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Impact of the efficiency wage on the motivation of employees within companies



Farid Khemissi*, Taha Chebbi

College of Business Administration (CBA), Northern Border University, Arar, Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine the factors that would influence the motivation and preservation of employees in private sector organizations. In this research, we will seek to determine the nature and extent of salary impact by efficiency to stimulate employees. This research project is one of the new topics that some researchers have started in recent years. The novelty of this topic consists in the inclusion of the factor of the efficiency salary. This factor is likely to have a positive impact on attracting, motivating, and retaining talent. Some of the factors already known for their impact on the motivation of competencies such as training, job security, and material and moral incentives will be adopted. It is assumed that the results of this research will have a positive impact on the motivation and preservation of employees.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, companies are competing for the skills and the means to produce and create. If the labor market functions well and macroeconomic policies are not too restrictive, the reallocation of factors of production from certain industries to other forms is easy, and unemployment remains low. On the other hand, unemployment appears if the labor market functions poorly and macroeconomic policies are too restrictive. In the second place, this realization of the factors of production is done under the impulsion of a very precise force: The rise of wages. Workers leave companies that offer low wages to those with higher wages. Typically, in a period of unemployment, wages drop and employees agree to work for a lower salary level. However, labor market studies by Akerlof and Yellen (1986) and Perrot (1992) showed the existence of a wage level higher than the market, even during periods of unemployment. Accepting work at a lower wage than the market gives the employer the impression that the employees are incompetent and may not produce the maximum production effort. Also for the employer who offers a salary below the market, he will face many problems, either not being able to

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: fkhemissi2006@yahoo.fr (F. Khemissi) https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2022.01.006

© Corresponding author's ORCID profile: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9917-2253

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retain employees in the company or not being able to hunt for the flank (Benedicte, 1994). The employer must then set a salary (the wage efficiency) to encourage the employee to make efforts and contribute positively to the growth of the company.

The interest of this article is to put in perspective the practice of the wage of effectiveness on the motivation contacting a category of professionals acknowledged having provided a remarkable effort. In order to do that we shall introduce in a first-party the notions of the wage of effectiveness and effort at a job. We shall formulate then in the second party, method and the results of an empirical study led to wage earners of four firms Tunisian reappointed in their area. Finally, acquired results will be discussed to think if the wage of effectiveness is a practice to be developed within firms.

1.1. The efficiency wage and motivation at work

Efficiency pay does not only justify the economic aspect, the search for good profitability, and the maximization of turnover in the company, but it also justifies the search for equality between the productivity of labor and the wage which checks the general equilibrium. In their simplest version, efficiency wage models postulate that worker productivity increases with their net wages. In fact, when workers receive higher pay for their work, they tend to exert greater effort. In terms of compensation management, the entrepreneur considers salary as a strategic variable and a separate tool to take in labor management. Indeed,

the theory of the efficiency wage seeks to show the effects of a variation of the wage on the effort and the productivity of the employees. To better understand this concept of efficiency wage, we must first reflect on the labor market that represents the starting point of our research on the mechanism of salary efficiency. Efficiency wage theories in particular make it possible to explain why the wage level chosen by companies may be higher than that which would make it possible to balance the labor market (Decreux, 1999). The choice of companies is due to the motivational aspect of any salary increase since the effort is directly related to the salary. On the other hand, other situations may occur if taking into account the unemployment rate. A high unemployment rate pushes the individual to maximize his effort to avoid any risk of dismissal because in such a situation, the demand for labor becomes very high compared to the supply is therefore the possibility of finding another job seems a can be difficult, which encourages employees to maximize their efforts without having a salary increase. The efficiency wage theory proves that there are several indicators to measure the product of work, such as the ability of workers and their decisions to grant or not a certain level of effort (Sartoris 1999). The traditional method of balancing labor supply and demand in determining wages is not so effective, it was necessary to introduce other elements such as productivity, which helps to measure the efficiency of employees. importance attributed to worker productivity is explained by the growing relationship between labor productivity and the level of real wages, a relationship that represents the basic assumption of efficiency wage theories (Sartoris, 1999). For companies, the efficiency wage is the wage that encourages the individual to produce the maximum effort, to increase productivity at work, and not to cheat at work. The company finds in the salary of efficiency even if its level is higher than that of the market, a way to maximize the production and consequently the profit. The efficiency wage is compatible with a single level of efficient productivity and a single level of employment that does not necessarily represent the highest possible levels but ensures the maximization of profit (Sartoris, 1999).

