

Social Thinking and Managerial Practices: An Exploratory Study among Managers

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How to cite this paper: Gaymard, S., & Desgré, M. (2025). Social Thinking and Managerial Practices: An Exploratory Study among Managers. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 13, 1400-1417. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2025.132073>

Received: February 5, 2025

Accepted: March 21, 2025

Published: March 24, 2025

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Abstract

Current societal phenomena concerning the ecological transition or the recent Covid-19 health crisis are helping to accelerate changes in work and employees' relationships with it. A private French agri-food group wanted to initiate a reflective approach on the new strategic issues of attractiveness and employee loyalty by questioning management. Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers to explore their representations. Among these managers, half were promoted inside the enterprise (internal promotion) and the other recruited outside the enterprise (external recruitment). A content analysis made it possible to compare the representations of the two groups. We observe more important themes depending on the group. The results are discussed with regard to elements of literature.

Keywords

Managers, Agri-Food Enterprise, Internal Promotion vs. External Recruitment, Social Thinking, Semi-Structured Interviews

1. Introduction

The world is changing, and with it, work and the relationship to it. France is no exception to this phenomenon. The French Minister of Labor, Full Employment and Integration made this observation in April 2023, during the Labor Conference as part of the National Refoundation Council (**Conseil National de la Refondation (CNR)**, 2023). The situation of the French labor market is not comparable to that experienced by the labor market in the United States between July 2020 and the end of 2021 with the "great resignation". However, it should be noted that between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, the French labor market experienced a historically high number of resignations: approximately 520,000 per quarter, of which approximately 470,000 concerned people on permanent contracts (**Lagouge**

et al., 2022). In this context and in the face of the various challenges that companies must face, the “Assises du Travail”, during discussions on the meaning and relationship to work between December 2022 and March 2023, highlighted the importance of managerial practices in companies and their evolution, specifically by giving “more responsibility, autonomy and recognition to employees” (Thiéry & Senard, 2023: p. 3, own translation).

A private French agri-food group, specializing in meat production and the preparation of meat-based products, has begun a reflection on managerial practices to define the “manager of tomorrow”. From the perspective of applied social psychology, the strategic objective of this reflection is to develop the attractiveness of the company, preserve the health and guarantee the safety of employees.

In this context, if the evolution of managerial practices seems to be a strategic issue for companies today, it is necessary to question what underlies these practices. More specifically, we question the impacts of the manager’s career path on his managerial practices. After having defined in the first part the theoretical aspects on management and social representations, the methodological aspects will be presented, followed by the results and the discussion.

2. Theoretical Framework

Management according to Thiétart (2003) can be defined as “the action or art or manner of leading an organization, directing it, planning its development, controlling it” (own translation, p.7). The manager, as an authority figure, plays important roles at the interpersonal level, in information management and in the decision-making process (Mintzberg, 2020). The roles of the manager are in the organizational aspect, coordination, control (Fayol, 1999; Mintzberg, 2020; Thiétart, 2003), knowing that the manager is responsible for a group of people working together within an organization or unit (Mintzberg, 2020). Based on observations of the work of five senior managers, corroborated with the results of studies on how different managers use their time, Mintzberg isolated ten different roles of the manager, grouped into three broad categories that constitute the nature of the managerial profession: interpersonal roles, information-related roles and decision-making roles. The 1980s were marked by the evolution of concepts such as corporate culture (Devillard & Rey, 2008; Meier, 2019; Schein, 2004) and the development of a significant movement calling for a more strategic role for human resource management (HRM) (e.g. Devanna et al., 1981; Miller, 1985). Organizations must develop a culture that harnesses creativity and entrepreneurship (Lundy, 1994). For Peretti (2000), the notion of strategic human resource management means that the function adopts a dynamic vision. Attractiveness is a major strategic issue for companies wishing to recruit (Barber, 1998; Dubois et al., 2009; Fray et al., 2015), and management with its tools will play a determining role in employee engagement at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Cézanne et al., 2019; Fearon et al., 2013). Managerial practices represent one of the main areas of work for companies in the discussions carried out (Thiéry & Senard, 2023). This

involves integrating into these, work and the relationship of individuals to it in connection with recent social, societal, and generational developments (Bender, 2009; Fray et al., 2015; Lagouge et al., 2022; Petit, 2012; Thévenet, 2001; Vie Publique, 2023), and the issue of the internationalization of teams (Chevrier, 2003, 2012; Karjalainen & Soparnot, 2011). The manager plays a key role in all types of organizations: he unites “the efforts of all towards a given goal” (Mintzberg, 2020, own translation, p. 21).

