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## Article

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## Socially responsible HR practices and their effects on employees' wellbeing: Empirical evidence from Catalonia, Spain

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### ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility towards employees has been promoted by international organizations that produced recommendations, conventions, principles and other documents to enhance job quality and wellbeing at work. However, much is still unknown about their effects. This article empirically analyses the effectiveness of several practices of human resource management, which are “responsible” according to those international institutions, in relation to three well-known dimensions of employees' wellbeing at work: job stress, job satisfaction and trust in management. The empirical analysis is conducted for the case of Catalonia using information from the Quality of Work Life Survey for 2007. The results show that, in general, higher job quality increases employees' wellbeing at work, but some practices are more effective than others for each specific wellbeing dimension. It is also noteworthy that some practices, such as job security and good environmental working conditions, seem to positively affect all domains of employees' wellbeing at work.

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### 1. Introduction

In the human resource management (HRM) literature there is a fundamental question regarding potential trade-offs between organizational performance and employees' wellbeing in contemporary organizations (Peccei, 2004). This highlights tensions between a managerialistic-oriented approach and criticism deriving from the critical management approach (Boxall, 2013). The main focus of mainstream approaches to HRM, and basically the “hard HRM” tradition with high performance work practices is on the firm's performance and interest. Hence, the main goal of analysing the effects of HRM practices on employee outcomes has been to optimize resources towards the ultimate interests of the company (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000; Guest, 2011) with little emphasis on employees' interests and wellbeing (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). For the criticism perspective, employees' commitment and involvement are seen only as mechanisms for achieving organizational results, the firm's interests often prevailing over those of the employees (Godard, 2004; Ramsay, Scholarios, & Harley, 2000). Adverse effects can appear in

employees, such as job stress and burn-out (Lopes, Lagoa, & Calapez, 2014; Ramsay et al., 2000). These have been studied much less than positive effects (Van de Voorde, Paauwe, & Van Veldhoven, 2012).

Business ethics has emerged as a growing field of interest, and within this framework a “business case” (Vogel, 2005) for the ethical management of people can also be found, along with normative and evaluative prescriptions for contemporary HRM practices (Spencer, 2013). In some cases these have given rise to codes of conduct aimed at promoting ethical HRM practices (Diller, 1999). A value-laden ethical approach to HRM represents an important way forward in the analysis of the HRM–performance relationship. This approach involves organizations taking care of employees' needs and ensuring they are treated with due consideration for their wellbeing (Paauwe, 2009).

Employees' needs and wellbeing are also the object of interest of international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the European Union and the United Nations Organization. They promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) in firms' actions and management. One of the spheres of CSR is the management of employees, and codes of conduct, recommendations and so on have emerged from these organizations (Boiral, 2003; Diller, 1999). These are the basis for national actions that go in the same direction, that is, firms being “socially responsible” towards their employees.

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Our study focuses on CSR in the management of employees. There is little research on how those recommended responsible actions enhance employees' wellbeing at work. The available empirical evidence is too scarce or too narrow in scope to provide generalizations or a clear view of the extent and nature of responsible HRM practices, especially in Spanish companies. Most of the studies conducted to date obtain corporate information mainly from CSR business reports, labour agreements, surveys, or interviews with company managers and executives (Instituto de Estudios Laborales, 2006), without addressing the perception of the affected and interested party, the employees themselves (Aragón, Rocha, & Cruces, 2005). One of the most widely adopted voluntary initiatives in Spain is that of codes of conduct (Aragón & Rocha, 2004), and the most widespread business actions focus on improving job quality in the areas of health and safety at work, training, equal opportunities, job creation and preservation, and internal communication. Studies for large companies show that labour policies and practices had evolved little in recent years (previous to the economic crisis), with training, internal communication, and risk prevention being the areas gaining most ground (Instituto de Estudios Laborales, 2006; Media Responsable, 2007). Fewer studies exist in small and medium size companies; they point to a progressive incorporation of conciliatory measures between working and personal life, work flexibility, mentoring systems and personalized training (Murillo, 2008). However, trade unions have decried a poorly defined inclusion of CSR in collective bargaining and a still embryonic state of social responsiveness in the management of human resources (Observatorio de la Responsabilidad Social, 2009). None of this scarce information has been compared with other data. We remain unaware of the extent to which responsible HRM is effectively implemented, and how far formal commitments made by companies are actually executed. With our study we contribute to fill this gap. We perform an empirical analysis of the case of Catalonia, Spain, with a large representative sample of employees, and several HRM practices. Catalonia has received little attention on this score, even though it is one of the most economically active regions in Spain and accounts for a large number of employees. In addition, previous studies analyze employees' satisfaction, but not other dimensions of wellbeing at work.

