

Unveiling the different shades of well-being to improve managerial decision-making¹

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Maria Vincenza Ciasullo - Silvia Cosimato - Miriana Ferrara

Abstract

Frame of the research. Well-being is a concept that has attracted scholars' interest for centuries. In the last decades, workplace well-being has gained academic research attention. Nevertheless, a holistic approach to how workplace well-being is related to the decision-making process is currently missing. A conceptualization of well-being influencing the decision-making process is therefore provided.

Purpose of the paper. The study aims to investigate well-being from managers' perspective, highlighting the factors that shape workplace well-being, thereby affecting the overall decision-making process.

Methodology. A qualitative approach is adopted, employing a single case study methodology. As a key and distinctive company that promotes well-being, Cisco is chosen. Through the collection of 973 reviews of Cisco managers from a worldwide job platform (i.e., Indeed), a thematic content analysis is performed.

Results. The results show that psychological, social, and contextual factors are interconnected and contribute in a balanced way to workplace well-being.

Research limitations. The investigation of a single case study does not allow generalizations.

Managerial implications. The study demonstrates that managers can affect workplace well-being. In this direction, it is valuable to inspire and support managers to be proactive, supportive, collaborative, and ready to adapt and react to change to facilitate a smooth decision-making process.

Originality of the paper. Despite the prolific research on well-being, few studies focus on adopting a manager's perspective to understand how well-being can affect the decision-making process. Both the multidimensional and multilayered nature of workplace well-being are addressed in the study.

Keywords: well-being; workplace well-being; managerial decision-making; Cisco managers; Indeed platform

1. Introduction

In 2004, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined well-being as a state “which allows individuals to realize their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to their community” (p. 23). It has attracted the interest of

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policymakers, scholars, and practitioners over centuries. Thus, well-being is rooted in the speculation of the godfathers of Western philosophy, Plato, Socrates, Epicurus, and Aristotle, allowing us to approach this construct alternatively, according to the hedonistic or the eudemonistic perspective (Deci and Ryan, 2008). The hedonistic perspective considers a good life to be based on seeking pleasure and the avoidance of negative feelings, while the eudemonistic perspective considers it to be the extent to which individuals have realized their potential and have achieved a meaningful life (Scaria *et al.*, 2020).

These seminal approaches and their etymology demonstrate that the foundations of well-being lie in its positive charge, essential to balancing psychological, social, and physical instances of individuals and organizations (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). This approach emerges from the positive feelings (e.g., happiness and satisfaction) and the functioning elements (e.g., engagement and self-acceptance) that should always inform psychological, social, and even economic processes. Recently, well-being's main dimensions have been summarized in three different but interrelated macro categories: subjective, material, and relational (White, 2008). Moreover, its ability and/or willingness to balance multidimensional challenges and resources, such as physical health, happiness, work-life balance, work environment, social support, education, and security, make well-being a complex construct that is still under the scrutiny of policymakers, scholars, and practitioners (Wassell and Dodge, 2015).

The complex and multidimensional nature of well-being makes it difficult to define it univocally (Dooris *et al.*, 2018). The following alternative definitions confirm the lack of a common approach to well-being. Sirgy (2021) considered it to be the ability or the aspiration to satisfy salient life domains, while Diener *et al.* (2002) approached it as “a person's cognitive and affective evaluations on his or her life” (p. 63). Moreover, Simovska and O'Toole (2021) defined well-being as ‘being well’ or “having an optimal psychological experience and functioning” (p. 172), which, according to Alartartseva and Barysheva (2015), has subjective (self-assessed) dimensions related to individual human and spiritual characteristics and features, and objective (ascribed) dimensions coming from individuals' perception and evaluation of human society.

Subjective and objective well-being sheds light on a further characteristic of inner well-being-its multilevel nature, which, together with its multidimensionality, contributes to its complexity.

On the one hand, subjective well-being is inspired by the ancient Greek hedonistic philosophy and can be defined as “the frequency and intensity of experiences of joy, fascination, anxiety, sadness, anger, and affection that makes life pleasant or unpleasant” (Kahneman and Deaton, 2010, p. 164). As stated, this approach lays its foundations on people's evaluation of their lives and encompasses both cognitive judgments of satisfaction and affective appraisals of moods and emotions (Diener *et al.*, 1999, 2002). Dealing with subjective well-being, Diener (1984) described it as an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about an individual's life at a particular point in time, ranging from negative to positive and therefore coming from a combination of positive affect and life satisfaction.

