

PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF COMPANY WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION ON EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) as part of Workplace Health Management (WHM) is an emerging function within organizational HRM. Research has investigated the economic feasibility of WHM by examining health-related productivity losses and presenteeism but has also shown connections of WHM and employee reactions, i. a. happiness, confidence, job satisfaction, and perceptions of being cared for by employers. The goal of this paper is to examine possible impacts of WHM, and especially WHP on certain motivational and emotional aspects of the employment relationship, namely the perceived attractiveness of the employer, and perceived impacts of WHM/WHP on emotional atmosphere, work motivation, a commitment of the employees, and the number of voluntary quits.

Keywords: workplace health management and promotion, attractiveness of the employer, emotional atmosphere at the workplace, work motivation and commitment

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WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION AS AN EMERGING HRM FUNCTION

Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) as part of Workplace Health Management (WHM) is an emerging function within today's organizational Human Resources Management system. The aim of WHM is to assist the organization and its members to be more productive by protecting and improving the health of employees. Productivity and health is an outcome of protecting health on the one hand and of offering opportunities for health promotion on the other (Kastner, 2010a, Slesina & Bohley, 2011). Physical and psychological health are equally important

for to be preserved and promoted. It is the individual who is responsible for h/h status of health in the first place. Nevertheless, in order to maximize potentials in protecting and improving health, an active role of companies is necessary as well (Zimolong & Elke G., 2010, Hymel et al, 2011, Ljungblad et al, 2014). Today a key issue in WHM becomes the the integration of traditional workplace health protection and the emerging WHP (workplace health promotion) practices. (Hymel et al.,2011).

Under scarcity in the labor supply, WHM and WHP can be especially important. Demographic tendencies have a negative impact on labour

force supply. (Ehing & Moog, 2013). As for another negative tendency, an increased level of absenteeism caused by psychological illnesses can be observed. (Techniker Krankenkasse, 2015). Changing workforce needs and expectations, challenges for employer branding and for offering special and customized employment experiences, and related impacts from underlying CSR philosophies and practices, can all be relevant causes for considering WHM as an important competitive advantage and a tool for fostering and communicating organizational and HRM values.

By today WHM is offered as an instrument for analyzing health-related productivity losses and presenteeism (working while sick). WHM uses absenteeism-data evaluations, health checkups and special offers for preserving and promoting health. (Wilke et al, 2015).

For monitoring and controlling the WHM activities, many of the used key-figures are difficult to calculate. Wellmann and Überle (2007) discuss the following frequently used ratios : (1) absence times, (2) costs of an undisturbed working hour, (3) labour turnover rate, (4) employee and customer satisfaction, (5) motivation, (6) performance, (7) productivity and (8) utilization of WHP activities. Out of the listed indicators only the (1), (3) and (7) are hard factor ratios. Data for calculating the remaining ratios can be gained merely from employee surveys. In this context Uhle and Treier (2015) claim that merely individual parameters and key figures like costs or absence times are insufficient to ensure a sustainable WHM.

As an example, Dickson-Swift et al. (Dickson-Swift et al, 2014) offer results going beyond the traditional “key figure values” approach. They have found connections between WHM and employee reactions in Australia: *“Employees report improvements in happiness, confidence, job satisfaction, physical health, work ethic, healthy behaviours ..., and a gain in enthusiasm for healthy choices ... When employers make an effort to do something for the good of the employees, such as offer flexible time, run a health information session or have a staff BBQ at lunchtime, employees feel willing to repay this through extra hard work. Employees often reported a perception of being cared for by employers through the programs on offer...”* In

our present study our investigations will cover some of these motivational, emotional areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

The environment is becoming more dynamic and more complex, which is termed by Riekmann as “dynaxity” (1992).

Since the 80s, change tendencies have begun in areas such as internationalization and globalization, IT revolution, automation, robotization and biotechnological innovations, new quality expectations, and service economy, which have all impacted employees' value systems and lifestyles. Consequently, organizations underwent rapid transformations. Extra- and intra-organizational changes impacted work, employment and careers. Many organizations have experienced growing job complexity at all organizational levels. Non-routine tasks demanded extra effort, initiative, and risk-taking on the side of employees. (see e. g. Dessler, 1994, 2000, Schermerhorn et al, 1994, Fehér, 2009a, Fehér, Kollár 2012).

This trend of dynaxity (environmental turbulence and complexity) has continued to the present. (Kastner 2013). It is becoming more difficult for individuals to keep stable orientation and certainty for decision-making. Ever-increasing complexities would require ethical and inspiring leadership practices, whereas, paradoxically, toxic leadership can be a persistent reality within many contemporary organizations. (Hoffmann, Sergio, 2020)

Besides stress experienced at work, there are tendencies which make it difficult for the average employee to establish a stable living. This uncertainty and non-transparency increase the mental requirements for employees. In addition, by today, the acquired knowledge is more and more quickly getting out-of-date and to be renewed (Lohmann-Haislah 2012). For coping with challenges, LLL is required. (e.g. Eisermann et al, 2013). Under the 7/24 work environment, the coincidence of uncertainty and the high expectations of investors or superiors lead to a high and often ill-making psychological pressure among employees. One result is the increase of absenteeism caused by psychological illnesses (Techniker Krankenkasse, 2015).

