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Work and Social Wellbeing: The Impact of Employment Conditions on Quality of Life

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Abstract

This paper aims to extend our understanding of the impact of management practices and employment conditions in the contemporary workplace on the broader social realm. The study provides an analytic account of how these employment conditions impact on the social wellbeing of a representative sample of individuals and households. We assess the propensity of working arrangements that are manifested in various high performance work systems either to enhance or to diminish quality of life. The paper indicates that certain management practices and employment conditions have impacts that extend beyond the workplace and influence the broader wellbeing of individuals and families.

Keywords

Social wellbeing, employment conditions, high performance management practices, job security; quality of life

Introduction

Decades of accumulated research evidence tells us that critical human needs are met through employment. These are broadly considered to include tangible economic resources and security; the opportunity provided by meaningful work to develop life skills and a sense of worth; and the benefits of social relationships and respect from peers. The satisfaction of these needs is important for individuals but also, at a more general level, for the health and wellbeing of society (O'Toole and Lawler, 2006). The social costs of insufficient or low quality employment involve diminished standards of living, devalued employee contribution to production, weakened social ties with the potential for increased social conflict, and the economic costs of unused or underused human capacity (Burchell, 1999). The question of how changes in contemporary workplaces have influenced the broader wellbeing of societies is therefore one requiring serious and sustained research engagement by social scientists.

The focus of this paper is on the broader social manifestations of the organizational practices and employment that characterise the contemporary workplace. The aim is to provide an empirical and analytic account of how these employment conditions impact on the social wellbeing of a representative sample of individuals and households. This is an important question as there is a considerable, albeit inconclusive, body of research on the effects of employment practices on organizational performance (Cappelli and Neumark, 2001; Godard, 2004; Luthans and Sommer, 2005; Harley, 2005; Wright et al., 2003; Combs et al., 2006; Guest, 2011) but relatively little evidence concerning their broader impact on perceptions of general wellbeing and quality of life.

The contemporary world of work is one characterised by change as employers are increasingly driven by competitive and financial considerations and by enhancing shareholder value to experiment constantly with available 'best practices'. The decisions that employers make about work focus on the development of increasingly flexible labour market practices and working arrangements. The needs of workers, much less the broader social impacts of these changes are seldom significant elements in the decision making of employers.

Many of the changes introduced by employers since the early 1990s have placed an increasing emphasis on new human resource management practices often portrayed as ‘high performance work systems’, ‘high commitment workplaces’, ‘high involvement management’ or as various team-based and participative management stratagems. There are a number of components of these human resource management practices which commonly include greater involvement by employees in the determination of methods of work and higher levels of communication and participation about work matters with peers and managers. These organizational arrangements can encourage learning and flexibility for competitive advantage (Dixon et al., 2007), develop intrinsic motivations about work (Forest 2008), and reduce staff turnover by enhancing employee engagement, organizational commitment and job satisfaction (McNulty et al., 2007; Trussa et al., 2013). They generally involve higher levels of employee discretion often associated with policies providing incentives to improve employee commitment and motivation including job security and family friendly policies (Harley et al., 2005). On the negative side, such organizations may sometimes be characterised by strong work intensification pressures and high levels of work stress.

There is an unresolved debate in the literature concerning the impact of these contemporary management practices on employees (Ramsay et al., 2000; Harley, 2005; Kalleberg et al., 2009) and there are relatively few empirical studies that help to adjudicate between, on the one hand, the claims of those who view these practices as relatively benign and associated with generally positive outcomes for employees such as higher levels of autonomy, capacity for involvement, hours flexibility, commitment and satisfaction which in turn contribute to superior organizational performance (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Harley et al 2007; Christian et al. 2011) and, on the other hand, critics of the impact of these employment practices on employees in such domains as work intensification, job insecurity, stress and impaired work– life balance (Hodson 2001; Osterman 2000; George 2011; Halbesleben 2011). The analysis presented in this paper aims to extend our understanding of the impact of work practices and employment conditions that characterise the contemporary workplace to the broader social realm. In particular, we assess the consequences of the

practices that are often associated with high performance work systems for quality of life and social wellbeing.

Work and Social Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a multidimensional concept that may be viewed as the culmination of a physical and mental state that interacts with the social context in which an individual lives and works. It has now been acknowledged that narrow measures of income and economic performance are poor proxies for quality of life. Pioneered by the work of Amartya Sen (1987) it has become increasingly clear that there is a need to consider more nuanced measures of quality of life, taking into account a wider range of key aspects of an individual's life circumstances (Stiglitz et al. 2009). A number of studies have responded to these postulates by viewing wellbeing as a multidimensional construct (Lent 2004; Pollard & Lee 2003; Cummins et al. 2003; Land 2010).