On the other hand, objective well-being is inspired by Aristotle's main concept of eudemonia (or εὐδαιμονία, derived from εὐδαιμων, or happy), intended not as a personal and hedonic feeling of happiness, but rather as a positive feeling toward manifestations of things that are objectively valuable and contribute to an overall assessment of the quality of life (Hirai *et al.*, 2016; Sean, 1986). However, despite the above-mentioned differences, the inner complexity of well-being blurs the boundaries between these two approaches, making them not competing but rather two facets of a general construct (Forgeard *et al.*, 2011). However, it is worth noting that both the objective approach to well-being and its eudemonic approach relate to organizational well-being, intended "as the first step of an organizational development process" (Sancassiani *et al.*, 2015, p. 11), requiring the ability to promote and maintain employees' physical, psychological, and social well-being (Boccoli *et al.*, 2022; Torri and Toniolo, 2010). This peculiar declination of well-being has recently been approached as both a strategy and a responsibility due to the blurring of the line between work and life, which has led managers to take responsibility for creating a more positive and productive workplace (Lambert *et al.*, 2019; Spence, 2015). In this sense, when applied to the workplace, well-being-which, in a nutshell, is "how we feel at work and about our work" (De Neve and Ward, 2023, p. 3)-emphasizes the importance of social interactions typical of a specific workplace (Bartels *et al.*, 2019). This has led to a focus on eudemonic endeavors toward the quality of external relationships and the intrapersonal dimensions essential to creating common purposes within an organization (Putra *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, to achieve general well-being within a business organization and in a specific workplace, the participation and empowerment of people or employees are essential (Butts *et al.*, 2009; Franco-Santos *et al.*, 2021).

This implies that when employees are committed to the organization and engaged with processes, they tend to have positive feelings and a positive attitude, essential to experience a general sense of wellness, which can positively affect the decisions that inform their behavior (Boxall and Macky, 2014; Eatough and Spector, 2014). This opens up a research gap in terms of if and how the different dimensions of the construct under investigation impact both subjective/internal and objective/external well-being, which calls for further investigation into if and how well-being can positively affect the decision-making process. Particularly, despite the prolific body of research on well-being, there remains a notable gap in the literature when it comes to adopting a manager's perspective to explore how well-being influences the decision-making process.

This study aims to bridge this gap by identifying the main factors at the core of workplace well-being and their influence on decision-making. Two main inquiries inspired this analysis:

RQ1: *What are the factors that mostly affect managers' well-being?*

RQ2: *How does a perceived sense of well-being affect managers' approach to the decision-making process?*

To address these issues, an explorative analysis is conducted, assuming managers' perspectives to investigate well-being as a multidimensional construct that affects the decision-making process. The general remainder

of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical background, Section 3 describes the research setting and the methodology adopted, and Section 4 illustrates the main results. Section 5 offers a discussion of the study and Section 6 highlights implications, limitations, and future research.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 A multilevel and multidimensional approach to well-being: a focus on organizations and workers

Even though well-being is globally central to public policies and individuals, it remains “a complex multi-faceted construct that has continued to elude researchers’ attempts to define and measure” (Pollard and Lee, 2003, p. 60). The inner complexity of this construct is due to the intertwining of different levels and dimensions, which various nuanced definitions—deeply dependent on the conceptual approach that different disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, philosophy, politics, etc.) have embraced—have highlighted over time. To counteract this situation and offer a systematic approach to well-being, the focus must be both on the differences and on the similarities between two main essential levels: the objective or external level, and the subjective or internal level of well-being (Norwich *et al.*, 2022). If objective well-being stems from individuals’ perception and evaluation of human society and aims at meeting essential or basic needs in terms of social norms and values, subjective well-being aims at responding to subjective needs and managing personal experiences according to personal characteristics and features (Conceição and Bandura, 2008). Moreover, subjective (or internal) well-being can be declined at the micro level as individual well-being, which is generally defined as the evaluation of life quality, coming from individuals’ “perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and about their goals, expectations, standards and concerns” (WHO, 1995, p. 1406).

By considering the two levels of well-being, Alatartseva and Barysheva (2015) identified the following main characteristics of well-being: 1) an existence in harmony with others and the environment; 2) an innate understanding of what is good and the ability and willingness to achieve it; 3) individuals’ ability to realize their human potential and plan for life; and 4) the creation of a society and the empowerment of people to fulfill the above-stated positions. However, the complexity of well-being lies not only in its two levels (subjective and objective), but also in its multiple and often intertwined dimensions, which call for a dynamic and always new balance. In this sense, Sundriyal and Kumar (2014) considered well-being based on three main dimensions: physical, psychological, and social. In more detail, the physical dimension is related to what can be achieved in terms of health status, functional outcome, and/or quality of life, while psychological well-being comes from good and proper psychological functioning, possibly thanks to the intertwining of self-acceptance, positive relations, personal

growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Finally, the social dimension of well-being deals with a personal ability to interact in a community successfully and respectfully, as well as in other social contexts. This dimension is based on interpersonal relationships, social support networks, and community engagement. Even though these dimensions differently impact both objective and subjective levels of well-being, according to Maslow (1943), their dynamic combination-the reduction of tension between the urgency of needs and goals as well as their satisfaction-can lead to a holistic sense of well-being and even a more general sense of happiness (Cosimato *et al.*, 2021; Oishi *et al.*, 2009).