WHM, including WHP may be instrumental in handling stress under new work environments. Smith et al. pointed out that “*changing organizational health in a meaningful way has the potential to have positive and broad-based influence on personal health through the mechanism of experienced stress.*” (Smith et al, 2012) WHM can additionally improve the working atmosphere since the employees feel more esteemed by the proceeding of workplace health-related activities. .

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In our former research conducted in Germany and Hungary in the period 2014-2016, we have made investigations about the perceived impacts of sustainable and long-term oriented WHM, including WHP on the overall health of employees, on the attractiveness of the employer in the labor market, on the emotional climate of the organization, and the relations of WHM with leadership style and cooperation exchange within teams and between different teams. (Reich et al, 2015, Czeglédi et al, 2015, Fehér, Reich, 2016).

According to the results offered by Reich’s PhD research (Reich, 2017) supervised by Fehér, employees think that WHM is an important factor in caring about their health. Reich concluded that certain leadership behaviors and team cooperation tendencies, the perceived attractiveness of the employer, and other perceptions about the employment relationship, are also statistically significant in relation to the investigated WHM practices. (Reich, 2017).

In this paper we focus on the topic of certain additional positive effects of WHM as perceived by employees. We use Reich’s (2017) research design and methodology with an expanded data base. The conceptual framework of the research is illustrated by Figure 1. We report on possible impacts of WHM, and especially WHP on certain motivational and emotional aspects of the employment relationship, namely: the perceived

attractiveness of the employer, perceived impacts of WHM/WHP on emotional atmosphere, work motivation, commitment of the employees, and the number of voluntary quits.

The data were gathered in Hungary and Germany by use of a standardized questionnaire in the time between 03/2014 and 01/2018. The underlying assumption behind a joint sample was that the two European countries are traditionally closely connected, both culturally and economically. (Reich, 2017) Within his European social model, Sapir (2006), for example, described both countries as continental. Under a classification of work organizations by Makó et al. (2009), both countries are in the same country cluster.

For the earlier parts of the research (Fehér, Reich, 2016, Reich, 2017) and for the actual extended data collection in Hungary and Germany, part-time students and course participants have been questioned. The questionnaire led to 298 evaluable answers, 172 in Hungary and 126 in Germany. The research is not representative of the sample and specifically does not allow comparisons between the two countries. As pointed out by Reich (2017), it can show a rough direction and identify tendencies within the surveyed organizations.

Of special interest in the purpose of this article are the survey questions, which dealt with the attractiveness of the employer, the emotional climate at the workplace, and if the motivation and commitment of the employees are increased by actions of a WHM and to what extent (Reich, 2017). The answer options for these questions (and the corresponding statistical values) were “Yes” (3), “No” (1) and “Don’t know” (2) and for the expected extent “To a large extent” (3), “To a certain extent” (2) and “To a small extent” (1).

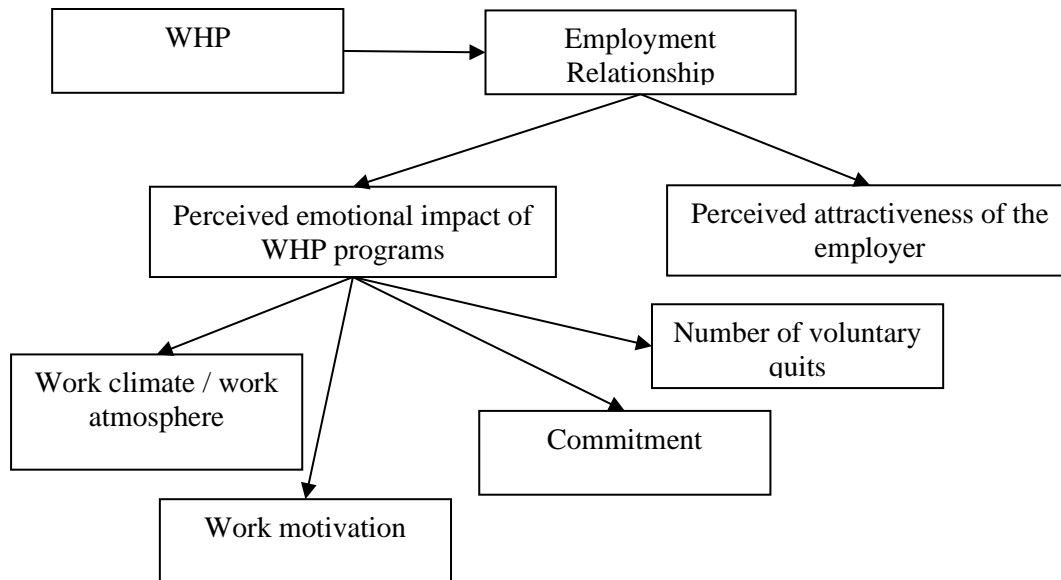


Figure 1: The effect of WHP on certain Employment Relationship dimensions

Source: Reich, 2017

In this paper, we present the hypotheses that were formulated and tested for Reich's (2017) earlier research, and we examine them, as aforementioned, with an expanded database.

