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HERO MODEL: WALKING THROUGH THE METHOD AND ITS EMPIRICAL CASES

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Abstract

HERO is a relatively new (2012), European Model of Human Resources and Organizational Management with its roots on Positive Psychology. Several studies on the Model, which use empirical and heuristic data, have been carried out within the last years. Throughout this practitioner paper, the different footsteps that comprise the Model are analysed, observing scientific data from different articles and researches, about its validity and implementation's impact. This writing goes through some of those studies, findings and methods, compiling and describing them, accordingly to each step of the methodology, giving a complete overview. The different footsteps that comprise the Model are examined, observing the existing literature, its possible validity and stimulating debate, encouraging further development and research from practitioners. Its prime objective is to promote the integral health of workers, teams, and Organisations, making these agents more effective, resilient and satisfied in the face of the current volatility in the labour market at a national and international level. HERO organisations make systematic, planned, and proactive efforts to improve processes and results for both employees and the Organization, by implementing certain professional practices and a developmental procedure through a tested, human and practical approach. An integrated-analytical review of this recent methodology, being studied in Universities as a Personnel Management System for business, taking into revision prominent published papers and contrasted experimental data.

Keywords: *Healthy, Resilient, Organization, Model, Management, Psychology*

INTRODUCTION

DESCRIPTION OF THE HERO MODEL

The HERO Model was initially developed by M. Salanova in 2008 (Sánchez Jiménez, Á., 2015), which applied a global organisational approach, considering that an Organization which encompasses the health of the workpeople inside its work environment, healthy resources, and positive practices becomes healthier and empowered, leading to thriving corporational results. In 2012, seven years later, a proved Model emerged intending to promote the health of employees, teams and Organisations, being it scientifically validated by the authors Salanova, Llorens, Cifre & Martínez (2012). These four independent judges used the empirical and heuristic methods in the development of HERO throughout different collaborations and researchers with the University Jaume I; executing for it two experimental studies intending to consolidate the Healthy and Resilient Organization Model (HERO).

Salanova et al. (2012) assured that the results of their two Studies provided validity and psychometric support for the new measure designed to evaluate the so-called HERO systems. The Study (1) was composed by a series of semi-structured interviews with the CEOs of 14 companies, as well as questionnaires for its stakeholders (710 employees, 84 work units - their immediate supervisors, and 860 clients). In their Study (2), they used SEM (Structural Equation Modeling), taking aggregate data at the work unit level, which consisted of 303 teams and their supervisors from 43 companies. The data resulting from both studies showed that healthy employees entirely correlate with positive relationships between working resources and healthy organisational practices; besides of flourishing organisational results (evaluated this last point only by supervisors).

In this line of work, Acosta, H., Torrente, P., Llorens, S. & Salanova, M. (2013) claimed in their exploration that, the data from the ANOVA regression analysis, at the organisational level and with a sample of 218 clients ($N = 218$), showed that healthy organisational practices relate positively and significantly to the engagement ($\beta = .40, p < .001$). Affirming the most correlating stances were, in order of importance: psychosocial health, skills development and career development.

Aiming to delve into the HERO Model, Hedy Acosta, Valeria Cruz-Ortiz, María Salanova & Susana Llorens (2015) based their research on healthy Organisations, they argued in their study the demonstration that, from an empirical approach, the “psychosocial health” of workers turns out to be the crucial element which defines a healthy Organisation. Accordingly, a HERO Organisation is meant to be oriented to develop, systematic, planned and proactive efforts to improve its psychosocial and business health, through healthy practices and resources to improve tasks, the social and organisational environment; especially in situations of crisis and sudden changes (Salanova et al. 2012). Having this same a direct impact on the financial results of the company, as a corporate organisation as such, bases largely its existence on its economic results. Hedy Acosta et al. (2015) included in their study on HERO, the element of “Financial health” as a concept to be evaluated (along with the rest of the factors studied), obtaining this element a Cohen’s Kappa coefficient index of 77% on the importance of being considered.