If management is a concept whose function is similar to all organizations, whether associations, institutions or companies, it is important to differentiate the public sector from the private sector in which this study is part. As Bourgault (2020) reminds us: “management is a certain global approach to things and takes into account the goals and the particular context of the organization” (own translation, p. 19). As such, it is important to emphasize that the conditions in which public or private sector organizations operate, the environment, the scope of actions, the legal system, the constraints, the controls they encounter or even the purposes of these are not identical, influencing the role of managers and the way in which they assume it. When the organization of the private sector aims for profit, that of the public sector would seek the general interest defined according to the political power in place. The public or private nature of the context influences even the attitudes and positioning of managers in the way they carry out their missions (Bourgault, 2020). In France, the public/private sector boundary seems more marked than in Anglo-Saxon countries, although the emergence of “new public governance” (Osborne, 2006) tends to blur this distinction (Desmaires & Abord de Chatillon, 2008).

In understanding human behavior in organizations, psychological theories have focused on affects and motivations. Historically, Mayo’s experiment at Western Electric and the human relations school are references in the field of management (Sanders, 2020). The links between management methods and employee well-being have since been widely studied (e.g. Hentrich et al., 2017; Nyberg, 2009; Skakon et al., 2010; Wang & Gaymard, 2019). The theoretical field of social representations, a key concept in social psychology, was initiated by Moscovici in 1961 with “...a model articulating the psychological and social mechanisms of social-thinking” (Gaymard, 2021: p. 32, own translation). The field of social representations is part of the field of social thinking because social representation is collective thought. Social representations, made up of many elements such as opinions, beliefs, positions, reflect a vision of the world constructed in interactions and shared by a group. Social representations fulfill knowledge functions (understanding reality), identity functions, they guide and justify behaviors. We can say that the function of knowledge and understanding is one of the essential motivations (Fiske, 2004). We cannot speak of social representations without an object and without a social group. Knowing that “not every object is necessarily an object of social representation” (Gaymard, 2021: p. 119, own translation), it will have to meet two conditions highlighted by Flament and Rouquette (2003). First of all,

the question of sociocognitive salience (e.g. what emerges in the discourse), then that of the practices of the social group studied. The reciprocal influence of practices and social representations has been demonstrated (Abric, 1994; Codol, 1972; Flament, 1994; Gaymard, 2021; Moscovici, 1961).

Social psychologists have investigated several objects in the professional field, particularly based on the theory of the central core (Abric, 1994; Flament, 1994). The object “work” is one of the most studied objects, among different social groups (e.g. Flament, 1994, 1996; Gaymard, 2014; Salmaso & Plombeni, 1986). However, if we are interested in the managerial problem, it has rarely been studied from the angle of social representations. We can nevertheless cite the work of Caillé and Jeoffrion (2020) which focused on the social representation of managerial practices in the aeronautics sector. Because the field of social representations is inextricably linked to discourses, qualitative methodology has been a reference from the beginning (Moscovici, 1961). This theory is also considered as a constructivist theory: “The theory of social representations offers an explanation of thought, and to a lesser extent of language, which emphasizes their constructive role” (McKinlay et al., 1993: p. 135, own translation). In the field of social representations, we can think that the object “manager” will be appropriate with differences depending on the managers’ career path: if they were promoted inside the company and therefore strongly imbued with the culture of the organization, or if they were recruited externally.

3. Methodology

3.1. Context of the Agri-Food Enterprise

The agri-food sector, where our study took place, represents the leading industrial sector and employer in France, with nearly 57,000 companies employing more than 650,000 employees (full-time equivalent) in 2021 (Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (INSEE), 2023). In this agri-food environment, nearly a quarter of employees work in the meat and meat product preparation sector, where recruitment needs are significant (Ministère de l’Agriculture et de la Souveraineté alimentaire, 2022; Pôle Emploi, 2021). However, in a context of a crisis of confidence in food, the agri-food sector is one of the sectors most exposed to the actions of non-governmental organizations, particularly on issues relating to nutrition, health risks, the environment or, to a lesser extent, that of respect for human rights and working conditions (Laisney, 2015), further reinforcing the interest in reflections on managerial practices and their effects on the attractiveness and commitment of employees.