Due to the dialogic dynamics existing between the two main levels of well-being (objective and subjective), individual well-being at the organizational level is highly influenced by a sub-dimension of social well-being-that is, workplace well-being or people's "satisfaction at work, and the emotional and psychological experience and health status expressed at workplaces" (Zheng *et al.*, 2015, p. 623). Even though workplace well-being is a blurred concept, which several disciplines have approached and defined differently, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development defined it in 2007 as a bio-psycho-social construct that includes physical, mental, and social health, referring to the several issues related to the different dimensions of employees' sense of wellness (Brauers, 2008; Wallace, 2022). This concept is attracting growing attention among policymakers, managers, and others due to the disruptive phenomena that are currently changing socio-economic scenarios and subverting individuals' priorities and the way people approach work and life satisfaction (Baccarani *et al.*, 2013; La Placa *et al.*, 2013). In this sense, it is also worth noting that workplace well-being is highly influenced by job satisfaction, which can be positively or negatively affected by contextual, physical, and psychological elements (Bertrandias *et al.*, 2021; Daniels *et al.*, 2022; Spence, 2015).

2.2 Factors to assess workplace well-being

Due to the advent of the digital revolution and other dramatic events (e.g., the Covid-19 pandemic), the workplace is globally undergoing a disruptive transformation, mainly based on remote and virtual team working (Avery and Zabel, 2000; Bennett and McWhorter, 2021; Chamakiotis *et al.*, 2021; McPhail *et al.*, 2024). Together with this, well-being within the workplace and its consequences represent a major issue and a matter of concern for policymakers, companies, and employees at the global level (Wallace, 2022). This also calls for new approaches and strategies aimed at managing human resources; thus, employee well-being is one of the main components of workplace relations (Droulers *et al.*, 2020, p. 5). Moreover, assuming a managerial perspective, workplace well-being represents the turning point of human resource management (HRM) (Wright *et al.*, 2007), based on the so-called 'happy, productive' worker hypothesis (Peccei, 2004; Peccei *et al.*, 2013; Zelenski *et al.*, 2008) and the possible contribution that managers can offer through a participative and innovation-driven leadership (Inceoglu *et al.*, 2018). De Neve *et al.* (2013) pointed out the positive influence that emotions such as a sense of personal satisfaction and well-being can also

act on human decision-making at the organizational level. This implies that managers with a good sense of well-being and with a generally positive attitude toward the company tend to “make decisions about how to allocate scarce resources in ways that are conducive to worker wellbeing” (De Neve *et al.*, 2013, p. 10), balancing rational and emotional factors. In doing so, programs and actions aimed at achieving mutual gains for both employers and employees, such as healthy and balanced lifestyles, are needed (Van De Voorde *et al.*, 2012; Watson *et al.*, 2023). However, assuming the opposite perspective of critical management studies (CMS), work is considered one of the main determinants of employees’ wellness. Thus, this approach considers workplace well-being programs intended to create the ‘fit’ employee (Cederström and Spicer, 2015; Johansson *et al.*, 2017) or individuals’ fit with work (Wallace, 2022).

Like the general concept of well-being, workplace well-being can be articulated into individual or subjective and social or objective levels. The first (individual or subjective) is based on three main elements: job satisfaction, affective or emotional experience of work, and meaningful and purposeful work (De Neve and Ward, 2023, p. 1145). These dimensions are based on Foucault *et al.*’s (1995) approach to workplace well-being, considered as employees’ disposition to engage in ethical self-work based on self-conduct and on specific forms of ethical subjectivity rather than on healthy activity (Baccarani, 2008). Here, ethics delves into “the manner in which one ought to conduct oneself—that is how one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject” (Foucault, 1990, p. 26), which, in a nutshell, is the “relationship you ought to have to yourself” (Foucault, 2000, p. 352). This implies that workplace well-being is also highly influenced by individuals’ level of engagement with ethics and by their disposition to inspire personal self-conduct toward it. Moving to the social or objective level of workplace well-being, it is worth noting that in this case there are also three main characteristics: a supportive team culture, delivering excellent services, and professional development opportunities (Anderson *et al.*, 2021).

The extant literature recognizes that the three main dimensions of general well-being—psychological, social, and contextual/physical—can also be applied to workplace well-being (Sundriyal and Kumar, 2014). Focusing on these three dimensions, it is worth noting that psychological well-being is related to individual and internal experiences/feelings (e.g., the experience of happiness and self-realization), while social well-being refers to the quality and degree of individual interactions with peers and with society and nature. Finally, contextual well-being is related to environmental conditions that characterize individuals’ lives and/or workplaces (Franco and Blasi, 2013).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research setting and design