Keys The Model Presents For The Intervention

Hedy Acosta et al. (2015) asserted it was in the fifties/sixties of the twentieth century when the first contributions regarding “organisational health” began. In this sense, these authors refer to the work of the American author C. Argyris (1958), who defended that a healthy Organisation is which allows optimal human functioning; likewise, to the book *Organizational Psychology*, a study elaborated by the Swiss-born Edgar H. Schein, where Schein (1965) identified five characteristics that would be part of a healthy Organisation: (1) Sense of change, (2) Move the

information appropriately, (3) Adequate processing and use of the information, (4) Adapt and transform without being destroyed, and (5) Obtain information about future transformational consequences. Since these first approaches were published in the middle of the last century, over time and until today, different investigations have taken place in the areas of Human Resources and Psychology, wherein this respect, the interest of several studies has focused on intervening the health of Organisations, work and people from different angles. Some examples of areas with an increasing trend in recent years are such as Stress (Bono, J. E., Glomb, T. M., Shen, W., Kim, E. & Koch, A. J, 2013); Health and Safety (World Health Organization, 2016); or Positive psychology (J. Mills, M., R. Fleck, C. & Kozikowski, A., 2013). The relatively recent HERO Model by Salanova et al. (2012), presents a theoretical set with some of these approaches where its essence is based on (1) The continuous change of current modern societies in terms of economy, habits, flows of people and social movements, (2) The role of Organisations as an economic and social agent with a Management committed to the integral health of people, interdisciplinary and interventionally, and (3) Integration of healthy programs in the policies and culture of Organisations (Salanova, M., Llorens, S. & Rodríguez, A., 2009).

Therefore, the empiricist and heuristic practical-interventional goal of using the HERO Model, as explained by Salanova, M., Llorens, S., Torrente, P. & Acosta, H. (2013) sustains itself on the interrelation of (1) Healthy organisational resources and practices, (2) Healthy employees and teams, and (3) Healthy organisational results; constituting these three the main dimensions of a HERO. According to the Model, these blocks have to be supported by data collection and analysis from the different vital agents (managers, supervisors or similar), and objective financial indicators (such as ROI - return on investment and profitability); with the use of qualitative (use of tests, proofs...) and quantitative methods (face-to-face sessions, interviews...), Salanova et al. (2012).

SITUATION ANALYSIS, IDENTIFY NEEDS AND PRIORITISATION

The purpose of performing an analysis based on the HERO Model into an Organisation is due to its potential theoretical/practical application in the modern organisational context, where there is the challenge of continuous social changes, constant economic turmoil, periods of different crises (either political, economic, labour or biological), and rapid technological advances. In this respect, it is highly favourable for the survival of a corporation as such, the resources, people and strategy adaptation forethought, with healthy objectives, for the Organization as a whole. The preservation of a positive fit under challenging circumstances, strengthening in adverse conditions, being resilient and keeping the business performance results under pressure (Salanova et al. 2012). This signifies to put through efforts that involve implementing healthy resources and practices which improve the work environment at the task (e.g., empowerment), interpersonal (e.g., transformational leadership) and organisational (e.g., Human Resources policies) levels, (Salanova et al. 2013).

Analysing The Situation And Identifying Action Priorities

According to Salanova et al. (2013), when in a company, the initial situation analysis phase is going to take place as part of the HERO Model application, an specific testing battery must be effectuated, which has to contain qualitative and quantitative elements about the organisational context, identifying possible challenges or problems that are potential for improvement and resolution. First, what concerns to qualitative elements, two of the three points of the Model will be analysed, (1) Resources and healthy practices, and (3) Healthy organisational results; carrying out semi-structured interviews with the corporation Directors, decomposing the results and analysing the content, by a specialised actor and independent from the company. Creating for each case, a system of categories and subcategories, mutually exclusive, valid and reliable, Salanova et

al. (2013) about Weick (1985). Secondly, the quantitative elements are analysed using a system of three questionnaires for supervisors and rest of employees, with 21 scales or subscales equally validated by the manner mentioned above (Weick, 1985), on the three HERO dimensions as previously listed: (1) Healthy organisational practices and resources, (2) Healthy employees and teams, and (3) Healthy organisational results. Salanova et al. (2013) stated that the responses (using a seven-point Likert-type scale [0-6] where 0 is the minimum and 6 the maximum), will always be oriented collectively, that is, thinking of work teams where individuals habitually develop their performance, and, on the other hand, thinking of the Organization as a whole. Besides, a customer questionnaire must be conducted, with questions regarding positive organisational results in Service quality: excellent performance, employee empathy, customer loyalty, and customer satisfaction.