3.2. Population

Within an organization such as a company, there are many managers with different scopes of activity (team leader, workshop manager...). In this exploratory study, we interviewed 18 managers from the different hierarchical levels of the organization, ranging from the team leader to the human resources director. Nine

managers were promoted within the company (internal promotion) (2 human resources directors, 1 human resources manager, 1 production manager, 1 workshop manager, 3 team managers and 1 support functions manager) and 9 others were recruited externally (5 human resources directors, 1 production manager and 3 workshop managers). All the managers interviewed work on sites in the same French city, belonging to the group's historical hub and all have a permanent contract with the company (the characteristics of each group are described in **Table 1**). Each person interviewed: was informed of the context of the study, assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the responses, informed of the possibility of interrupting the interview if they wished, and gave their free and informed consent.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the managers interviewed (N = 18).

		Managers from internal promotion (I) (N = 9)	Managers from external recruitment (E) (N = 9)
Gender	Male	66.66%	66.66%
	Female	33.33%	33.33%
Average age		49.33	40.44
Average length of service in the company (year)		25.56	3
Position held	Human resources director	22.22%	55.56%
	Human resources manager	11.11%	0.00%
	Production manager	11.11%	11.11%
	Workshop manager	11.11%	33.33%
	Team manager	33.33%	0.00%
	Support functions manager	11.11%	0.00%

3.3. Interviews and Qualitative Approach

Semi-structured interviews lasting 1 to 1.5 hours (guide Appendix 1) were conducted face-to-face within the company. The qualitative approach at this stage appears relevant for collecting the different opinions and positions of managers in the exploratory phase (Moliner et al., 2002). We carried out a categorical thematic analysis by constructing a reading grid (Blanchet & Gotman, 2000; Gaymard, 2003; Paillé & Mucchielli, 2021; Santiago-Delefosse & Rouan, 2001). The analysis of the discourse of each theme of the interview guide (N = 6) was listed according to categories and sub-themes. The categories were defined for each theme of the guide to ensure their homogeneity and agreement between researchers (example of the theme 1, see Appendix 2).

For each theme addressed during the semi-structured interviews, we present a summary table of the categories constituting the theme with the frequency of responses concerning managers from internal promotion (I for "internal") and managers from external recruitment (E for "external"). For identify the higher percentage differences at the category level (total percentage), we adopted a min-

imum gap of 20% given the number of managers in each group. In the text, some discursive extracts given by a manager (I or E) will be presented to illustrate the categories. The discussion will include the particularities of the sub-themes that can be used for interpretation.

4. Results

4.1. Theme 1 “Characteristics of the Manager”

Table 2. Characteristics of the manager (For the question, see Appendix 1).

Categories	Sub-themes	I (internal)	E (external)
Contact with others	The manager is available, listens, communicates, knows the people in his team, adapts, manages the team, supports it, leads it.	100%	100%
	Total category 1	100%	100%
Soft skills	The manager is fair, equitable, upright, caring, respectful, exemplary	88.89%	77.78%
	Total category 2	88.89%	77.78%
The manager guarantees	...good human, social and material working conditions	66.67%	44.44%
	Total category 3	66.67%	44.44%
Knowledge of the activity	The manager knows the job, the tasks carried out by his team and the processes	33.33%	11.11%
	The manager is not a technical expert in the profession and the activity of his team	11.11%	33.33%
	Total category 4	44.44%	44.44%
Active role of the manager with his team	The manager leads, motivates, develops his team, manages skills	33.33%	77.78%
	Total category 5	33.33%	77.78%
Authority figure	The manager is the reference person in his area, decides, enforces the rules, is demanding, “put persons back in the frame”	33.33%	66.67%
	Total category 6	33.33%	66.67%
More or less long-term vision of management	The manager gives the direction to follow, guides his team to achieve the set objectives, anticipates, has a vision.	22.22%	77.78%
	Total category 7	22.22%	77.78%