This study aims to contribute to the research on organizational well-being assuming a managerial perspective. Particularly, it investigates what mostly affects managers’ well-being and if it influences their decision-

making approach. In doing so, an exploratory case study analysis has been conducted, focusing on Cisco System Inc. as an extreme case. Analysis of an extreme case study is an appropriate method for gaining insights from rare or unusually positive or negative complex phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989; Tellis, 1997). The case study analysis is conducted by implementing thematic analysis, a research method based on a data analysis strategy used for “identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data” (Clarke and Braun, 2017, p. 298). Thematic analysis is a comprehensive process “where researchers can identify numerous cross-references between the data and the research’s evolving themes” (Alhojailan, 2012, p. 12). The analysis was conducted by gathering data from the Indeed online job search platform, considering Cisco System managers’ comments. The case company is the worldwide leader operating in the information technology sector, offering an industry-leading portfolio of technology innovations by focusing on the design, manufacture, and sale of networking hardware, telecommunications equipment, and other high-technology services and products such as routers, switches, networking software, security solutions, collaboration tools, data center technology, and cloud-based services (<https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/about.html>). Table 1 shows the main structural characteristics of the case company.

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Tab. 1: Cisco Systems Inc. profile

Date of foundation	1984
Headquarters	San Jose, California, USA
Revenue in 2023	US\$ 57 billion
Employees	84,900
Countries	95

Source: Our elaboration of Purpose Report 2023

3.2 Data collection and data analysis

Data collection was conducted on textual material about Cisco Systems Inc. managers’ approach and perception of well-being published on the Indeed platform. Cisco Systems Inc. represents best practice in terms of a positive workplace environment. This is proved by the fact that the case company was awarded the “Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For” in the USA in 2023 for the third year running, and it gained the bronze medal for the “World’s Best Workplace” award. These awards are assigned by Fortune and Great Place to Work, a research institute focused on workplace culture that has been publishing the Best Companies list for 26 years.

The Indeed platform was selected because, since 2019, it has collected and disseminated work well-being data on a very large scale, gathering more than 15 million survey responses in the USA alone, and becoming the platform with the largest data on workplace well-being (De Neve and Ward, 2023). Querying the Indeed platform, data were collected in December 2023, when 6,400 reviews were retrieved. The following inclusion criteria were set for data collection: reviews published in English

by US Cisco managers who had written two or more reviews since the birth of the Indeed platform.

Tab. 2: Inclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	
Type of document	Online review
Data source	Indeed platform
Authorship	US Cisco business managers
Publication date	August 2011-December 2023
Language	English

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Review selection was performed through an open-ended iterative search process (Fingeld-Connett and Johnson, 2013) based on an ongoing search, reading, and refining of the selected texts. In so doing, researchers selected 973 comparable texts responding to the inclusion criteria. The privacy of reviewers, confidentiality, and anonymity of reviews' authors were ensured, reporting just their function, such as managers (i.e., senior manager or task manager) involved in the following business functions: business development, operations, marketing, finance, HR, IT, R&D, and sales. Data were analyzed by performing thematic content analysis through QSR NVivo 14 software. Thematic content analysis is a qualitative research technique aimed at exploring a specific phenomenon through an inductive or deductive process to generate a theoretical understanding (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). This method is well-suited to analyzing textual resources, identifying specific themes or concepts, and counting their occurrence (or frequency of occurrence). It makes it possible to describe, analyze, and report patterns in the data (themes) (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019). In line with the selected method, a coding scheme was developed and applied based on three main coding categories derived from the main levels of workplace well-being and some specific themes for each category (Table 3).

Tab. 3: Coding categories and themes for the analysis

Categories	Themes
Psychological	Personal traits Professional development Personal growth
Social	Culture Relationships Values
Contextual	Work environment Organizational features Self-achievements

Source: Authors' elaboration.

To better depict the coding process at the core of the thematic analysis, Table 4 provides a coding manual example. In this way, the coding process

automatically conducted using the software is better detailed, focusing on the single steps: 1) screening data sources; 2) selecting data; 3) sorting categories; and 4) linking themes. This process makes it possible to index a text into categories and establish a “framework of thematic ideas about it” (Gibbs, 2007).

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Tab. 4: Coding process

Data source	Example of data	Initial category	Emergent themes
Indeed platform	“On any given day, I might partner with CS leaders, or PS technical subject matter experts, or sales enablement on projects and programs to drive customer value”.	Contextual well-being	Work environment Self-achievements
		Social well-being	Relationships
Indeed platform	“Had a lot of lesson learned and guidance from the team. It was difficult but I was able to pick up what they were putting down and their help was very useful in the long run”.	Psychological well-being	Professional development Personal growth
		Contextual well-being	Work environment Self-achievements
Indeed platform	“Great place to work, excellent culture that genuinely promotes a work/life balance whilst maintaining high levels of productivity and efficiency. A perfect environment for ingenuity and creativity”.	Psychological well-being	Personal traits
		Social well-being	Culture
		Contextual well-being	Work environment
Indeed platform	“I learned so much about my capabilities as well as my ability and willingness to learn more. Cisco provides many job paths for an individual. I worked with some of the most intelligent minds out there as well as made lifelong friendships”.	Psychological well-being	Professional development Personal growth
		Social well-being	Relationships
Indeed platform	“On the engineering side of the business, the intensity and innovation factor is very high. Dynamic work environment, fast-paced-and great people”.	Contextual well-being	Organizational features Work environment

Source: Authors' elaboration.

