

Job resources as intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators and the applicability of the Self-determination theory in Moroccan companies

Applicabilité de la théorie de l'Autodétermination dans les entreprises marocaines : ressources du travail entre motivateurs intrinsèques et extrinsèques

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Abstract

In Morocco, human resources management is evolving with the introduction of new practices by multinational groups. While past management principles relied on extrinsic rewarding and material resources to motivate employees, exploring the resources offered nowadays would help us determine the types of motivators used by Moroccan companies. We conducted semi-directed interviews with Human Resource managers in different organizational settings to gather data on motivation practices that they use within their companies. Findings suggest that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators are valued by managers to improve their employees' satisfaction. We were also able to support the applicability of the Self-Determination Theory in the Moroccan context through evidence of the use of a various range of motivation practices as well as the fulfillment of the three needs that are linked to intrinsic motivation, the need for autonomy, the need for competence and the need for relatedness. Many interviewees mentioned the use of non-standard work arrangements, research on these types of work settings is especially relevant in the current global circumstances. Future studies would help us examine the relationship between the different types of motivators and job satisfaction as well as health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Keywords: Self-determination theory; extrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation; job resources; non-standard work arrangements.

Résumé

Au Maroc, la gestion des ressources humaines évolue sans cesse grâce à l'introduction de nouvelles pratiques par des groupes multinationaux. Les principes de gestion passés reposaient sur la motivation matérielle extrinsèque, une exploration des pratiques actuelles nous permettra de déterminer la nature des ressources utilisées. Nous avons mené huit entretiens semi-directifs avec des managers des ressources humaines au sein de différentes organisations pour recueillir des données sur les pratiques de motivation qu'ils utilisent au sein de leurs entreprises. Les résultats suggèrent que les facteurs de motivation intrinsèque et extrinsèque sont mises en œuvre par les gestionnaires pour améliorer la satisfaction de leurs employés. Nous avons également pu soutenir l'applicabilité de la théorie de l'autodétermination dans le contexte marocain en observant l'utilisation d'une variété de motivateurs ainsi que la satisfaction des trois besoins liés à la motivation intrinsèque : le besoin d'autonomie, le besoin de compétence et le besoin d'appartenance sociale. De nombreux interviewés ont mentionné l'usage du télétravail, la recherche sur les effets de cette forme de travail est particulièrement pertinente au vu des circonstances mondiales actuelles. De futures études pourraient investiguer le lien entre les différents types de motivation et la santé et le bien-être au travail.

Mots-clés : Théorie de l'auto-détermination ; motivation extrinsèque ; motivation intrinsèque ; ressources du travail ; formes de travail atypique

Introduction

There is growing interest around occupational health and wellbeing in Morocco. The few global studies that were conducted on this topic reported high levels of unhappiness at work. A large sample survey by the “Haut Commissariat au Plan” (HCP, 2017) revealed that one fifth of employees are not satisfied with their jobs and express the desire to change it, the majority of employees (67.2%) attribute their dissatisfaction to remuneration levels. Another study reported that a third of the surveyed workers believe work is a source of stress, caused by a lack of recognition, a lack of means to reach objectives and too much pressure (“Bien-Être Au Travail : Les Mauvais Chiffres Du Maroc,” 2017).

Wellbeing in the workplace has been linked by many scholars to motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In Morocco, there is a confusion around the definitions of wellbeing at work, of job satisfaction and motivation. Workers tend to gather these notions under the same general theme of wellbeing (Orabi & Bentaleb, 2020). Very few studies have attempted to link between predictors and outcomes in this configuration. A study of the sources of motivation linked to human resources management practices and job satisfaction of healthcare workers reported the following determinants of job satisfaction (El Yadari et al., 2020): training positively and significantly influenced job satisfaction; internal communication and working in a cooperative and considerate environment had the same effect on job satisfaction. No relationship was found between remuneration and job satisfaction, which could be a specificity of the medical sector as doctors may find other sources of satisfaction in their jobs. Two types of companies have been identified by human resources researchers in Morocco, depending on how elaborate their motivation practices are. The group with more elaborate practices uses inspiring objectives, flexible rewarding depending on individual performance, encouraging competitiveness between employees for each promotion opportunity and vertical mobility for high performers. These motivation practices are often designed with the help of external consultants. Another group of companies has less elaborate practices and rewards loyalty instead of merit, these firms favor the promotion of a team spirit among their employees and competition is undesirable, they also tend to reward collective performance instead of individual performance (Bentaleb, 2005).