In the human resource management (HRM) field, recent literature has recognised that sustaining broadly defined employee wellbeing is of increasing importance in many workplaces (Kowalski et al., 2014). The evidence suggests that poor employee wellbeing can have adverse effects on individuals and organizations (Loretto et al. 2009; Goetzel et al. 2002). Specifically, an increased body of research points at the links between employee engagement, organisational performance and individual well-being (Truss et al. 2013). For instance, low wellbeing has been linked to low levels of engagement by individuals and low levels of performance at an organisational level (Christian et al. 2011; Schaufeli 2013).

Elsewhere, we have advocated that researchers move away from viewing wellbeing in terms of material circumstances and adopt a more comprehensive measure that incorporates the objective aspects of peoples' living conditions that they deem to be important to their quality of life (Povey, Boreham and Tomaszewski, 2013). The index that we have developed includes satisfaction with factors such as: health, family relationships, housing, personal security, income, natural environment, work, and leisure opportunities (see Table 1).

In essence, we argue that the wellbeing of individuals and families is determined not only by the material resources that impact on their ability to live a decent life but also access to personal resources and services that provide the ability to participate in the normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in a society; the breadth and depth of social connections and the attendant norms of confidence and reciprocity; and integration into community networks associated with notions of trust and shared values. The strong relationship between these measures suggests a complex network of social capacities that enable people to take advantage of their social and human capital and material resources (Boreham, Povey and Tomaszewski, 2013).

Key aspects of these social capacities have strong resonances with skills and capabilities achieved through work. While being employed has traditionally been linked with higher wellbeing, the past few decades have seen important transformations occurring in the work place that may have an impact on the social wellbeing of employees. In particular, research has focused on new human resource management practices that put an emphasis on organizing work so that employees have the discretion to solve problems creatively and to work effectively with others in pursuit of organizational goals (Combs et al., 2006; Wall and Wood 2005). To be effective these practices need to be intertwined with trustworthy information flows, upward as well as downward communications, and training investments to provide enhanced opportunities for employees to take initiatives arising from their empowerment and to give them the capability to contribute to important work decisions (Harley, 2005; Reissnera and Pagana 2013). At a specific level, participative management practices can give employees an opportunity to influence work practices and employment arrangements that affect other aspects of their lives (Kuoppala et al., 2008; Kalleberg et al., 2006). However, in this paper we are interested in the extent to which these capabilities have consequences beyond the workplace and provide individuals with motivations and capacities that impact directly on their quality of life or social wellbeing. Notwithstanding the positive outcomes that may be associated with contemporary work systems (Dixon et al., 2007), there is also a great deal of potential for particular aspects of work requirements to be incompatible with non-work activities resulting in strain and conflict (Pocock et al., 2007). Forms of high involvement management may be effected through work intensification and

shifting of responsibility to employees, which in turn contributes to heightened workload, stress and potentially, increased work-to-life interference (Foley & Polanyi, 2006; Halbesleben, 2011). In particular, Individuals with high levels of engagement in both work and other life roles are likely to experience reduced levels of wellbeing (Strandh and Nordenmark, 2006). Employees may become physically and psychologically drained by work tasks associated with such high intensity management practices (McCrea, Boreham and Ferguson, 2011). Through these mechanisms, some high performance work systems (HPWS) may create work that is energy draining and has negative spill-over effects to other life domains.

In summary, management practices and employment conditions that are manifest in the contemporary workplace may have the potential to either enhance or diminish wellbeing. This paper is one of the first empirical attempts to assess the broader social and economic implications of various aspects of workplace practices. In particular, we are interested in the linkages between work systems and the employment conditions they foster as well as the broadly defined social wellbeing of employees encompassing health, citizenship behaviour, community ties and so on (Foley and Polanyi, 2006). In what follows we attempt to determine the differential impact of the key characteristics of these work systems on the broader quality of life of different categories of employees.

Characteristics of contemporary workplace organization and social wellbeing

New workplace practices have been characterized in a number of ways, however, despite these different labels, there is a common thread in the underlying arguments; organizations can achieve high performance by adopting practices that recognize and leverage employees' ability to create value. At the heart of these developments are forms of work organization which allow employees a degree of discretion and flexibility in terms of how they do their work. Associated human resource practices draw on employee participation, involvement and empowerment. The work practices and employment characteristics surrounding modern workplaces that we consider in this paper are discussed below.