For all the managers interviewed, the manager is defined by his relationship with others (100% I; 100% E, cat.1): “The manager supports his team. He has good contact with the employees, he talks, says hello.” (I); The manager’s interpersonal skills are mentioned (88.89% I; 77.78 E, cat.2): “The manager is fair: he always works in the same way with everyone he works with.” (E); The manager also guarantees good working conditions (66.67% I; 44.44% E, cat.3): “The bulk of the manager’s work is to calm tensions.” (I); The manager has knowledge (33.33% I; 11.11% E, cat. 4): “The manager knows his environment and the tasks performed. This allows him to have credibility with his team.” (E); The manager has an active role with the

teams (33.33% I; 77.78% E, cat.5): “The manager is someone who sets the course and is able to lead a team.” (I); The manager is the authority figure (33.33% I; 66.67% E, cat.6): “The manager earns respect and ensures that the rules are respected.” (I); The manager has a medium/long-term vision of management (22.22% I; 77.78% E, cat. 7): “The manager sets short- and long-term objectives. [...] He must be visionary.” (E). Categories 3 [guaranteeing good conditions, higher among I], 5 [active role with the team, higher among E], 6 [authority figure, higher among E], and 7 [more or less long-term vision, higher among E], are those that present the most differences between the two groups (**Table 2**).

4.2. Theme 2 “Characteristics of a Good Manager”

For all managers surveyed, A good manager maintains contact with others (88.89% I; 77.78% E, cat.1): “A good manager spends time with his team to exchange, take an interest in them and get to know them.” (I); A good manager ensures the well-being of his team (33.33% I; 22.22% E, cat.2): “A good manager is above all someone who puts people in good condition to do their work: he provides the right equipment and the right resources.” (E); A good manager maintains soft skills (88.89% I; 55.56% E, cat.3): “A good manager is humble. He does not believe himself to be superior to others.” (I); The good manager also results from external variables (0.00% I; 22.22% E, cat. 4): “The good manager is the one who is put in the right conditions. That is to say the framework that is offered to him and what is put in his hands, the organization that is offered to him, the hierarchical management that he has.” (E); The good manager is an authority figure (22.22% I; 44.44% E, cat. 5): “The good manager defines rules.” (I). Categories 3 [soft skills, higher among I], 4 [external variables, higher among E] and 5 [authority figure, higher among E], are those which differentiate the groups the most (**Table 3**).

Table 3. The characteristics of a “good manager”.

Category	Sub-themes	I (internal)	E (external)
Contact with others	The good manager communicates, consults, takes an interest in his team, spends time with them, adapts to his team, feels his team	88.89%	77.78%
	Total category 1	88.89%	77.78%
A good manager ensures the well-being of his team	A good manager maintains the social climate and ensures the well-being of employees	33.33%	22.22%
	Total category 2	33.33%	22.22%
Soft skills	A good manager is respectful, exemplary, caring, humble and questions himself.	88.89%	55.56%
	Total category 3	88.89%	55.56%
External variables influencing good management	A good manager operates in a context that allows him to be a good manager.	0.00%	22.22%
	Total category 4	0.00%	22.22%
Authority figure	The good manager sets the framework, decides	22.22%	44.44%
	Total category 5	22.22%	44.44%

4.3. Theme 3 “The Problems Encountered by Company Managers”

Regarding the theme of the problems encountered by managers, we have: The place, the framework and the tools (33.33% I; 77.78% E, cat. 1): “The definition of the manager’s role is not always clearly formalized and explained: managers manage situations that they should not manage.” (I); The presence of foreign workers (66.67% I; 33.33% E, cat.2): “The presence of foreign workers leads us to think about how to manage a team that speaks several languages.” (E); The presence of young workers (55.56% I; 55.56% E, cat. 3): “We have the presence of a new generation with different mentalities.” (I); The complexity of management (88.89% I; 88.89% E, cat. 4): “The job of manager has become more complex due to the number of tasks required, which is much greater than before. We have requirements in terms of quality, safety, environment, and production monitoring indicators.” (I). Categories 1 [place, framework and tools given to the manager, higher among E) and 2 [presence of foreign workers, higher among I] are those that differentiate the groups the most (Table 4).

Table 4. The problems encountered by company managers.