Hypothesis 1:

"In employees' view, Workplace Health Management is statistically positively related to the attractiveness of the workplace/employer."

The question used in the questionnaire to evaluate this hypothesis was the following:

Do WHP programs make a workplace/employer more attractive for employees? (Reich, 2017)

Research has confirmed that WHM is a tool for enhancing the output and availability (in terms of productivity, health, and presenteeism) of existing employees (see, for example, Slesina & Bohley, 2011, Wilke et al., 2015). In the era of demographic change and labour force scarcity (Ehing & Moog, 2013), it is also of key relevance of how effective organizations become in attracting new workforce. Therefore, it is important to know whether WHM as a new HRM function is in a positive relationship with the employer's attractiveness within the labor market.

Hypothesis 2:

"WHM has perceived additional positive

emotional impacts to the employment relationship.

- a) To the emotional climate at the workplace.
- b) To the work motivation of the employees.
- c) To the commitment of the employees towards the organization.
- d) To the number of voluntary quits."

Hypothesis H2 is based on Uhle and Treier (Uhle & Treier, 2015) claiming that a one-sided orientation on conventional parameters is insufficient for WHM measures. Through H2 we search for possible organizational level, like a), b), c); and perceptual, like a), b), c), d) effects of WHM. By assuming a relationship between WHM and a), b) and c) we also follow Dickson-Swift et al. (Dickson-Swift et al, 2014) who have found connections between WHM and positive employee emotional reactions.

Survey questions used to evaluate H2 included:

- "Do WHP programs contribute to the improvement of the emotional climate at the workplace?"
- "Do WHP programs increase the work motivation of the employees?"

- “Do WHP programs increase the commitment of the employees toward the organization?”
- “Do WHP programs decrease the number of voluntary quits (turnover) of the employees?” (Reich, 2017)

For data processing, we used **Microsoft Excel** and **software “R”**. To analyse the data amongst

other methods, the one samples t-test was used. By using Likert scales and a sample size of 283, the minimum requirements for using t-test are fulfilled.

RESULTS

183 (61%) of the respondents were male and 115 (39%) were female.

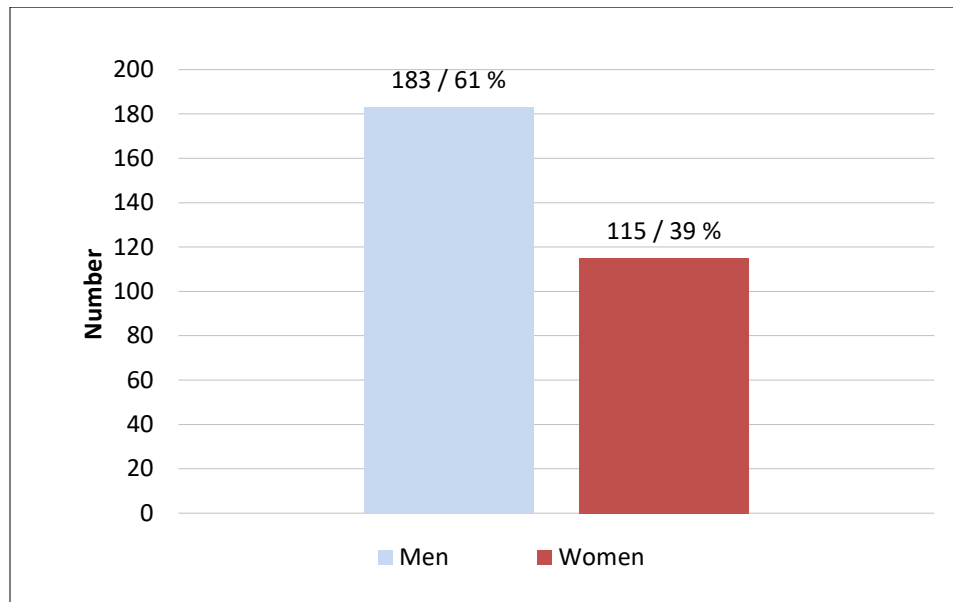


Figure 2: Respondents by gender

Source: author's work.

Only two (1 %) of the respondents were younger than 21 and five (2 %) older than 60. The largest group was between 21 and 30 years old

(116 / 39 %), followed by the group between 31-40 with 37 %.

