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**Professionals' perceptions on management
practices supporting employee well-being in a
diverse working community**

International Business

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International Management and Entrepreneurship

Author:

Anni Suoniemi

Supervisors:

D.Sc. Elina Pelto

D.Sc. Riikka Harikkala-Laihin

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Author: Anni Suoniemi

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Over the past decade, employee well-being has gained higher focus in organizations. Professionals in knowledge-intensive work, are experiencing employee well-being challenges, such as stress and burnout, more than ever before. Organizations are now focusing more on employee well-being itself, rather than enhancing organizational performance through employee well-being initiatives. Meanwhile, organizations are struggling to retain and attract talent. Megatrends, such as globalization, demographical change, and technological advancements are also shaping work. Employees from diverse cultural, national, and educational backgrounds are being brought together. At the same time, workforce is aging, and organizations have employees from different generations working jointly. These changes place greater demands on managers, who must balance individual differences, while treating all employees equally, and managing conflicts that may arise from language barriers or differing interpretations.

Considering all these factors, this thesis explores professionals' perceptions on management practices that support employee well-being in a diverse working community. The literature review examines psychological well-being and work-related aspects to employee well-being to build comprehensive understanding of employee well-being. Literature review covers topics such as employee well-being management, employee-manager relationship, and transformational leadership to identify effective management practices for supporting employee well-being. The thesis also examines the idiosyncrasies of professional work and diversity in working community to unravel their impact on employee well-being. Professionals' perceptions are at the core of this thesis.

Literature review reveals that professionals' perceptions are rarely studied in the field of business. This thesis uses qualitative research approach to shed light on new insights on professionals' perceptions on employee well-being, professional work, and working in a diverse working community. Data is collected through interviewing professionals with diverse age-profiles, different genders, different numbers of experience in professional work, from different organizations and diverse working communities to gain as diverse representation of perceptions, as possible. A model for managers to support professionals' employee well-being, developed by the author, is introduced in this thesis.

The thesis offers both theoretical and practical implications for managers, academics, and psychologists. It suggests that management practices should aspire professionals to enjoy going to work, find their work meaningful and have a good work-life balance. This can be achieved by making work and working conditions supportive of employee well-being. Secondly, managers should commit to building and maintaining employee well-being, and finally, managers should get to know their employees on a personal level, to consider the needs of individuals. By examining professionals' perceptions on employee well-being, professional work, and diverse working community, the thesis expands understanding of these phenomena. These insights can be applied across various academic fields such as international business, management, and occupational healthcare.

Key words: employee well-being, meaningful work, work-life balance, employee-manager relationship, transformational leadership, management practices, professional work, flexible work, diverse working community

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Työhyvinvointi on noussut organisaatioissa entistä enemmän esille viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana. Asiantuntijatyöntekijät, jotka tekevät tietointensivistä työtä, kohtaavat työhyvinvoinnin haasteita, kuten stressiä ja loppuun palamista, enemmän kuin koskaan ennen. Organisaatiot keskittyvät nyt yksinomaan työhyvinvoinnin edistämiseen, sen sijaan että pääasiallisena tavoitteena olisi organisaation suorituskyvyn parantaminen työhyvinvoinnin kautta. Samaan aikaan organisaatioilla on haasteita pitää kiinni hyvistä työntekijöistä ja houkuttaa uusia osajia. Myös megatrendit, kuten globalisaatio, väestörakenteen muutos ja teknologinen kehitys muokkaavat työtä. Monimuotoiset ja monikansalliset työntekijät erilaisista kulttuuri- ja koulutustaustoista työskentelevät yhdessä. Samaan aikaan työvoima ikääntyy ja organisaatioissa työskentelee yhdessä eri sukupolvien edustajia. Nämä muutokset luovat esihenkilöille entistä suurempia vaatimuksia. Esihenkilöiden tulee löytää tasapaino siinä, miten he huomioivat työntekijät yksilöllisesti, samalla kuitenkin kohdellen heitä tasa-arvoisesti. Esihenkilöiden on myös hallittava ja johdettava kielimuureista ja erilaisista tulkinnoista syntyviä konflikteja.

Huomioiden edellä mainitut tekijät, tässä pro gradu-tutkielmassa tutkitaan asiantuntijatyöntekijöiden käsityksiä työhyvinvointia tukevista johtamiskäytänteistä monimuotoisessa työyhteisössä. Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa tarkastellaan psyykkisen hyvinvoinnin ja työhön liittyvien tekijöiden vaikutusta työhyvinvointiin. Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa käsitellään myös työhyvinvoinnin johtamista, työntekijä-esihenkilösuhdetta sekä transformatiivista johtamista, joiden avulla tunnistetaan työhyvinvointia tukevia johtamiskäytänteitä. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan asiantuntijatyötä ja työyhteisön monimuotoisuutta, jotta ymmärretään niiden vaikutukset työhyvinvointiin. Asiantuntijatyöntekijöiden näkemykset ovat tämän tutkimuksen keskiössä.

Kirjallisuuskatsauksen myötä selviää, ettei asiantuntijatyöntekijöiden näkemyksiä ole juurikaan tutkittu kirjallisuudessa. Tässä tutkimuksessa laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää hyödyntäen valotetaan asiantuntijoiden näkemyksiä työhyvinvointiin, asiantuntijatyöhön ja työskentelyyn monimuotoisessa työyhteisössä. Aineisto kerätään haastattelemalla erilaisia asiantuntijatyöntekijöitä, jotta erilaiset näkemykset tulevat mahdollisimman monipuolisesti esille. Haastateltavat edustavat eri ikäprofiileja ja sukupuolia. Lisäksi he työskentelevät eri toimialoilla, organisaatioissa ja työyhteisöissä. Tutkimuksessa esitellään myös kirjoittajan esihenkilöille luoma malli, jonka avulla voidaan tukea työhyvinvointia.

Tutkimus tarjoaa sekä teoreettista että käytännöllistä kontribuutiota esihenkilöille, johtajille, tutkijoille ja psykologeille. Johtamiskäytänteillä tulisi pyrkiä siihen, että asiantuntijatyöntekijät menevät mielellään töihin, kokevat työnsä mielekkääksi sekä saavuttavat työn ja vapaa-ajan tasapainon. Pyrkimykseen voidaan päästä tekemällä työstä ja työoloista työhyvinvointia tukevia. Lisäksi esihenkilöiden tulee sitoutua työhyvinvoinnin rakentamiseen ja ylläpitoon, sekä tutustua työntekijöihin henkilökohtaisesti, jotta yksilölliset tarpeet saadaan huomioitua työssä. Tutkimus asiantuntijatyöntekijöiden näkemyksistä työhyvinvointiin, asiantuntijatyöhön ja työyhteisön monimuotoisuuteen laajentaa yleistä ymmärrystä näistä aiheista. Oivalluksia voidaan soveltaa useilla akateemisilla aloilla, kuten kansainvälisessä liiketoiminnassa, johtamisessa ja työterveyden alalla.