Through this overview, we can clearly see that there is a confusion around the multiple concepts linked to motivation and wellbeing at work. We can also see that policies adopted by companies to support their employees are divided into material practices and immaterial ones.

The material ones are related to pay and remuneration while the immaterial ones are linked to organizational support and communication.

This paper's aim is to explore job resources that fall under these two categories of rewards within the theoretical framework of self-determination, we will try to separate extrinsic motivators from intrinsic motivators that are used by human resources managers in their daily organizational activities. This will constitute a first step towards investigating mechanisms that lead to health and wellbeing outcomes in Moroccan companies. To conduct this investigation, we will try to answer the following questions:

- What are the motivators human resources managers use in the Moroccan context to motivate their employees?
- How do these motivators support the applicability of the Self-Determination Theory in Moroccan workplaces?

To answer these questions, we will first lay out the conceptual background for this article through a literature review around the notions we used throughout our study. The objective is to present a categorization of the types of practices related to motivation, and the consequence of each one of them as well their role in influencing other organizational variables. The following section will present the methodological considerations for this qualitative exploration, which consisted in semi-directed interviews with HR specialists across a wide range of organizations. Finally, we will present and discuss the results of the data collection process, structured to answer our research questions. Implications and future avenues of research are also discussed.

1. Theoretical framework

Our research's first theoretical basis is the Job demands/resources model as a theoretical framework that considers two broad sets of job characteristics: job demands and job resources. Job demands are physical, psychological, social and organizational facets of the job that require a lasting physical or psychological effort and are thus linked with a cost. These demands might cause strain if the effort to meet them is too high. Job resources on the other hand are physical, psychological, social and organizational traits that help achieve the job while stimulating personal development and reducing the impact of high job demands. They encompass advancement, growth opportunities and organizational support. In this paper, we will focus on job resources, particularly what our informants considers rewards.

We will also use the Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2010, 2012) to categorize these rewards following the two motivation ends of the continuum, from the least determined to the

most determined. On the one hand, there is extrinsic motivation, which refers to material incentives and instrumental behaviors related to the satisfaction individuals may find in obtaining a reward or the effects of this reward on their self-image and personal goals. In this case, work becomes a mean to an end. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation characterizes individuals that are motivated by a need for self-determination and competency linked to the personal satisfaction they can obtain from achieving an activity. These findings led Amabile to suggest a complimentary definition of motivation where he considers that individuals are intrinsically motivated when they perform an activity for pleasure or interest, to satisfy their curiosity, for self-expression or personal challenge. Individuals are extrinsically motivated when they engage in an activity to meet an objective outside of the activity itself. (Amabile, 1993).

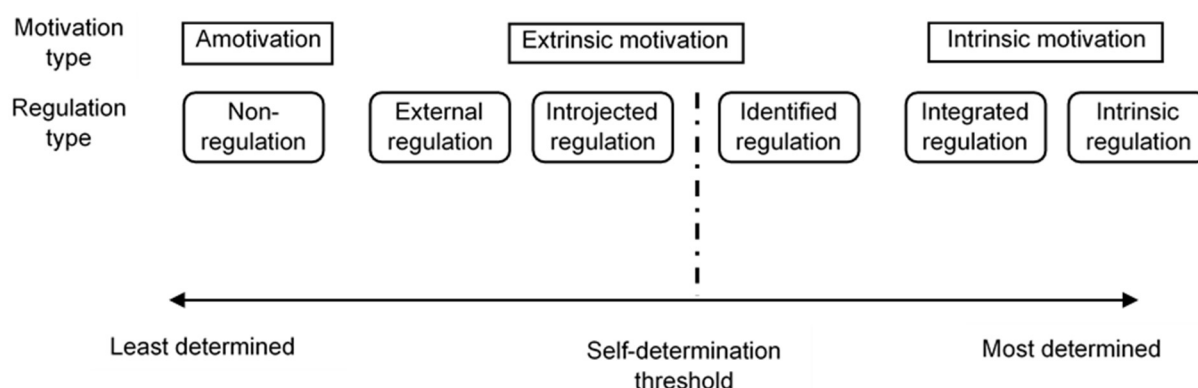
A particularly fertile field in the study of motivation is the one related to the virtues of intrinsic motivation as opposed to a more extrinsic or weakly self-determined motivation (Fenouillet & Lieury, 1996). The researchers found intrinsic motivation promising because it seemed to be associated with the spontaneous and self-determined implementation of learning activities, without the use of external pressures or the development of a system of extrinsic rewards.