4. Results

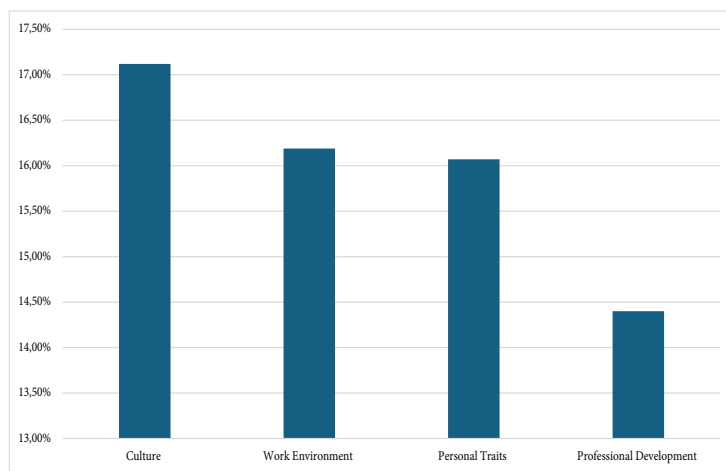
To organize the themes and sub-themes related to workplace well-being, the main categories that emerged from the literature (psychological, social, and context) were used. The results achieved from the thematic analysis of the selected sample of documents (Cisco's managers' online reviews) were synthesized: the following tables and figures show the main findings. They point out the main factors (and the related sub-factors) that affect the three main levers of managers' well-being at their workplace.

The results demonstrate that the first category, named 'psychological', and its associated themes were the most recurrent in the analyzed texts

(35.99%), followed by 'context' (32.05%) and 'social' (31.96%) (see Appendix A). Moreover, the results demonstrate a relatively narrow margin, especially between the last two categories.

Focusing on the themes associated with the aforementioned categories (Table 5), the results achieved by analyzing the selected reviews demonstrated that the most prevalent theme was culture (17.12%), belonging to the less frequently occurring category 'social'. It is worth noting that there is a significant margin between occurrences of the other themes associated with this category. Work environment (context) accounted for 16.19 percent of total occurrences, and personal traits (psychological) for 16.07 percent. In this case, this theme demonstrates a narrow margin with the sub-theme of professional development (14.4%). This led us to understand the factors that mainly influence managers' perception of workplace well-being at the main levels, actualized in the psychological, social, and contextual dimensions.

Tab. 5: The most occurring themes



Source: Authors' elaboration.

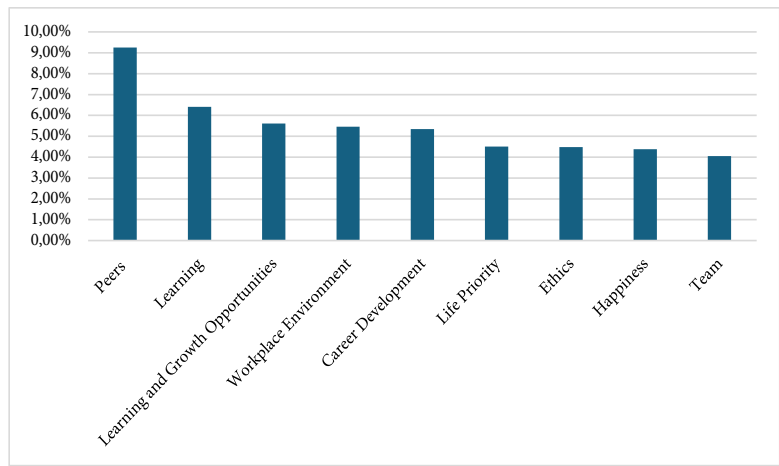
To better understand the main nuances of the three main categories of workplace well-being, it is worth focusing, too, on the occurrence of sub-themes (see Appendix A) related to the issues that managers perceive as most impactful on personal and professional dimensions of psychological well-being, on cultural and relational dimensions of social well-being, and on organizational and material dimensions of contextual well-being.

It is worth noting that none of the detected sub-themes recurred more than 8.33 percent of the total sub-themes (Table 6). This implies a high fragmentation between Cisco managers' perceptions of the main discriminant of the themes attached to psychological, social, and contextual well-being. The most recurrent sub-themes associated with the psychological dimension are learning (6.41%), career development (5.35%), life priority (4.51%), and happiness (4.38%), while those associated with the social dimension are peers (9.25%), ethics (4.48%),

and team (4.05%). Finally, the most recurrent sub-themes attached to the contextual dimension are workplace environment (5.46%) and learning and growth opportunities (5.61%). All the other sub-themes accounted for less than 4 percent of the total occurrences.