Avainsanat: työhyvinvointi, työn merkityksellisyys, työn ja vapaa-ajan tasapaino, työntekijä-esihenkilösuhde, transformatiivinen johtaminen, johtamiskäytänteet, asiantuntijatyö, joustava työ, monimuotoinen työyhteisö

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1 Introduction

1.1 The importance of employee well-being

Employee well-being is a comprehensive perception of how employee feels at work. Amongst the feelings, it constitutes of attitudes and the state of vitality employee experiences. Employee well-being is influenced by working conditions, work itself and personal factors. (Työterveyslaitos, 2024) Employees whose well-being is high, comprises three major components: high-level positive emotions, low-level negative emotions, and overall satisfaction with life (Wang et al., 2023, 337). Great variety of factors from employees' personal factors to organizational or societal factors influence employee well-being. Employee well-being consists of both psychological and physical well-being at work (Das & Pattanyak, 2023, 21311). This study focuses on psychological well-being, since professionals' well-being is mainly challenged by psychological burden.

Well-being is an important life goal for many individuals. Employees' interest in enhancing their well-being has increased in recent years. One explanatory factor why employees are pursuing happiness and well-being at work is that they spend a quarter of their adulthood at work. However, digitalization, which merges work and private life, economic turbulences and decreasing job security are proven to cause employees' stress. (Schwarz et al, 2023, 89). Employee well-being is not a permanent and stable state. Stress factors, resources related to work, work community and work tasks affect employee well-being and work-life balance. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 6)

Studying well-being from the perspective of work, work related processes and interactions within organizations is relatively new. Previous studies on employee well-being have emphasized the role of individuals, and their personal qualities, affecting employee well-being related phenomena. However, as studies have advanced, employee well-being has been viewed as a broader phenomenon, where one must explore the subjective experience of employees and the matters which affect their subjective experience. (Laine, 2015, 34-35) The finding set the approach for this study. This study discovers professionals' perceptions on employee well-being. Professionals, in the context of this study, refer to employees who work in knowledge-intensive work also referred to as professional work. Professionals are defined as workers whose job is cognitively demanding and involves knowledge. Examples of professional work are academics, accountants, and IT engineers. (Sørensen & Holman, 2014, 67) Professional work requires special training (Collins, 2024).

Employees who work as professionals and at a diverse working community are interviewed about their experiences on management practices, which support employee well-being. A diverse working

community is formed by employees with different characteristics in terms of gender, age, nationality, language, educational background, family situation and beliefs, to mention a few (The Centre for Occupational Safety, 2024). In this study, diversity is studied in terms of differences in people's cultural or national background and age. Management practices, in the context of this study, refer to methods, actions and measures that managers take to reach organization objectives. Although the link between a diverse working community and organizational benefits have been studied extensively, research on diversity's effects on employee well-being is limited.

Literature review helps to gain comprehensive knowledge on the chosen topics, but also discover gaps that must be further studied (Saldana, 2011, 68). Literature review showed that professionals' perceptions are rarely studied in the field of business. The concepts of employee well-being, management practices and diverse working community are studied together to understand the broad phenomenon of employee well-being. This study adds value to existing research by studying the connections of these concepts, which have not yet been sufficiently explored together. Existing research indicates that further research, which focuses on the interventions that can be utilized to influence the fulfilment of basic psychological needs of professionals, is needed. Studying interventions that effectively influence professionals' work and supports their employee well-being needs further research. (Piiro et al., 2022, 41) In this study, management practices are studied since they are a practical way to intervene in professionals' work to support their employee well-being. The experiences of employees also constantly change, for example when working communities and the work itself changes. Next section dives into employee well-being challenges among professionals who work in a diverse working community to demonstrate the topicality and multidimensionality of employee well-being.

1.2 Challenges for employee well-being among professionals in a diverse working community

Well-being is one of the primary objectives in our society. Organizations are in key role to improve it, as people spend a lot of their time at work. Work environment is changing rapidly and that leads to a need to develop employee well-being. Organizations' success is dependent on their level of innovativeness and capability to adapt to changing needs of the market, for instance. As markets and business environments change, employee well-being must also be monitored and developed. When organizations invest in employee well-being strategically and practically, they receive return in investment in terms of operational and financial performance. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 4)

Organizations also receive reputation related advantages by being more appealing for potential employees or stakeholders when they invest in employee well-being (Puttonen et al., 2016, 4). The pace of employee turnover is increasing, and is in fact 50-75 percent higher, than what it has previously been for organizations. After the pandemic, it has been taking 18 percent longer to hire suitable candidates for work positions. (Ellis & Tupper, 2022) The statistics show that retaining existing employees and attracting the most suitable professionals for the work are challenges, which organizations face. In the big picture, employee well-being research has prioritized employee performance over well-being. However, in the last decade, higher focus has been put on employee well-being itself. Human resource management prioritizes to enhance employee well-being and views it as an important route to high performance. (Guest, 2017, 22-23)

In Western economies, organizations are realizing that employee well-being needs more emphasis in workplaces to ensure employees can maintain their productivity and capability to work. Around 29 percent of Europeans' ability to work is affected by a health problem and productivity requires good health. (Day et al., 2014, 28, 31) Organizations must promote the opportunities the work enables for individual employees. Employee's enthusiasm and engagement also affect their work well-being. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 8)

Research adduces that large organizations (over 200 employees) score lower in employee well-being questionnaire responses, compared to smaller organizations, when measuring employees' well-being (Puttonen et al., 2016, 8). The finding is somewhat surprising, since larger organization often tend to comply with corporate social responsibility strategies and integrate social risks in their everyday business operations. In larger organizations stakeholder expectations should encourage the organization to meet social standards and be seen as a responsible employer for its employees. (UNIDO, 2024)

Technological development leads to an increase in the number of professionals at work, and new ways of working, such as remote or hybrid work, are discovered. As the requirements for work grow and develop, companies must find ways to encourage their employees to work above their job requirements and increase innovative work behaviour. Researchers argue that endorsing employee well-being is essential for companies operating in the current, rather complex, business environment. (Salem et al, 2022, 657) The megatrends, such as technological and demographical change, also continuously affect what people require from managers. Managers needs to be able to build and maintain collaboration between diverse stakeholders. They need to act as innovators, whilst ensuring that various, even conflicting, views are considered. (Baimyrzaeva et al., 2021, 178)

Organizations' workforce represents diversity in various ways, for example in terms of generation, ethnicity and background (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2020, 1121). Employees and customers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds are brought together due to globalization. Globalization has led to an increase in intercultural interactions, which may be challenging for some people. (Sharma et al., 2018, 521-522) Diversity in organizations has shown to shake employee well-being, trust, and integration (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2020, 1121). The diversification of workforce brings challenges for today's managers since work communities must support people with diverse profiles and backgrounds. The standards for managers are rising and they must create a work environment where openness, transparency, collaborations and learning from others are valued. (Adams et al., 2020, 1146).