Categories	Sub-themes	I (internal)	E (external)
The place, framework and tools given to the manager	The manager lacks tools and training, has unclear tasks and missions, has unsuitable tools	33.33%	77.78%
	Total category 1	33.33%	77.78%
The presence of foreign workers	...impacts production activities	66.67%	0.00%
	...is seen as an issue to be integrated into the reflection on managerial practices	0.00%	33.33%
Presence of young workers	Total category 2	66.67%	33.33%
	Negative judgment of the younger generation of workers (less professional conscience, rudeness, “I don’t care” attitude, etc.)	55.56%	0.00%
	Finding that professional expectations have evolved	0.00%	55.56%
Complexity of management, lack of skills	Total category 3	55.56%	55.56%
	Internal managers (quality, health, safety, use of tools, etc.)	88.89%	66.67%
	External managers (human management, quality, health, safety, use of tools, etc.)	0.00%	22.22%
	Total category 4	88.89%	88.89%

4.4. Theme 4 “The Daily Strengths of Managers”

Regarding the strengths encountered daily by managers, we have: Social relations (77.78% I; 33.33% E, cat. 1): “In my center, a strength is the strong proximity to staff.” (I); Corporate culture (44.44% I; 22.22% E, cat. 2): “Humility, the simplicity of the group’s values is a strength to be preserved.” (I); The interpersonal skills of the people in the company (22.22% I; 33.33% E, cat. 3): “Kindness but accompa-

nied by demand.” (E); The tools available to managers (0.00% I; 22.22% E, cat. 4): “Information meetings held for managers on certain topics and how to act.” (E). Categories 1 [social relations, higher among I], 2 [corporate culture, higher among I] and 4 [available tools, higher among E], are those which differentiate the groups the most (**Table 5**).

Table 5. The daily strengths of managers.

Categories	Sub-themes	I (internal)	E (external)
Social relationships	Proximity, listening, support, communication	77.78%	33.33%
	Total category 1	77.78%	33.33%
Company culture	Simplicity, accessibility, sense of duty...	44.44%	22.22%
	Total category 2	44.44%	22.22%
Soft skills	Kindness, Courage, Franchise	22.22%	33.33%
	Total category 3	22.22%	33.33%
Available tools	Formations	0.00%	22.22%
	Total category 4	0.00%	22.22%

4.5. Theme 5 “Factors of Well-Being at Work”

Regarding the factors of well-being at work, we note: The relational framework of the activity (77.78% I; 88.89% E, cat.1): “Well-being also comes from the complicity created with one’s manager, one’s hierarchical superior.” (E); The material framework of the activity (55.56% I; 44.44% E, cat.2): “A position that is well-adapted both physically and mentally: arriving at a tidy and clean position. If it is a mess, this creates mental fatigue.” (I); Organizational elements (44.44% I; 44.44% E, cat.3): “The question of working time is a factor of well-being.” (E); The relationship that the employee has with his activity and the activity itself (33.33% I; 11.11% E, cat.4): “In order to feel good at work, the person must like his work.” (I). This last category, higher among the I, differentiates the two groups the most (**Table 6**).

Table 6. Factors of well-being at work.

Categories	Sub-themes	I (internal)	E (external)
The relational framework of the activity	Atmosphere, recognition, relationship with the manager...	77.78%	88.89%
	Total category 1	77.78%	88.89%
The material framework of the activity	Adapted position and resources, autonomy, limits	55.56%	44.44%
	Total category 2	55.56%	44.44%
Organizational elements	Schedules, work organization	44.44%	44.44%
	Total category 3	44.44%	44.44%
The relationship to the activity and the activity itself	Love your job, have skills	33.33%	11.11%
	Total category 4	33.33%	11.11%

4.6. Theme 6 “The Influence of the Manager on the Well-Being of Employees at Work”

Regarding the influence of the manager on the well-being of employees at work, we note: The improvement of working conditions (88.89% I; 66.67% E, cat.1); The influence of the manager (77.78% I; 55.55% E, cat.2): “We must involve people, make them feel recognized, show that what we do has value, all this contributes to making people feel good in their work.” (E); The role of other factors outside the manager (33.33% I; 44.44% E, cat 3): “Well-being is not the results of an individual, but that of an organization.” (I); Human relations (44.44% I; 22.22% E): “Everything is linked to the interest shown in people. That’s why it’s important to know people, to have their trust, so that they confide.” (E). Categories 1 [the manager improves working conditions, higher among I], 2 [positive influence of the manager, higher among I] and 3 [social relations, higher among I], are those that differentiate the two groups the most (Table 7).