1.2. The model of incentive for effort

By practicing the efficiency wage, companies seek to encourage employees to produce the maximum effort, minimize the presence of imperfect information, and, if possible, cancel information asymmetry. "The worker can act inefficiently because the entrepreneur is unable to control his activities and check the tasks due to the lack of appropriate technical knowledge" (Sartoris, 1999). Applying a salary level that can minimize the unemployment rate can cause problems for companies. Indeed, in a labor market characterized by a low unemployment rate, the actual capacity of

the employee is difficult to determine, indeed every employee can easily find a job at the same level of salary. It is necessary for companies that the unemployment rate remains high so that the employee produces the maximum effort. The unemployed would be willing to work for less than the wage efficiency, but for such a salary they cannot find a job, because they cannot guarantee to avoid idle behavior (Sartoris, 1999).

1.3. The anti-selection model

The anti-selection model justifies the theory of efficiency wages through the policies of recruitment and selection of the labor force by companies (Sartoris, 1999). The productive capacity is different from one individual to another even if they are the same level of qualification. Information asymmetry is one of the problems that companies may face when hiring. The entrepreneur is unable to know the actual capacity of the employee at the beginning; it took a period for the employee to invest most of these capacities. Two situations can emerge when hiring. First, if the company overestimates the capacity of the employee, in this case, productivity will be less than expected. Accepting a low wage is a sign of low productivity, resulting in an increase in the cost of production and the company will be forced to hire more employees to achieve its goal. The second situation, if it underestimates the capacity. In this case, the productivity will be higher than expected. Indeed, the company makes a good selection if it hires employees who agree to work for a high salary. This choice can minimize the cost of production for the company. The model Antiselection is based on the assumption that workers who offer their services at a high wage have higher work capacity, and that firms that practice the efficiency wage are supposed to attract the best workers who are implicitly selected by their selfassessment on earning capacity (Sartoris, 1999). The salary can measure the productive capacity of the employee. Indeed, if the company chooses the efficiency wage as a benchmark to evaluate the capacity of the employee, then the one who agrees to work for a salary lower than the efficiency wage proves that his productivity is low and therefore their chance to work. To be hired will be very weak. The fact of offering a lower salary brings into play the chance of being recruited, since, in relation to companies, this wage shows, indirectly, the sign of poor quality. The problem arises for companies, which have no interest in lowering the salary because the best employees will resign. The reaction of companies to the decline in aggregate demand will never be to reduce the level of wages, but rather to lay off workers who are then unemployed, even if they are willing to work in exchange for lower pay (Sartoris, 1999). As in the incentive-to-effort model, the unemployment rate plays an important role in determining the actual capacity of the employee. The employee must always set a salary higher than the efficiency wage, which represents for the company a sign of high productivity. In the case of unemployment, the employee has no interest in offering a lower wage than the market, because this can be explained by employers as a sign of low productivity (Weiss, 1991; Sartoris, 1999). This result is also very interesting because it reflects not only wage discrimination but also discrimination by unemployment.

1.4. The model of flanking

The employer is able to control all the elements which ensure the good functioning of the company, but the control of the labor force remains always uncertain because the information arranged on the employees is partial and does not make it possible to know the level of Effort actually provided. Workers who flank will not necessarily be spotted and that the productive efficiency of the company will be affected (Kahn, 2000). There are situations where the employee's effort cannot be controlled or measured. How to encourage the employee to work? This question finds its answer in the model of Shapiro and Stieglitz (1984) in the Walrasian paradigm, the dismissal has no effect and cannot, in any case, solve this problem since in a competitive economy (without unemployment) dismissal is more a sanction since the employee can be recruited by other companies. This result shows the inefficiency of the Walrasian solution. On the other hand, Shapiro and Stiglitz (1984) proposed another solution that can make the threat of dismissal credible; it is the fact of increasing the wage more than the market. But the problem that can appear is the increase of the salary level by the other companies to a level that makes the difference negligible. An efficiency wage increase relative to the level of the market prevents workers from engaging in "flanking" behavior and is a means of encouraging employees to provide the effort required by the employer.