The aging of workforce also causes issues in employee well-being (Day et al., 2014, 28). Workforce is constantly aging and working longer, which pressures organizations to manage age diversity more efficiently. Organizations must also meet the needs of different aged employees. (Butler, 2020, 117) Aging of population and economic recession shake the balance between employee's work and family life. Employees are becoming more diverse in terms of family and how they perceive it. There are for instance different forms of families, such as single-parenting, and cultural norms can also influence people's perception of family. (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 88, 224-225)

Flexibility of work is highly valued by young professionals, who often live outside work and do not live to work. It is crucial for managers to accept this character and not fight it. However, flexibility of work is not only valued by technologically driven youngsters, but also amongst older professionals. Young professionals also see work flexibility as a standard that all organizations must meet. Therefore, organizations must recognize each employees' individual perceptions and skills to manage their staff effectively. (Butler, 2020, 117, 120)

The constant changes of work create problems for employee well-being, and it has been proven difficult to either prevent or solve employee well-being related problems. (Gerlander & Launis, 2007) The media presents various stories about people getting burnout, and other challenges related to people's employee well-being. It is argued that the linkage between management practices and organizational outcomes needs more understanding and research. Therefore, anyone working in manager roles needs to be aware of both the changes happening and their implications on people. (Alfes et al., 2013, 330) In the next section, research questions and the study's structure are defined.

1.3 Research questions and structure of the study

This study's primary objective is to discover: *How can management practices support employee well-being among professionals in a diverse working community?* Diverse working community's effects on employee well-being is studied by interviewing professionals, who work in diverse working communities. The study aims to answer the following research sub-questions:

- *How the features of professional work impact employee well-being among professionals?*
- *How can employee well-being be supported in a diverse working community?*

Answering the sub-questions helps to understand the idiosyncrasies of professional work and working in a diverse working community. The study focuses on the perceptions of employees.

Employee well-being is studied through describing psychological well-being and defining its effects on employee well-being. Moreover, employee well-being is described by work-related factors that influence it. Work-related factors are studied to comprehensively understand, which factors employee well-being consists of. After covering these factors affecting employee well-being, organizational and managerial factors are studied to identify management practices and methods that positively influence employee well-being. This is done through literature on transformational leadership and employee-organization relationship, for instance. The literature review continues with studying the characteristics of professional work and how it affects professionals' employee well-being. Moreover, diverse working communities are discussed to understand how cultural and age-related differences affect employee well-being. Studying employee well-being in diverse working communities aims to adduce employee well-being promoting factors that are distinguishing in diverse workplaces.

Professionals' own experiences are at the core of this study and qualitative research, which is conducted to understand the broad phenomenon of employee well-being and gain valuable insights from interviews with employees who do knowledge-intensive, professional work. Although employee well-being is the most essential concept of this study, understanding the characteristics of diversity in working communities and the nature of professional work are essential to discovering the best management practices that promote employee well-being in that context. The next chapter will define and describe employee well-being and its management in detail based on existing literature.

2 Defining employee well-being and its management

2.1 Describing psychological factors affecting employee well-being

Positive emotions benefit employees' well-being and performance whilst reducing effects of stress (Day et al., 2014, 55-56). According to a broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions broaden one's momentary thought whilst negative emotions narrow it. Pursuing positive emotions counteracts negative emotions and broadens person's thinking and resources for coping. Increasing optimism helps to find positive meaning and to experience positive emotions. For example, feeling there's a connection with others can occur simultaneously with experiencing commitment or love. Finding positive meaning helps one's psychological well-being. (Fredrickson & Seligman, 2000, 1-18) Positive emotions boost creative thinking and learning, which enable the employee to work productively in the long run. Employee well-being and promoting positive emotions should be prioritized over organizational performance. (Day et al., 2014, 55-56, 66)

Each employee is motivated by different *internal goals*, and from the perspective of employee well-being, it is important to recognize this. Setting individual goals is time-consuming but necessary in today's working life, where there may be a shortage of professionals (Sahimaa, 2022). Internal sources of motivation are needed especially for performing complex tasks, which supports the idea that goals need to be set at an individual level and they should motivate internally. The importance of internal goals from the perspective of employee well-being is supported by research, which identifies externally motivated individuals to be more prone to psychological distress and burnout than internally motivated. When external goals are highly dominant, they can also lead to feelings of anxiety and overload. This can be explained by the fact that externally motivated individuals experience a loss of control, and their level of commitment decreases. (Kuvaas et al., 2017, 248, 340)

Self-determination theory presents that people have a need for *autonomy*, *competence* and *being related to others (relatedness)*. When these basic psychological needs are met, motivation and positive well-being outcomes occur. People in autonomy supportive organizations are more satisfied with their job, trust their management and feel less controlled, than in organizations where autonomy is not supported. Supporting autonomy also leads to higher employee well-being and intrinsic job satisfaction. Autonomy-supportive managers can therefore increase employees' psychological well-being. (Deci et al., 2008, 14-15, 19) Feeling that a person can successfully perform in goal-oriented tasks is compulsory for people. People search for mastering challenges and enjoy them. People also want to connect with others and form strong stable bonds with one another. (Ryan & Moller, 2017,

214-219) Autonomy and competence create well-being outcomes, such as meaningfulness. When people make benevolent acts, they in fact increase their own well-being. Prosocial behaviour, in other words, voluntarily doing good for others, is shown to increase well-being and performance. Prosocial behaviour has energizing effects as well. (Martela & Ryan, 2016, 355-356).

People want to do *meaningful work* because experiencing meaning is one of the basic needs of humans, and a significant part of employee well-being. (Pelo, 2021) Human naturally seek for meaning and lack of it is linked to psychological unwell-being. Finding meaning is about connecting with others since meanings are the expected relationships and associations that people predict to happen. The way one looks at the world is determined by meaning systems they adapt from culture and society. One's past experiences also build their meaning system. Meaning systems affect people's experiences, direct them towards pursuable goals and affect what truly matters to them in life. In a work setting, different people have different meanings to work. One might work to get pay, whereas other works to receive status. (Martela & Pessi, 2018, 1-3)

Studies of human functioning present that a crucial variable, which explains employee well-being, is that work is meaningful, worthwhile, and valuable to the employees themselves and others. When employees perceive their tasks significantly impacting other people positively or helping them, employees feel a higher level of meaningfulness. People who say that their work is meaningful, have less work stress, depression, and anxiety. (Allan et al., 2018, 155-156) Therefore can be stated that meaningful work leads to better employee well-being. Researchers have found a positive correlation between organizational commitment, work motivation and meaningful work. Organizations benefit from having employees whose work is meaningful, because there are lower amounts of absenteeism and therefore, more time put towards work to receive higher work performance. (Allan et al., 2018, 156)

Meaningful work also has great impact on work motivation, because if meaning and activities supporting one's own values are lacking, motivation for work suffers, and the employee performs poorly. (Pelo, 2021) When considering the connection between motivation and well-being, the individuality of motivation is emphasized, meaning that different matters motivate each person (Kanfer et al., 2017, 341). From a motivational perspective, it is therefore important to recognize what is meaningful to each individual employee. For example, employee motivation can be increased by small adjustments to work that increase individual's sense of meaningfulness in work (Pelo, 2021).

