since some employees have higher abilities than others. Proper work allocation attracts a number of desirable returns to the organisation, such as growth of total output in terms of the production levels of both individual employees and the company (Yoon & Suh, 2003). Bolton (2007) further advocates that the fair allocation of workloads results in motivated employees. On the other hand, an inequitable work allocation system may result in high levels of disgruntlement, which may further lead to industrial action and labour turnover (Origo & Pagani, 2009). In allocating work, managers should be fair, taking into account the skills, knowledge and understanding of employees as well as their experience and workloads and the opportunity for development (Lazear & Gibbs, 2009). Inconsiderate work allocation may result in a development in which certain employees are overwhelmed with work while others have less work to do. Consequently, those who have been allocated more work may be overworked leading to loss of production and despondency in the workplace (Duarte et al., 2012). Based on the foregoing discourse, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: There is a significant relationship between work allocation and employee well-being in the service industry

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

After considering the insights gained from the literature review, the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 was developed. The framework depicts that employee well-being is driven by four organisational climate factors which are manager-employee relationships, working conditions, remuneration and work allocation. Accordingly, four hypotheses; H1, H2, H3 and H4 were postulated.



4. METHOD

4.1. Research Design

For the purposes of this study, the quantitative research approach using the survey method was used in the collection of primary data. The survey research method was selected because it makes use of questionnaires to obtain data from a sample of respondents selected from the population, which made it directly applicable to this study (Chai & Xiao, 2012).

4.2. Participants

The research among employees at a seven selected companies operating in the services sector which are located in Southern Gauteng, South Africa. Respondents were selected using the non-probability convenience sampling technique. The convenience sampling technique was used because it was difficult to access all the respondents at the selected companies at the same time. An initial sample size of n=300 respondents was set, using the available historical information. However, 164 usable questionnaires were eventually collected and used in the data analysis, which gave an acceptable response rate of nearly 55%.

The profile of the respondents showed that 55% of the respondents were male whereas 45% of respondents were female. After collapsing the age groups, it emerged that a majority of the respondents (72%) were aged between 18 and 39 years. With reference to racial groups, approximately 71% of the respondents were blacks. A total of 48% of respondents were employed on contract while 32% were permanent. With respect to employment tenure, 83% of the respondents had been employed for less than five years. At least 37% of the respondents worked in the Food and Beverages department whilst 30% worked in Housekeeping and Casino.

4.3. Data Collection Instrument

A six-section structured questionnaire was used in the data collection process. Questions in Section A consisted of six items that sought information pertaining to aspects such as the respondents' gender, age, race, type of contract, number of years employed, and department where the respondent was employed. Section B consisted of six questions adapted from Booth and Hamer (2000) and Bono and Ilies (2006) that elicited the respondents' views on their relationship with their managers. In Section C, there were five questions that prompted the respondents' perceptions on their working conditions. These questions were adapted from two studies conducted by Lynch (2004) and Kinzl et al. (2004). Section D was composed of six questions (adapted from Fay & Thompson, 2004; Bockerman & Ilmakunnas, 2006) that elicited the respondents views on their levels of remuneration. Section E consisted of four questions adapted from Ruhala et al. (2007) as well as David, Rawley and Polsky (2011) that elicited information on work allocation. Section F of the questionnaire consisted of 20 questions that were adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire short form (MSQ) designed by Spector (1985). The questions in Sections B to E were scored on a 5 point Likert Scale with 1 expressing strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. Likewise, the Likert scale configuration was in section F but the scale was anchored by 1= strongly dissatisfied and 5= strongly satisfied. The respondents were requested to indicate their scores on these ranges in the scales.

4.4. Questionnaire Administration

After their obtaining clearance from management at the selected companies, questionnaires were administered to participants during the month of July 2013. Respondents were given a period of approximately 5 days to complete the questionnaire. During the collecting the data, ethical considerations such as the right to anonymity, right to confidentiality, informed consent, right to privacy or non-participation, and the right to protection from discomfort or harm were followed.

4.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a computerised statistical package (SPSS Version 22.0) to compute frequency distributions, measures of central tendency and regression analysis.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Validity and Reliability

In order to determine the face and content validity of the measuring instrument, a panel consisting of three experts in the discipline of industrial psychology was requested to assess the ability of the questionnaire items to measure the constructs under attention clearly. A pilot test involving a convenient sample of 20 respondents was also conducted. Feedback obtained from these two procedures facilitated the further refinement of questionnaire items. The internal consistencies of the scales in the measuring instrument were measured using the Cronbach alpha coefficient (refer to Table 1), which ranged between 0.722 and 0.871, while the alpha score for the entire scale was 0.794. Since these alpha values were all above the minimum acceptable level of 0.70, it can be concluded then that the measurement scales used in the study were internally consistent or reliable, as recommended by Malhotra (2010).