Participative management is one of the key practices associated with high performance work systems (Ramsay et al., 2000). The organization of work is intended to permit front-line workers to participate

in decisions that alter organizational routines (Appelbaum et al., 2000). Both management and staff are generally involved in processes such as information sharing, goal setting, idea generation, and problem solving. Ideally, these measures involve management and staff listening, responding to, and taking an interest in each other, their ideas, concerns and suggestions. One of the primary aims of participative management strategies is to enhance organizational efficiency and effectiveness through higher flexibility, higher product quality, and higher performance by enabling communication channels in the workplace. It has been argued that such participatory practices are “win-win” systems that not only benefit employers but also their employees through increasing the intrinsic rewards of work (Appelbaum et al., 2000). However, the evidence for a spill over of participative management practices to the broader realm of social wellbeing is not strong. There is some US data reported by Freeman et al., (2000); Anderson-Connolly et al., (2002) and Osterman (2000) and an Australian study by McCrea et al., (2011) which suggest a link with esteem, belongingness, citizenship behavior and other life domains but the evidence remains limited in case of well-being. In the analysis that follows we examine the case for a relationship between participatory organizational practices and social wellbeing outside the workplace. We hypothesize a positive association between participatory organizational practices and wellbeing.

Flexible work hours are a common component of high performance work systems that enable employers to help meet workload pressures at peak times and to retain employees who might otherwise consider resigning to attend to family needs. In terms of balancing work and family demands, Fagnani and Letablier (2004) found that a majority of respondents who had their working hours reduced felt that this had made it easier for them to combine work and family life. Various studies show that giving employees more control over work arrangements, including the number of hours worked, the work schedule, and the location of work, helped them to balance work with other aspects of their lives (Hayman, 2010). However, employee perceptions of flexibility of work hours may depend on supervisor support, as well as the perceived appropriateness of people at their level utilizing flexible work hours (Hyman et al., 2005; Kirby and Krone, 2002). This study examines

employees' perceptions of flexible work hours and examines the extent to which flexible work hours are associated with wellbeing. We hypothesise a positive association between the two measures.

Contemporary workplace practices have been impacted by the acceptance of strategies enabling numerical flexibility. Deregulatory industrial relations changes have provided the framework for the elimination of constraints on the ability of management to allocate labour in terms of numbers employed, hours worked and contracts of employment (Watson et al., 2003). These organizational factors, along with a less favourable economic outlook, have created a climate of *employment insecurity* that has broad-ranging implications for the wellbeing of individuals and families. There is now a considerable literature linking employment insecurity to stress often manifested by decreased work-life satisfaction, mental and physical health and quality of life (Nolan et al. 2000; Cheng et al., 2005; Ferrie et al., 2005). Job insecurity can result in anxiety which spills over into other life domains, negatively impacting on health and interfering with both work and other life domains (Foley and Polanyi, 2006; Mauno and Kinnunen, 2002; Silla et al., 2009). Work carries across into family life and the literature has consistently pointed at an interaction between work insecurity, family life and social networks (Böckerman et al., 2011). The measure of job insecurity we use relates to concerns about continuing employment and employees' perceptions of risk of loss of their job and other aspects of their employment. In the analysis that follows we hypothesise a negative relationship between employment insecurity and the broader quality of life of employees captured by our social wellbeing measure.

Behind the rhetoric about high performance work systems, the most important trend appears to be people working harder. The combination of increased competitive pressures for cost reduction and the 'extra discretion' to complete more tasks are leading to substantial work intensification and *workload pressure* (Warhurst and Thompson, 1988). Organizational change is often manifested by cost reduction initiatives resulting in greater workloads, increased and often unpaid responsibilities and longer hours (Warhurst and Thompson, 1988). Longer work hours create tension with demands in other family domains (Bonney, 2005; Cousins and Tang, 2004; Hosking and Western, 2008; Pocock et al., 2007), especially for women (Gardner and Hini, 2006; Milkie and Peltola, 1999). Conversely,

while a reduction in work hours provides more time for other life domains, it may also lead to intensification of workload and less energy for other life domains (Fagnani and Letablier, 2004).

Workload is generally a stronger predictor of work-to-life interference than work hours (Allan et al., 2007; Britt and Dawson, 2005; Ilies et al., 2007; Wallace, 1999) and we hypothesise that greater workload pressure is likely to be negatively associated with social wellbeing.

High levels of individual discretion and commitment, associated with high performance work systems, sometimes appear to be factors implicated in high levels of *work stress*. Stress arises from not meeting expectations associated with high workloads (Gardner and Hini 2006), which leaves less energy and less positive mood spilling over into other life domains (Giebels and Janssen, 2005).

Research indicates that high levels of perceived stress result in impaired physical and mental functioning, presenteeism; absenteeism, poor physical health, depression, and low job satisfaction (Chang and Lu, 2007; Kalia, 2002; Smith, 2000; Tweed et al., 2004). Heavy workloads can lead to anger and withdrawal at home (Story and Repetti, 2006) as well as negative health outcomes. In the analysis that follows, we test the hypothesis that higher levels of work stress are associated with lower wellbeing.