In today's working life, the pace of work is intense, and results must be achieved quickly. This affects the resources allocated for motivating employees and on the balance between employees' work and

leisure time. (Kuvaas et al., 2017, p. 248) *Work-life balance* signifies well-balanced commitment to distinct roles, such as the roles of employee and a family member, in the time available. Work-life balance is linked to employee well-being and success. Work and life are interrelated requirements for daily living. Employees' family well-being suffers when employment dominates over family and the boundaries get blurred. This can happen when employees work from home and over working hours. (Smith et al., 2022, 585) The balance can also wobble if employees must drastically shape their behaviour going from family to work role, or vice versa. Insufficient support from either managers or family can create conflict that affects work-life balance negatively. (Day et al., 2014, 96)

Aging of population and economic recession shake the balance between employees' work and family lives. Family demands cause pressure to work-life balance and cause mental health challenges for employees. (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 88, 224-225) Internally motivated people balance different roles, such as employee and family role, better. This supports employee well-being and can reduce burnout. Internal motivation also leads to optimism, job satisfaction, and reduces stress, which all promote overall employee well-being. (Kuvaas et al., 2017, 248).

Hurry is one of the main psychosocial factors that burdens employees. An appropriate level of hurry and time pressure can boost employees' work, but generally it increases stress, and in a long run can harm employee well-being. Time management can help to get rid of constant time pressure. Employees can develop their own working habits to manage time better. However, in most cases, time pressure is caused by interorganizational factors, such as minor number of employees, and incompetent leadership. Togetherness, open communication, common rules for work and organizational development can help reduce time pressure and therefore boost employee well-being. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 27) Next section broadens understanding of employee well-being by describing work-related factors that affect employee well-being.

2.2 Describing work-related factors affecting employee well-being

Organizations can influence employee well-being (Puttonen et al., 2016, 6) alongside with other work-related factors. A framework called the HERO model, which is grounded on the idea that employee well-being is an output of the combination of three elements: healthy organizational resources and practices, healthy employees, and healthy organizational outcomes, is presented in figure 1.



Figure 1. The HERO model (Adapted from Day et al., 2014, 129)

Healthy organizational resources and practices consists of for example job resources that promote team autonomy, feedback and support within the team and transformational leadership. Healthy employees can engage in work and trust their team, which builds team resilience and efficacy. Alongside these two elements, employee well-being requires healthy organizational outcomes, such as corporate social responsibility and positive performance. (Day et al., 2014, 129-131) An organizational culture that supports employees' psychological needs, impacts significantly to their employee well-being. (Schwarz et al., 2023, 91) Understanding how organizational practices, more specifically management practices, can support healthy employees, is at the core of this study. To resolve this, work-related factors are studied further by processing them in four clusters, which are presented in figure 2.

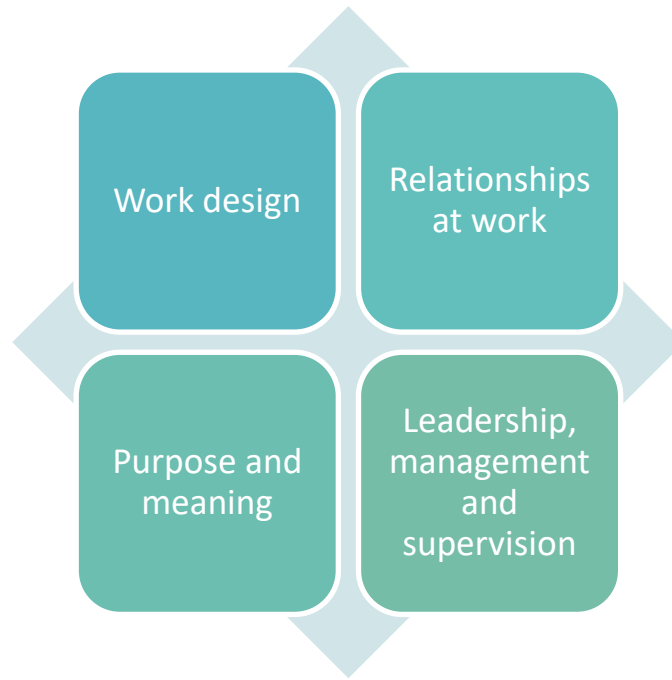


Figure 2. Four main clusters of work-related factors important for employee well-being (Adapted from Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 77)

The first cluster of work-related factors is work design, the second cluster is relationships at work, the third cluster is purpose and meaning and the fourth cluster is leadership, management, and supervision. These four clusters are discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections.

2.2.1 Work design

Pay and rewards affect employee well-being only if a certain level is not passed. More importantly actual work and its design, such as its usefulness, level of autonomy and freedom, influence employee well-being. Work design is one of the four clusters, presented in figure 2, of workplace factors important for personal well-being. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 77). People value that a job is demanding, since it makes it more interesting and less boring. Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham have developed a *Job Characteristics Model*, which impacts person's psychological state and therefore influences psychological well-being. The variety of skills required by a job is one characteristic of the model. In addition, the extent to which the job task impacts others and produces identifiable outcomes can affect employee well-being. Finally, the amount on autonomy employee has in their work and the amount of feedback the job itself provides for the employee also affect well-being. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 79-81)

Work must be in balance with challenge, support, demands and control to ensure psychological well-being for the employee. In this balanced condition, challenge pressures such as time pressure, job

scope and additional responsibility with proper support and training, can act as positive pressure, which boost well-being. Employees do not need to feel like they are never under pressure to be well. However, the balance of demands, resources, control, and support must be achieved for positive pressure to act as a supporter of employee well-being. If demands for instance get too overwhelming for employees, it leads to stress, which further negatively affects employee well-being. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 82-84)

Globalization and the changes it has caused in work and society, have led to working times being a flexible concept. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health suggests that organizations invest in careful planning and execution of working times, whilst considering employees' individual needs. Working time has been noted as an important factor affecting employee well-being, health, and work-life balance. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 18, 19, 25) Flexibility positively influences well-being and it can be used as a tool to create effective work-life balance. When implementing flexible work in an organization, it should be introduced to as many employees as possible. The ones who do not have the opportunity to do flexible work feel they are under more pressure compared to others who have the opportunity. Flexible work can be arranged in different ways. Remote work, such as working from home, is one arrangement. In addition, flexitime, meaning that employee can decide when to start or finish their day, and reduced hours are practices, which make work flexible. Flexitime for instance has shown to positively impact work-family conflicts. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 87-88)

