STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WITH EMOTION SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP FOR PRODUCTIVITY

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the key elements of emotion sustainability (ES) and sustainable partnership (SP) under post-COVID-19. Qualitative primary data is a major part of data analysis to support the findings from qualitative secondary data analysis on ES. The key findings for wellness influence are 1) self-awareness, 2) spiritual support, and 3) trust with flexibility for productivity with ES and SP with the SERVQUAL model. The learning outcomes on literature and 10 interviews with interviewees from Southeast Asia countries related to ES demonstrate that the principles of SERVQUAL are embedded in measuring wellness. For self-awareness related to new wellness skills, factors such as raisin diet, grapes nutrition awareness, antioxidant, happiness emotion, and adaptiveness are explored. Management with influence via ES and SP under post-COVID-19 in 2020 has seldom been studied. With these findings, organizations shall have an idea of designing activities to enhance emotional sustainability for staff members. The paper details the learning outcomes generated from the literature in the past as well as the use of SERVQUAL. This is important for organizational development with wellness training and individual/organizational development.

Keywords: Stakeholder Engagement, Emotion Sustainability, Sustainable Partners, Productivity, SERVQUAL

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1. INTRODUCTION

After the financial tsunami in 2008, organizational re-engineering, saving-cost projects, and employee redundancy cases are found in a variety of industries across the national boundary. Under post-COVID-19 in 2020, not only organizational stress was common, but also the well-being of employees, management, and partners were definitely affected by different contextual factors. Gladies and Kennedy (2011) quoted the four factors leading to stress which include a lack of career advancement, fear of making mistakes, difficulty in teamwork, and non-involved nature at work. Under the circumstances of economic downturn, organizational restructuring, and dissatisfaction of employees, it is time to study the elements, measurements, solutions, and future challenges of quality of work life (QWL) to avoid pricy physiological and spiritual problems of employees. Moreover, the principles of total quality management (TQM) and International Organization Standardization (ISO) focus on “continual improvement” for sustainable business, including sustainable organizations with improvements in organizational morale. In fact, organizational morale derives from job satisfaction of which requirements and/or expectations of a staff are fulfilled by an organization. This is the real meaning of quality — fulfilling requirements and expectations of internal
customers for striving excellence. If the well-being of employees is well taken care of during the process of organizational re-engineering under a financial tsunami, the costs of absenteeism, low participation rate, inadequate decision-making process, scare of using technology, and low productivity can be avoided.

Providing quality services to employees for a quality lifestyle is one of the organizational objectives which has seldom been explored comprehensively in the past few years. Scott (2005) claimed that it was important to be responsive to the needs of society. This is especially true in Hong Kong in the past five years with the role of women in the workplace becoming stronger and the issues of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and work-life balance (WLB) have caused many concerns to organizations, public and private organizations. Hence, the objectives of this study are:

1. To study the elements of ES.
2. To understand the importance of SP in enhancing wellness and organizational development.
3. To identify the relationship between SERVQUAL and the key findings of items 1 and 2.

Axelsson, Sonesson, and Wickenberg (2008, p. 473) quoted the saying of Stoltz and Olausson that fairness, equality, and diversity were important issues for liberal education and sustainable development. They further pointed that the processes for knowledge, learning, and research should take place with the consideration of equality, diversity, and the surrounding world. According to the ideas of Axelsson et al. (2008), "Universities shall help widen the understanding of society and culture, working to improve international relations and achieve sustainable development" (p. 472). Axelsson et al. (2008) highlighted that knowledge was driven by cross-boundary actions, knowledge-transforming actions, cultural and social experience, as well as diversified backgrounds of students and teachers.

The remainder of the paper is as follows. Section 2 reveals relevant literature. Analyses of the methodology for conducting the investigation are presented in Section 3. Section 4 covers the findings followed by Section 5 which concludes the paper.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lonsdale (2003) found that the school library was closely related to the students' achievement. In his study, he revealed that the quality of collection and collaborative relationships between teachers and school librarians could directly influence students' learning. In terms of the characteristics, Lonsdale (2003) recognized library could nurture students' self-esteem, independence, confidence, and a sense of responsibility in regards to their own learning. After graduation, the influence of the library still prevails. Lonsdale's (2003) study showed a strong library programme that possessed an adequate collection, human resources, and financial support could lead to higher students' achievement in the community. Sharing the same views with Lonsdale (2003), Williams, Wavell, and Coles (2001) also found that libraries had "a positive impact on academic achievement" to students from their research. They highlighted the key factors of a library focusing on "collection levels, library staffing levels, and collaboration between librarian and teacher" while Emmons and Wilkinson (2011) supported that a professional library staff had a great impact on student persistence and the library. Hence, a library can increase students' persistence indirectly.