Once the results obtained, and the data is analysed, it is possible to identify the Organization's needs for its decision-making and taking actions, its implications, its weaknesses and strengths, prioritising in terms of becoming a HERO. For this, the Organization will evaluate the results with prioritisation in those management areas focused on improvements (such as productivity, competitiveness, cost optimisation, and health) according to its context, business targets and situation (Rivera, A., 2017) about Figueroa, O. Á. (2014).

Rivera, A. (2017) asserted, in this respect, could better identify the several needs of an Organization by adding some (according to the case) adjusted sub-points for detailed action priorities and analyse the situation when managing this phase of the Model, concerning the three cited pillars of action in HERO. (1) Healthy organisational practices and resources: Autonomy in the development of work; Performance management system based on feedback; and Specific training programs for the job. (2) Healthy employees and teams: Horizontal relational structure; Possibility of becoming a business associate; plus participation in the decision making. And, (3) Healthy Organizational Results: Flexible hours; Telecommuting; or/and Easy application for leaves of absence.

In his investigation on HERO, Rivera, A. (2017) explained that significant data were monitored on an analysis about the intervention performed concerning to the identification of needs and prioritisation of various areas such as those mentioned, for seven years (2009 to 2015), into an institution which implemented the Model (Salanova, 2008). Data from which distilled positive results, highlighting the internal measurements of Organizational Climate, Labour Commitment and Psychosocial Risk Factors. Rivera, A. (2017) underlined an increase in terms of income and profitability since the beginning of the application of the HERO Model and during the seven subsequent years of the design's monitorisation, which showed, assuming other deeds, a progressive total annual organisational growth during the period (2009 = USD +500,000; 2015 = USD +3,000,000).

OBJECTIVES

Nielsen, K., Randall, R., Holten, AL. & González, ER. (2010) stated that the relevance of developing theoretical models, valid methodologies, and positive interventions is a change of focus towards the positive, towards improving the strength of teams and towards the optimal functioning of Organisations. According to Schaufeli & Salanova (2007), review the managing system on social and ethical issues in Organisations contributes to employee engagement.

The objective of carrying out a HERO intervention will, therefore, be definite, referring to taking actions based on the results from its previous Analysis phases, implementing those actions in teams and the Organization, aiming to improve the performance and satisfaction of people and at the organisational level, promoting health, quality of work-life and professional excellence. Snyder, C. R., Feldman, D. B., Taylor, J. D., Schroeder, L. L. & Adams III, V. H. (2000) broadly

differentiated possible positive corporate interventions within two types of objectives. On the one hand, Primary interventions to achieve optimal performance and satisfaction of employees, teams and the Organization; Secondary interventions, on the other hand, aimed at making a series of constant efforts and over time, leading at achieving a maximum level of health, operation and satisfaction of teams and the Organization.

In a more in-depth review of the same, Salanova et al. (2013), and referring to several specific authors cited below, propounded eight concrete Objectives for the implementation of the HERO Model, which should be oriented towards the optimisation of: (1) Self-confidence, trust, communication, conflict resolution and personal resilience (McDonald, G., Jackson, D., Wilkes, L. & Vickers, MH, 2012); (2) Performance, team collaboration, and effectiveness (Robertson, M. M. & Huang, Y. H., 2006); (3) Learning and quality improvement (Phillips, J., 2005); (4) Psychological capital, economic impact and income (Luthans, F., Avey, J. B., Avolio, B. J., Norman, S. M. & Combs, G. M., 2006); (5) Positive feelings, behaviors, cognitions and well-being (Sin, N. L. & Lyubomirsky, S., 2009); (6) Self-efficacy and commitment towards job performance (Carter, R., Nesbit, P. & Joy, M., 2010); (7) Team participation, problem-solving ability, and organisational health (DeJoy, D. M., Wilson, M. G., Vandenberg, R. J., McGrath-Higgins, A. L. & Griffin-Blake, C. S., 2010); and, (8) Emotional intelligence (Soria, M. S., Rodríguez, A. M. & Gumbau, S. L., 2006).