By focusing our attention on employees' interest rather on firms' performance as the ultimate objective, we are differentiating our analysis from others that are more common in the HRM literature, primarily based on the "mainstream" HRM approach, where the analysis is centred on discovering which practices are more relevant for high employee performance, as this is assumed to ultimately improve the firm's performance. Our basic objective is to obtain information on which responsible HRM practices contribute most to enhance each dimension of employee wellbeing at work (job satisfaction, trust in management and job stress). The HRM practices chosen are those in the "job quality" sphere of CSR as understood by the aforementioned international bodies promoting CSR. This study may be a first step towards further analysis of employees' wellbeing at work and how CSR can improve it.

The article is organized as follows. The next section briefly introduces CSR as the framework of our empirical analysis. It includes reference to the guidelines recommendations, directives and similar documents on CSR from the ILO, the EU, the GRI and other organizations as they frame CSR in HRM. "Responsible" HRM practices are also presented. Section 3 offers a brief review of previous studies on the effects of HRM practices on the three dimensions of employee wellbeing we are analysing. Section 4 includes the data and method of analysis; Section 5 the results; and Section 6 is the discussion and conclusions of the article.

## 2. Corporate social responsibility in human resource management

There is a growing concern about job quality and employees' wellbeing. Arguments for and against enhancing job quality are subject to academic scrutiny (see, for example, Cloutier-Villeneuve, 2012; Spencer, 2013). Incorporating CSR into HRM may be a way of integrating employees' wellbeing within the workplace. CSR includes many theories and approaches. Corporate social performance (CSP) (Wood, 1991) offers a general model which frames our empirical research. CSP includes three elements: CSR principles (such as equality and fairness); corporate social responsiveness (for example, fair remuneration); and the social results obtained from responsiveness (such as employees' job satisfaction and trust in management).

However, difficulties still exist in making CSR operational (Dahlsrud, 2008; Garriga & Melé, 2004; Lee, 2008). In practice, parameters for socially responsible labour management are basically defined through the conventions, principles, regulations, directives, etc., drawn up by these diverse international bodies and institutions that promote CSR (ILO's labour conventions; the European Commission Green Paper of 2001 (European Commission, 2001a) and its COM 2002 and COM 2011 (European Commission, 2002, 2011); the Global Compact programme, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the ISO 26000, the OECD's Guideline, the Social Accountability International certification (SA 8000) accrediting social responsibility, etc.). Recommendations from national bodies and institutions are also based on them. These documents do not offer a single list of "socially responsible" HRM practices, but they do include the main areas of action related to job quality (Celma, Martínez-García, & Coenders, 2014): remuneration, recruitment, training, internal information and communication, health and safety in the workplace, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and work/life balance. According to this approach, "being responsible", or having a broad focus on job quality, refers to taking into account both objective characteristics of individual jobs and those relating to the general work environment (Cloutier-Villeneuve, 2012; European Commission, 2001b). It is responsible to reduce temporary contracts and increase job stability; to provide employee training that allows the employee to develop; and to provide an equitable remuneration, which can include a variable remuneration or profit sharing according to effort or results. It is also responsible to provide the employee with information, knowledge and channels of participation in the firm's policies, to combat all types of discrimination at work, and to ensure health and security at work and a balanced combination of work and personal life.

