

Dignity in the Workplace. The Perspective of Humanistic Management

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this article is to fill the gap in the Polish discourse on management about the concept of dignity in the workplace. The text presents the issue from the perspective of humanistic management. The article analyzes contemporary discussion about dignity in the workplace conducted in the Western discourse on management.

Methodology: The reflections stem from a critical analysis of popular concepts of dignity in the workplace in the management discourse. The author also uses the existing results of empirical research. The analysis uses management literature on dignity, which is the basis for systematizing available concepts.

Findings: The literature analysis enables systematization of various concepts of dignity in the workplace and identification of specific levels in the quality of employee treatment in an organization. Hence, the author identifies a few key factors that affect employees' dignity in the workplace both positively and negatively and indicates mechanisms that allow for the humanization of work processes.

Research limitations: The theoretical reflections should be verified by empirical research in organizations. However, the area of research on dignity in the workplace is not problematized enough, potential problems still require in-depth theoretical research.

Practical implications: The reflection on dignity in the workplace emphasizes the organizational mechanisms that lead to the humanization and dehumanization of work processes. The problematization of the category of dignity should allow researchers to conduct empirical research in organizations and managers to design organizational solutions that protect the well-being of their employees which, in consequence, may have a positive impact on the organization's development.

Originality: The article discusses the concepts of dignity in the workplace which are absent in the Polish discourse of management and indicates directions of further research in the field.

Keywords: management, business ethics, dignity

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Introduction

Dignity is a fundamental value for humanization processes in organizations, including organizational cultures and social relationships in the workplace (Lamont, 2000; Hodson, 2001; Bolton, 2007; Sayer, 2007; Lucas, 2015; Bal, 2017; Kostera and Pirson, 2017; Pirson, 2017). The sense of value, satisfaction, and dignity of the employees depends on how people treat each other in social relationships (Lindemann, 2014; Mariański, 2016). Interestingly, the category of dignity has not attracted much interest among management and organizational ethics researchers until recently, including even those involved in the Critical Management Studies research stream (Alvesson et al., 2009; Prasad et al., 2016).

This article aims to analyze popular theoretical approaches to dignity in the workplace, available in the Western management discourse, and open discussion on the importance of human dignity in management and organizational processes in the field of Polish management sciences. I present the perspective of humanistic management as a field of considerations about dignity in the workplace. Furthermore, I indicate dignity as a performative act rooted in social relationships in the organization and the factors that affect the employee's dignity positively and negatively. The final part of the article reflects on the possible directions in the future research on the category of dignity in the field of management science.

Humanistic management

Research on dignity in the workplace is a part of the discourse of humanistic management, which stems from the assumption that employees need to be treated as an end in itself (Melé, 2003; 2012; Praweńska-Skrzypiek, 2007; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2014; Zawadzki, 2014; Nierenberg, et al. 2015; Dierksmeier, 2016; Kostera, 2016; Kostera and Pirson, 2017; Pirson, 2017). Following Immanuel Kant, Max Weber, Mary Parker Follet, and Elton Mayo, the humanists in management foreground the need to balance the economic approach towards managing organizations with a humanist approach in which a human being is not the object of economic exchange but the subject of moral interactions. In the humanistic perspective, the main purpose of organizing should be to increase the common good and social welfare (Alvehus and Jensen, 2015; Pirson, 2017). Thus, management processes – also in business organizations – must proceed in such a way as to protect the well-being of individuals at all costs, including their dignity (Pirson, 2014; Pirson et al., 2015). Humanistic approach to management, as some of the researchers observed, might guarantee effective pursuit of organizational

balance, in which the financial performance is one of the consequences of the effective ethical principles and satisfaction both of the employees and social environment (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2013; Bal, 2017; Pirson, 2017).