These eight objectives would be the proposed optimisation purposes to be achieved through the intervention of the HERO Model in an Organization, after the previous phase of Analysis for the corporation's objectives, identification of its needs and prioritisation.

METHOD

After establishing the objectives for the Model, the positive strategies for the methodology and activities to be followed with the implementation of HERO can be well addressed from a (1) Perspective of the Organization and its work teams, and as well, from (2) The employees as individuals (Salanova et al., 2013). For full completion of the intervention, consequently, at the psychological and at the Human Resources level, the ideal scenario would be to take into account and combine both approximations.

From the (1) Perspective of the Organization and its teams Salanova, M., Llorens, S. & Martínez, I.M. (2016), declared various activities to execute when developing HERO in a corporation: Reorganisational job design, intending to reduce exposure to psychosocial risks, as well as increasing the number of healthy employees and results; Positive and transformational leadership, as a current critical social resource in increasing health and wellbeing at work; Training in efficacy beliefs, including them in the Human Resources formation as a mechanism for self-motivation, learning and managing emotional states and mindfulness; Career development, motivating and giving employees opportunities to improve their career, inside or outside the company.

On the side of (2) The employees as individuals, Salanova et al. (2016) indicated three categories. Firstly: Behavioural strategies that include Practicing the virtues; Be kind to others; Express gratitude; Learn to forgive: Share good news; and take care of social relations. These tactics lean on the principle that happiness is not the pursuit of external pleasure (hedonism), but on leading an authentic, truthful life with meaning and purpose (eudaemonia). Secondly: Cognitive strategies based on empirical methods, which include Reflecting on the positive; Cultivate optimism; and, Savor life. Thirdly: Volitional strategies, related to the will of individuals and the relativisation of life issues, aimed at establishing and pursuing personal goals while Increasing resilience (Bryant, F. B. & Veroff, J., 2007 and, Lyubomirsky, S., Sousa, L. & Dickerhoof, R., 2006), acknowledged by Salanova et al. (2013).

The methodology of the assertive interventions to complete through HERO is carried out using specific qualitative and quantitative means to be fulfilled by the critical agents of the company. The scores to be obtained in the intervention variables marked by the Organization while following the HERO Model process must be compared before and after the intervention using independent tests and judges (Salanova et al., 2013). These authors refer to different investigations on how to accomplish the scheme and measurement of data regarding the activities that take place during the HERO interventional process, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches; such as Student's t-probability distribution tests for the intervened teams (Carter et al., 2010), ANOVA regression analysis of variance and ANCOVA analysis of covariance (Luthans, F., Avey, JB & Patera, JL, 2008), multilevel models (DeJoy et al., 2010), interviews, field notes and participation rate (McDonald et al., 2012), and data collection from the questionnaires and meetings concerning the improved and positive aspects after the intervention (Salanova et al., 2009).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Salanova et al. (2016) highlighted that for HERO interventions, the treatment has to be understood from Positive psychology's perspective, as design and implementation of different strategies which are applied by teams and Organisations to improve their performance and satisfaction to promote health, quality of work-life and organisational excellence (all it following the scientific method). To this end, a planned establishment and operation of the HERO treatment are necessary to support all people, taking into account the cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects (Sin, N. L. & Lyubomirsky, 2009) adduced by Salanova et al. (2016).