However, a higher salary than the market can encourage employees to perform the maximum effort. But, the credibility of the threat of dismissal is reflected through the following mechanism. In the traditional job demand function, the wage increase has the effect of increasing the unemployment rate, since the demand for labor is a growing function of wages. This becomes a real incentive to work. In the model of Shapiro and Stiglitz (1984), the problem is to determine the unemployment rate, which poses a real threat to employees, which leads to a paradox that shows that a certain level of unemployment is necessary to manage the uncertainty of the wage contract (Benedicte, 1994). Dismissal is the worst penalty that can be borne by the employee, but in return, employers often use it to encourage employees to work and maximize the production effort. In her research, Kahn (2000) explained Kraft's (1990) idea that firing is a way of encouraging employees to meet the required performance standards. However, dismissal can be a very important element in encouraging employees to work. Nevertheless, do not exaggerate, because there

can be a negative effect on the company since the risk of being dismissed at any time pushes the best employees to leave the company. The deterioration of productivity is the immediate consequence. Kraft (1990) showed, following an empirical study, that there is a growing and non-linear relationship between the dismissal rate and productivity (Kahn, 2000). However, in a market economy, the employee's situation is directly related to unemployment. Indeed, the possibility of being recruited is a decreasing function of the unemployment rate.

The question that arises is that if the dismissal prevents the employee from adopting the "flanking" behavior, what is the point of a salary increase? According to Kahn (2000), the answer is proved by Kraft (1990): Because a high wage rate is everything equal, on the other hand, a factor aggravating the losses suffered by a worker in the event of dismissal. Dismissal is a potential loss of income. Indeed, a high salary is a motivating factor inasmuch as it is accepted that the effort is an increasing function of the level of wages. The study of Shapiro and Stiglitz (1984); conducted by Kahn (2000), showed that "only the absolute level of wages and conditions in the labor market influence the stress behavior of employees." In addition, the incentive of the employee results from the possibility of benefiting from a rent induced by the payment of a salary higher than the market wage, but it is necessary to have a certain rate of unemployment. The incentive to deploy the maximum amount of productive effort is based on the fear of dismissal, coupled with the hope of increased income in the future. These two elements prevent the employee from behaving with "flanking."

We, therefore, led a qualitative study of four firms of big sizes. We tried to know and to understand how this firm defines policies of motivation her at the job, sets up an efficient wage policy, acquires results satisfactory. We discussed with representative RH to know better if the firm had a policy of motivation for the wage earners to differentiate by their remarkable efforts.

1.5. Motivation at job

Generally speaking, motivation is what grows to action, that is to say, all the motives which explain an act (Gacha, 2015). Psychology defines motivation as a group of dynamic factors that orientate the action of an individual to a given purpose and cause at him a given behavior (Gacha, 2015). Motivation is the process that regulates the commitment of the individual to a definite activity. It determines launching in a certain direction with the desired intensity and assures it the continuation up to culmination or break. Motivation is assimilated with a «reservation of energy»: It refers to ardor, to wish, to aspiration to exceed a condition given to attain another one (Gacha, 2015). The motivation at a job is a group of energy forces that come as well from the inside of the human being as its environment to

provoke the behavior linked to a job and to determine its form, its direction, its identity, and its length (Gacha, 2015). The motivation at a job is so the force that pushes the individual to surpass itself, to make sacrifices to excel in his domain, and especially allow his organization to reach its targets (Gacha, 2015).