Around the world, humanism in organization management strongly refers not only to the organizational and management theory but also to practice (Jensen et al., 2009; Von Kimakovitz et al., 2011). There are examples of companies that try to break away from the employee reification terminology: they change concepts such as “human capital” or “human resources” with less objectifying “human relationships” or “human capabilities” (Boselie, 2010). Moreover, some firms indicate the need to use methods of critical, emancipatory empowerment to involve employees in decision-making processes (Alvesson et al., 2009). They furthermore emphasize the importance of opinions of the lower levels employees, their democratic representation and decision-making capabilities regarding strategic management, and overall organization leadership (Hodson, 1996; Valcour, 2014; Jałocha and Zawadzki, 2018). Such examples, even though they are not exhaustive, demonstrate the practical commitment of businesses to protecting dignity in the workplace.

From the perspective of humanistic management, dignity is subject neither to relationships of exchange nor economic efficiency. On the contrary, dignity is an inalienable component of humanity, albeit subject to limitation or strengthening (Kostera and Pirson, 2017; Pirson, 2017). The dignity of employees depends on their self-esteem and autonomy in relationships with other, based on concern and respect (Bal, 2017; Stephens and Kanov, 2017). The role of researchers who study organizations and management is to understand how the workplace and management processes can influence employees and their dignity: is it an impact which enables the humanization of work processes or one that can hinder human development?

Human dignity as a performative act

Despite many references to the category of dignity in historical and philosophical discourse (Malpas and Lickiss, 2007; Kateb, 2011; Sensen, 2011; Misztal, 2012; Rosen, 2012; Düwell et al., 2014; Mariański, 2016), human dignity remains a category that escapes its explicit definitions. This problem is especially visible when we release dignity from its narrow, elitist, and aristocratic understanding closely related to nobility, honor, and rank, and accept – as in this text – an egalitarian and universal understanding embedded in moral discourse. As Donna Hicks observed in this context, usually we have a gut feeling about the dignity as a concept but in the same time we

do not have sufficient language to describe it (Hicks, 2011). One of the reasons is that dignity is an indispensable feature of every human being, which draws its meaning closer to the broad notion of humanity. The relatively low level of philosophical problematization of this category in the management discourse seems to be an important reason for the absence of a suitable language to describe dignity.

As part of the problematization of the category of dignity and its understanding, it seems appropriate to highlight its performative character (Bal, 2017; Mitchell, 2017). Performativity indicates the fact that dignity, although it is an inalienable characteristic of the human being, is paradoxically and simultaneously a potential that may be updated and, thus, honed by action, but which also may be limited (Sayer, 2007; Düwell, 2014). This is why reflections on dignity recognize that dignity may be threatened or protected regardless of its immanent nature.

Following the above argumentation, dignity is a universal, egalitarian, and performative moral norm, that indicates the need for respect for the humanity of every individual, but which may be violated or protected due to its performative form. The performativity of dignity shows the need to analyze it in the context of social behavior since the latter always influences dignity as a moral value. In this sense, the presentation of dignity as a reflection of the working conditions in the organization is embedded in the assumptions of consequentialism and deontology: they analyze the consequences of certain social activities – including management activities – in the context of influence on the dignity of the employee in terms of general moral norms, through which one's behavior and respect undergoes judgment (Painter-Morland, 2008). For example, negative opinions of individuals in the workplace may be one of the consequences of unethical activities in the organization, and it is important to diagnose them by looking for a more general moral norm like respect for the dignity of employees, the violation of which would explain the state of affairs.