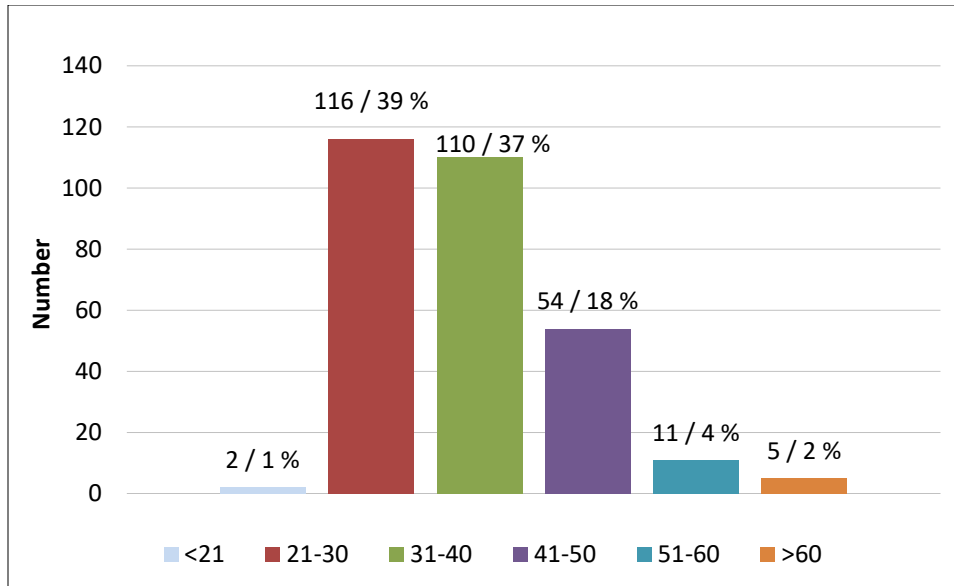


Figure 3: Respondents by age

Source: author’s work.

As shown in Figure 4 the largest group was working in companies with private ownership (41 %), followed by multinational ownership (38 %) and state ownership with 17 %.

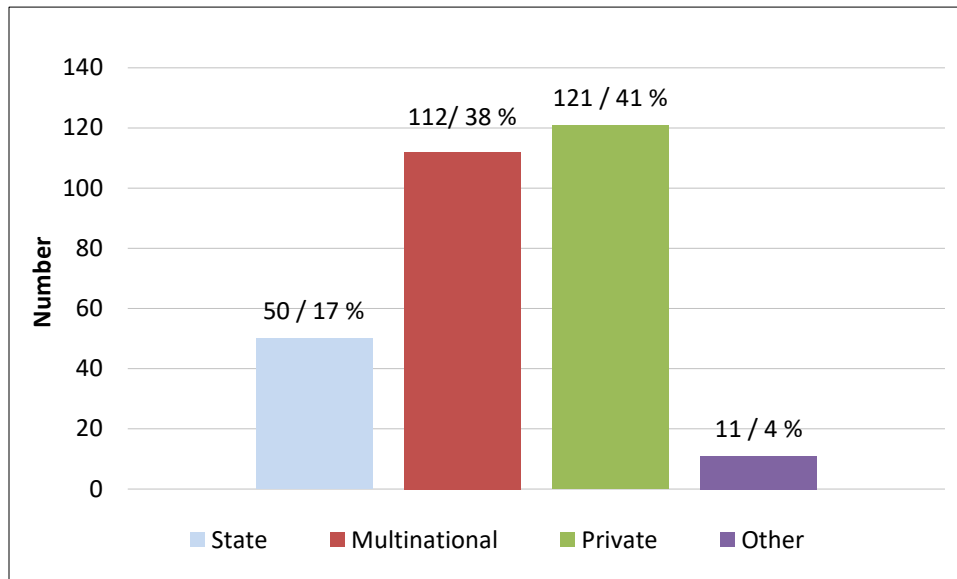


Figure 4: Respondents by ownership structure

Source: author’s work.

Most respondents (46.2 %) work for medium-sized companies with 20-499 employees. 43.4 % work for big companies (500 or more employees) and 10.4 % work for small organizations.