To brighten the library, some believed that one should look beyond the library logistics. Instead, the whole service quality should be emphasized. Einasto (2009) deemed that the ultimate goal of an academic library was "to maintain a level of service quality that satisfies its users, will ensure funding of activities sufficient for the existence and development of the organization" (p. 9). Paiste (2003) cited the result-oriented goals of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for the educational institution "the delivery of ever-improving value to students and stakeholders, contributing to educational quality" and "improvement of overall organizational effectiveness and capabilities". Obviously, the importance of service quality is fundamental for an academic library. Service quality should consequently be paid attention to when improving the library.

In addition, a good measurement system shall be user-friendly operated on an on-going basis with formative and summative information for obtaining a holistic picture of library performance and satisfaction of users. This is of great importance for higher educational institutes as the library affects the academic results of students, the research outputs of teachers, and the image of a university in the eyes of the public.

The literature reports on many attempts to define quality. In business and industry, quality has been an important issue for many years. One of the definitions used in managerial literature is that "quality is the extent to which the product meets the demands; another is 'customer satisfaction'", however, comments that in higher education there was no clear indication whether "the 'customer' is the institution, the student, the future employer, or society" (Vroijenstijin, as cited in Bornman, 2004, p. 373).

The effectiveness of a university library greatly relies on the satisfaction of students. Though satisfaction is intangible and subjective, some generic and objective measures are needed to quantify satisfaction. It is valuable to explore deeply with proper methods for improving library services to meet the foreseeable demand. Mola (2007) concluded that processes were fundamentally important in all models and approaches to quality management and the implementation of ISO 9001 was an important first step in implementing other more holistic quality initiatives that libraries should consider. Mola (2007) also mentioned that not only ISO 9001 but also other integrative approaches of TQM could be used for libraries in higher education. Hence, this paper is going to study the use of the SERVQUAL model to assess library performance as a whole.

The concepts of TQM and SERVQUAL can be utilized in this aspect. SERVQUAL not only "identifies service quality from customer perspective" (Nitecki, 1996, p. 183) but also "more than justifies the separate measurement of perceptions and expectations" (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1993). Paiste (2003) also regarded that TQM embraced the value of
maintaining customer focus and of being customer-driven in development with user-oriented cataloging. Taking these special virtues, it is believed that SERVQUAL and TQM are useful to explore the measurement and improvement of library performance in this research.

3. METHODOLOGY

On Stage 1 a qualitative study was conducted on sustainable emotion. The literature published between 2012 and 2020 is shown in Table 1 below with the following result.

| Year | Title                                                                 | Name of journal                                             |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2012 | Product choice and the importance of aesthetic design given the emotion-laden trade-off between sustainability and functional performance. | Journal of Product Innovation                                |
| 2013 | Play for protest, protest for play: Artisan and vendors' resistance to displacement in Mexico City. | Antipode                                                     |
| 2015 | Critical reflection mapping as a hybrid methodology for examining socio-spatial perceptions of new research sites. | Annals of the Association of American Geographers           |
| 2015 | Empowerment strategies for ideation through online communities.       | Creativity and Innovation Management                        |
| 2018 | Using sociology to build and organize movement networks.             | Sociological Forum                                           |
| 2018 | Emotions and sustainability: A literary genre-based framework for environmental sustainability management education. | Academy of Management Learning and Education               |

Six journal articles were found related to our study. After reviewing the articles, some themes appeared to be prominent such as emotion sustainability for productivity, task-based solutions, humanistic returns, shared values, capacity for future challenges, and contemporary relevant solutions. To explore how relevant these emerged themes were to the articles, a text search using the above-mentioned themes as keywords was conducted with NVivo. The results are as follows (Table 2).

| Keywords                                      | Sources | References |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|------------|
| Emotion sustainability for productivity       | 6       | 1134       |
| Task-based solutions                          | 3       | 8          |
| Humanistic returns                            | 0       | 0          |
| Shared values                                 | 6       | 60         |
| Capacity for future challenges                | 5       | 88         |
| Contemporary relevant solutions               | 5       | 27         |

Most of the keywords were mentioned in the articles except humanistic returns. “Emotion sustainability for productivity” and “shared values” appeared in all 6 articles with 1134 and 60 references respectively. “Capacity for future challenges” was referenced 88 times in 5 articles. “Contemporary relevant solutions” were also mentioned in 5 articles with 27 references.

4. RESULTS

Having critically reviewed the articles, some relationships between the emerged themes were found. Capacity for future challenges, shared value, and contemporary relevant solutions appeared to be the contributing factors of emotion sustainability for productivity. A model of the four themes was shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Model of four themes on emotion sustainability for productivity
On Stage 2 the interviewees with human resources background were selected.

According to Verghese (2008), mental health has two dimensions — the absence of mental illness and the presence of a well-adjusted personality that contributes effectively to the life of the community. Well-adjusted personality is a hot topic under post-COVID-19 when people are scared to go out and they also face the challenge of losing a job.

Ms. Cindy Lai, an experienced human resources manager for over 20 years, expressed interest in ES, relating to emotional stability and open-minded personality to create common topics, common interests, and common goals with colleagues for achieving organizational goals.

"Among physical, mental, and spiritual wellness, I rank physical wellness at the highest level. Without accessibility, social life, enjoyment of life, and workplace relationship will be ruined".