In Spain, and specifically in Catalonia, there is very little information about the practice of CSR in the management of employees (Celma et al., 2014). Numerous examples of good practices already exist in many companies in Catalonia, as in European countries in general, but it is difficult to establish generally applicable conclusions regarding CSR practice, especially in the area of HRM. This is partly due to a shortage of academic and informative studies, providing clear empirical evidence (Celma et al., 2014; Diller, 1999).

## 3. Previous research on HRM practices and employee wellbeing

For employees' subjective wellbeing at work we have considered the dimensions most frequently encountered in the literature (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007; Origo & Pagani, 2009; Poulidakas & Theodossiou, 2010; Salvatori, 2010; Van de Voorde et al., 2012). First, there is happiness-related wellbeing, which is based on subjective experiences and functioning at work. It is empiri-

cally proxied through job satisfaction. Second, there is the health dimension of wellbeing, which refers to objective physiological measures and subjective experiences of bodily health. It is measured through job stress. Finally, trust in management measures the social wellbeing dimension, which refers to the quality of the relationship between employees and their employer and/or supervisor.

A number of empirical studies on these constructs already exist, basically on job satisfaction. Most of them have been conducted under the mainstream perspective. Appelbaum et al. (2000) found that greater employee autonomy, better communication and working in teams increased job satisfaction. A positive relationship between job satisfaction and training was found in Harley, Allen, and Sargent (2007); and in Macky and Boxall (2007), Macky and Boxall (2008) internal promotions and practices that encourage employee involvement in decision-making processes were also found to increase job satisfaction. However, other studies go beyond those practices: Macky and Boxall (2007), Macky and Boxall (2008) also include in their analysis the effect of employees working more hours and having heavier workloads and greater demands, all of which may result from HPWPs. They found that they reduced job satisfaction. For their part, Edgar and Geare (2005) found that practices which improved physical safety at work and equal opportunities for employees were crucial in raising job satisfaction, while Guest (2002) found evidence that work-family balance programmes, along with improved information within the company and measures to prevent harassment were positive for workers' job satisfaction. In the case of Spain, empirical research has basically focused on analysing job satisfaction using data for the whole of Spain, without specific attention to the case of Catalonia. In addition, these studies only analyze one dimension of employee wellbeing, i.e., job satisfaction. In general, they find a positive relationship between job quality and job satisfaction. For example, in Borra and Gómez García (2012) job satisfaction increases with practices which enable personal and work-life balance, job training and higher salaries and is negatively affected by jobs with a high health risk. Gamero (2010) found, in his analysis of differences in job satisfaction among immigrants and Spanish natives, that satisfaction is affected by job characteristics more than by personal characteristics. Rico (2012) also found this result, but gender was significant as an explanatory variable, women being more satisfied than men, as in other previous studies there cited. Sánchez-Sellero, Sánchez-Sellero, Cruz-González, and Sánchez-Sellero (2014) found that demographics were not so relevant if job quality characteristics were included in the analysis of job satisfaction. In their analysis of job satisfaction among university graduates and the effects of over-education and over-skilling, Kucel and Vilalta-Cufí (2013) found, among other results, that job satisfaction is increased with learning opportunities and having time for family tasks. Finally, Pouliakas and Theodossiou (2010) found that low-paid employees were significantly less satisfied with their jobs than high-paid employees.

Job stress is a mental and physical condition negatively affecting employees' health and, as a consequence, the quality of their working life (Savery & Luks, 2001). Macky and Boxall (2008) and Savery and Luks (2001) found that empowerment practices are an effective way of reducing job stress levels, whereas extended working hours, greater workloads or working under time pressures are key factors in causing work-related stress. Harley et al. (2007) found that improved selection processes, performance-based pay, and the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process resulted in reduced job stress. Kalmi and Kauhanen (2008) found evidence that better communication reduces work-related stress; Nelson and Burke (2000) found that threats to career prospects or a lack of and/or unclear promotion prospects can lead to an increase in job stress. Work-family conflict (Sparks & Cooper, 1999) and poor

working conditions, such as high levels of noise or a lack of privacy (Burke, 1988), have also been found to increase stress.