Flexible working times and remote work are common for employees working in professional roles. Common for these employees is also that they work in their free time as well. If organization allows flexible and remote work, they must evaluate the affects those might have for employee well-being. Working time flexes must benefit both parties, the employee, and the employer. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health requests that employees' needs are primarily considered over organizational benefits. Flexible work can however negatively influence employee well-being if employees work too much. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 18-19) Studies have found links with working long hours and decrease in physical and psychological health. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 86) Long work weeks also lead to less innovativeness and lower productivity and performance. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 18, 19, 25)

2.2.2 Relationships at work

Workplaces today are knowledge-intensive and collaborative, where employees continuously interact with their colleagues. Relationships at work define the social environment of the workplace. (Methot et al., 2017, 1789-1790) Employees work in teams, which are units that typically consist of diverse

members, who have own expertise and experiences. Teams may experience relationship conflicts, where personalities clash, and that can make members feel annoyed or tense. Relationship conflicts differ from task conflicts, because they are often caused by differences in ideas, opinions, viewpoints, and backgrounds. Such conflicts can cause anxiety for team members and harm employee well-being. Conflicts and emotions are interrelated since emotions trigger conflicts and emotions are the consequence of conflicts. Emotionally intelligent managers can help team members use the right emotion regulation strategies, which can for instance help prevent conflicts. (Yuan et al., 2020, 236, 237, 249)

Social relationships, such as receiving support from colleagues at work, influence employee well-being. (Schön Persson et al., 2018, 4303-4307) Majority of employees interact with other people at work. These interactions affect how employees feel at work. Positive work relationships often help employees cope with work demands. For some employees, positive relationships are the greatest aspects of work. Difficulties at work can be handled with supportive colleagues. Emotion labour, which means planning and controlling emotions during interpersonal transactions to express organizationally desired emotions, can have negative influence on employee well-being. Regulating and monitoring emotions to meet the organization standards when dealing with colleagues can in a long run lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout. This happens when emotions experienced are not equable with the expressed emotions. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 85-86)

2.2.3 Purpose and meaning

Employees must feel that the work they do is worthwhile, to have good employee well-being. In addition, employees need to be committed to what they do, and they must find it meaningful (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 89). When employees know the purpose of their work, in other words why the work they do is important, they perceive their work to be meaningful. Often the purpose for work is set on an organizational level to define the organization's existence and act as the foundation of the organization. The purpose of the organization is emphasized by the values and beliefs of managers. A strong purpose that strives the organization, increases organization's employees' well-being. A purpose creates meaning for the employees and makes them feel that they are part of something great. (Duma et al., 2023, 216-218, 226)

Organizational purpose is something that employees personally interpret. Therefore, purpose is formed by the people of the organization and how they interpret it, define it, and act upon in everyday work. The purpose is as strong as the people, for example employees, believe it is. Finding meaning in work is often related to organizational purpose. However, sometimes employees can view

organizational purpose strong, but not perceive their work to be meaningful, if for example work tasks do not meet the needs of those individuals. People have inherent needs for purpose and meaning in life and their subjective experience of employee well-being is positive when they fulfil those needs at work. (Jasinenko & Steuber, 2023, 1418-1420)

Employees prefer knowing that their efforts are worthwhile. The meaning, which their work tasks have, affect employees' emotions and behaviours. Work in which employees find meaning, can avoid employees feeling negative emotions such as disappointment, shock or being upset. Identifying purpose to why work is done, is beneficial to employees' well-being. Managers should help employees identify the purpose and it can boost employee performance as well. (Chadi et al., 2017, 1704-1705)

2.2.4 Leadership, management, and supervision

Leadership, management, and supervision often go hand in hand with having a sense of purpose, since their role is to create purpose and lead employees toward goals that are meaningful and worthwhile (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 89). Managers should actively manage the risk of work-life conflict, which can rise when employee finds great meaning from their work, which neglects other aspects of their life. Managing this risk can be done by offering supervisory support or work-life initiatives, for instance. When such conflicts are properly managed, it is likelier that employee well-being is at a good level. (Jasinenko & Steuber, 2023, 1440)

Employee's goals must be set together with the manager. Demands for the employee must be properly managed to support employee well-being. Such practices include managing workload and work patterns. Resources and available support should be considered when setting employee demands, not to forget about work-life balance. Employees should also understand their role in the organization and conflicting roles should be avoided. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 88-92)

Employees should be managed to make them be in control of their work and letting them influence how they do their work. Micro-managing can make employees lose their sense of control and autonomy. However, employees can and should be challenged and supported by the manager. Supporting employees to reach their challenging goals builds self-confidence. Support can consist of encouragement and resources by the manager, organization or even colleagues. Overall, the quality of employee manager relationship is important for employee well-being. Promoting positivity at work, whilst dealing with unacceptable behaviour, are management practices which boost employee well-being. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 88-92)

Discretionary management practices, which aim to encourage employees and align employee goals with their team's or organization's objectives can have positive impact on employee well-being. In addition, such practices able employees to improve their skills and give them more authority. Adopting an employee-centred perspective to employee management can support employee well-being. Organizations must ensure that discretionary management practices are put into action by employees' immediate managers. Offering employees opportunities to engage in decision-making, goal setting and modifying work, can make them proactive agents. That can enhance their job resources and mitigate job demands, which make employees' work have more meaning and employees experience more well-being. (Luu, 2020, 44, 60) Employee well-being is influenced by varied work-related factors. Next, organizational factors are studied to understand in more detail how organizations impact employee well-being.

2.3 Describing organizational factors affecting employee well-being

2.3.1 Employee-organization relationships (EORs) affecting employee well-being

Employee-organization relationship (EOR) is a term that represents the relationships between the organization and its employees, and it typically contains a psychological contract between the two parties. Positive and symmetrical internal communications improve the quality EORs, which leads to organizational success. (Kang & Sung, 2017, 83-86) When employee and manager have a mutual understanding on the psychological contract, the employee is shown to improve in performance. Employee well-being is often evaluated with the effectiveness of employee-organization relationship and work performance. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 6)

The subunits or tribes in the organization are the ones who ensure, that the employees act upon their organization's missions, and accordingly with the company culture. Subunits have a mediator role where the organization's expectations are modified to fit the localized dynamics. The members of the subunit have different roles: individual members, managers, and peers. Employees often evaluate their relationship with their immediate managers when asked about their perceptions on employee-organization relationship. Research shows that immediate managers have a powerful role in influencing EOR. Managers' behaviour impacts, how employees identify their role within the organization, and how they perceive their relationship between the organization. (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 29-34)