Table 7. The influence of the manager on the well-being of employees at work.

Categories	Sub-themes	I (internal)	E (external)
The manager improves	...working conditions	88.89%	66.67%
	Total category 1	88.89%	66.67%
The manager influences	...by posture	33.33%	0.00%
	...by well-being	22.22%	11.11%
	...recognition of people	22.22%	22.22%
	staff commitment	0.00%	22.22%
	Total category 2	77.78%	55.55%
It is not only the role of the manager	Role of the organizational context	22.22%	44.44%
	Role of workers	11.10%	0
	Total category 3	33.33%	44.44%
Human relations	Knowledge of the people in the team	0.00%	22.22%
	Communication (importance of listening plus managerial communication)	44.44%	0.00%
	Total category 4	44.44%	22.22%

5. Discussion

The history of management is closely linked to the evolution of society and the history of companies. Managerial questions arising from reflections on the management of organizations experienced a real craze after the industrial revolution and the creation of increasingly large companies (Nicolas, 1996). It must be said that Western societies had then reached the highest stage of economic development in history, fertile ground for this type of reflection (Mintzberg, 2020). As work and the economy had evolved, employers of the time quickly asked themselves the question of mobilizing employees, obtaining their commitment and

their participation in collective performance (Bevort, 2013). In addition, the relationship to work continues to evolve and the health crisis has had a strong impact on it, as research shows (e.g. Gaymard & Hatton, 2023; Gaymard et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2022; Zhang & Kowalczyk, 2023). In this context of change, companies are concerned with responding to the new challenges they face, such as the attractiveness of human resources, staff loyalty and the promotion of quality of life at work. This is the case of the French private agri-food group from which the population of managers interviewed in this study comes; it must be said that the agri-food market has important issues to defend, in order to remain competitive at the international level (Laisney, 2015; Margetic, 2014). Representation is a common-sense knowledge linked to practices, associating the object with the group (Abric, 1994; Moscovici, 1981, 1984). The objective of this study was to understand the social representation that managers had of their practices, to bring out more important themes or even specific ones. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews highlights these elements that we will discuss in a more global way after recalling the observed differences.

Regarding theme 1 “the characteristics of the manager”, if for all the managers interviewed, the manager is defined by his relationship with others, we observe several differences between internal and external managers. The fact of guaranteeing good working conditions predominates for the manager promoted internally while the active role with the team, the authority figure and the “more or less long-term vision”, are more important themes for the manager recruited externally. Among the sub-themes related to knowledge of the activity (category 4), we also noted that internal managers were more focused on knowledge of tasks while external managers emphasized more the fact that they were not “technical” experts. Regarding theme 2 “the characteristics of the good manager”, the “soft skills” category is more important for internal managers while the influence of external variables and the authority figure are more marked categories for external managers. Regarding theme 3 “the problems encountered by the company’s managers”, the category of the place, the framework and the tools given are more important among external managers while the presence of foreign workers is more prominent among internal managers. In addition, if internal managers exclusively address the problem regarding the negative effects on the proper functioning of the activity and performance, external managers perceive this phenomenon as an issue to be integrated into the company’s current thinking on managerial practices. In addition, it is interesting to observe in category 3 “presence of young workers”, sub-themes with opposite connotation. Managers who have evolved internally translate more difficulties in their speech than managers recruited externally who, for their part, highlight the expectations of the new generations in terms of work. These elements contribute to the complexity of management perceived by the two populations of managers (category 4), since the sub-themes tend to show that this is felt more by internal managers. Regarding theme 4 “the strengths of managers’ daily lives”, social relations and corporate culture predom-