Table 1. Mean scores and internal consistencies of scales

Dimension description	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha	Mean score	Position in mean score rank
Manager-Employee Relationship	6	0.722	4.129	5
Working Conditions	7	0.871	3.901	4
Remuneration	4	0.707	3.924	3
Work Allocation	6	0.845	4.163	2
Employee Well-being	20	0.713	4.531	1
Overall Scale	35	0.794	4.527	Not applicable

Scale (Sections B-E): 1= Strongly Disagree: 2=Disagree: 3=Neutral: 4=Agree: 5=Strongly agree
Scale (Section F): 1= Very dissatisfied: 2=Dissatisfied: 3=Neutral: 4=Satisfied: 5=Very Satisfied

Table 1 showcases the mean scores of the dimensions considered in the study. The mean-scores for the five factors under consideration in this study ranged between 3.901 and 4.531, which represents clear inclinations towards either the agree/strongly agree or the satisfied/strongly satisfied positions on the Likert scales. This result demonstrates that respondents were satisfied with the existing levels of these factors in their organisation. A comparison of the mean scores, shows that employee well-being (= 4.531) scored the highest mean, which depicts that respondents were most satisfied with this factor than the other four.

5.2. Regression Analysis

In the current study, hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis. Regression analysis was defined as an inferential statistical technique that is performed to identify the variables that predict or provide the best explanation for the portion of the total variance in the scores of the dependent variables (Malhotra, 2010). Employee well-being was entered into the regression model as the dependant variable and the four factors; namely, manager-employee relationship, working conditions, remuneration and work allocation were entered as the independent variables. The results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression Model

Independent variables: Extrinsic motivation factors	Dependent variable: Employee well-being			
	Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
	Beta		Tolerance	VIF
Manager-employee relationship	0.291	4.265	0.000	0.571
Working conditions	0.248	5.844	0.001	0.682
Remuneration	0.109	1.995	0.040	0.595
Work allocation	0.276	2.137	0.002	0.709
Model summary: R=0.478 Adjusted R²=0.438 F=16.727 Std. error of the estimate = 0.84386				

The four independent factors accounted for approximately 44% (R2 = 0.438) of the variance explained in employee well-being. Colleniarity statistics for the four independent variables were satisfactory, indicating that the problem of multi-collinearity was insignificant in this study since there were no high correlations between the independent variables. All tolerance values fell above the value of 0.5 prescribed by O’Brien (2007). Variance inflation factor (VIF) values fell between the 1.0 and 4.0 range recommended by Pan and Jackson (2008).

6. DISCUSSION

Hypothesis H1 found support in this study and was therefore accepted since the regression model revealed that the manager-employee relationship factor was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.291$; $t = 4.265$; $p < 0.000$). This result demonstrates that the state of health of the relationship between managers and employees is an indicator of the level of employee well-being among employees in the workplace. These findings are consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Noblet, Graffam and McWilliams (2008) which concluded that when managers consult their subordinates, the result is a better feeling of belongingness, which leads to better mental health among the employees. In addition, in a study by Booth and Hame (2007) it emerged that employees in democratic management workplaces reported reduced stress levels than those in conventional management workplaces where decision-making is for managers only. Managerial support that allows employee feedback and bilateral communication in an organisation is also important because it improves employee well-being (Kassahun, 2005). Conversely, managers who are under pressure may affect their subordinates by bullying them, which causes most of the subordinates to suffer from depression and other ill health problems (Zairi & Jarrar, 2006). Merriman, Schmidt, Ross and Dunlap-Hinkler (2004) further add that managers have to understand that their behaviours can severely transform the efficiency, productivity, quality, morale, and culture of their organisations if they temper with workplace trust. Lufkin (2006) also emphasises that an effective manager is one who is able to monitor stress levels, manage expectations and make every effort to understand the needs of subordinates. Therefore, in order to spur employee well-being and its wide-array of associated benefits, it is imperative that there be meaningful relationships between managers and their employees in the workplace in the service industry.

Hypothesis H2 was supported and consequently accepted in this study because the regression analysis disclosed that the working conditions factor was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.248$; $t = 5.844$; $p < 0.001$). This finding portrays that the state of working conditions reflects the degree of employee well-being among employees in the services industry. As advocated by Kinzl et al. (2004) the working environment could influence the level of pride employees have in themselves and the work they do. Employees who work in clean and friendly environments are more likely to be satisfied with and look forward to their respective jobs (Spitzer, 2007). Turkyilmaz, Akman, Ozkan and Pastuszek (2011) further stress that a healthy working environment facilitates the easier accomplishment of task goals by employees. Working conditions regulate the level of satisfaction that an individual employee experiences (Hall, 2003). Also, most employees prefer to work in environments where temperature, lighting, noise and other environmental factors are both safe as well as comfortable (Van Emmerik, 2004). Still, Krueger et al. (2002) suggest that a good working environment stimulates optimum organisational performance. It is an important supposition then, to assume that satisfaction of employee well-being hinges, among other things, on satisfaction with the standard of working conditions in the services industry.