2.3.2 Explaining employee-organization relationship with social exchange

Employee-organization relationship can be studied from the perspective of social exchange, where the relationship is based on mutual benefit and repaying. The perspective argues that the more employees get from the organization, the more they are willing to give back. The exchange can be either material, such as goods and money, or immaterial, such as recognition and respect. Studies show that social exchange strongly contributes to the psychological linkage between the parties. (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 88, 95, 98) The exchange perspective can be explained with the relationship between the manager and followers. If the relationship is low in quality, there is a low level of trust and desire to exceed the performance set by the job descriptions. On the other hand, if the relationships are high in quality, employee performance is positively influenced by mutual respect and trust. (Alfes et al., 2013, 336) Social identity perspective argues that when employees identify themselves with the organization, they are likelier to serve the interests of the organization and act towards common objectives and mission. Management practices, which are based especially on social identity, function well in an uncertain and changing business environment. (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 88, 95, 98)

Management practices to encompass and manage employee-organization relationship play a crucial role in motivating behaviour. Understanding the psychology and social exchange affecting the relationship can be beneficial for organizations. However, managers, as organization representatives, are shown to have an important role in influencing the relationship and social identity. Management practices can be perceived as the most straightforward and resilient way for managers to influence employees. The practices have a vital role in affecting the psychological relationship and bond between employees and their organization. (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 85-87) Research indicates that the immediate manager's role in ensuring that the management practices are implemented in positive atmosphere, is crucial. (Alfes et al., 2013, 346) Management practices, and how to utilize them effectively to support employee well-being, are further discussed in the following section.

2.4 Describing managerial factors affecting employee well-being

2.4.1 Committing to managing employee well-being

Building a work environment and culture that promotes employee well-being requires *commitment from organization's managers*. Developing employee well-being also requires constant evaluation, planning, acts and follow ups. It is recommended that employee well-being development is a stable development area in organizational development. Deming cycle is a commonly used tool to develop

organizations and it can be used as a tool for managers to manage employee well-being. The cycle consists of four stages: plan, do, check and act (figure 3). The Center for Occupational safety has developed the cycle to build a principle for organizations to follow and ensure employee well-being in the changing business circumstances. With the help of their principle, organizations can accomplish a safe, sustainable workplace, where employee well-being is a systematic part of everyday business. (The Center for Occupational safety, 2019, 3-4)

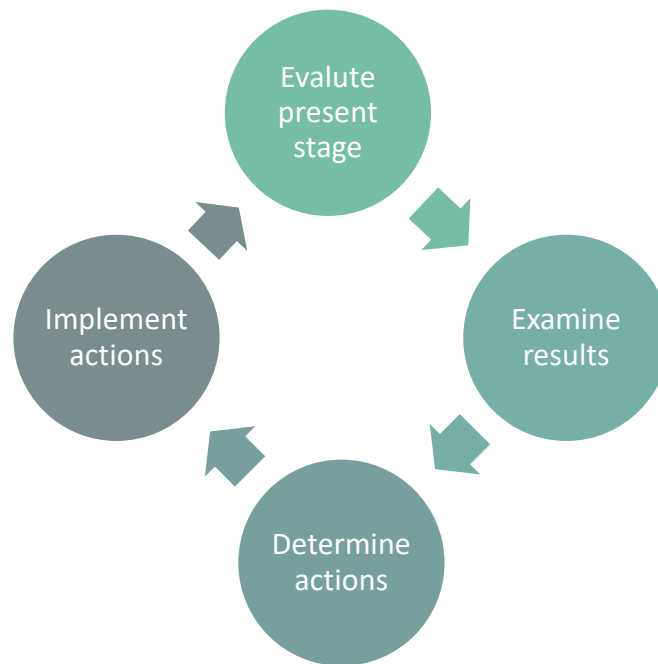


Figure 3. Employee well-being development cycle (Adapted from the The Center of Occupational safety, 2019, 5)

Organizations must realize that employees experience well-being differently and the levels of employee well-being might differ in different parts of the organization. Therefore, to understand the present stage, the employees of the organization must individually evaluate their level of employee well-being (*evaluate present stage*). Managers should take along different stakeholders, such as team leaders, union representatives and other staff to fully understand the present stage. (The Center of Occupational safety, 2019, 7) Employee well-being should be systematically involved in organizations' processes, organization's finances, and planning. This can be done with the employee well-being development cycle presented in figure 3. A separate well-being strategy might not be needed if all operations have a well-being aspect. (Puskala, 2024)

After evaluating the present stage, the results must be examined (*examine results*). Examination can be done by evaluating whether the anticipatory actions the company takes truly prevent employee well-being risks when measured. Measures must be designed and personalized for different types of

work in the organization. The results should be openly communicated to the employees in a transparent manner. (The Center of Occupational safety, 2019, 9) Consistent measuring through employee surveys and listening to people, is the key in achieving employee well-being. Measuring must take place on a regular basis. Employee well-being also predicts employee retention. If employee has a high level of work well-being, they are three times likelier to continue working in the organization. Organizations can also measure such outcomes of employee well-being. If for example finding competent talent is difficult for an organization, one way to minimize the risk of talent loss is to develop employee well-being. (Great Place to Work, 2024)

Managers must ensure that the development of employee well-being does not end in examining the results. Organization must determine actions that can be measured for further evaluation (*determine actions*). The actions must also be concrete and easily accessible by the employees. Examples of such action could be making training opportunities visible for employees. (The Center of Occupational safety, 2019, 11) It is recommended to invest time into supporting mental health. Organizations must take responsibility over actions related to time management, for instance, and individual employees cannot solely be responsible of it. (Puskala, 2024)

Organizations should take a long-term perspective into employee well-being development. Many workplaces tend to have a short-sighted view, and work is optimized to the extent that employees struggle with time-related challenges and natural recovery during workdays is impossible. (Puskala, 2024). Developing employee well-being is a continuous process which does not end when actions have been implemented. Continuous improvements enable employee well-being and a healthy workplace (*implement actions*). Managers must take responsibility over the development process and committed to it. In addition, employees must be informed about the process and the outcomes of different stages. (The Center of Occupational safety, 2019, 13) Managers' commitment to managing employee well-being is the key to positive employee well-being outcomes.