Organizational practices associated with various models of high commitment or high performance management often make demands of individuals that have repercussions beyond the workplace (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). *Work-to-life interference* arises when work activities are incompatible with non-work activities, resulting in strain and conflict (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000; Ford and Collinson, 2011; White et al., 2003; Ilies et al., 2007; Pocock et al., 2007). Individuals with high levels of participation in both work and other life roles, especially family roles, tend to experience more work-to-life interference (Strandh and Nordenmark, 2006; Dex and Bond, 2005). We therefore examine the hypothesis that higher levels of work-to-life-interference are associated with lower social wellbeing.

There are, of course, other HRM practices concerned with communications technologies, restructuring and flexibilization that may impact on employee wellbeing, but we have limited

ourselves in this paper to those which have gained prominence in the current literature. It is worth noting that there is no consensus in the literature about the specific dimensions that HPWS should encompass and different studies have typically used different sets of indicators (Chaudhuri, 2009; Datta, Guthrie and Wright, 2005; Zhang et al., 2013). However, it also needs to be acknowledged that the choice of indicators was partially dictated by the data available, which was drawn from a survey of social wellbeing that covered a wide range of aspects, of which work was an important component.

Other employment characteristics

Non-permanent work: About 15 percent of full-time jobs in Australia are casual or fixed term and these jobs often diminish prospects for a good balance between work and life because of their more limited access to benefits such as paid recreation leave, and the employment insecurity which often characterises such positions. ***Part-time work:*** There has been a dramatic growth in part-time work, leaving many employees working fewer hours than they require to meet family needs (Bonney, 2005). It is the combination of both casual and part-time positions that determines what are termed precarious working conditions (Burgess & Campbell 1998; Kalleberg 2009). ***Employment status (managerial and non-managerial):*** Often the benefits that may accrue from flexible work arrangements and high discretion roles remain in the domain managerial and professional employees and are not readily available to non-managerial staff. ***Union presence:*** Trade unions are the primary institutions upon which employees have relied for collective regulation at work. Unions in a partnership role are better able to protect the interests of employees, ensuring that they are advantaged rather than disadvantaged by the adoption of high performance workplaces (Gill, 2009). The absence of trade union at the workplace might be expected to leave employees with fewer protections against management changes that involve the intensification of work and is therefore hypothesized to be negatively associated with wellbeing.

Data and Methods

The data used for this analysis was obtained from the *Study of Social Wellbeing* (Boreham et al., 2009), based on a representative survey of households in the State of Queensland, which had a

population of 4.4 million with characteristics broadly representative of the other states of Australia. The study used a random probability sampling method stratified by region, age and gender. The data was collected between May and October 2009 and comprised 2,723 respondents representing an overall response rate of 68 percent. We consider that the data from this sample will be generalizable to other similar populations. For the purpose of this research, only those 1,653 respondents who indicated that they currently work for pay were included in the analysis.

Dependent variable – social wellbeing

The *Study of Social Wellbeing* aimed to compile an index that was comprehensive but concise and that would cover the multiple facets of the concept discussed in the wellbeing literature. To achieve this goal a number of specific questions such as ‘How satisfied are you with your housing?’ were asked as opposed to asking more global questions such as ‘How satisfied are you with your life’. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that, in this approach, wellbeing is defined not by each person’s objective circumstances but by their subjective experience of these objective circumstances. The study included a number of items that could be used to construct an index of wellbeing.¹ These items were chosen for inclusion in the study based on findings in the literature as well as a conceptual focus on the objective circumstances of respondents. For each item, respondents were asked to indicate: (i) the extent to which they were satisfied with those aspects of their lives, and (ii) how important those aspects were to their overall feeling of wellbeing. We were able to eliminate a number of items that were not regarded as important to respondents’ overall feeling of wellbeing and to develop a scale of Social Wellbeing which included the twelve items considered most important to quality of life. Respondents were then asked to provide subjective ratings of their satisfaction with these aspects of their lives and this measure constitutes our social wellbeing index.

The following twelve items were included in our final social wellbeing measure: Health; Family Relationships; Ability to afford essential items; Housing or Accommodation; Income; Savings and other financial assets; Personal security; Natural environment; Leisure opportunities; Respect accorded by others; Job or work; Level of stress you normally feel. The Index had a high internal

consistency (a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89). Descriptive statistics were run where the responses for each aspect of wellbeing were summated into dissatisfied (1, 2 or 3), neutral (4), and satisfied (5, 6 or 7) categories and the percentage of respondents who selected these categories are presented in Table 1. These data revealed that, while high levels of satisfaction generally prevailed, there were relatively higher levels of dissatisfaction with levels of stress, health, work and leisure.