Following the performative perspective based on social relations, another important element is the relational and empirical nature of dignity; it requires both the affirmative action of recognizing the needs of others and self-assessment of self-esteem that may change over time (Pless and Appel, 2014). As Stephens and Kanov claim, we only know dignity through our everyday relations with others (Stephens and Kanov, 2017). In this sense, as Randy Hodson (2001) observed, dignity is the ability to develop a sense of self-worth and self-respect, enjoying in the same time the respect of other people. In the performative perspective, one may and should care for dignity and, under unfavorable conditions, one should fight for it. In this sense, as Martha Nussbaum pointed out, the concept of dignity is related to the idea of “active striving” (Nussbaum,

2011, pp. 23, 31). A similar stance presents Jeremy Waldron who claims that the protection of human dignity is possible thanks to self-possession, self-control, and the ability to fight against destructive submissiveness (Waldron, 2012). Dignity is, therefore, the ultimate moral goal of social actions also in organizations – not just the law that one can obey or not – and managers should always consider it in the context of interpersonal relations (Mitchell, 2017).

The context of interpersonal relations reveals that every human is a sensitive social being, who is physically, psychologically, economically, and culturally dependent on others throughout the whole of life. This deep social nature indicates that our dignity takes shape in the process of experiencing relationships with other people and is close to autonomy, understood as self-esteem assessment and self-control (Sayer, 2007). Our autonomy is something extremely fragile and always depends on how others treat us: the realization of autonomy paradoxically has a heterogeneous character which depends on negotiating meanings in relations with others (Taylor, 2005). Relationships with other people in the organization are considered both as patterns of exchange between people interacting in the pursuit of a common goal – and temporal, emotionally saturated interactions that are not necessarily related to the implementation of clearly defined tasks (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003). According to those two types of relationships in the organization, to treat other people with dignity means treating ourselves and others not as an economic resource, to be manipulated and measured against a goal, but as a perfect whole and an end in itself (Sayer, 2007).

Such a non-instrumental way of treating people makes it possible to find existential fulfillment in relationships with oneself and others, and is a prerequisite for a life based on dignity. In this perspective, according to Donna Hicks (2011), we may regard dignity even as the value that allows the human species to survive because the social action based on updating dignity enables the creation of a secure world, with the provision of respect for the independence of the other person and their understanding.

Dignity in the workplace

From the perspective of the humanistic and social sciences, the category of dignity has been implicitly present in the context of the analysis of working conditions for a relatively long time (Bolton, 2007; Rosen, 2012). The attempt to combine dignity with work processes is evident, for example, in the Catholic social teaching along with its founding document, the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XIII, 1891). The great masters of sociology and philosophy, such as Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim,

and Max Weber, also indicated the problem of threats to human beings and their dignity in the modern society (Hodson, 2001). Despite these and other references, the category of dignity seems to be insufficiently analyzed in the organizational context and the discourse of management science.

The paradox when considering dignity in the workplace is that its value shows its importance, especially when challenged. This is also due to the difficulty of capturing the phenomenon of dignity; it is difficult to answer such questions as for why people in certain situations feel less or more dignified. To facilitate this task, dignity researchers tend to investigate it through the prism of organizational pathologies that pose a threat (Kaufmann et al., 2011; Karlsson, 2012; Crowley, 2014). In this sense, non-humanitarian working conditions, regarding exploitation, mobbing, inability to meet basic needs, unequal treatment based on gender or age, traineeship, limitation of employees' freedom, burdening people with too high performance requirements or showing disrespect to their opinions, indicate processes hazardous to human dignity (Melé, 2014; Kostera and Pirson, 2017).

Diagnosing such pathologies is even more necessary because the absence of respect for dignity may lead to professional burnout, decrease in motivation, and even – in extreme cases – suicide attempts (Cederström and Fleming, 2012). For example, Lucas, Kang, and Li (2013) investigate the causes of the suicide of fourteen young employees hired at Foxconn Technology Group in China in 2010. The scholars conclude that the main role in this tragedy played the institutional oppression of human dignity: the company authorities questioned the self-esteem of employees, which in consequence resulted in the erosion of self-respect and a sense of inability to change the oppressive working conditions in the future. This example of undermining workplace dignity points to the need for reflection on the strategies for the humanization of work processes.