2.4.2 High quality leader-member relationship supporting employee well-being

The concept of leader-member exchange (LMX) refers to the relationship between the supervisor, the manager and their member, the employee. Empirical studies prove that high quality leader-member exchange, where mutual trust exists, positively influences employee well-being. According to the LMX theory, employees gain social resources from a high-quality relationship and that makes them not only perform better but gain more confidence, resilience, and optimism. Social support from the manager increases employee well-being (Xerri et al., 2023, 1824-1827, 1836) When leader-member relationships are high-quality, employees trust their managers. In addition, employees then view

management practices, and their meaning, in a positive light. A good relationship also indicates that employees feel supported, and they are likelier to continue working in the organization for longer. (Alfes et al., 2013, 337)

Employees require resources to handle their work demands and unpleasant work conditions. Managers provide such resources, for example support, autonomy, and feedback, to the employees, which reduce their demands. LMX acts as a mediator between the chosen management style, for instance transformational leadership, and employee well-being. (Das & Pattanayak, 2023, 21313, 21320) High-quality leader-member relationships help to support employees' needs and values, and creates a working environment, where there is less stress and better employee well-being. Daily interactions between the parties affect, how the employee perceives their leader-member relationship. Leaders may not have the possibility to interact and show support to their employee on an everyday basis. Employees' needs for their manager can also vary depending on the day. Therefore, LMX quality is not stable, and its variation also makes employee well-being variable. On the contrary, low-quality leader-member relationship causes emotional exhaustion for the employees. (Ellis et al., 2019, 119-122, 130)

2.4.3 Supporting employee well-being by engaging employees

Studies view employee-organization relationships (EORs) as an important contributor to link management practices to employee engagement, loyalty and performance. (Kang & Sung, 2017, 83-86) To understand how management practices affect employee behaviour, one must identify how employees perceive the practices. Commonly people focus on understanding the intentions behind the practices, rather than trying to examine how they are experienced by employees. Employees experience the impacts and aims of managerial practices differently. Moreover, studies have shown that employee engagement can serve as a link between management practices and desired behavioral outcomes. However, it is evident that same management practices are interpreted differently amongst different individuals. Employees, who perceive practices positive, are shown to hold higher levels of engagement over the ones, who perceive them more negatively (Alfes et al., 2013, 331-332, 346)

Studies show that employee engagement supports employee well-being by encouraging positive emotions toward work, which lead to achieving self-actualisation. As the consequence of self-improvement and self-actualisation, comes employee well-being. (Salem et al, 2022, 657-669) Researchers have found internal communication to work as a tool, to enhance the level of organization's employee engagement. Organizations can affect employee engagement with positive internal communication, providing an innovative organizational culture and acting transparently.

(Kang & Sung, 2017, 83-86) Employee engagement also benefits the organization. When the levels of it are poor, the performance of the employees and the whole organization is low. On the other hand, organizations with highly engaged employees enable better return for investors with solid financial performance, provide better customer loyalty, work in the organisation longer and have less sickness-absences. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 27-28)

Companies, which enhance employees' strengths through engagement and empowerment, are more attractive to potential employees. Companies can achieve engagement by different strategies, such as assessing employees' values and professional goals, negotiating, making an employee development agreement, and monitoring the achievements on set goals. Holding workshops on engagement is a beneficial way to encourage engagement and boost personal skills such as time management and positive thinking. However, the prime matter that enhances engagement and employee well-being is positive leadership. Leadership can create and protect a psychologically safe environment, where there is trust, resilience, respect, and well-being within the team. (Day et al., 2014, 132, 134) Transformational leadership is discussed next to reveal how such leadership style can be utilized in implementing management practices into action.

2.4.4 Transformational leadership positively influencing employee well-being

Employee well-being is affected by the people they work with, especially their immediate manager. Immediate managers can support employees but also cause them stress. In fact, leadership is often determined as a stress causing factor for the employees. Managers can also affect positively their subordinates' well-being with feedback, recognition and behaviour that shows *trust* in the employees. A leadership style, which is controlling has been proven to lower employee well-being. It is worthy to mention that also subordinates behaviours affects how their manager treats them. Managers must be aware of their behaviour's impact and trained to understand it. On the other hand, subordinates must we aware of their own influence on their supervisor's behaviour. (Van Dierendonck et al., 2004, 165, 166, 173) Effective management and high-quality leadership build the foundation for employee well-being. Although the entire work community must participate in taking care of employee well-being, the support from immediate managers and their investment in employee well-being are evidently vital. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 13)

Leadership is about influencing and motivating other people. Transformational leadership style is about inspiring employees to do their best by recognizing and considering them as individuals. Research has shown that transformational leadership style is effective to gain more motivated and satisfied employees, when compared to other styles. Transformational managers can also influence

employees with charisma and serving as a positive role model. Such leaders communicate symbolically and envision the organization's future to be bright. Goals set for employees are ambitious yet reachable, and employees are made to feel they will succeed. Transformational leadership emphasizes enthusiasm, optimism, and building confidence. (Bakker et al, 2023, 700-701)

Transformational leaders consider employees as individuals who need personalized support and coaching to meet their full potential. Employees' uniqueness and strengths are recognized by managers of this form. Transformational leadership has shown to effect positively on employee performance since it enables employees to engage with and optimize their work design. Autonomy and social support are outcomes of this form of leadership. Ultimately, transformational leadership can build personal and job resources for employees. (Bakker et al, 2023, 701) Transformational leadership positively affects well-being, increases job satisfaction and decreases burnout. Personal factors, such as self-efficacy and resilience, however, are in the essence of linking transformational leadership and well-being. The form of leadership enhances self-efficacy, which further increases resilience. Therefore, leadership and personal factors together contribute to well-being. (Djourova et al., 2020, 256-257)

Transformational managers inspire employees to innovativeness and creativeness at work with their leadership style. Studies show that a transformational leadership style also affects employee psychological well-being positively. Transformational leadership enables the employee and the organization to have a shared vision, which created meaningfulness to the employee. With an attractive vision, created by the manager, the employees' motivation towards work tasks grows. The manager is seen as a role model and a coach that promotes wanted behaviour. Supportive and active leadership is shown to create higher well-being. Manager also has a mediator role in how their subordinate perceives the meaningfulness of their work environment, role, or other work characteristics. Therefore, manager-employee relationship affects employee well-being at work. (Nielsen et al., 2008, 16, 17 28, 29) Immediate managers must master clear communication, positive feedback and social persuasion to build employees' confidence and performance. Implementing such practices to organizations management strategy can positively contribute to employees' well-being (Djourova et al., 2020, 266). Now that we understand managerial factors' impact on employee well-being, characteristics of employees working as professionals in knowledge-intensive work and a diverse working community are studied next to reveal their effects on employee well-being.

3 Employee well-being among professionals in a diverse working community

3.1 Characteristics of professionals and knowledge-intensive work

The changes in organizations, the intensiveness of work, and challenges in managing work time, are causing challenges for professionals in knowledge-intensive work (Työturvallisuuskeskus, 2024). Professionals' work involves acquisition, creation, and application of knowledge. Therefore, work tasks are often highly complex and require complex solutions. Tasks are cognitively demanding, intellectually challenging and can vary a lot. Knowledge-intensive work has an interdependent nature to it, and it contains frequent interactions, emotional demands, and plenty of interruptions. The work contains high job resources, such as fulfilment of basic human needs, promotion of learning and versatile achievement of goals, which improve employee well-being. On the other hand, knowledge-intensive work can be stressful. Stress is caused by impossible job demands and long working hours, which affect work-life balance. (Sørensen & Holman, 2014, 68-69) Professionals in knowledge-intensive work might be required to work relatively independently with flexible work arrangements (Horwitz et al., 2003, 26).