Motivation can be defined as follows:

- The launching of behavior: It is the passage of the absence of activity in the execution of tasks requiring an expense of physical, intellectual, or mental energy. Motivation provides the necessary energy to perform the behavior.
- The direction of behavior: Motivation aims behavior in the sense which it admits that is to say towards objectives to be attained. It is the impellent force that orientates (1) the energy necessary for the realization of purposes to be attained, (2) efforts to accomplish as best as he can, according to his capacities, the job one waits for which.
- The intensity of behavior: Motivation encourages to spend energy in the measure of objectives to be attained. It manifests itself by the level of physical, intellectual, and mental efforts unfolded in the job.
- The persistence of behavior: Motivation encourages spending the energy necessary for the regular realization of objectives, for the frequent execution of tasks to attain one or several purposes. The persistence of behavior manifests itself by continuity in the time of the characteristics of direction and intensity of motivation.

From this definition, we are going to differentiate the effect of an increase of the wage at a level proportional to the effort provided on motivation at the job.

2. The methodological approach

On the basis of this theoretical frame, we introduce the method used to acquire our data. Then, we display synthesis and analysis of the results of the discussions of colleagues accomplished in the aforementioned firm "The interview is a technique which is necessary when one wants to approach some questions. It is an approach that submits the questioning to the meeting, instead of fixing it in advance (Blanchet and Gotman, 2007). The interview is therefore a method of producing narratives, thus gathering opinions and concrete facts. Field investigation through interviews also reveals processes by revealing certain logics of action. This qualitative approach is interesting because it allows to gather a lot of information and because it calls on the point of view of the actor, his experience, his logic, and his rationale. In addition, the use of interviews makes it possible to have direct contact with the interlocutors and to detect certain behavioral elements.

Respondents are of different status, skills, and authority in the company. We conclude by proposing

perspectives, in terms of HR reflections and managerial practices.

On the basis of this theoretical framework, we present the method used to obtain our data. Then, we expose the synthesis and the analysis of the results of the interviews of collaborators realized in this company.

This study was conducted from June to November 2018. We conducted this study with the collaboration of the Human Resources Department. A total of 23 individuals were interviewed, including 10 managers and 13 qualified employees with high school degree levels and above. These individuals are all concerned with efficient wage policies both for themselves and for enforcing them, at one time or another, as a proximity manager.

The meetings took the form of 23 semi-structured interviews and were therefore structured to leave room for discussion. Each interview lasted an average of 50 minutes. The first few minutes were devoted to clarifying the purpose of the study and the themes to be treated. We then gave the opportunity to the interviewee to answer the questions we asked him by following the interview guide. However, some adjustment actions were undertaken by reformulating responses in some cases, non-compliance with the order of questions in the guide, or the elimination of certain questions to which the interlocutor responded spontaneously. During a break granted by their supervisor, attempts were made to interview people at their place of work. Because of the need to respect certain ethical rules during the interviews, we tried to create a climate of trust in order to facilitate communication and exchanges. In this regard, we have guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality, and feedback to put the interviewees at ease.

Finally, to facilitate the work of synthesis and analysis of qualitative data we transcribed the interviews and treated them by a thematic analysis of content.

2.1. Thematic content analysis

The analysis of the content carried out in the form of a thematic analysis based on the interview grid, allowed us to be aware of the influence of certain variables on employees' perceptions and behaviors towards this tool. Indeed, the vast majority of interviewees emphasized the vital importance of high management commitment to motivating employees. They believe that supported and encouraged by the general direction, they would necessarily be more motivated and more engaged in their tasks. Extract from top management verbatim:

- It seems very difficult to motivate and involve employees if line managers do not intervene by increasing wages, and rewarding employees every time a task is well executed.
- As long as the hierarchy accepts the implementation of a reward, such as the increase of the salary, employees will be incited to work more

and to produce the maximum of effort which also applies to employees who do not want to work in this company.

 Salary increases and performance bonuses are the only solutions to motivate and involve employees and, consequently, the proper functioning of the company.

These opinions led us to integrate efficiency pay among the important variables that influence the incentive for employees to work more.

Moreover, one of the most notable and important results that emerge from the interviews is the fact that we have found in the Tunisian context that the problems inherent in divergences in the levels of "motivation" of employees are far from being an answer to our question about the degree of motivation in this company that "every person tries to give their utmost effort and to be motivated in his work, so that the company continues to evolve and that his job is celebrated.