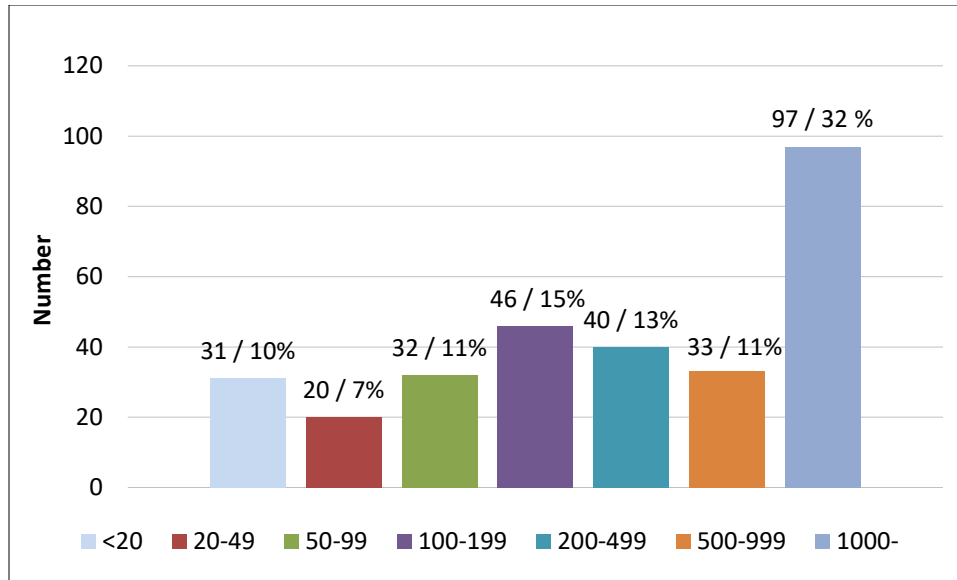


Figure 5: Respondents by number of people working for the organization
Source: author’s work.

As referred to Reich (2017), Hypothesis 1 tests whether in employees view WHM is statistically positively related to the attractiveness of the workplace/employer.

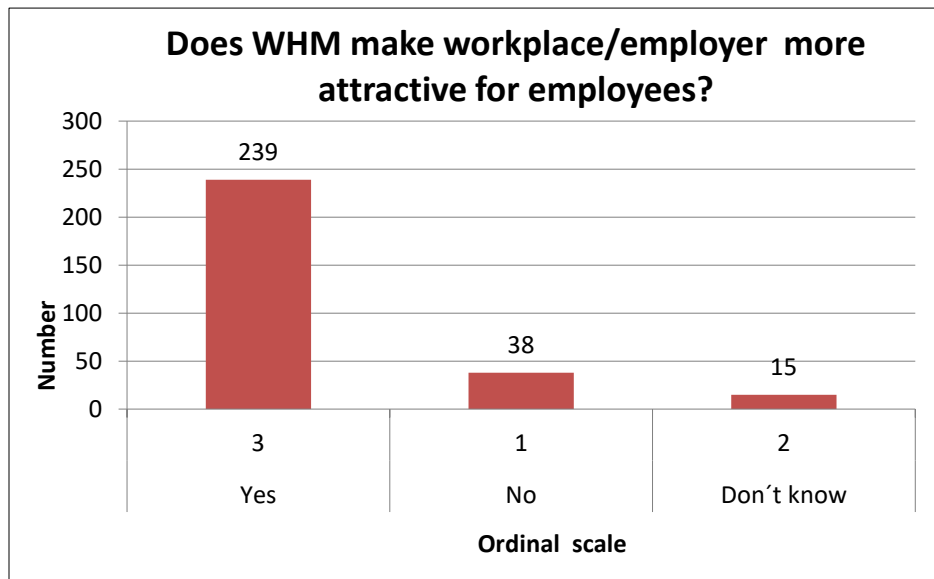


Figure 6: (Hypothesis 1) Histogram for employment attractiveness
Source: author’s work.

For 82% of the respondents, Workplace Health Management increases the employer’s attractiveness for employees who are already working for the company (see Table 1).

Table 1: (Hypothesis 1) Distribution for employment attractiveness

More attractive? (Total)			
	Item	Total	Percent
Yes	3	239	82%
No	1	38	13%
Don't know	2	15	5%
		292	100%
If "Yes": To what extent?			
Large	3	79	33%
Some	2	153	65%
Small	1	5	2%
		237	100%

Source: author's work.

One third of those responding "Yes" in "C1" stated that the WHM contributes to a large extent to the attractiveness of the employer, while 65% attribute to some extent.

Table 2: (Hypothesis 1) Distribution for employment attractiveness – organizations without and with WHM

More attractive? (without and with WHM)		without WHM		with WHM	
	Item	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Yes	2	153	78%	86	90%
No	1	30	15%	8	8%
Don't know	0	13	7%	2	2%
		196	100%	96	100%
If "Yes": To what extent?					
Large	3	39	26%	40	26%
Some	2	107	71%	46	30%
Small	1	5	3%	0	0%
		151	100%	86	57%

Source: author's work.

In line with the results of Reich (2017) dividing the responses into two groups, one without WHM and one with WHM, 78% in the group without WHM think that WHM increases the attractiveness of the employer for them and 90%

in the group with WHM think that way (this is a difference of 12%).

For this item, a one-sample t-test is used, too. The null hypothesis is that there is no positive

correlation between WHM and the employer's attractiveness, which is a mean equal to or less than 2. Because the t-value is higher than the

critical value, the null hypothesis can be rejected. This means that with 95% certainty, there is a positive correlation.