Table 1: Satisfaction with aspects of wellbeing

Item Description	n	Dissatisfaction	Neutral	Satisfaction
		%	%	%
Your health	1,595	21.95	14.04	64.01
The level of stress that you normally feel	1,592	28.83	25.13	46.04
Your housing or accommodation	1,591	7.73	8.36	83.91
Your income	1,598	21.15	13.21	65.64
Your ability to afford essential items	1,592	13.19	10.49	76.32
Your savings and other financial assets	1,595	30.78	11.85	57.37
Your job or your work	1,588	16.37	12.09	71.54
Your family relationships	1,595	7.02	7.65	85.33
Your personal security	1,592	6.16	12.56	81.28
The respect you are accorded by others	1,595	5.64	16.68	77.68
Your natural environment	1,598	5.44	14.02	80.54
Your leisure opportunities	1,598	17.21	15.64	67.15

Workplace organization variables

Six indices measuring aspects of the organisational climate in which respondents worked, were constructed, namely: participative management; flexible work hours; job insecurity; workload pressure; work stress, and work-to-life interference. As argued earlier, these measures describe the outcomes of HRM practices concerned with high performance work systems that impact on organizational climate. With these indices we are able to capture all of the salient aspects of work organisation outlined in the discussion in the introduction to this paper.

A factor analysis was run to check the validity of the indices constructed. The results indicated that the items for each index load only on one factor and the factor loadings were high (predominantly

above 0.70), confirming that the items are valid components of the scales. We also check the reliability of all scales using Cronbach's alpha. The results were satisfactory, with the alpha values exceeding 0.85 for all indices with the exception of 'flexible work hours' (alpha=0.51) and 'employment insecurity' (alpha=0.60). Despite somewhat lower reliability, we decided to retain these two indices in our analyses because of their theoretical importance to the model. The items used to construct the scales and descriptive statistics for all six measures are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Workplace organisation indices – composition and descriptive information

Participative Management	n	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %
I am generally satisfied with my relationship with my immediate manager or supervisor	1,572	10.62	15.27	74.11
Management is generally interested in my suggestions for how we can work better	1,562	16.64	22.09	61.27
Management generally keeps me informed about things that will affect me and my job	1,564	17.65	17.71	64.64
I can't influence my immediate supervisor's decisions/actions that affect me	1,562	47.70	28.61	23.69
I don't feel that I can trust Management in this organisation	1,564	55.43	24.81	19.76
Flexible work hours	n	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %
I have no flexibility about my hours of work	1,607	62.04	10.45	27.50
I am able to take a day off on full pay to attend to personal matters	1,591	35.39	9.30	55.31
I am able to take a day off at my own expense to attend to personal matters	1,601	12.49	8.12	79.39
If I need to start work late or leave early occasionally it is generally OK to do so	1,613	15.07	6.45	78.49
Employment insecurity	n	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %
The security of my job depends on regularly working extra hours	1,613	66.27	17.48	16.24
My employer regularly puts off people if business declines	1,588	63.54	20.53	15.93
Some family members in my household are likely to lose their jobs in the next 1 months (i.e., get retrenched/fired/not have a contract renewed)	1,596	61.65	25.19	13.16
Workload pressure	n	Never %	Sometimes %	All the time %
I feel that I can't possibly finish my daily workload in a normal work day	1,624	39.10	35.90	25.00
I believe the amount of work I have to do interferes with how well it gets done	1,619	49.10	36.32	14.58
I feel I have too heavy a workload	1,618	48.70	35.23	16.07

Work stress	n	Never %	Sometimes %	All the time %
Problems associated with my job tend to directly affect my health	1,618	62.48	29.11	8.41
The demands of my job leave me feeling stressed	1,620	45.37	41.05	13.58
Problems associated with my job have kept me awake at night	1,618	57.17	34.55	8.28

Work-to-life Interference	n	Never %	Sometimes %	All the time %
After work I come home too tired to do things I had planned to do	1,610	20.99	55.47	23.54
My job keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend with my family	1,608	43.22	38.68	18.10
The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfil family responsibilities	1,607	59.12	32.05	8.84
I have so much work to do in my job that it takes time away from my personal interests	1,606	57.22	28.52	14.26
My family/friends dislike how I am preoccupied with my work while I am with them	1,602	79.34	16.73	3.93

The Participative Management Index is comprised of five items: I am generally satisfied with my relationship with my immediate manager or supervisor; Management is generally interested in my suggestions for how we can work better; Management generally keeps me informed about things that will affect me and my job; I can't influence my immediate supervisor's decisions/actions that affect me; and I don't feel that I can trust Management in this organisation (the last two questions have been reverse-coded).

The Flexible Work Hours Index is comprised of four items: I have no flexibility about my hours of work; I am able to take a day off on full pay to attend to personal matters; I am able to take a day off at my own expense to attend to personal matters; and If I need to start work late or leave early occasionally it is generally OK to do so. The responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and higher index scores indicate higher flexibility (the first item has been reverse-coded).