Self-determination theory also posits that there are three fundamental needs that are directly linked to psychological wellbeing, the need for autonomy (to feel ownership for one's actions or behavior), competence (the need to experience mastery and to produce desired outcomes on one's environment) and relatedness (the need to feel belonging and to be connected to others) (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Adams et al., 2017). These three fundamental needs have been linked to intrinsic motivation and studies have shown that conditions that foster autonomy, competency and interpersonal affiliation directly impact physical and psychological health (Williams et al., 1998). However, Deci and Ryan specify that the needs that must be met in priority in order to maintain or increase intrinsic motivation depend on the individual's initial motivational situation. If the individual is extrinsically or not intrinsically motivated, the needs that should be considered first are his need for competence and social affiliation. On the other hand, if the individual is already intrinsically motivated, there should be an aim towards fulfilling his need for competence and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2010).

To sum up, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are not a binary concept within the self-determination theory framework. They are a system that is linked to the degree of self-determination on the continuum in the figure below. This helps in grasping what motivation

means and offers a tangible approach to improve the degree of self-determination or to increase intrinsic motivation, which is striving to meet basic psychological needs in relation to the situation.

Figure N°1: Motivation in the Self-Determination Theory



Source : (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

This provides support for the necessity to explore the applicability of the theory in the Moroccan context and how different human resources managers use the different types of motivators. We will use the previous framework as a reference to categorize the resources mentioned by our interviewees.

2. Methods

We used a qualitative approach involving semi-structured interviews with organizational stakeholders in Morocco.

2.1. Context and participants

We collected data from a sample of organizational stakeholders between December 2018 and June 2019 in Casablanca. Interviewees were Human Resources Managers (HRM) in different types of organizations, they also had different backgrounds, education, experience levels, and ages.

We conducted eight interviews in total. Seven interviewees were HRMs, one was the CEO of a start-up who acted as an HRM for his company. Five respondents were male, three were female. Two were aged 30 years or younger, two were aged between 30 and 40 years, four were older than 40. Half of the respondents has completed their studies abroad, the other half in Morocco. Most of them have completed a master's degree.

We identified and contacted HR managers via email. We reached out to some through mutual acquaintances. They work in national companies and holdings, multinationals and start-ups. One HR manager put us in touch with the HR director overlooking the HR department of the

Holding to which her company belongs, this was interesting because it provided insights on the differences between HR policies in the same broad organization.

2.2. Data collection

The interviews provided information on the different policies managers use to motivate the employees in their organizations. We categorized them into intrinsic or extrinsic motivators to see which one is the most prevalent in workplaces in our context. We believed the interviewees were knowledgeable on the topic and that their perspectives would advance our understanding of the application of the self-determination theory in Morocco in future research designs (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). We reached saturation at the eighth interview.

The semi-directed interviews lasted between 45min and 1h15min. Interviews were conducted in the office of the respondents, except two who favored casual settings.

2.3. Data analysis

We audiotaped all the interviews and transcribed them verbatim. We systematically coded the transcripts using colored markers before transferring them to spreadsheets for better organization. We relied on pre-established codes making use of the theories that guide our research (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Deci et al., 1989) as well as our research questions. We also identified new codes from the interviews as relevant additional coded segments emerged from the text (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Huberman & Miles, 1991). This system helped us organize the indexed data in categories, themes and subthemes of recurrent codes that correspond to the different concepts we presented in the theoretical framework. The analysis consisted in extracting themes within each category and interpreting them in order to verify the applicability of the theory.

3. Results

3.1. Clear distinction between types of motivators:

We were able to clearly distinguish the two categories of motivation from the interviews with the managers. HR managers are able to differentiate between the different types of motivators, as can be seen in this excerpt from an interview with one HRM:

“People find motivation in two things, either material or non-material. Recognition is important, when you work somewhere and there is no recognition, you question the reason you’re working. Also, material motivation plays an important role, because when people work and they are comfortable financially, their minds are focused on work more than people who have financial problems...”