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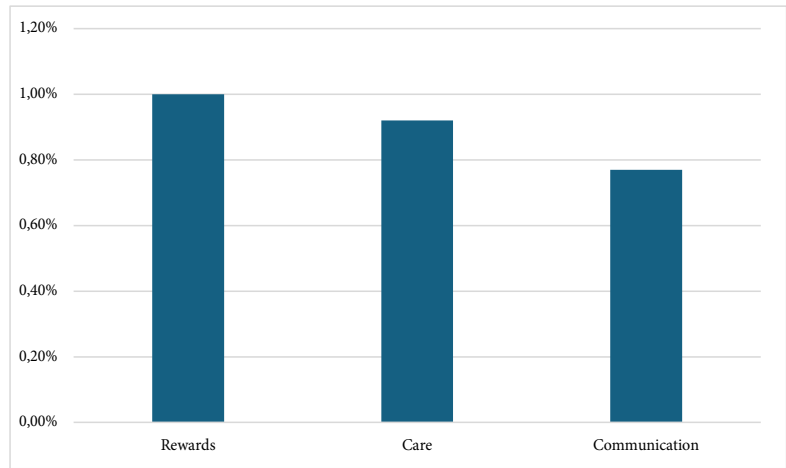
Tab. 6: The most recurrent sub-themes



Source: Authors’ elaboration.

It is also interesting to focus on the less recurrent sub-themes. Doing so identifies the sub-themes which are less than or equal to 1 percent, such as communication (0.77%) and rewards (1%) (contextual dimension), and care (0.92%) (social dimension) (Table 7).

Tab. 7: The less recurrent sub-themes



Source: Authors’ elaboration.

5. Discussion

The results presented in the previous section and synthesized in Table 8 make it possible to address the first research question at the core of this study: what factors most affect managers' well-being?

Tab. 8: Comparison between the most and least frequent themes and sub-themes

Category	Theme	Most recurrent sub-themes (> 4%)	Least recurrent sub-themes (< 1%)
Psychological	Personal traits (16.07%)	Learning (6.41%) Career development (5.35%) Life priority (4.51%) Happiness (4.38%)	//
Social	Culture (17.12%)	Peers (9.25%) Ethics (4.48%) Team (4.05%)	Care (0.92%)
Contextual	Work environment (16.19%)	Workplace environment (5.46%) Learning and growth opportunities (5.61%)	Communication (0.77%) Rewards (1%)

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Drawing on Sundriyal and Kumar's (2014) conceptualization of the three main dimensions of workplace well-being (psychological, social, and contextual), and in line with the extant literature, the analysis demonstrated that these dimensions are not conflicting but are highly interrelated; consequently, they are able to influence workplace well-being at both the subjective and objective level.

The emergence of this inner connection between the three themes is due to the holistic nature of the construct under investigation. Thus, managers who embrace that holistic and integrated approach to well-being tend to develop and enact collaborative initiatives, programs, or actions able to have a positive influence on all three main dimensions of workplace well-being at the individual, team, and organizational levels (Costello, 2020).

This holistic and collective approach to well-being can also mitigate "work-related stress and enhance employees' health, well-being, performance, and the organization's productivity" (Cvenkel and Cvenkel, 2020, p. 162), thereby contributing to the creation of what scholars define as the 'happy productive' (Peccei, 2004; Peccei *et al.*, 2013; Zelenski *et al.*, 2008). The results also demonstrate that managers tend to attach more emphasis to some themes related to workplace well-being.

Focusing on the themes, managers attached more importance to culture than to relationships and values. This is because when managers are optimistic, proactive, future-oriented, and supportive, they tend to place great emphasis and work more on cultural elements. After all, shared practice can develop a strong sense of belonging to the organization, contributing to enhancing the individual and collective sense of general well-being (Williams *et al.*, 2015). This finding is also in line with the ecological approach (McGregor *et al.*, 2003), which considers well-being a

holistic concept influenced by the cultural elements that characterize both the external and internal corporate environment. In this vein, Yamaguchi and Kim (2015) considered culture as being able to develop tailored ways to approach and contribute to well-being based on managers' ability to inspire their decision-making process to the local/national culture, which offers individuals the same approach to life, to what is good and what is not, and even to problem-solving (Alagaraja, 2020). It follows that managers' understanding of culture and social behaviors can better challenge the complex dynamics that characterize professional relationships that bond people in a specific work environment (Yamaguchi and Kim, 2015). In doing so, managers will be open to addressing not only the situational factors that affect employees' relationships with their work but also the personal factors (e.g., work-life interconnection and balance) that can contribute to creating a positive and stressless experience at work (Cvenkel, 2021). This sheds light on another important theme that emerged from the conducted analysis: workplace well-being can help enhance or make more evident personal traits or individual characteristics. These traits are a person's characteristics that are reflected in psychological capital, namely hope and self-efficacy. Personal traits can influence the way people experience the workplace, their responsibility, stress, and a general sense of wellness, and, in doing so, "their intentions to remain with the organization" (Groza & Groza, 2022, p. 353). A positive work experience can also be influenced by those practices that an organization implements to promote individual well-being, an overall sense of satisfaction, enhanced performance, and productivity. This can be achieved by promoting the work-life balance based on initiatives like dependent care, flexible work options, and family or personal leave (Cosimato *et al.*, 2021; Nunes and Rodriguez, 2024). It follows that managers who want to contribute to creating a positive, shared, and long-lasting sense of well-being pay more attention to individual characteristics and traits than to professional development and personal growth. This is due to the strong influence that personal traits can have on the workplace climate, and therefore on the stress rate, fairness, and inclusiveness (Cvenkel, 2021). Consequently, in making decisions about team building, job/responsibility assignments, and even project management, managers tend to pay more attention to individuals' psychological characteristics than to individuals' ability, skills, and even talent, because these characteristics can negatively affect work life and the ability to hit corporate goals.