A review of empirical studies examining the impact of work practices on the level of trust in management offers a range of positive and statistically significant practices. Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, and Werner (1998) point out that delegating control and improving communication within the company are key determinants in employees' trust in their management team; Coyle-Shapiro, Morrow, Richardson, and Dunn (2002) highlight the impact of profit sharing as a key factor in determining trust in the company managers. Mayer and Davis (1999) found that appropriate performance appraisal can positively affect trust in company management and Appelbaum et al. (2000) highlight the positive impact various HPWPs can have on trust in the company managers. Guest, Brown, Peccei, and Huxley (2008) found a relationship, albeit weak, between different forms of cooperation in the company and employee trust in the management team. Finally, in Burns, Mearns, and McGeorge (2006) there was evidence that making the company a safer work place could increase employee trust in the company directors.

In what follows we analyze the effects of "responsible" HRM practices on the three measures of employee wellbeing, with the objective of identifying which contribute to a larger extent to each type of wellbeing at work.

#### 4. Data and method

In our empirical analysis the information on labour practices and characteristics of firms, jobs and employees come from the Quality of Work Life Survey conducted by the Spanish Ministry of Labour in 2007 with a representative sample of employees aged 16 or above in Catalonia, Spain. The present analysis is based on  $n = 1647$  respondents. National surveys of working conditions have a number of characteristics that make them especially useful for analysis, and have therefore been used in previous studies, such as Celma et al. (2014), Gamero (2010), Kalmi and Kauhanen (2008), Peccei (2004), Ramsay et al. (2000) and Rico (2012). The ECVT survey provides information as perceived by the employees themselves, allowing us to analyze the degree and type of "responsible" practices and the results of these practices from the perspective of the employee. It is widely known that a disparity can exist between the intended practices of companies, their application and effectiveness, and the workers' perception of them (Lauring & Thomsen, 2009; Wright & Nishii, 2004).

The analysis proceeds by estimating an ordered logit model of employee's wellbeing at work on the explanatory variables (HRM practices and control variables). Three models are estimated, one for each measure of wellbeing. The observed measures of wellbeing (job satisfaction, job stress and trust in management) provide only ordinal information on the true and unobserved latent variable.

For employees' subjective wellbeing, we have considered, as in previous research: happiness-related wellbeing (job satisfaction), health-related wellbeing (job stress), and social wellbeing (trust in management). The three of them are measured on a scale of 0–10 (maximum value). Table 1 offers their descriptive statistics.

The explanatory variables included in the estimation are the "responsible" HRM practices (Table 2). Some of the explanatory variables are subjective and measure the intensity of the practices

**Table 1**  
Descriptive statistics of employee wellbeing.

	Average	Standard deviation
Trust in management	7.19	2.448
Job stress	5.53	3.093
Job satisfaction	7.19	1.748