Emotion sustainability (ES) and sustainable partners (SP) are crucial at the workplace. The four levels of wellness sustainability can be classified from the fundamentals of physical wellness for accessibility, followed by mental wellness with energy and positive thinking personality and spiritual support. The highest level is the commonality of partners in a community.

This has been echoed by Mr. Kevin Or who received education from Hong Kong and Canada with entrepreneurial projects in human resources services in Hong Kong, and land development projects in Japan and Malaysia. He mentioned that communicating with your inner self is the fundamental step for developing a well-adjusted personality. This kind of self-communication is for:

- understanding your inner self under emotion instability of post-COVID-19;
- escaping from busy routine schedule under business innovations and transformation when business is in a disruption stage with uncertainties;
- enhancing partner relationships with a pause in life and identifying space to grow with common grounds, trust, better-partnered projects for communities.

When asked to give a 1-5 rating score to spiritual, mental, and physical wellness, Mr. Or said, “Spiritual wellness is 5 followed by mental at 4 and physical at 3”. The insights that we have gained from the sharing of Mr. Or is that: “Brightness for life betterment is built on a common ground with sustainable partners who have a certain level of emotion sustainability and an integrated perspective of wellness and clear reflection with a pause in life to re-build capacity followed by your inner self”.

Altogether, there were 10 interviews conducted in September and October 2020 with interviewees who have business and academic projects with partners in different countries. Invited interviewees are professors, industry practitioners, entrepreneurs in the toy, human resources, and product-making industries. The interview summary has been documented for NVivo qualitative analysis. A model with self-awareness, spirituality support, and trust with flexibility is identified for wellness to influence (Figure 2) These three dimensions are a follow-up element for the first model (Figure 1) on emotional sustainability for productivity arisen from the literature search.

**Figure 2.** Model of self-awareness, spirituality support, and trust with flexibility for wellness to influence
On Stage 3 a study was conducted to explore the development of new wellness skills under COVID-19. A literature search using the keyword, “new wellness skills” in papers published in 2020 was carried out. Thirteen papers were found relevant. A review of the papers showed that some factors were associated with wellness. They included raisin diet, grapes nutrition awareness, antioxidant, happiness emotion, and adaptiveness. To further examine whether the factors had an impact on wellness, a text search using the above-mentioned factors as keywords was done on the 13 papers with NVivo. Findings indicated that grapes nutrition awareness and raisin diet were mentioned in 9 and 6 papers with 114 and 249 references respectively. “Happiness emotion” was cited 148 times in one paper (Table 3).

Having reviewed the papers with special focus on the influence of the most mentioned factors on wellness, the relationships between them were established as illustrated in the following model (Figure 3).

### Table 3. Results on new wellness skills

| Factor/Keyword                  | Paper | Reference |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Immunity                        | 4     | 6         |
| Wellness                        | 2     | 41        |
| Raisin diet                     | 6     | 249       |
| Grapes nutrition awareness      | 9     | 114       |
| Antioxidant                     | 3     | 70        |
| Happiness emotion               | 1     | 148       |
| Adaptiveness                    | 4     | 22        |

5. CONCLUSION

All in all, the above on-going qualitative primary data collected from the 10 interviewees from 4 Asian countries and secondary data analysis over 10 years agreed with the NVivo first model (Figure 1) from literature searched on ES and the second model (Figure 2) from the interview summary on wellness to influence have been reviewed critically. The overall findings from the key elements for wellness and productivity for sustainable development and SP for wellness are indicated in Figure 2. It is time to re-visit the use of the SERVQUAL model in delivering wellness-related projects and activities and develop talents in understanding emotional sustainability and

![Source: NVivo data analysis on wellness.](image)
sustainable partners under post-COVID-19 in which partners need to re-think from a psychological and a social perspective.

The principles of SERVQUAL are recommended to be used in measuring wellness: 1) reliability — stable individual traits for well-adjusted personality; 2) responsiveness — personality change and true adjustment from inner self in response to the challenges in life during the post-COVID-19 period; 3) assurance — “follow the flow” strategy with performance indicators to maximize positive outcomes from ES and SP; 4) empathy — understanding the viewpoints of others to facilitate spiritual, mental and physical wellness for wellness; 5) tangibility — activities of the network, space and time for true reflection and capacities building and new norms of happiness.

Furthermore, we need to be aware that the new skills related to wellness are raisin diet, grapes nutrition awareness, antioxidant, happiness emotion, and adaptiveness. These elements have impacts in relation to wellness as indicated in Table 3. In order to increase the reliability of the results, quantitative data and experimental tools on healthy diet and emotion of happiness are needed for good practices on promoting United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG 3), ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being of all at all ages with sustainable development.

All in all, organizations traditionally view the workplace as a venue for achieving organizational goals and objectives which is more on a task-based perspective. This functional view needs to be changed under COVID-19 to a humanistic-based approach, closely linking up the wellness of staff in relation to productivity for quality enhancement. Thus self-care techniques on wellness and productivity for the general workforce are highly recommended.

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