Table 3: (Hypothesis 1) One sample t-Test for the item C1 (attractive for employees)

One Sample t-test					
	mean of x	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df
C1	2,688356	2,621703		17,041	291
	HA: greater				
	H0: mean <= 2				

Source: author's work.

Viewing the results of the statistics and the t-test, it can be concluded that Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

With reference to Reich (2017), in Hypothesis 2 we examine whether "WHM has perceived additional positive emotional impacts on the employment relationship in relation to:

- the emotional climate at the workplace
- the work motivation of the employees.
- the commitment of the employees towards the organization.

d) the number of voluntary quits"

Table 4 and Table 5 show the results for the four items. Overall, we were able to get 294 evaluable answers for item a) (emotional climate), 295 for item b) (work motivation), 294 for item c) (commitment of the employees towards the organization) and 291 for item d) (number of voluntary quits).

Table 4: (Hypothesis 2) Distribution for a) emotional climate and b) work motivation

		a) emotional climate		b) work motivation	
	Item	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Yes	3	226	77%	214	73%
No	1	36	12%	46	16%
Don't know	2	32	11%	35	12%
Total number		294	100%	295	100%
Mean		2,65		2,57	
Standard deviation		0,689		0,748	

Continues Table 4.

If "Yes": To what extent?					
Large	3	90	40%	80	37%
Some	2	129	57%	114	53%
Small	1	7	3%	20	9%
Total "Yes"		226	100%	214	100%

Source: Author's work.

The mean of the total results of a) is 2.65 (see Table 4). This seems to indicate a clear positive relationship between WHM and the emotional climate. In fact, 77% of the 294 respondents answered with "Yes". (see Table 4). From them, 40% think that WHM increases the emotional climate significantly (see Table 4). The means for

item b) counts 2.57 (see Table 4). 37% of the 214 (see Table 4) positive respondents answered WHM increases work motivation to a large extent.

The distributions for a) and b) are shown by Table 4 and Figure 7 and Figure 8.

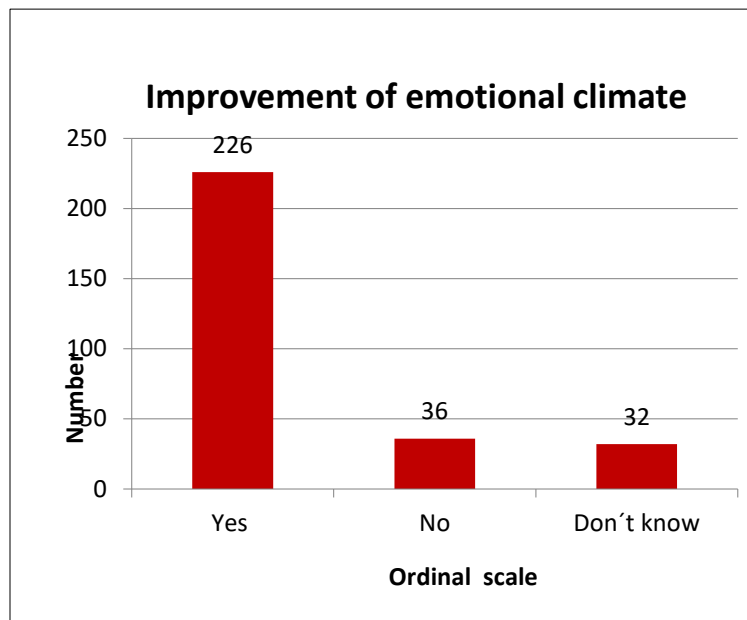


Figure 7: (Hypothesis 2) Histogram for a) (improvement of emotional climate)

Source: author's work.

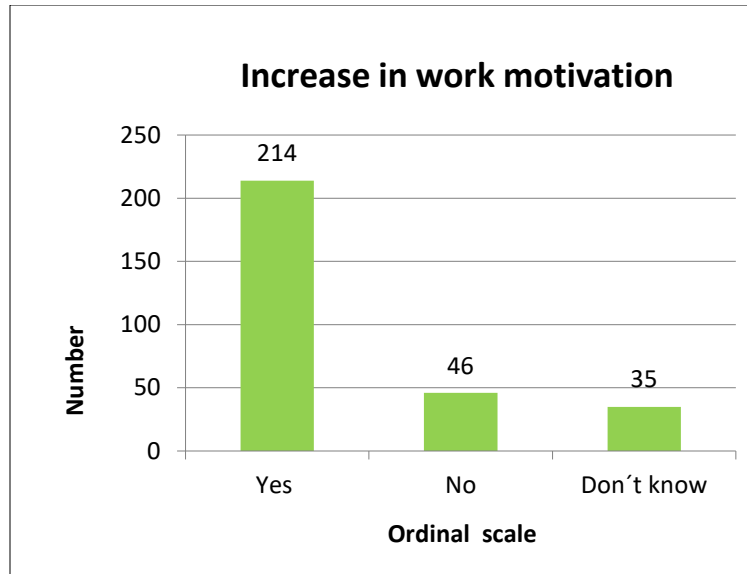


Figure 8: (Hypothesis 2) Histogram for b) (an increase of work motivation)

Source: author's work.