Interventions should be organised and work for the objectives and purpose of the Organisations themselves (Salanova et al. 2016), once the previous phases of Analysis have been conducted. The management of the intervention will be established based on the objectives, on one side of the Organization and its teams, and the other from an individual scale approach, as indicated. Regarding its operation, Llorens, S., Salanova, M., Torrente, P. & Acosta, H. (2013) averred specific basic guidelines which should direct to facilitate the success of HERO interventions: (1) Prepare the work environments, incorporating procedures into the general policies of the Organization, ensuring the full commitment of it, promoting the mechanisms for information and participation of the different actors; (2) The arrangement, planning and operation of the intervention in a realistic way, using objectives and hypotheses based on valid, robust scientific data, and following the previous results of the evaluation and analysis phases; (3) Implement and test the effectiveness of the intervention with prior field and quasi-experimental studies, longitudinal designs with multiple levels of analysis and key agents. These should be then analysed, next to an appropriated interventional strategy proposal; (4) Ensure the maintenance and monitoring of the intervention over time, which implies evaluating with tangible and intangible data the real impact of the procedure, ensuring protection and confidentiality, promoting the measures and instituting them proactively together with the strategic objectives of the Organization.

Furthermore, Salanova et al. (2013) recommended that the interventions involve at different time intervals (before them, during them and after them), pre and post-evaluations. The last post-evaluation after intervening an Organization for its amelioration within a reasonable timeframe may be completed, from three to eighteen months after the last session (DeJoy et al., 2010).

The constitution and operation of the scientific-professional HERO Model have its foundation and bases on the proposal from the European Network of Organizational and Work

Psychologists (ENOP), Salanova et al. (2013). On the vital attention about the aspects of psychology at work and the Organization, not only in obtaining scientific and professional results but also during the planning, procedure, development and consideration of the intervention.

Projects in which HERO mediatorship have been conducted following the so-called Model's operation system, have consequently obvious benefits (Salanova et al., 2016). One of the examples that could support this asseveration is the experimentation led by Coo Calcagni C., Ortega, A. & Salanova, M. (2015), where during three weeks the investigators worked with two groups (experimental and control), basing the investigation on awareness using the Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy model (MBCT) from the University of Oxford. Coo Calcagni C. et al. (2015) asseverated the variance ANOVA analysis of repeated measures indicated significant differences in the development of mindfulness as a feature, happiness, and performance, in those subjects who had participated in the intervention from those who did not. One year later, Coo Calcagni C. & Salanova (2016) prepared another study on the Model, focused on developing personal strengths applied to the Organization in combination with the development of mindfulness as a strategy to promote happiness, commitment and emotional intelligence; where throughout eight weeks employees from all levels of the Organization participated in this intervention. The experimenters evaluated that the results in this study showed significant improvements in the areas of attention towards interpersonal traits and into the levels of commitment (vigour, dedication, absorption), emotional intelligence and happiness after the implementation

EVALUATING THE MODEL IMPACTS

The ultimate purpose of a HERO evaluation is to create an optimal balance between the objectives of the people with those of the Organization (Salanova et al., 2013). Increasing healthy organisational practices and resources - evaluated by managers, supervisors and teams/employees -, and healthy results - evaluated by teams, supervisors and clients - following a collective approach.

The study developed by Salanova et al. (2016) suggested different areas of impact, where to evaluate the intervention of the Organization using the HERO Model. (1) Ability to attract talent, recruitment, selection and retention; (2) Evidence of the establishment and management of the psychological contract; (3) Application of regular HERO audits, gathering reliable information and institutionalising healthy measures; (4) Holding workshops on positive experiences, structured similarly to the Quality Circles (business Kaizen), however, in this case, focusing on cognitive and behavioural resources.

HERO evaluations have its core pillars in the three dimensions or blocks of the Model (see Figure 1): (1) Healthy organisational resources and practices, (2) Healthy employees and teams, and (3) Healthy organisational results. Salanova et al. (2016) suggested that the high interdependence between these areas is due to the fact that any improvement in one of them directly affects the others. Proclaiming their empirical results indicated that Organisations which optimise resources and develop healthy organisational Human Resources practices, result in healthier employees/work teams, endowed with excellent potential and well-being. This perspective will lead to fair organisational results where, in the current work context, a strong causality of relationships is established between the three blocks of variables of the HERO Model. Salanova et al. (2016) referred in its paper to Gil, E. A., Llorens, S. & Torrente, P. (2015) as an example of scientific research that justifies these variables using empirical data (pp. 180-181).