However, this same interviewee later added: Unfortunately business leaders are always looking after their own interests and they never discuss with employees about the problems experienced. On the other hand, they intervene only to punish and dismiss employees even when the company is in full expansion; we note that 5 other employees have made comments that are in line with the latter statement

However, the interviewees emphasized the importance of taking the human factor into account in improving production and the survival of businesses. We quote as an example the sayings of one interviewee, according to which everything has to go through the improvement of work conditions and the encouragement of employees for the company to evolve. Another manager, in answering the question of what a successful company means to him, said that it is a considerable salary level and therefore a higher level of motivation.

3. Results of the qualitative analysis

In accordance with the literature, we have distinguished actors in the motivation of employees: wage efficiency. However, a human resource manager specifies that a motivated employee is "someone who understands all of their responsibilities and is able to help others. He does not just do his job, but he helps other employees if they have problems (interview, 18)."

Good relationships within the company encourage a great deal of motivation at work. "You have to know the employees well; because it is important that there is a good atmosphere (interview, 18)" or "we are in a good mood, we laugh, there is joy in this work. There is a good atmosphere between us, we get along very well (Interview 23)."

On the other hand, some employees refuse to get involved in organizational life. This refusal may arise from the fact that their remuneration is insufficient despite the effort provided. Several interviewees confirm that the permanent increase of the salary to a level considered as the salary of efficiency is an essential factor to motivate the employees in the work.

While a director of human resources tells us that: "whenever there is an increase in the wage, the marginal productivity of the employee increases for several months, and that he becomes very active and well attached to his work, but at a certain moment, we begin to record a drop in his performance, since he is waiting for a new salary improvement (Interview 20)."

This interview proves that motivation is directly related to the psychology of the human being and that we can never say that an individual is motivated forever. Incentives must be renewed to continue to motivate employees.

However, during a period of growth, companies that do not try to retain their employees through adapted managerial practices such as (efficiency salary, training considered as indirect remuneration, etc.) are exposed to the risk of encountering difficulties. While companies offering career development opportunities and motivating salaries will attract the most qualified workforce in priority and consequently it ensures its evolution and continuity.

4. Discussion

We propose to discuss the results according to the categories that have emerged through the synthesis of the elements of the discourse of the different categories of respondents.

4.1. Role of efficiency wage in employee motivation

The evidence shows that the efficiency wage is a topic that is recurrent with professionals, particularly when it comes to motivating value-added employees. The spontaneous responses of the interviewees in our qualitative interviews have shown that some are not always motivated, since the salary efficiency is not able to meet their expectations, and their remuneration is insufficient despite the effort provided.

Several works show that a projected increase in wages plays an important role in changing the behavior of the individual. According to Adams (1965), the employee can use a specific ratio (R/C) to measure his degree of motivation within his company. However, two situations can emerge; R/C<1 but remains positive, in this case, the employee's contribution is more significant than his remuneration (the efficiency wage). The employee then feels that he is treated unfairly. He will therefore match his effort to his salary level.

In the second situation; R/C>1 the employee is in a situation where his remuneration increases more than his contribution to work. The individual feels then that he is treated fairly by his company, he will then try to maximize his effort and therefore his performance at work. This effort is psychologically considered by the employee as a reward for his company. However, our quantitative research (carried out thanks to interviews conducted on the sample of Tunisian employees) confirms our results and proves that the salary of efficiency represents a better solution to reward the effort provided by the employee. It encourages motivation to work.

All respondents say they really liked their job and expressed their satisfaction. The low motivation of employees represents a cost for the company that is difficult to evaluate. However, the negative impacts are numerous: (low quality of service, low performance, non-constructive individual behavior, absenteeism, departures, etc.).

Equilibrium between sanction and reward tells employees what behaviors their employer wants. However, sanctions may apply in case of bad behavior at work. However, it must be ensured that the error of the employee is not due to a lack of information. The company is responsible for keeping its employees accountable for any information. Sanctions must be applied according to very specific rules known to all. If sanctions are applied, they should not be perceived as unfair.