The Employment Insecurity Index is comprised of three items: The security of my job depends on regularly working extra hours; My employer regularly puts off people if business declines; and Some family members in my household are likely to lose their jobs in the next 12 months (i.e., get retrenched/fired/not have a contract renewed). The items covered by this indicator extend beyond

personal circumstances. The responses range on a five point scale, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). A high index score would indicate employment insecurity, while a low index score would indicate employment security.

The Workload Pressure Index is comprised of three items: I feel that I can't possibly finish my daily workload in a normal work day; I believe the amount of work I have to do interferes with how well it gets done; and I feel I have too heavy a workload. The responses range on a five point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (all of the time); higher index score indicate higher workload pressure.

The Work Stress Index is comprised of three items, namely: Problems associated with my job tend to directly affect my health; The demands of my job leave me feeling stressed; and Problems associated with my job have kept me awake at night. The responses range on a five point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (all of the time); higher index score indicates higher job related stress.

The Work-to-life Interference Index comprises five items: After work I come home too tired to do things I had planned to do; My job keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend with my family; The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfil family responsibilities; I have so much work to do in my job that it takes time away from my personal interests; My family/friends dislike how I am preoccupied with my work while I am with them.

Other employment variables

Four indicators measuring the employment circumstances of respondents were constructed, namely: employment status, contract work, part-time work, and union presence. *Employment status* was based on responses to the question: In your main job, which of the following best describes the position that you hold? Respondents answered non-supervisory, supervisory or managerial. *Contract work* was based on the following question: In your main job for which you are paid, are you a permanent employee, a contract employee for a fixed period of time, a casual employee, or self-employed. *Part-time work* was based on response to the question: How many hours do you usually work in a normal week, including any paid or unpaid overtime. Based on standard definitions of part-time work,

participants were classified as part-time if they reported working less than 35 hours per week. *Union presence* was based on responses to the question: Are there union members in your workplace?

Control variables

We adjusted our final model using a number of control variables described in the literature as being associated with work performance and with wellbeing. These are: gender (Milkie and Peltola, 1999); marital status (Acock and Demo, 1994; Diener et al. 1999; Evans and Kelley, 2004); children in the home (Ross, et al., 1990); age (Keyes, 1998; Keyes and Shapiro, 2004); educational level as a proxy for socioeconomic status (Acock and Demo 1994; Kim and McKenry 2002; Ross et al. 1990); and health (Wilkie and Young, 2009; Bloom and Canning, 2000). Children were defined as younger than 18 year of age, living in the household. We distinguished between households with children under 18 years of age, households with children 18 years and older and those households without children. Educational levels were collapsed into the following three groups: schooled up to year 12; trade, certificates and diplomas; and tertiary education. The measure used for health asked respondent's rate their health on a five point scale ranging from poor to excellent. We also account for the importance that people attributed to wellbeing items by including the average importance score as a control variable. This control variable adjusts the statistical models for the fact that people who attribute higher importance to the components of social wellbeing tend to also have higher wellbeing levels as captured by our variable.

Data analysis

Prior to the analysis reported below, data was screened for normality and outliers. While the wellbeing index was positively skewed, populations tend to report high wellbeing and it can therefore be considered to be naturally skewed. No transformation was applied to this index as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) and past research on subjective wellbeing (Cummins, 1997; Rashleigh, 2004). Additionally, it has been argued that skewness has little influence on samples with more than 300 participants (Keppel, 1991).

The data was also reviewed for missing information. Across the 17 variables included in our statistical models, 96 percent of the sample had data missing on less than four variables; we conducted imputations on this portion of the dataset, while omitting from our analyses the remaining four percent of cases. Due to the very low proportion of the omitted cases, it is unlikely that any bias related to the omission would change the observed patterns of associations or the conclusions reached in the paper. For the included cases, mean scores were imputed for continuous variables and an additional dummy variable, indicating missing information, was added for each of the categorical variables.

We used multiple linear regression models to estimate the associations between the measure of wellbeing (our dependent variable) and the measures of organizational climate, while controlling for other relevant characteristics. It is important to remember that, being based on observational cross-sectional data, the results do not imply causality. Therefore, while our theoretical and conceptual framework postulates that organizational climate impacts on employees' wellbeing, it is also possible that because the respondents are healthy and satisfied, they may tend to have a more positive perception of the management practices and employment conditions.

As a preliminary check, we examined the correlations between all variables in the model (Table 3). They ranged between .12 and .66, suggesting that multicollinearity was unlikely to be a problem. This was confirmed by a relatively low value of the mean Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 1.52, with the individual variable's VIFs ranging from 1.04 to 2.74.