**Table 2**  
Descriptive statistics of CSR in HRM.

Variables <sup>a</sup>	Average (standard deviation)	Percentage	N
Type of remuneration			1647
Fixed		81.1	1335
Variable of mixed		18.9	312
Participation in profits			1647
Yes		16.8	276
No		83.2	1371
Number of social benefits (between 0 and 10)	1.32 (1.933)		1647
Monthly salary			1647
<600€		5.9	97
600–1200€		49.4	813
1201–2100€		35.6	587
2101–3000€		7.2	119
>3000€		1.9	31
Type of contract			1647
Permanent		80.1	1.319
Temporal		19.9	328
Company offers training			1647
Yes		52.3	861
No		47.7	786
Internal information (summated scale) (Cronbach' $\alpha = 0.85$ ) (0 = none; 10 = much)	6.17 (2.901)		1647
Information about organization chart	6.45 (3.208)		1647
Information about company goals	6.40 (3.244)		1647
Information about training offer by company	5.66 (3.403)		1647
Team work			1647
Yes		80.3	1322
No		19.7	325
Risk level (0 = none; 10 = much)	3.61 (3.250)		1647
Environmental workplace conditions (summated scale) (Cronbach' $\alpha = 0.77$ ; 0 = very bad; 10 = very well)	7.03 (2.170)		1625
Air conditioning evaluation	6.28 (3.575)		1336
Heating evaluation	7.13 (3.001)		1385
Ventilation evaluation	7.36 (2.730)		1448
Noise evaluation	6.11 (3.290)		1622
Lighting evaluation	8.07 (2.062)		1500
Physical space evaluation	7.87 (2.271)		1498
Security provided by company (summated scale) (Cronbach' $\alpha = 0.87$ ; 0 = never; 10 = always)	7.48 (2.791)		1647
Information about labour risks	7.36 (3.073)		1647
Safe working conditions	7.59 (2.842)		1647
Level of discrimination and harassment (summated scale) (Cronbach' $\alpha = 0.79$ )	0.40 (0.997)		1647
Level of discrimination by sex	0.55 (1.711)		1647
Level of discrimination by age	0.45 (1.495)		1647
Level of discrimination by nationality	0.46 (1.503)		1647
Level of discrimination by incapacity	0.26 (1.142)		1647
Level of psychological harassment	0.51 (1.660)		1647
Level of sexual harassment	0.15 (0.793)		1647
Maternity harm the professional career (1 = yes; 2 = no)			1647
Maternity damages professional career of women (% of yes)		25.3	759
Paternity affect professional career of men (% of yes)		26.2	888
Prolongation of time work (0 = never; 10 = always)	3.62 (3.283)		1647
Time work			1647
Full time		86.6	1427
Part time		13.4	220
Weekly hours at work	39.39 (8.440)		1647
Working day			1647
Continuous		49.5	815
Not continuous (in shifts)		50.5	832
Difficulty getting leave (summated scale) (Cronbach' $\alpha = 0.87$ ; 0 = none; 10 = much)	3.61 (3.114)		1611
Difficulty to request unpaid leaves	3.42 (3.512)		1594
Difficulty to request long leaves	3.85 (3.637)		1587
Difficulty for reducing working hours	3.94 (3.671)		1583
Difficulty to request short absences	2.94 (3.446)		1511

<sup>a</sup> The mean and standard deviation are calculated for quantitative variables and the percentage for qualitative variables.

as assessed by the employee on a scale (0–10). The inclusion of subjective variables is consistent with the line of research into the impact of multiple practices on employees (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Wright & Nishii, 2004), where analysis focuses on employees' perception of work practices. The rest of the explanatory variables are objective and categorical. They measure the presence or absence of a particular employment practice in the workplace. If multiple indicators are available, they are combined into summated scales. In addition to HRM practices, the ordered logit regression also includes twelve variables to control for the characteristics of the employee, of the firm and of the job. Details of these variables will be provided on request.

## 5. Results

Table 3 present the results of the estimated models for CSR in HRM variables. A positive sign in the marginal effect (ME) indicates that the explanatory variable and the dependent one go in the same direction. We have also calculated the relative marginal effect (RME), which is the marginal effect divided by the probability (result variable = 10). It measures the quantitative contribution of each explanatory variable to changes in the dependent one, and hence allows us to quantify which practice is more effective, and to what extent, in enhancing each dimension of employee wellbeing.

For each measure of wellbeing, the analysis proceeded in two steps: the first model, containing only control variables (available on request); the second, also containing the HRM practices. The statistics displayed at the end of Table 3 indicate that the models are significant as a whole and the goodness of fit is acceptable.