The third most recurrent theme was work environment, which mostly attracted managers' interest, especially if compared with organizational features and material achievement. This finding is in line with the extant literature according to which employees' satisfaction and subsequent general well-being can depend on the working space's main characteristics (Aryanti *et al.*, 2020). Thus, recent phenomena, such as demographic changes, "an aging population, longer working hours, competing demands between work and home, and the use of communications technology that works toward 24/7 constant contact" (Cvenkel, 2021, p. 431), have had some negative consequences on people's satisfaction with the workplace that highly affect individual and organizational outcomes. Moreover, workplace

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well-being positively or negatively influences employees' ability to develop professionally (Correa *et al.*, 2019). When managers make employees feel supported, those employees are more open to contributing to creating a positive work environment based on "the collective well-being of departments, teams, and the whole organization as well" (Alagaraja, 2020, p. 13). The attention that managers give to the workplace environment also denotes their efforts in solving quickly and positively emerging problems, making more than the best decision that fits with the specific workplace, the related culture, and the people who contribute to its development. According to Braverman (1999), managers should always be able and willing to avoid their work environment turning toxic, causing personal stress, mistrustful relationships, unrelenting organizational changes, and even bullish or violent behaviors that hinder a company from healthy growth over time (Martin *et al.*, 2003).

Drawing on previous considerations, it is also possible to address the second research question at the core of this study: how does a perceived sense of well-being affect managers' approach to the decision-making process? When managers approach well-being holistically, boosting the synergies existing among its multiple dimensions, the relative managerial decisions are logically influenced. Accordingly, the overall decision-making process is boosted and informed by ethical decisions because it is oriented to fairness, collaboration, motivation, and readiness to change (Nair *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the extant literature approaches fairness as being related to employees' perception of the decision-making process in terms of impartiality and managerial support (Leiter and Maslach, 2017), while collaboration is about the "quality of social interaction at work, including relationships with colleagues, managers, and subordinates" (Cvenkel, 2021, p. 433). Finally, motivation deals with how an organization's priorities and ethical approach are aligned with those of employees (Cho *et al.*, 2008). When fairness, collaboration, and motivation are recognized in organizational governance, employees tend to achieve a high person-job match, which makes them less likely to experience burnout and have turnover intentions, and more open to being deeply engaged in organizational choices even when these require a big change. Moreover, managers who recognize the influence of personal traits on well-being tend also to be open to the influence that these levels of psychological well-being have on the decisions they are called to take in terms of managing team dynamics, essential to ensuring collaboration, commitment to the company, and engagement with corporate activities. This is also important in inspiring managers to make ethical decisions, especially, as stated, when the work environment is becoming toxic, to promptly enact corrective and participative actions to discourage misconduct and violent behaviors (Costello, 2020). It follows that to challenge these situations, managers should inform decision-making on shared purposes, making the related strategies and processes as participative and as smooth as possible. However, it is worth noting that this is possible when managers have themselves developed a sensitive approach to an organization nourished by a generally positive sense of well-being (Day and Penney, 2017).

6. Implications, limitations, and further research

Maria Vincenza Ciasullo
Silvia Cosimato
Miriana Ferrara
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shades of well-being
to improve managerial
decision-making

Drawing on the inner complexity of the main construct of well-being, the main aim of this study was to offer a better understanding of the multidimensional and multilevel nature of workplace well-being and to ascertain if and how it affects the decision-making process.

In doing so, the analysis has pointed out some theoretical and managerial insights. The results therefore contribute to the fragmented research on well-being complexity (Dooris *et al.*, 2018), offering a better understanding of the mutual relationships and the synergistic dynamics existing between the different levels (subjective/internal and objective/external) and dimensions (psychological, social, and contextual) at the core of workplace well-being (Sundriyal and Kumar, 2014). By addressing these interconnections, the study sheds light on the intricate interplay of factors that collectively shape well-being. The analysis has pointed out not only the main determinants of the three main dimensions of workplace well-being, but also the dynamic balance between different but strictly related elements that mutually contribute to creating a general sense of well-being at the individual and organizational levels (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). This balance underscores the complex and reciprocal contributions of individual and organizational factors in fostering a holistic sense of well-being. Moreover, the study has demonstrated the theoretical relevance of considering managers' perspective in understanding well-being, highlighting their key role as both influencers and recipients of workplace dynamics.