An interesting answer to the question of dignity in the workplace offers Domènec Melé (2013), who diagnoses dignity from the point of five levels of human quality treatment: maltreatment, indifference, justice, care, development. It should be mentioned – what the author did not do – that these levels may be created not only by the managers, but also by but also by the other employees. The current paper treats Melé's concept of dignity as a conceptual framework and, along with references to other popular concepts of dignity in the workplace, will analyze it below in pursuit of a problematization and systematization of the theory of dignity in the discourse of management science.

While maltreatment and indifference towards employees are phenomena indicative of the absence of respect for the human dignity in the workplace, the three successive levels determine the possibility of protecting dignity – to a varying degree. From Melé's point of view (2013), in order to protect and fulfill the dignity in the workplace, it is necessary to realize the following: justice understood as respect for workers and their rights; care for the interests of the employees related to support in solving their problems; and, at the highest level, emphasis on development as wellbeing of employees, which depends on mutual respect and friendship-based relationships. According to Melé, we should note that these three levels must be authentic; that is, justice, care, and development must be treated as an end in itself, not as the means to achieve a higher level of financial efficiency or organizational effectiveness (Melé, 2013). As Sayer (2007) diagnoses, when care for worker's dignity is instrumental and devoid of authenticity, motivated only by the desire to achieve other goals by means of relationship of exchange – like expecting overtime work in exchange for concern and respect – it is not protection of dignity, but rather cynicism, which eventually may decrease the employee's motivation to work (see more about it: Kunda, 1992; Willmott, 1993; Jacques, 1996; Fleming and Spicer 2007).

Maltreatment

At the lowest level of workplace treatment is the pathology of maltreatment, associated with blatant injustice based on the abuse of power. At this level, the employee's autonomy is limited and, thus, there is little talk about any ethics in dealing with people; exploitation, aggression, and bad treatment of employees manifests the pathologies of lacking humanistic working conditions (e.g. Snyder, 2010; Kaufmann et al., 2011; Hicks, 2016).

The abuse of power which creates the problem of exploitation – forcing people to work without proper remuneration or on the basis of an agreement unfavorable for the employee (see: Kantor and Streitfeld, 2015) – is particularly dangerous and may threaten human dignity. This often goes hand in hand with the problem of authoritarianism; that is, such use of the social position and power to define own authority and make decisions unfavorable for the employees (Witkowski, 2011). This creates the problem of mutual distrust and lack of respect between the authorities and employees, which then leads to demotivation and further distortions in communication (Siebert et al., 2015). Aggression is very common at this level, expressed not only in actions but also in language; insults and rude or disrespectful words further widen the field of humiliation. Linguistic aggression may also be associated with the mechanism of psychological manipulation that involves, for example, accusing an employee without suffi-

cient reason. The most vivid example of psychological manipulation in the workplace is mobbing: the abuse of another employee by applying pressure based on a long-term disrespect and using such mechanisms as bullying and symbolic, physical, or sexual violence (Hodson et al., 2006; Trepper et al., 2007; Chamberlain et al., 2008; Lopez et al., 2009).

Manipulating people also includes such phenomena as the hidden influence on a person with the use of lies, deception, and false expectations to satisfy selfish interests, increase the area of influence, or intentionally discriminate (Crowley, 2012). An example of manipulation that is particularly dangerous for human dignity is the use of power to persuade co-workers to behave unethically.

Indifference

According to Melé, the second level of human quality treatment is indifference – related to the disrespectful treatment of workers by showing a deliberate lack of recognition of their needs, fears, and personality traits (Melé, 2013). Unlike maltreatment, indifference shows no clear signs of bullying and the organization works in accordance with the law. Nevertheless, at this level, we observe the pathology of disrespectful treatment and indifference to the needs of those who are subject to this law. To inform employees that they were fired with a simple text message (Paterson, 2003) or organize fictitious meetings with no intention of listening to them (Adams, 2015) are just some examples. That is why the mere agreement with the law, without attention to the personality and needs of workers, is too little to speak about dignity in the workplace (Melé, 2013).