The results show that job satisfaction and trust in management are the two dimensions of wellbeing most significantly affected by the responsible HR practices considered. In contrast, job stress is significantly affected by a smaller number of practices. Job stress is most related to monthly salary: those with the highest salaries (more than 3000 euros) are the most stressed. Working in split shifts is the other practice which most increases job stress, followed by higher risk levels at work and extended working hours, although to a lesser extent. The employee not participating in profits is also a relevant factor. These results show similarities with those obtained by previous research: extended working hours (Macky & Boxall, 2008; Savery & Luks, 2001); and poor physical working conditions and work-family conflict when working in split shifts (Kalmi & Kauhanen, 2008). However, in our research, greater information/communication is not significant, contrary to what was found in Kalmi and Kauhanen (2008). Finally, stress theory considers that job insecurity negatively affects employees' attitudes (Sora, Caballer, & Peiró, 2010). In our case, having a permanent contract is not statistically significant for stress; but it highly and significantly affects job satisfaction.

According to the estimation, the most effective practices for job satisfaction are: job security (permanent contract), team working, the professional career not being harmed by maternity/paternity, non-discrimination at work and practices that increase security and environmental workplace conditions. Other practices which are also statistically significant, but at  $p < 0.1$ , or are not so quantitatively important, are: social benefits, training and internal communication; full-time work versus part-time, working fewer hours, and ease of taking time off. These results are in line with previous research. However, training does not seem to be as important

**Table 3**  
Logit ordered model for wellbeing.

CSR in HRM variables	Trust in management		Job stress		Job satisfaction	
	ME	RME +	ME	RME +	ME	RME +
Variable of mixed remuneration (ref. fixed)	−0.025	−20.49%	0.009	13.24%	−0.003	−6.12%
No participation in profits (ref. yes)	−0.017	−13.93%	0.020**	29.41%	−0.009	−18.37%
Social benefits (0–10)	0.005	4.10%	−0.002	−2.94%	0.006***	12.24%
Monthly salary (ref. >3000€)						
<600	0.019	15.57%	−0.047***	−69.12%	−0.030	−61.22%
600–1200	0.036	29.51%	−0.043	−63.24%	−0.030	−61.22%
1201–2100	0.056	45.90%	−0.045**	−66.18%	−0.018	−36.73%
2101–3000	0.015	12.30%	−0.020	−29.41%	−0.027	−55.10%
Temporary contract (ref. permanent)	−0.021	−17.21%	0.002	2.94%	−0.027***	−55.10%
No training (ref. yes)	0.020	16.39%	−0.001	−1.47%	−0.009	−18.37%
Internal information level (0–10)	0.024***	19.67%	0.003**	4.41%	0.008***	16.33%
No teamwork (ref. yes)	0.010	8.20%	0.003	4.41%	−0.021***	−42.86%
Risk level (0–10)	−0.006***	−4.92%	0.009***	13.24%	−0.003***	−6.12%
Environmental workplace conditions (0–10)	0.019***	15.57%	−0.003**	−4.41%	0.005***	10.20%
Security provided by company (0–10)	0.014**	11.48%	−0.001	−1.47%	0.005***	10.20%
Discrimination and harassment level (0–10)	−0.024***	−19.67%	0.004	5.88%	−0.010***	−20.41%
Maternity does not harm professional career (ref. yes)	0.053***	43.44%	−0.004	−5.88%	0.015***	30.61%
Prolonged working hours (0 = never; 10 = always)	−0.002	−1.64%	0.005***	7.35%	−0.001	−2.04%
Part time work (ref. full work)	−0.029**	−23.77%	0.009	13.24%	−0.015	−30.61%
Weekly hours at work	−0.002**	−1.64%	0.001	1.47%	−0.001***	−2.04%
Not continuous working day (ref. continuous)	0.006	4.92%	0.016***	23.53%	−0.006	−12.24%
Difficulty getting leave (0–10)	−0.005***	−4.10%	0.001	1.47%	−0.003***	−6.12%
	N = 1.584		N = 1.584		N = 1.584	
	Likelihood Log.		Likelihood Log.		Likelihood Log.	
	−2876.42		−3424.02		−2674.4763	
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> . 0.103		Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> . 0.048		Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> . 0.104	
	AIC = 2952.42		AIC = 3500.02		AIC = 3485	
	Y = Pr		Y = Pr		Y = Pr	
	(trust = 10) = 0.122		(stress = 10) = 0.068		(satisf. = 10) = 0.049	
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (only control). 0.029		Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (only control). 0.021		Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (only control). 0.027	

+ Relative marginal effect = marginal effect/prob (result variable = 10).