This other manager thinks both types of motivation play a role in the satisfaction of workers and their performance at work:

“If there is a balance in terms of expenses and resources, the expenses should not only comprise the technical and material aspects, but there must also be a level dedicated to the development of skills, dedicated to the improvement of conditions of work, and a balanced management.”

Another manager also believes that immaterial retribution should be complimented with material rewards:

“The retribution in the form of feedback, this type of reward is immaterial. There is also another type of recognition: ‘bravo! nice work’ and oral congratulations, we should keep in mind that we should not go overboard with these either because they can hurt in the long run. Employees want something concrete, this brings us to material compensation in the form of increases, bonuses or other.”

Overall, managers mentioned the two types of motivators equally. In the next sections, we presented job resources that were related to intrinsic motivators and extrinsic motivators, we later introduced a category with non-standard arrangement as a specific motivator that many respondents mentioned.

3.2. Intrinsic motivators

In our findings, Human Resources Managers identified many organizational policies that they consider motivating for employees. These motivators fit within the three different needs that are linked to intrinsic motivation as well as psychological and physical wellbeing. We present the findings below.

3.2.1. The need for autonomy

This aspect of which many interviewees mentioned the importance in creating motivation, coupled with the support of the hierarchy, can be a powerful tool to help employees achieve work goals and be more satisfied at work, a multinational HR manager said in this regard that it is often the result of a supportive hierarchy: *“There is autonomy, and that’s what is good in multinationals [...]. When you have the support of your hierarchy, it drives you to be more independent.”*

One HRM who works in a multinational mentioned the process clarity that stems from having job descriptions and clear objectives that helps you become autonomous as a source of motivation: *“You know what to do, you work with clear objectives on which you are evaluated at the end of the year, so that motivates you.”*

3.2.2. The need for relatedness

A multinational Human Resources Manager mentioned the social environment as an incentive that motivates his colleagues to make more efforts at work and to support each other:

“We have that [supportive social climate] ... There is a -corporatist- vision among the people who work here. They value the interests of the company and they agree to make an extra effort without waiting for a counterpart, and people help each other.”

Another multinational HRM considers that the two most important things in a company are recognition and the social climate, then comes the material aspect.

3.2.3. The need for competence

An HR manager cited a tool that his company uses during evaluations to enhance the personal development of its employees, this tool records their professional objectives as well as one personal objective on which they are held accountable. Many companies insist on the personal development of their employees, another manager mentioned the role of Human Resources Management in the development of employees, he emphasizes the responsibility of this support function in helping improve not only the working environment, but also employees' skills. He defies the vision that HRM is mostly tied to administrative functions. He illustrates his speech by presenting a talent management program that his company implemented to closely follow workers' career plans.

In the same vein, this national HR company manager believes it is necessary to help people reach their full potential: *“The world is evolving and today, if we want to be successful, if we want to attract the best, we can't just manage people, manage their tasks, and then manage their salary. We need to help them grow and flourish.”*

This seems to be even more relevant in the services industry that relies heavily on human skills and talent, this HRM introduced the concept of human capital management: *“Since the highest percentage of the economic fabric today in Morocco is in services [...]. A little bit of awareness that employees are first and foremost a capital and that we must make this capital grow and try to increase its competence.”*

This is also relevant in start-ups, where employees witness the expansion and the growth of the company and can attribute its success to their efforts, as explained by the CEO of the start-up: *“What is very interesting about us is the potential, how fast we grow, and people actually manage to project themselves. They think: ‘If in two years it develops [...], it would have been thanks to me that it grew so well’.”*

He also cited recognition as part of performance evaluations that are conducted in his company, particularly, the 360 review where he asks questions like: *“What is the accomplishment you are most proud of?”* in order to evaluate how fulfilled his employees are. Recognition was also identified as a major source of motivation for employees, as depicted by this HRM, who explains the different sources of recognition for workers in a company: *“Recognition is diverse. It comes from the manager inevitably perhaps in day-to-day settings. It comes when a project manager, once the project is finished, sends congratulations to all participants in the project. It comes from the top management that, whenever there is the opportunity to -during a team building, a big results’ meeting etc., sends a message of congratulations.”*

3.3. Extrinsic motivators

Many managers emphasized the role of physical working conditions and material rewards in the motivation of employees, their satisfaction and their performance at work. This multinational HR manager talked about working hours as another aspect that many managers don’t take into consideration when investigating workers’ intention to leave. She believes that it is one of the many working conditions that when not satisfactory, tends to make people quit. She acknowledges and justifies it by considering it a threat to employee’s health.