This offers interesting managerial implications. The results of the analysis demonstrate that managers and their practice can positively affect workplace well-being only when the afore-mentioned dynamic balance between a personal sense of well-being and a sense of well-being felt by other human resources at the psychological, social, and contextual levels is accomplished. In this sense, this work offers some interesting insights that can inspire and support managers in terms of attitude, strategic behavior, and operation practice, essential to finding the most fitting combination of the elements associated with well-being dimensions (Alagaraja, 2020). As the findings demonstrate, this is particularly important in current workplace settings, where unexpected complexities and criticalities contribute to making well-being a multi-faceted and dynamic concept, whose most prominent dimensions are highly dependent on the organizational culture, social interactions, and the ability to balance work-life practices and priorities. To achieve this goal, managers should change their traditional approaches to decision-making, opening up to a participatory logic based on worker-centered data-driven processes and activities. This also offers another interesting and surprising implication for managers, who must be aware that the combination to achieve and nourish workplace well-being does not exist; rather, managers should be ready to change and renegotiate the elements to be considered according to the changing situations that characterize life at the individual, social, and business levels. This implies a lean and smooth approach to decision-making that can be enacted only when managers are proactive, participative, collaborative, and sensitive to challenges and opportunities (Bartels *et al.*, 2019). It is worth noting

that this is not an easy task to accomplish; thus, managers must usually discern between multiple and often conflicting priorities (such as critical needs, internal conflicts, misbehaviors, etc.), and take the most suitable decision for employees and for the company only when they are satisfied with their workplace on different levels (Alatartseva *et al.*, 2015). This implies that due to the complexity of workplace well-being, the decisions that managers are called to make are informed not only by rational factors but also by the blurred nature of psychological and social factors. In this sense, a new and more emotion-based approach to decision-making emerges, focusing on the importance of nourishing not only professional and technical competencies but also emotional ones, essential to understanding and reacting to the complex behavioral dynamics that employees enact to face the emergent and unexpected issues typical of current turbulent professional and personal environments. As the findings demonstrate, when managers merge the rational dimension of their professional skills and their emotional abilities, they can easily, proactively, and collaboratively improve workplace well-being, which tends to have a positive indirect influence on employees' satisfaction with their job and their performance.

In a nutshell, the originality of this work makes it possible to assume that perceived well-being can positively affect decision-making when it is holistically approached and therefore achieved by balancing its different dimensions and the related intertwined levels.

The study presents a main limitation related to the investigation of an extreme case study, which does not allow consistent generalization of the results. Nevertheless, the paper proposes exploratory research that is a first qualitative step toward addressing future quantitative studies that could analyze the statistical relationships among well-being dimensions and the decision-making process mediated by the sub-dimensions (themes) detected in this study. Moreover, given the period included in this study, longitudinal studies could be insightful to understanding how well-being, in its multidimensional nature, has developed over the years, particularly considering disruptive events such as economic crises, ecological disasters, technology disruption, and so on. Since this study is based on the collection of reviews, future research could gather data through surveys and then collect primary data.

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Websites

<https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/about.html>

Academic or professional position and contacts

Maria Vincenza Ciasullo
Full Professor of Management
University of Salerno - Italy
e-mail: mciasullo@unisa.it

Silvia Cosimato
Associate Professor of Management
University of Napoli Federico II - Italy
e-mail: silvia.cosimato@unina.it

Miriana Ferrara
PhD Student in Big Data Management
University of Salerno - Italy
e-mail: mferrara@unisa.it

Appendix A

Categories	Themes	Sub-themes	% of the total occurrences
Psychological Dimension 35.99	Personal Traits (16.07)	Life Priority	4.51%
		Flexibility	2.20%
		Supportiveness	2.56%
		Happiness	4.38%
		Self-efficacy	2.42%
	Professional Development (14.4)	Career Development	5.35%
		Skills	1.45%
		Learning	6.41%
		Talent	1.19%
	Personal Growth (5.52)	Self-achievement	1.68%
		Success	1.51%
		Expectations	1.26%
		Goals	1.07%
Social Dimension 31.96	Culture (17.12)	Peers	9.25%
		Community	3.90%
		Networking	3.97%
	Relationships (7.08)	Team	4.05%
		Collaboration	2.11%
		Care	0.92%
	Values (7.76)	Diversity	1.15%
		Collective identity	2.13%
		Ethics	4.48%
Contextual Dimension 32.05	Work environment (16.19)	Learning and Growth Opportunities	5.61%
		Workplace Environment	5.46%
		Remote	2.73%
		Agile	2.39%
	Organizational features (8.69)	Innovation	1.34%
		Technology	1.42%
		Leadership	2.73%
		Training	1.19%
		Inclusivity	1.24%
		Communication	0.77%
	Material achievements (7.17)	Upgrading	1.13%
		Rewards	1.00%
		Benefits	3.33%
		Compensation	1.71%

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