\*\*  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

as in [Kucel and Vilalta-Cufí \(2013\)](#); and working many hours has a significant but low impact. Finally, it seems that job satisfaction is not affected by monthly salary, contrary to the results in [Borra and Gómez García \(2012\)](#), and those of [Pouliakas and Theodossiou \(2010\)](#).

Concerning trust in management, the estimation results show that it is mainly affected by non-discrimination practices and by practices which reduce risk and increase physical security and workplace conditions (as in [Burns et al., 2006](#)). The firm providing internal information also increases trust in management (as in [Whitener et al., 1998](#)), but less than other practices like offering a full-time rather than a part-time job. Hence our results differ from previous ones in the high effectiveness obtained here for non-discrimination practices and the type of job (part time versus full time). It also differs in that profit sharing is not significant in our case. These results may indicate that Catalans view part-time work as an imposed rather than a voluntary type of contract. It also seems that trust in management is largely affected by practices that enhance physical safety and working conditions, as well as non-discrimination practices. These results may have to do with the psychological contract, whereby employees trust the organization as long as it keeps its promises and if employees see fair policies being implemented ([Sora et al., 2010](#)).

The results also show that some practices affect all three dimensions of wellbeing. The specific information on the contribution of each of them is of major relevance for practical purposes. Hence, if the objective is to increase job satisfaction, the most effective practices are: job security (permanent contract), working in teams, non-discrimination and maternity not being to the detriment of one's professional life. To reduce job stress the most effective practice is having a full day's work instead of working in split shifts. Not participating in profits has also appeared as being relevant, as well as employees with higher salaries having higher levels of stress. Finally, to increase trust in management, the most effective practices are non-discrimination and maternity not affecting the professional career, and internal information on the firm's goals, structure, etc. Full-time work is also associated with greater trust in management.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

The objective of this article was to analyze if being “responsible” in the management of employees, in the sense of applying the type of practices which are considered “responsible” according to international and national institutions and organizations, contributes to enhancing employees' wellbeing at work. Although there are studies on job satisfaction, trust in management and job stress, they do not approach the issue from a CSR perspective. Moreover, they tend to consider only a small group of human resource practices and only one outcome. And in the case of Spain, most research has been limited to the analysis of job satisfaction.

CSR introduces a moral management of employees, and governments seem committed to it. This is the case of the Spanish government. However, with the economic crisis, political action has basically been aimed at trying to create jobs rather than on improving job quality and encouraging socially responsible management of employees. Evidence provided by this study can be useful for future action in line with CSR, while waiting for more recent data to be available (unfortunately, the QWLS is not available for recent years; it ends in 2010).

As expected, positive practices have a positive influence on wellbeing, and some results are in accordance with previous research from the mainstream HRM approach and from economic perspectives of employees' job satisfaction. In general, it is quite common to encounter that socio-demographic variables are not so rele-

vant for explaining differences in wellbeing as may be originally expected when no job quality measures or labour practices are considered in the analysis. It has also been found that in some cases “responsible” practices are more effective for enhancing employees' wellbeing than “high performance work practices”. In our analysis the explanatory variables included cover nearly the whole spectrum of the areas of job quality, not only some of them. Therefore, the effects of each of them are considered in the analysis, given that the effects of the other job quality practices are already included and taken into account. This contributes to a broader image of the impact of practices, compared to when only some of them are considered in the analysis.