The social, emotional, and political recognition of the human being is not only the basis for understanding employee needs but also the basic need of an individual as a social being. The absence of indifference in communication and social relationships (social recognition), friendship and love (emotional recognition), and human and civil rights (political recognition) enables us to build self-esteem, autonomy, and – as a consequence – dignity in the workplace (Frazer and Honneth, 2003; Islam, 2012; Pless, Maak, and Harris, 2017).

At the second level of treatment, employers treat employees as resources, neglecting their humanity, and the management disregards human needs when considering the effects of their decisions. Decisions and their effects appear only in the context of economic efficiency with the employees only perceived as the means to achieve performance goals. Work motivation depends only on the amount of salary, without the consideration of the situation in which a well-done job may be an end in itself (Sayer,

2007). Lack of trust in the workers ability to take non-instrumental actions humiliates their dignity, thus minimizing their motivation to do good only to the instrumental social activities based on the relationship of exchange (Brennan and Petit, 2004).

In particular situations in the organization, indifference towards employees may be expressed with (Hodson, 2001; Otis, 2008; Crowley, 2012; Fleming, 2017): the absence of serious interactions; strict orders instead of mutual respect; baseless accusations with the assumption of bad intentions; unwillingness to listen to others; disrespectful talk about the work of others; poor quality contracts without clearly defined role and responsibilities; neglect of employee expectations. Other manifestations of indifference at the micro level include: no articulation of employees' names, jokes about the employee; talk about the employee in the room in the third person; continuous criticism of behavior; accusations; unapologetic creation of unfavorable situations for others. One of the effects of indifference in the workplace may be anxiety of expressing constructive criticism for fear of humiliation (Sayer, 2007). The attention and concern of employers only appear if an employee has extreme personal problems or as a psychological, cynical technique to leave the impression of attention to get more performance from the employee (Fleming and Spicer 2007; Melé, 2013).

To summarize the first two, ethically unacceptable levels of human treatment in the organization, we should notice that the styles of personnel management leading to the abuse of workers influence human dignity in the workplace. Treating employees as resources and measures to achieve pre-determined organizational goals can result in the employee's loss of autonomy, sense of exclusion, lack of concern and attention, and erosion of respect for oneself and the work itself (Hicks, 2016). As Hodson notes (2001), non-humanitarian management eliminates the possibility of consensus from social relationships: it promotes the recognition of conformism as the desirable organizational value and application of penalties to those who disagree with the proposed solutions or fail to meet the imposed performance standards (see, Zawadzki, 2014). In the workplace with these pathologies, scholars notice submissiveness and workaholism which negatively impact the ability to protect dignity (Karlsson, 2012; Zawadzki, 2017). Consequently, as Sayer (2007) observes, violating the employee's dignity may result in his feeling of shame, stigmatization, humiliation, disregard, or mistrust.

It seems advisable to assume that when dignity in the workplace is being threatened, protective strategies might be employed. Hodson indicates four such actions and foregrounds the incalculable acts of employee micro-resistance against abuse as the most important one (Hodson, 2001; Pawłowska, 2017). As other researchers reveal, micro-resistance may take a hidden form of cynicism based on internal disagreement

with the previous conditions (Fleming and Spicer, 2007) or a more explicit form linked to disagreement with unfavorable decisions, absenteeism, strikes, or – ultimately – exit from the organization (Stuesse, 2010). Other forms of protection of dignity are (Hodson 2001): the formation of democratic relationships with colleagues based on trust and respect and creation of an alternative, independent system of meanings that allows for a critical distance to the organization's pathologies. Employees may also protect dignity thanks to civic actions aimed at shielding the welfare of workers.