Another local company HR manager includes frequently renovating offices as an aspect of good working conditions.

The HR director of the holding, who is the most experienced considers mostly the material aspect of motivation and provides his employees with multiple advantages, believing that they ultimately don’t need anything else. Below is an excerpt from the interview: *“They have conventions for car purchases, for stays in hotels, for products that the group commercializes, they are well off. And they can’t say they are not well off.”*

Finally, material motivation is heavily associated with bonuses and salaries. Many managers mentioned paying good salaries as a way to retain their employees, and bonuses to reward them and to motivate them to work harder. One example is this excerpt from the interview with a multinational’s HR manager who believed that the material aspect will prevail at some point: *“Employees will think of the material aspect at some point. For example, asking for a bonus, or the promotion they deserve to be happy, or to be put in the position they want.”*

3.4. Non-standard work arrangements

Since this topic has been brought up by many respondents, we believed it would be fitting to include it in its own category even though it could fit under intrinsic motivation. Indeed, this

work arrangement seems to be fulfilling a need for autonomy and competence for workers with, in counterpart, the trust of their hierarchy and expected gains in productivity. Managers are considering changing their work organization to be more flexible and adapted to their workers' schedules. This was the case of the HR manager of a piping industry multinational: *"We have a lot of advantages. We don't have the obligation to be here at the office all the time. If we want, we can work from home ... you see, even when you make the extra effort to stay until 9pm, 10pm or work on a Sunday, it is not a problem because it's a give-and-take."*

This was the case of the start-up manager who considers it important to be flexible for the sake of productivity: *"This company is nice because everyone works in the way he feels he is the most productive. If you wake up in the morning and you don't want to come to the office, you send what we call a 'work from home'. You just work from home."*

This was also the case of the national insurance company: *"We have a flexible schedule to allow employees according to their situation to organize themselves in their private lives as well. Managers can reason using the overall number of hours per week. We put this flexibility in place precisely to allow employees to breathe."*

When asked about absenteeism issues, the HRM of a consulting multinational mentioned non-standard work arrangements as potential solutions: *"There are also policies that can be implemented or new practices in the Moroccan context such as working from home, or sequential work. The organization of work is extremely important to be able to counter this type of reality."*

To a lesser extent, the more experienced HR director offered his employees a form of flexibility in terms of working hours. They have a flexible start of the day, between 8:30 and 9am.

4. Discussion

Motivation has multiple consequences on performance, because as Ryan and Deci explained: *"Motivation concerns energy, direction, persistence and equifinality--all aspects of activation and intention [...]. Perhaps more important, in the real world, motivation is highly valued because of its consequences: Motivation produces"* (Ryan & Deci, 2000: 69). Human Resources Managers are at the forefront of this equation within companies.

As alluring as intrinsic motivators may seem compared to other more situational motivators, scholars are still debating their use. Using extrinsic motivators such as rewards in various forms, evaluations, social comparisons, more or less severe sanctions, etc. is undoubtedly no

less effective in terms of learning but requires organization, control and time (Joule & Beauvois, 1998).

Through these series of interviews, we found evidence for the applicability of the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) in the Moroccan context. There are quotes that address the use of both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, often in the same organization. although the distinction between intrinsic motivators and more extrinsic motivators may seem obvious, managers are well aware that there may be areas of passage between these motivators which are not reflected by the dichotomy between intrinsic aspects and extrinsic ones. We can clearly observe this phenomenon in the use of evaluation practices that now include evaluation of personal fulfillment within the organization, and how the latter facilitates the accomplishment of personal goals as well, on top of professional objectives. On this topic, Deci & Ryan (2010) evoke for example a process of “internalization” when the received reinforcements are important for self-image, and a process of “integration” when the individual perceives behaviors as important in themselves from the point of view of his own goals and values (Deci & Ryan, 2010).

Among intrinsic motivators, we could see the three categories of need defined in the self-determination theory, the need for autonomy through empowering workers and allowing them to take decisions and to manage their schedules and their tasks, the need for belonging through establishing an adequate social climate. As well as the need for competence through developing their employees’ potential and offering them growth opportunities.