Table 3: Wellbeing and employment – correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Wellbeing	1.00						
(2) Participative management	0.33**	1.00					
(3) Flexible work hours	0.13**	0.30**	1.00				
(4) Employment insecurity	-0.29**	-0.34**	-0.17**	1.00			
(5) Workload pressure	-0.24**	-0.24**	-0.04	0.23**	1.00		
(6) Work stress	-0.34**	-0.37**	-0.12**	0.31**	0.66**	1.00	
(7) Work-to-life interference	-0.40**	-0.30**	-0.12**	0.35**	0.59**	0.64**	1.00

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Results and discussion

Turning first to the correlations, our findings provide a great deal of evidence that helps to illuminate some of the general themes in the literature we have discussed previously. First, the highly significant and negative correlations between participative management practices and work stress (-0.37), employment insecurity (-0.34), work-to-life interference (-0.30) and workload pressure (-0.24), indicate that workplaces encouraging participative management practices are less likely to exhibit these work characteristics. The view that participatory practices in high performance work systems are implicated in substantial work intensification is not sustained by these correlations. Indeed the evidence points to an alternative explanation more akin to the ‘high road’ – ‘low road’ organizational systems that emerged as a theme in the literature in the 1990s (Boreham et al 1996). The three highest correlations, which are all statistically significant, were between work stress and workload pressure (0.66); work-to-life interference and work stress (0.64); and work-to-life interference and workload pressure (0.59). These results suggest that employment practices that create workload pressures are associated with an organizational environment characterised by high levels of work stress, employment insecurity and work to life interference. Turning to our primary focus on social wellbeing, it appears that there are cross-cutting and contradictory pressures in the employment practices that are both positively and negatively associated with the social wellbeing of employees.

In order to determine more accurately the effect of organizational climate on wellbeing, we estimate a three-step regression model, the results of which are described in Table 4. The baseline model, only includes the workplace organization variables, while model 2 extends it by adding other employment variables, and model 3 extends the model further by adjusting the workplace and employment-related coefficients using the control variables described in the previous section (only coefficients for the key variables of interest are shown in the table).

Table 4: Relationship between wellbeing and employment conditions

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Baseline model with organizational climate variables		Other employment variables included		Adjusted for control variables	
	$\hat{\alpha}$	SE $\hat{\alpha}$	$\hat{\alpha}$	SE $\hat{\alpha}$	$\hat{\alpha}$	SE $\hat{\alpha}$
Participative management	0.20 ^{***}	(0.03)	0.20 ^{***}	(0.03)	0.17 ^{***}	(0.03)
Flexible work hours	0.02	(0.03)	0.01	(0.03)	0.02	(0.02)
Employment insecurity	-0.13 ^{***}	(0.03)	-0.12 ^{***}	(0.03)	-0.10 ^{***}	(0.03)
Workload pressure	0.07 [*]	(0.03)	0.06	(0.03)	0.02	(0.03)
Work stress	-0.11 ^{***}	(0.04)	-0.13 ^{***}	(0.04)	-0.04	(0.03)
Work-to-life interference	-0.33 ^{***}	(0.04)	-0.35 ^{***}	(0.04)	-0.31 ^{***}	(0.04)
Employment status						
Managerial	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-managerial	-	-	-0.16 ^{**}	(0.05)	-0.11 ^{**}	(0.05)
Full-time/Part-time						
Full-time	-	-	-	-	-	-
Part-time	-	-	-0.12 [*]	(0.05)	-0.11 [*]	(0.05)
Contract type						
Permanent	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-permanent	-	-	0.02	(0.05)	-0.01	(0.04)
Union members in workplace						
Union members in workplace	-	-	-	-	-	-
No union members at work	-	-	-0.11 [*]	(0.05)	-0.09 [*]	(0.05)
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.27		0.28		0.39	
<i>N</i>	1585		1585		1585	

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; Control variables in Model 3 include gender, age, marital status, education level, health status, and importance of wellbeing weight.

Model 1 ($R^2=0.27$), indicated that five of the six organizational climate variables were significantly associated with the broader social wellbeing of employees. These were: participative management, employment insecurity, workload pressure, work stress and work-to-life interference. Adding other employment-related variables (Model 2, $R^2=0.28$) renders one of them (workload pressure) no longer statistically significant. Adding a range of control variables (Model 3, $R^2=0.39$), including health, explains out the effect of work stress on wellbeing, leaving three out of the six indicators highly significant. These three variables, namely participative management, employment insecurity, and work-to-life interference clearly have strong independent associations with the social wellbeing of workers, pointing to significant spillovers of these work-related practices and conditions on to broader outcomes outside of the workplace. Additionally, Model 1 with only the six workplace organisation indices has about 70% of the explanatory power of the most complex Model 3 (as indicated by the R^2 ratio of 0.27/0.39), confirming the high relevance of workplace practices for the social wellbeing of employees.