Justice

The third level of human quality treatment is justice which enables us to recognize and respect the dignity of the worker, although it is an obligation which stems rather from the duty to respect labor law than from the good will (Melé, 2013). This includes the proper exercise of power in the organization – in such way that law-breaking pathologies do not occur. The level of justice also requires keeping promises, fulfilling contracts with employees – both written and oral – fair remuneration and evaluation of work results, fair hiring and dismissing, and credible transparency in communication (Bubeck, 1995; Frey, 1997).

An important aspect of organizational justice is to avoid arbitrariness in the distribution of tasks and rewards, which requires a thorough analysis of the value of each employee separately. Otherwise, the pathology of nepotism and cronyism may appear. It is also important on this level to strive to eliminate any dishonest and illegal practices from the organization.

Care

The fourth level refers to the protection of employee dignity not only by recognizing and respecting their rights – as in the case of the third level – but also by caring for their interests and showing the willingness to help solve their problems (Melé, 2013). This level foregrounds not only the selfless support of work-related issues, health, and family but also the constant need to humanize work processes, including tolerance for possible errors and mistakes along with the will to correct them jointly (Edwards, 2009; Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012). Care for the employee should also involve actions that ensure a balance between personal and professional life, solve personal conflicts in the workplace, and ease difficult situations. In the context of the decision-making process, it is also important at this level to consider the worker's sensitivity to the consequences of our decisions; for instance, in the context of difficult HR decisions related to the reduction of employment (Holmqvist and Spicer, 2013).

Empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence play an important role at the level of care. It is not just about sensitivity to the employee's wellbeing but also about real concern for this welfare that takes their authentic needs into account (Engster, 2004; Rynes et al., 2012). At the same time, however, common sense in assessing these needs is crucial, which helps to concentrate only on the authentic ones and ignore situations in which employees deliberately pose as victims to gain an unfair advantage; assistance in such a situation would create the problem of injustice (Held, 2006).

Development

The highest level of quality of treatment and concern for dignity in the organization means the willingness to assist others in order to help them meet their real needs – the needs related to the development of humanness and ethical behavior (Melé, 2013). We should assume here not only respect for the employee's rights (as in the case of the third level) or concern for justified interests (the fourth level) but also the ability to adopt an in-depth perspective of each worker as a human being, which enables us to evaluate the best possible organizational solutions that broaden the field of mutual respect in the workplace. From this perspective, each employee appears not as a passive recipient of concern, but as an active creator of wellbeing for others and the whole organization; thus, at this level, managers involve other employees and make them responsible for organizational tasks, allowing them to build their own value. As Sayer (2007) remarks, the sense of being socially useful and independent – and not dependent on decisions and measures of others – is a very important factor which impacts dignity in the workplace.

Dignity requires assuming that actions aimed at providing the wellbeing for others – including the pursuit of their talents, creativity, sense of responsibility, and community development – are not an option, but the duty of every worker, including those who exercise power. However, Sayer observes (2007) that, paradoxically, the duty of caring for others may not be based on necessity or coercion but selfless help; only then it is authentic and benefits dignity. Promoting the principle of care (Nuebert et al., 2009; Gabriel, 2015) is possible with an ethical attitude of leaders who influence the moral outlook of co-workers by their actions and interpersonal relations (Dudau, 2009). This includes the types of leadership described in the literature on leadership such as servant (Van Dierendock, 2011) or transformational leadership (Grant, 2012). An important observation here is that the ethical impact on other people, related to deep concern for their well-being, will result in similar attitudes towards fellow workers (Koźmiński, 2013; Baczyńska and Korzyński, 2017). Thus, we may say that the realization of the fifth level of care triggers the mechanism of ethical chain reaction, in which experien-

cing goodness results in cumulative actions for the welfare of others. Melé calls this phenomenon “friendship-based reciprocity,” that has nothing in common with the instrumental relationship of exchange but stems from mutual respect and friendship, which constitute the basis for protecting dignity in the organization (Melé, 2013).