Many HR managers were proponents of policies that support their employees independence, research has shown that changes that facilitate participatory and autonomy-oriented management are valuable and are responsible for significant changes in workplaces where managers are trained to enhance self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2012). On the other hand, multiple interviewees believed that extrinsic motivation was enough for workers to be satisfied at work. Research has shown that using material rewards to control behavior will probably be associated with more surveillance and more competition, which can negatively impact intrinsic motivation (Adams et al., 2017).

As mentioned previously, research on motivation practices in Moroccan companies revealed the presence of two types of companies with differences in how elaborate their motivation practices are (Bentaleb, 2005). It seems that all the managers we interviewed have put in place practices that are more or less sophisticated and thought out, with a clear intent of motivating their employees and rewarding them.

It was interesting to note that the definition of wellbeing at work varied a lot between respondents, some associate it with the notion of job satisfaction, others associate it with motivation itself or fulfilment. This seems to be a general theme in the Moroccan context since previous research on the topic had the same conclusion about the confusion around the definition of wellbeing and the novelty of the concept (Orabi & Bentaleb, 2020).

We discovered another notable aspect of work organization that many managers considered a motivator. This practice is relatively new in the Moroccan context and is related to non-standard work arrangements, which have been demonstrated to provide great flexibility. Studies have shown that a supportive organizational culture, where employees are encouraged by their supervisors to maintain their performance even during remote work, had a positive influence on job satisfaction (Kossek et al., 2009). Social support is an important determinant of the success of work arrangements (Haines III et al., 2002).

5. Implications:

Overall, motivation practices have many implications both for workers and organizations. Managers should pay close attention to the resources they are offering their employees to motivate them, a balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation where both are used in a contextually appropriate manner can help organizations perform better while maintaining workers engaged and happy at work.

Theory based applications of motivation research such as the Self-Determination Theory should be encouraged in organizations, especially as more evidence from scientific publications start to emerge (Badubi, 2017). We believed it was necessary to explore applications and uses of the Self-determination theory in Morocco since it offers many implications for future research on workplace related motivation, as well as productivity, engagement and well-being in companies.

The managerial implications of motivation studies further demonstrate that motivation practices should be strategically imagined and purposefully designed. A lack of interest for employee motivation can have consequences in terms of turnover, burnout and performance loss. While the opposite can positively impact companies' bottom lines through talent retention and prioritization of human capital as a primary asset.

Conclusion

We aimed through this qualitative investigation to determine the applicability of the Self-Determination Theory in the Moroccan context. We conducted semi-directed interviews with

human resources managers in different companies to gather data on motivation practices that they use within their organizations.

Our findings lead to questions related to the link between motivation styles in companies and HR manager characteristics, such as age, seniority, international exposure, etc. A limit of this study is the small sample of respondents that were interviewed. Although we noted slight differences of interest between our most senior interviewees and the more junior ones, we can't infer any conclusions due to the exploratory nature of this investigation, but future studies should seek to address questions about this relationship through larger samples and quantitative research designs.

Our main findings also point to a diversity of motivation practices within Moroccan companies, both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators were used by most of the managers. No matter the type of motivation, its quality should matter, this particularly applies to extrinsic motivation, as in our context, managers still heavily rely on it. The question then is how these types of motivating human resources practices and compensation can be designed to be better internalized for improved quality (Bloom & Colbert, 2011). The return on investment from these programs could be significant and an interesting incentive for managers and companies. Intrinsic motivators have been demonstrated to have considerably positive effects on employee satisfaction and performance in various settings.

Differences between countries, regarding culture, regulation and economic systems are contextual factors of importance in human resources management and research (Gerhart, 2008; Gerhart & Fang, 2005, 2015; Rabl et al., 2011). That is why we deemed it important to explore the particularities of the Moroccan context in this regard. Future quantitative research is needed to measure the associations between types of motivation and wellbeing at work and to isolate mediators that play a role in this relationship such as job satisfaction, as well as specific practices that could serve as independent variables. The same could be done to study pathways between motivators and employee performance.

Practices that can be used as independent variables could for example be inspired by the recent appearance of non-standard work arrangements as a policy which was considered a resource but shifted to being an obligation for many during the Covid-19 pandemic. This raises the question of the difference between adopting the practice punctually and adopting it for longer periods of time, and the impact both settings have on employee's productivity and wellbeing, as well as how managers adapted to motivate their employees in less social settings.

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