Given that the effects of each practice differ, the prioritization of a firm's efforts in CSR will also imply a selection of practices. The practices which have proved to be more effective for enhancing employee wellbeing are: permanent and full-time contracts rather than temporary and part-time contracts, non-discrimination and non-harassment at work, maternity not negatively affecting the professional career, good physical working conditions, full day's work with no lunch break (“straight shift”), and internal information and communication. Some practices are very effective for two dimensions; this is the case for example with (non)discrimination and harassment, which has a large effect on trust in management and on job satisfaction (but not on job stress). It is also worth noting that good environmental working conditions and good internal information and communication seem to have large effects on all three dimensions of wellbeing.

With regard to those practices that are most closely related to high employee performance (information, training and teamwork), the results have shown that internal information and teamwork are more relevant than training. This result may be due either to a real fact or to our variable for training not being sufficiently suitable. This deserves more research in the future. The results have also shown that, in the case of Spain, temporary contracts do not seem to affect either trust in management or job stress, but reduce job satisfaction considerably. For its part, working part time basically has a negative effect on trust in management. These two results seem to indicate that job security is very important for Spanish employees; and that most part-time work is not voluntary. Trust in management is highly affected by both. It has also been found that receiving a variable or a fixed remuneration generally does not affect any dimension of wellbeing. It may well be that Spanish employees may associate variable remuneration with non-objective or insufficient remuneration for the workload, and hence it is not positively associated with wellbeing at work. It is also worth noting that social benefits, which are generally quite low in Spain, appeared to be important only for job satisfaction and trust in management, but their effect is not notable. Finally, job satisfaction is not affected by the level of salary, but employees with higher salaries are more stressed. This merits further research in the future.

This study is a first step towards further research and provides useful information for helping firms to enhance their CSR with employees in the sphere of job quality and to improve employees' wellbeing at work. This type of information is also useful when defining institutional policies for the promotion of quality employment in cases such as, for example, the European Commission's Social Policy Agenda and the European Council's Lisbon Strategy or the Spanish “road map”, known as the Spanish Strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility, 2014–2020. These clearly link quality employment to improvements in employees' job satisfaction and wellbeing at work ([European Commission, 2001b](#)). However, more research is needed to consider the possible relationship among the three dimensions of wellbeing and how “responsible” practices affect each of them and their relationship. Also an enrichment of the data is needed, so that more variables representative of different areas of responsible practices could be considered in the analysis,

and some of those already considered could be improved. Of course, time-series data would also improve the analysis.

Having better data is not an easy task, if large datasets including all economic sectors, types of employment and workers, therefore representing a large group of employees, are looked for. They are usually not available and are very expensive to generate by the researcher. In the case of the Spanish QWLS, the government has ceased to produce it beyond 2010.

Capturing the firm's perspective, together with that of the employee, would also improve the analysis. This research would also benefit from a future analysis of the relationship among the three measures of wellbeing and the HRM practices, the relationship among them and the interaction between practices. Despite all the limitations, we believe it is important that more research should focus on the employee's wellbeing side of labour relations. More threats to employees' wellbeing and their job quality are now accruing from globalization of the economy and financial capitalism. There has been a shift from managerial to financial capitalism, which implies amongst other things that "dominant growth strategies for firms militate against continuity and employment stability (. . .); there is a disconnect between employer objectives in work and employment spheres (. . .) (generating) a shifting of the burden of risk from capital to labour; there is a disconnect of managerial agents (. . .) by which corporate agents (decisions) are distanced from their local consequences (. . .)" (Thompson, 2011, p. 362). This negatively affects job quality and employee wellbeing. In addition, key developments such as systemic rationalization (Thompson, 2011) and the economic crisis experienced by many countries, Spain amongst them, are generating a progressive loss of job quality. For example, we have found that job security is of major importance for employees' wellbeing; however, the economic crisis and labour market reforms have reduced considerably the number of jobs which still offer it. All this makes it even more necessary that empirical evidence be made available regarding which measures of "socially responsible" HRM can contribute to improve employees' wellbeing so that firms might devote more resources and efforts to these practices. Governments also need information of this kind in order to enhance CSR in practice.

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