All three models show that, as hypothesised, participative management is significantly and positively associated with social wellbeing, with the coefficient staying relatively stable even when other work-related and socio-demographic characteristics are controlled for. Clearly, when workers feel that they have some influence over decisions being made at their workplace and feel that they are listened to, they not only perform better (Ramsay et al., 2000) but are also more satisfied with other aspects of their lives. Support from management and control over work methods have previously been associated with increased wellbeing (Holman 2006) and our findings confirm these spill-over effects on social wellbeing of participatory workplace practices.

Secondly, and consistent with our expectations, employment insecurity is significantly associated with lower social wellbeing. Again, this link persists even when controlling for other characteristics of persons and their workplaces and the coefficient remains stable in all three models. This finding corroborates previous research on the broader negative effects of job insecurity, such as its links with poor mental and emotional health (Cheng et al., 2005), family problems (Nolan et al. 2000), and withdrawal from social life (Böckerman et al., 2011)

Finally, our measure of work-to-life interference stands out as being strongly, and negatively, associated with social wellbeing across all of our three models – a finding consistent with our hypothesis. This result suggests that being able to find an appropriate work-life balance can play a crucial role in maintaining a sound level of wellbeing outside of the workplace.

Some of our hypothesised association between the workplace organization measures are not confirmed by the empirical results. Contrary to our prediction, there was no statistical association between flexible work hours and wellbeing. This could perhaps be due to the fact that the availability of work-hours flexibility does not need to translate into the actual utilisation of flexible working arrangements – we were unable to capture the latter with our survey data. Furthermore, the measure of workload pressure did not have a statistically significant association with social wellbeing and our measure of work stress, although initially found to be associated with lower levels of wellbeing, did not in fact have an independent effect on it. Instead, its effect was explained out by health status.

Nevertheless, our correlation analysis reported in Table 3 demonstrates that both the measures of workload pressure and work stress are correlated with the indicator of work-to-life interference, which is likely to capture some of the effect of the former variables. Therefore, it appears that all three conditions are likely to occur simultaneously but it is when work starts visibly interfering with life outside the workplace that the most serious consequences for social wellbeing are found.

In summary, our main hypotheses that organizational practices that characterise the contemporary workplace have a much broader impact on perceptions of wellbeing and quality of life than is sometimes thought are supported by the statistical testing reported above.

Conclusions

We have argued that changes in contemporary workplace practices introduced under the aegis of high performance work systems have unintended but nevertheless important spill-over effects for social wellbeing. The main premise of high performance work systems is that firms can achieve higher performance, higher flexibility, and higher product quality while remaining cost competitive by using the skills and information of their employees while inducing them to work harder and more effectively through moving decision authorities closer to those who have relevant information about work processes. Work under high performance work systems is argued to be highly intrinsically rewarding, thus *simultaneously* generating increased motivation and satisfaction. However, the empirical literature on high performance work systems and social wellbeing is both limited and equivocal. The research reported in this paper has sought to go beyond assessments of the good and bad outcomes of high performance work systems for organizational performance or work-life balance and to examine the disaggregated effects of these organizational systems on the broader quality of life or social wellbeing of individual employees.

The first conclusion that we draw is that there is indeed a significant societal spill-over effect of particular work practices. Of themselves, the organizational characteristics we have examined predict about 27 percent of working individuals' perceptions of their overall levels of social wellbeing. This

finding presents some important insights about the dynamics underlying the social capacities that enable people to take advantage of their social and human capital and material resources.

The second conclusion that is demonstrated by the results we report is that the boundary between work and social wellbeing is composed of a range of interpenetrating dimensions that work in often conflicting directions. The results suggest that higher levels of participation and open and trustworthy communications about work issues provide employees with capacities that are compatible with life skills that extend beyond the workplace. However, there is a strong and significant association between workload pressures and work stress which, in turn, impacts on quality of life.

Flexible work hours reported by our respondents were not strongly associated with social wellbeing reflecting a view in the literature that, where these arrangements exist, there may be a reluctance to take advantage of them if that were to jeopardize job security. Job security, on the other hand, was significantly associated with social wellbeing and it is clear from these results that the threat of unemployment and its clear associations with stress and work-life balance spills over into other life domains.

The experience of work and the workplace remains central to most people's lives. However, many of the management components introduced by employers that are often portrayed as 'high performance work systems' have outcomes for employees that extend beyond the workplace to the broader social realm. If, as we suggest, these outcomes have implications for social wellbeing including social connections and networks associated with notions of respect and security, then more time needs to be spent on research into the social consequences of organizational change.

Footnotes:

¹ Previous literature on wellbeing suggests that composite indices of wellbeing based on multiple items have some desired statistical properties, such as higher reliability and validity compared with single-item instruments, such as the global life satisfaction question (Diener et al. 2005).

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