However, we believe more in a system that rewards good behavior. The motivation of the employees is determined only, for our research, by the remuneration (the salary of efficiency). The salary of efficiency and its progression can influence motivation. In low-wage jobs, however, the efficiency wage policy must evolve with the other elements of motivation.

The motivation of employees in Tunisian companies is sometimes considered mediocre. This is caused by the low social value of the job they occupy. We must therefore ask ourselves how to increase the recognition of these employees by superiors.

The case study, which focuses on Tunisian companies, proves that the application of the efficiency wage has a positive influence on the performance of employees. This confirms the idea that the efficiency wage increase relative to the level of the market prevents employees from engaging in "flanking" behavior and means to encourage employees to provide the effort required by the employer.

Business leaders seek their individual interests and not the general interest. For them, a salary increase reduces the profit of the company. In several cases, the employee must accept the salary offered otherwise he may be penalized and in several cases, he may be dismissed. The employee must agree to stay and increase his production effort, because of a high unemployment rate it will be very difficult to find another job. The theoretical study shows that motivation is directly linked to the increase of effort by the employee, which is no longer valid because the person can increase his effort, not because he is motivated but because he fears being punished.

To sum up, we can say that the interviews show that an application of the salary of efficiency has a positive effect on motivation that is to say that the company has an interest in practicing the wage efficiency policy to motivate employees.

4.2. Generational diversity

Dejoux and Wechtler (2011) specified that generational diversity should be considered as wealth for the organization. Everyone must learn to live together, to evolve with a concern for integration and retention of the new generation that is much more differentiated by its mastery of new technologies, social networks, and ease of surfing the Internet (Hewlett et al., 2009). It is by relying on the diversity of human resources that organizations can also build a sustainable competitive advantage (Martin, 2014).

5. Conclusion

Different research shows that the individual uses his salary to satisfy his needs. Indeed, an expected increase in salary plays an important role in changing one's behavior. According to Maslow's theory, the satisfaction of needs requires a definite salary. However, to satisfy a need each time, a wage level is required that encourages the employee to increase his output to meet other needs. Indeed, one must have a well-defined level of wages to satisfy each need. The transition from one need to another requires, at the same time, an increase in the employee's performance as well as an increase in the salary on the part of the company. Each salary level corresponds to the marginal productivity of the employee. The efficiency wage is the lowest wage level that guarantees the exercise of an adequate effort on the part of all the workers and the satisfaction of the constraint of participation. A salary increase at a level considered as an efficiency wage can encourage employees to produce the maximum effort, which obviously leads to an improvement in production that can maximize the profit of the company even if its level is higher than the competitive wage. The efficiency of the employee who enjoys a high salary and even to the improvement of the conditions of professional and personal life. This results in an increase in productivity. An efficiency wage is a form of incentive contract that must drive the salary to deploy its effort. This effort is considered by Roussel et al. (1996) as an indicator of motivation at work. In addition, improving the employee's living conditions also contributes to his participation in the company's production process.

Finally, it must be said that this work complements previous work on the organizational factors of worker motivation. This places special emphasis on the influence that efficiency pay, as an organizational practice, can have on employee motivation.

This research does not claim to provide an explanation for the process of work motivation as a whole. The phenomenon is extremely complex, for this we have chosen to focus on the role of efficiency wage. This limits the scope of our explanation but opens avenues for research. It would be interesting to study the efficiency wage on a different population in SMEs and on simple workers. However, there are other elements that can influence engagement and motivation at work.

This study does not identify all the determinants of work motivation. Personality, various benefits, share ownership, recognition at work, and career goals can be determinants that can influence motivation and involvement at work. The company, the sector, and the size can also be determinants of motivation and involvement in the workplace.

However, it seems necessary to design and experiment with processes to attract and retain employees. Motivation study can help address issues businesses and employees may face in the near future. All these reasons justify the fact that we deepen our research on this process which has many impacts on the evolution of the company and on the destiny of the employees.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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