For item c) we had 294 respondents. The mean is 2.47 (see Table 5). 195 (66%) of the 294 (see Table 5) respondents thought that WHM would increase the commitment of the employees

toward the organization (34% of them attributed to a large extent).

Table 5: (Hypothesis 2) Distribution for c) (increase commitment) and d) (decrease turnovers)

		c) increase commitment		d) decrease turnovers	
	Item	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Yes	3	195	66%	110	38%
No	1	58	20%	88	30%
Don't know	2	41	14%	93	32%
Total number		294	100%	291	100%
Mean		2,47		2,08	
Standard deviation		0,803		0,823	
If "Yes": To which extent?					
Large	3	66	34%	31	29%
Certain	2	96	49%	56	52%
Small	1	32	16%	21	19%
Total "Yes"		194	100%	108	100%

Source: author's work.

In contrast to results for items a), b) and c), the mean for d) is only 2.08. Only 38% (see Table 5) of the respondents think that WHP programs decrease the number of voluntary quits of the employees. 30% stated with a clear “No.”

Distributions for c) and d) are below shown by Table 5 and Figures 9 and 10.

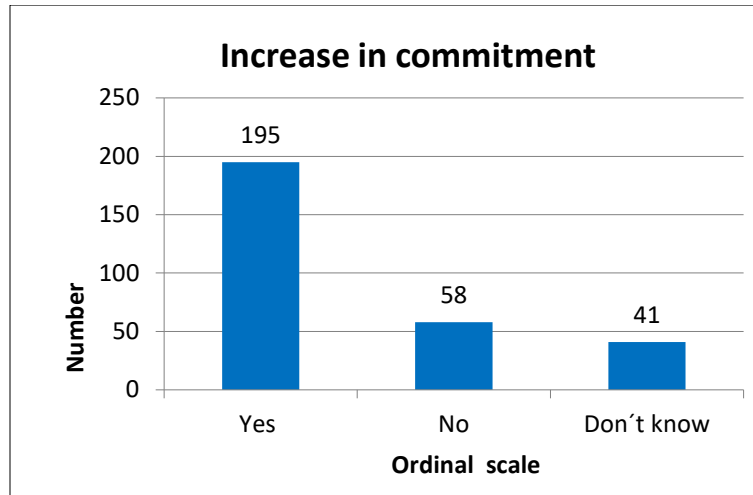


Figure 9: (Hypothesis 2) Histogram for c) (increase commitment)

Source: author's work.

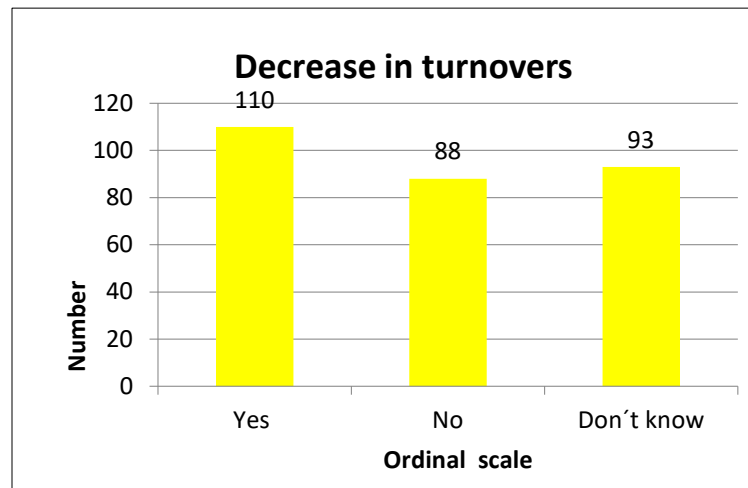


Figure 10: (Hypothesis 2) Histogram for d) (decrease turnovers)

Source: author's work.

To strengthen the conclusions drawn in the first step about a positive correlation of WHM and the four items only for items a), b) and c), the second step is to perform a one-sample t-test. The null hypothesis for the four items is that

there is no positive correlation between WHM and each of the four items. To validate this statement, the null hypothesis is defined as a mean equal to or less than 2.

Table 6: (Hypothesis 2) One sample t-Test for the item a), b), c) and d)

One Sample t-test					
	mean of x	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df
a)	2,6463	2,5799		16,076	293
b)	2,5695	2,4977		13,086	294
c)	2,4660	2,3887		9,9441	293
d)	2,0756	1,9960		1,5674	290
	HA: greater				
	H0: mean <= 2				

Source: author's work.