Human development requires constant attention to the humanistic dimension of working conditions, including sincere respect between co-workers and people in power; such that will allow the development of employees through respect for their work, selfless pursuit of the value of justice, sense of fulfillment, and sensitivity to their needs, including autonomy (Taylor, 2005). A high level of autonomy and freedom is the prerequisite to developing dignity, which allows independent control of organizational activities. Autonomy and freedom in the workplace stem from the possibility of sincere notice and reception, as well as deliberative organizational communication along with the possibility of expressing constructive criticism without the risk of humiliation, even in the absence of convincing arguments (Hicks, 2011).

Table 1. Strategies towards dignity in the workplace

Protection of dignity in the workplace	Violation of dignity in the workplace
Justice, Care, Development, Inclusion, Safety, Acknowledgment, Understanding, Recognition, Fairness, Benefit of the Doubt, Independence, Accountability	Maltreatment: exploitation, verbal and physical aggression, mobbing, authoritarianism, manipulation, discrimination. Indifference: ignoring the needs of the employee, constant criticism of someone’s work, ridiculous jokes

Source: Mele (2013); Hicks (2011); Hodson (2001).

As Diona Hicks observes (2011; 2016), taking care of dignity necessitates the acceptance of identity and difference which stem from the recognition of another person as an integral human being, who is privileged to express their views and be accepted regardless of age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, class membership, or skin color. According to the author – an international consultant on conflict solutions, including armed conflicts – the protection of dignity also needs a sense of inclusion, physical and mental safety, as well as attention in listening to and understanding of someone’s concerns (acknowledgment). It is also important to appreciate someone’s work (recognition), create the culture of fairness, treat others as trustworthy individuals (benefit of the doubt), who have the potential for independence. A very important strategy in caring for dignity is, according to Hicks (2011; 2016), the ability to take responsibility for one’s own actions and apologize when they violate someone’s accountability.

Conclusion

The performative interpretation of dignity as a moral value – realized in relationships with other people – enables us to see an organization as a place for denying or enhancing human dignity. We should highlight, as Stephens and Kanov (2017) do, that emphasis on empirical and relational aspects of dignity allows considering a bi-directional influence of organizational structures or cultures on social relationships, which determine the processes of undermining or enhancing dignity in the workplace. It seems fair to say that this approach, which emphasizes the performative character of dignity, best fits the research framework of the humanistic management, in which the human being is the highest good in the organization and requires protection with the use of management processes.

In further empirical research of the category of dignity in the workplace, it is worth following Sayer's (2007) warning that, even if someone claims that their working conditions do not pose a threat to their dignity, it does not mean that it is really so. This is because a worker systematically deprived of dignity may not expect more humane working conditions or raise objections at the moment of their absence. The ritualization of pathological relations forms low self-esteem, which may prevent from fighting for more humane alternative. On the other hand, however, one should also pay attention to the trap of romanticizing dissatisfaction and the ensuing resistance: people enjoy complaining about their work, but this does not necessarily mean that they work in conditions that threaten their dignity. It seems that particularly in-depth qualitative research conducted in the humanistic management field may help to thoroughly investigate the cases, in which dignity in the workplace needs protection (Kostera, 2003).

Finally, we should draw attention to an interesting paradox in research on dignity in the workplace: despite the highly instrumental context of the capitalist economy, dominant in most Western countries, the way the worker is treated may be non-instrumental and therefore, transcends the norms and principles of the capitalist context (Sayer, 2007). Following this reasoning we can say that capitalist working conditions in the organization are related to uncertainty (Krzyworzeka, 2011; Koźminski, 2015), frequent inequalities, and social injustice that results from existing organizational hierarchy and arbitrary division of resources (Sułkowski and Zawadzki, 2014). In this context, there is a constant threat to the dignity in the workplace and, therefore, the management and organizational researchers bear the responsibility to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon and indicate corrective actions, even if their implementation would not solve the problem completely. It is our, management scholars

and practitioners, responsibility to remember, that business should advance the human dignity, not undermine it.

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