NECESSARY RESOURCES

Implement the HERO Model assessment in an Organization will necessarily require to have a series of resources for the development of the same. Throughout this writing, the general strokes about the different structuration of the Model utilisation are exposed, from its initial

Analysis to its Evaluation, in which along it is necessary to ensure the availability of several needful resources for its implementation, Sena de Haro, C. (2017).

Salanova, M., Llorens, S. & Martínez, IM (2019) proposed the primary resources required to adequately instrument and appraise a HERO evaluation in an Organization, indicating precise guidelines, that next to specialists on the Model, it should comprehend: (1) Structural assets related to tasks, which include clarity of functions, job descriptions, objectives and roles, autonomy, existence of certain available information and feedback; (2) Constitutive of the organisation, encompassing established Human Resources Management (HRM) and Direction practices, mission and vision, values, culture, and organisational objectives; (3) Social resources, referent both to the immediate (colleagues) and mediate (managers, clients) social environment of work, which are related to the people who are part of the Organization; (4) Social capital, which includes interpersonal, intergroup and inter-organisational relationships, networks and connections. In addition to intragroup resources, social structure, and cultural dynamics (Salanova et al. 2019) about (Luthans, F. & Youssef, C. M., 2004).

The location and physical facilities of the Organization, schedule and time management, planning, the intervention of a specialist (materials, data platform, training, audit, Internet, online connection or emails among others), the Management and institutional commitment, established principles and goals, the participation and collaboration of people, budgetary destinations, financial purposes and the adapted methodology to the context and situation are before all else, essential resources when it comes to establishing HERO successfully in a Corporation.

CONCLUSION

The HERO Model offers a relatively recent approach, decade 2010-2020, comprehensive, efficient, positive and humane, all from an empirical, heuristic consideration with scientific/professional basis in the current working and organisational context, immersed in a globalised market, the fight against stress, continuous economic fluctuations, the search of talent (and its retention), the digitisation and the big data, highlighting them among others.

Taking into account all the benefits of the Model, nevertheless, it is a European developed experimental scheme, mainly oriented to the currently westernised market-labour system (West-Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand), which may encounter difficulties in its application outside this geo-social sphere, whether it is due to cultural, labour, economic, academic, legal or social reasons. Likewise, taking into account all the advantages from Positive psychology inside Human Resources, with its definitively valid and evolved human approach, when in practice inside the business environment, it could create inevitable controversy with those still powerful (and possibly outdated) purely capitalist approaches prioritising above all the functional existence of the Organization as a financial entity; Levitt, T. (1993) "the sole purpose of companies is to obtain economic benefits" (p. 249). Moreover, strictly for increasing economic wealth; Milton Friedman (1970) "the only social responsibility of the company is to earn money" (pp. 32 - 33). More than as a comprehensive, collaborative and ethical system of organisational management, with a social factor, where the health of workers prevails.

Finally, the HERO Model does not seem to make any explicit enlargement about its involvement in Corporate Social Responsibility, undoubtedly essential aspect in the present westernised work-scenario, where the expression of a company's commitment is the acceptance of its role in making sure of not knowingly operating towards the detriment of the society (CSR Europe's National Partner Organizations, 2010). Although it could be understood that, implicitly, the Model does take part in and refers to the same, due to its prevalent integrative and moral

orientation.

Fresh and with a considerable humanity factor, the HERO Model stands with potential as a scientific-professional work management system, which not only observes short-term monetary objectives but also advocates for the medium and long term targets. With individuals, their working environment and development, as essential entities and fundamental pieces for wellbeing and health (in all senses) of Organisations; where the last, almost become an element at the service of the people who are within them, and not the opposite. The need for more research and experimentation in this area is politely suggested to verify its mid/long term effects and sustainability within different contexts.

The Model exhibits a framework that implies the management of the Human Resources from a Psychology's approach (with greater emphasis on its positive and organisational branches), which subscribes for being an agent of change in the modern working age. Where perhaps ethics, conciliation, goodness, effectiveness and efficiency - without forgetting the sustainable distribution of benefits towards Organisations, employees and the society as a whole - takes on particular importance, if they ever ceased to have it.

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