The results for the items (in consistency with the earlier research by Reich, 2017) are the following:

a) (emotional climate): Because the t-value is **higher** than the critical value, the null hypothesis can be rejected. This means that with 95% certainty, there is **a positive correlation**.

b) (work motivation): Because the t-value is **higher** than the critical value, the null hypothesis can be rejected. This means that with 95% certainty, there is **a positive correlation**.

c) (increase commitment): Because the t-value is **higher** than the critical value, the null hypothesis can be rejected. This means that with 95% certainty, there is **a positive correlation**.

d) (decrease turnovers): Because the t-value is **lower** than the critical value, the null hypothesis can't be rejected. This means that with 95% certainty, there is **no positive correlation**.

The results of the t-test are the same as the results of the first step: a), b), c) seem to be in a positive correlation with WHM, while d) is not positively correlated with WHM.

Combining the results of the statistics and the t-test described in this article, Hypothesis 2 is only confirmed partly for a), b) and c). Part d) is not confirmed.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION

H1 hypothesis 1 is verified, supporting Reich's (2017) results, that WHM is statistically positive related to the attractiveness of the workplace or employer. This means as well that WHM may be able to improve company image. This can be seen partly in contrast to the results of a study of the FOM (2013). According to the FOM study, 52,4% of the respondents told WHM was not an important factor for them to work for their company. As interpreted earlier by Reich (2017) in his research on a smaller sample, the contrast can be explained by the difference in the meaning of the terms of "an image improvement of a company" and "a factor bearing importance in working for a company". Besides the time factor referred to, WHM is a relatively new component within the system of employment gratifications.

Previous research has confirmed that WHM is a tool for enhancing the output and availability (in terms of productivity, health, and presenteeism) of existing employees (see, for example, Slesina & Bohley, 2011, Wilke et al., 2015). In the era of demographic change and labour force scarcity, the organizational ability to attract a new workforce becomes crucial. Our research supports that WHM as a new HRM function – beyond its positive impact on present employees – has a positive relationship with the employer's attractiveness within the labor market.

H2 hypothesis 2 is **partially verified**. Positive correlations were found between WHM and good/better emotional climate at the workplace,

work motivation and commitment of the employees towards the organization. Nevertheless, in the respondents' eyes WHM would not lead to a decreased number of voluntary quits.

Based on previous literature (see, for example, Uhle & Treier, 2015 and Dickson-Swift et al., 2014), under H2 we have made investigations on some organizational levels, including emotional and motivational indicators related to WHM. Our research has supported previous literature: we have confirmed the positive effects of WHM on three investigated factors of the investigated employment relationship (emotional climate, work motivation, and commitment towards the organization). Data do not support the relationship between WHM and the fourth factor (voluntary quits). In this way, the fourth factor can be viewed as an indicator of the limits of the positive effects of WHM. The reason for the fact that employees don't think WHM leads to a decreased number of voluntary quits may be that the effects of the WHM are very positive, but limited regarding certain aspects of the employment relationship. (Reich, 2017)

This article deals with the expectations the employees have on WHM and its additional effects. Conclusions can be drawn, as already suggested by Reich (2017), about the reasons of the relation of WHM with the attractiveness of the workplace and the perceived positive emotional impacts. First, WHM would increase the attractiveness of an employer because of the general interest of employees in their own health. It can also be concluded that the employees feel confident that the actions of WHM lead to a better emotional climate at the workplace. (Reich, 2017) Following Suliman and Al Harethi (2013), who found a positive correlation between work climate and job performance, it can be suggested that WHM leads to better job performance. A reason for this assumption may be that through WHM the employees feel more respected by the employer. (Reich, 2017) Also employees' communication and collaborative atmosphere can be enhanced through participating in actions of a WHM.

Further conclusion can be drawn regarding why employees think WHM increases work motivation and increases commitment towards the organization. Reich (2017) suggested that

“caused by the perceived own importance for the company, the motivation to work for this company may improve, too. The same reason may be responsible for the expected improved commitment of the employees.” In this regard, the additional effects of motivation and commitment that are generally related to company benefits programs (see for example: Poór et al., 2018) can be very important as well. Based on Faragher et al.'s results on the correlation between job satisfaction and mental health (Faragher, 2005), in the light of the relations of WHM to emotional and motivational factors, it can be suggested that WHM not only directly but also indirectly impacts on the health of organizational members. .

Regarding employees' willingness to leave the company, we refer to Allen et al. (2010) who have found a negative correlation between willingness to leave and satisfaction and organizational commitment. Elci and Alpkan (2009) found that job satisfaction is negatively related to the intention to leave. Our research investigated the direct relationship between Workplace Health Management and the expectations of the number of voluntary quits. . We can confirm, as suggested earlier by Reich (2017) that in this case, the positive effects of WHM have their clear limits, and for the intentions of the employees to designate from the company, other factors may be more important.

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