inate among internal managers, while the available tools only appear among external managers. Regarding theme 5 “factors of well-being at work”, the relationship to the activity and the activity itself (category 4) is more marked among internal managers. Regarding theme 6 “the influence of the manager on the well-being of employees at work”, the categories “improvement of working conditions”, “positive influence” and “human relations” predominate among internal managers. When we look at the sub-themes of category 3 “it’s not just the role of the manager”, we see that external managers make more reference to the influence of the organizational context, displaying a more global vision of well-being. We find the presence of the three main categories constituting the nature of the managerial profession: interpersonal roles, information-related roles and decision-making roles (Mintzberg, 2020). The manager promoted internally refers more to human relations and the improvement of working conditions but also expresses more difficulties in managing foreign workers and young workers. He also appears closer to the corporate culture and defends the “affective” relationship at work as a factor of well-being. Managers promoted internally have gone through the different levels of the process, starting from the bottom up, which explains this difference. They are imbued with the company’s values, have become legitimate through their great knowledge of the field but they express difficulties related to the evolution of methods and the complexity of management. By their anchoring, these managers are probably closer to a traditional vision of employment. With globalization, organizational changes are considerable, and they have impacted employment and the interpretation that the individual has of his relationship with employment. The stability and predictability that characterized the old system (few changes in a professional career and evolution in the same company) are today rarer. The paternalism of companies has been gradually replaced by employee autonomy and less commitment (Lester et al., 2007; Osterman, 2009, 2011), with a transformation of the psychological contract (Schein, 1980).

The externally recruited manager displays a greater distance with fewer individual relationships, a more marked role in control (authority figure), the organizational aspect and coordination (Fayol, 1999; Mintzberg, 2020; Thiétart, 2003). References to a “more or less long-term vision”, a more global approach and a more marked awareness of the influence of organizational factors seem to be part of more strategic management (Devanna et al., 1981; Miller, 1985). Similarly, expectations of tools that can play a key role in employee engagement at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Cézanne et al., 2019; Fearon et al., 2013) appear more characteristic of the externally recruited manager. This manager appears less close to the corporate culture and more open to accepting changes, but he is also on average younger in our sample. Concerning the factors of well-being at work, he does not stand out from the manager promoted internally who on the contrary appears more concerned about this aspect. Both profiles therefore have strengths and weaknesses. These differences in managers’ representations are linked to specific practices. In order to promote employee well-being, it would be interesting

to know how these practices are perceived by the people managed and to explore the question of legitimacy in more depth (Keyes et al., 2000).

Psychologists have rarely studied managerial issues as an object of social representations, while the contributions of psychological theories in the field of management are numerous. Indeed, the origins of organizational and industrial psychology can be found at the beginning of the 20th century (Carpintero, 2017). In a reference work on management, Peters and Waterman (1982) published the eight major principles of excellence in business: a penchant for action, proximity to the customer, autonomy and entrepreneurship, productivity through people, engaging management, concentration on one's activity, a simple form in a complex world, and control that is both flexible and strict. In this exploratory study on social thinking, we observe that the salient elements of managers' discourse are imbued with some of these principles. This study has limitations in the population of managers whose functions are varied; Furthermore, we were not able to compare men and women, the latter being a minority.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we compared the discourse of managers promoted inside the enterprise or recruited externally. Through semi-structured interviews, the characteristics of the "manager" were explored. The differences observed in the representations are related to specific practices. In order to promote employee well-being, it would be interesting to know how these practices are perceived by the people managed.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix 1. List of Topics Covered during Semi-Structured Interviews

Grid of themes covered in semi-structured interviews with managers

1. Characteristics of the manager	In your opinion, what is a manager? What defines him?
2. Characteristics of the “good manager”	In your opinion, what is a good manager?
3. Problems encountered	In your opinion, what are the problems you face today as a manager?
4. Strengths, resources for managers	In your opinion, what are the strengths of managers today, that should be preserved?
5. Factors of well-being at work	In your opinion, what makes someone feel good about their job?
6. Influence of the manager on the well-being of his teams	In your opinion, what role does the manager play in making workers feel good?

Appendix 2. Definition of Categories. Example Concerning Theme 1

Categories of theme 1: Characteristics of the manager

1) Contact with others	Reference is made to relationships with others
2) Soft skills	Reference is made to personal qualities
3) The manager guarantees	Reference is made to the manager’s role in protecting good working conditions
4) Knowledge of the activity	Reference is made to the manager’s field of knowledge
5) Active role of the manager with his team	Reference is made to the manager’s dynamic role
6) Authority figure	Reference is made to strength and leadership
7) More or less long-term vision of management	Reference is made to setting more or less long-term goals