Hypothesis H3 was supported and thus accepted in this study as there was a statistically significant relationship ($\beta = 0.109$; $t = 1.995$; $p < 0.040$) between remuneration and employee well-being. This finding illustrates that one may use remuneration to measure and forecast the level of well-being among workers in the service industry. As observed by Barbie (2010), the inadequate performance of employees in most organisations could be attributed in part, to dissatisfaction with remuneration. High and recurring incidence of industrial action, turnover, absenteeism and excessive unionism within organisations may be symptomatic of employees' dissatisfaction with the reward system in place (Nilsson, 2010). A study conducted by Van den Berg (2006) established that remuneration is strongly and positively related to the welfare of employees. A comparative study of public and private sector organisations conducted by Stedham, Yamamura and Satoh (2006) concluded that employees in the public sector are less extrinsically motivated with their work since their compensation is suggestively lower than what is earned in the private sector. An evaluation of employee perceptions in Greece showed that employees upheld that extrinsic motivation instruments, more specifically the provision of fair wages, could be effective tools to improve productivity (Cardoso & Portugal, 2006). Similar conclusions were drawn by Lazear and Oyer (2004) in a study that examined the satisfaction of employees. Frye (2004) further contends that an increase in wages improves the efficiency of the organisation by enhancing the motivation of the employees. Gavrel and Lebon (2008) similarly found that introducing a market related wage may improve market efficiency by reducing the mismatch between workers and jobs. It may be pointed out then that to maintain its operational success, it is vital for an organisation operating in the services industry to ensure that its employees are adequately-remunerated.

Hypothesis H4 found support and was subsequently accepted in this study, since the work allocation factor was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.276$; $t = 2.137$; $p < 0.002$). This result designates that employee well-being amongst employees in the service industry is dependent upon the mode of work allocation. Abd-El-Fattah (2010) found that the majority of resignations in organisations can be attributed to disappointment with work allocation within the organisation. This signifies that there is an established positive association between work allocation and the satisfaction of employees. A study by Boreham, Gray and Blake (2006) found that satisfaction with work allocation is a dominant factor influencing employee well-being. Roelen, Koopmans and Groothoff (2008) also add that work allocation has emerged as a hindrance to the development and success of organisations (both public and private) in any country because it determines the extent to which employees are satisfied with and motivated to achieve organisational goals (Young, 2009).

Work allocation patterns contribute to the efficient operation of the organisation, as they determine the emotional, social and the physical health of employees (Croxon, Propper & Perkins, 2003; Origo & Pagani, 2009). On the contrary, managers who do not clarify the roles and duties of their employees might cause role conflict and role ambiguity among employees. Yang (2008) also advises that role ambiguity and role conflict may cause an individual to suffer from emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, leading to employee dissatisfaction. This means that in order for the organisation in the services industry to grow, managers must be able to give out work to employees in such a way that both employees and the organisation will benefit in the end (Bebchuk & Fried, 2003).

7. LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations which should be highlighted. Firstly, caution should be applied in generalising this study to other settings and contexts, since the findings of the present study are based on a small sample that was drawn from a single organisation. Secondly, the use of the non-probability convenience sampling technique increased the study's exposure to sampling bias. Thirdly, the study was conducted using a modified questionnaire which was based on questions that were not originally intended for the current study. In addition, the common limitations that are associated with quantitative data collection techniques that were employed in this research are acknowledged.

This study has implications for further research. Similar studies may be conducted using larger samples recruited from other organisations that were not included in this study. The study could be conducted using more advanced statistical models such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which may refine the results of the study. Future studies could also consider other organisational climate factors (e.g. recruitment, selection, training, etc.) that were omitted from this study. Comparative studies between the results of this study and those obtained from other organisations or through meta-analyses could also be considered in the future. This could lead to other thought provoking insights that were not captured in the current study.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the existence of predictive relationships between employee well-being and four organisational climate factors; namely; manager-employee relationships, working conditions, remuneration and work allocation in the service industry. It emerged that all factors were statistically significant, which implies that they are predictors of employee well-being. It is appropriate therefore to conclude that employee well-being in the service industry is dependent on the state of the relationship between management and employees, the standard of working conditions, the levels of remuneration and the mode of work allocation.

This study has theoretical and practical implications. On the theoretical front, the study provides current evidence of the dynamics in the relationship between the dimensions considered in this study, particularly in the context of the service industry. In this regard, the study serves as a reference source to future researchers on similar issues. On the practical side, managers in the service industry may be able to enhance the degree of employee well-being amongst workers in their organisations by making strategic improvements on the four independent variables considered in this study.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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