Professionals in knowledge-intensive work are motivated and capable of co-creating new insights. They can communicate, coach, and implement new ideas into practice. Creativity, social skills, flexibility, and intuition is often required from such professionals. Professionals in knowledge-intensive work are autonomous people who enjoy occupational development, mobility and resist traditional command and control. It is typical for such professionals to work in teams, which are managed by long-term goals. (Horwitz et al., 2003, 23-24)

Research shows that different organizational incentives, such as salary and training, and expectations perceived by employees, affect professionals' employee well-being. When professionals perceive that the organization values their recommendations, encourage them to participate in decision making and trust them with full authority with their work responsibilities, employees feel respected and trusted by the organization. As a result, employees find their work to be meaningful, which improves their employee well-being. Professionals' employee well-being has also been found to improve when they experience satisfaction and joy at work. Getting higher salaries and benefits also boost it but is not alone sufficient to increase it. (Che et al., 2022, 3, 10)

Job characteristics of knowledge-intensive work and their impact on employee well-being have been studied. Main concerns related to job characteristics were affiliated with task ambiguity, task

complexity, interdependency, and uncertainty. Professionals experience finding solutions to vague problems difficult and express concerns on how to know when a solution is adequate. Complexity of planning, administering, and coordinating several projects were factors which negatively impact employee well-being. Professionals may work on tasks which require both deep-focused problem-solving but also sharing knowledge and coordinating with others. Balancing these requirements affect their employee well-being. (Sørensen & Holman, 2014, 80)

Reducing task ambiguity and uncertainty of task solutions to support professionals' employee well-being is recommended. This can be achieved by improving the occurrence and quality of feedback from the manager. Creating plans of action to improve planning and coordination, creating improved meetings, alongside with reducing interruptions, are practices which support their employee well-being. Research suggests that organizations introduce actions to improve management and promote peer feedback. Formalizing mandates and plans of action to regulate task coordination and social interaction are also beneficial for employee well-being in professional work. When broadening employees' job descriptions, organizations should be aware that the implementations of new tasks can boost task uncertainty and ambiguity. (Sørensen & Holman, 2014, 80-84)

Professionals are experiencing more technology induced work stress called technostress, which comes from significant technology dependence, increased workload and demands for being more productive. After COVID-19, numerous employees have transferred to more digital work patterns. Technostress has become one of the main employee well-being challenges for both employees and organizations. (Wang et al., 2023, 334-337) Virtual meetings are an example of how technology has influenced professional work in the recent years. Virtual meetings have become part of professional work, especially after COVID-19. It is suggested that employees who continuously participate in virtual meeting, have the possibility to control their presence in them. If employees cannot limit their use of camera and microphone in virtual meetings, it can cause Zoom-fatigue, which negatively affects employee well-being. (Jokinen & Mäkikangas, 2023, 387, 399) Organizations and managers should be proactive in recognizing technostress among professionals and provide them with assistance and guidelines on learning, adapting and strengthening technological skills. Manager-employee communication, feedback and mental brake time are practices which help professionals affected by technostress. (Wang et al., 2023, 348) Next section covers the features of employee well-being in a diverse working community.

3.2 Employee well-being in a diverse working community

3.2.1 Diversity affecting employee well-being

Diversity in working community can boost exchanging information, bring out different perspectives to discussion and enhance ideas, for instance. These positive effects can help to perform better in tasks that require generating new ideas. (Homan et al., 2008, 1206) Organizations have recognized that higher performance, creativity and problem-solving can be achieved with diverse teams (Vos & van der Zee, 2011, 364). In a diverse working community, organization must promote growth and development over performance to maintain employee well-being and engagement of all aged employees (Kopperud et al., 2023, 1514, 1516-1517). Work teams experience diversity, and their team's level of it, differently. Employees' perceptions on diversity must therefore be examined, when trying to analyse the effects of diversity. When people are open to experience, they are likelier to perform better despite their differences. (Homan et al., 2008, 1217-1218)

Although diversity at work has various positive effects, it can have negative effects as well. Conflict and tensions between diverse employees can lower team's performance. If employees are demographically different, it can create a "us-them" distinction that can create harm to the working community. (Homan et al., 2008, 1206) Diverse teams at work can make employees less satisfied, uncommitted, and create emotional conflict (Vos & van der Zee, 2011, 364). These negative effects can take a toll on employee well-being. Employees experience stress, when trying to assimilate with different ones. Dissimilarity can also cause weakened psychological safety and feeling insignificant. (Jaiswal et al., 2022, 196) In the next sub-section, diversity is further examined by studying how cultural diversity affects employee well-being.

3.2.2 Cultural aspects to employee well-being

Employees of different cultures have differences in behavioural norms, language, and either personal or social values, which should be considered in intercultural interaction. Intercultural interactions can help employees learn from other cultures, but such interactions are often difficult for people. People are not always willing to accept cultural differences, and they want to cast others into the same mold. Cultural diversity can also lead to communication gaps, stereotyping, discrimination, and other factors, which foster conflict and disturb harmony. (Sharma et al., 2018, 522-523) The culture and country to which employee is born, also affects how they perceive managers' behaviour. Employees from high power-distance cultures, such as Asians and Africans, respect hierarchies and might not be

used to managers thanking and complementing them. Culture and country of origin also effects on the work culture and behavioural style that the person adopts. (Khanom & Shee, 2024, 1505-1514)

People's level of well-being differs across nations. In countries where there is numerous human rights and high social capital, there is on average a higher level of well-being. Factors such as national income and positive emotions are shown to impact the level of well-being positively. In addition, norms, for example how emotions are experienced in a culture, affect well-being. Income and how basic need are being fulfilled also affect well-being. (Michalos & Diener, 2009, 279-280, 285)

Employee's cultural intelligence, which is their ability to manage their role in new cross-cultural environments, affects their employee well-being. Cultural diversity is a double-edged sword since it can either boost innovation and performance or lead to conflicts and discrimination. It is important for managers to manage cultural diversity and ensure employees' cultural intelligence. This can be done by cross-cultural training and controlling the level of organization's cultural differences. (Li et al., 2021, 2-3, 16) Next, diversity is further studied by discussing age-related aspects to employee well-being, when professionals are for example in different phases of life because of their age.

3.2.3 Age-related aspects to employee well-being

Although the average age of employees rises, studies have found that in the past decade, employees' evaluation of their working ability has improved. Studies in Finland have not found that age significantly affects how employees perceive their employee well-being. (Puttonen et al., 2016, 8) However, prior studies show that older employees tend to experience more positive emotions and advocate positive thinking more than younger employees. Regulating negative emotions is more efficient for older employees. These positive emotional states boost employee well-being. (Mauno et al., 2013, 411-412)

On the other hand, it has been found that job changes can cause more distress for older employees. Distress happens because older employees have more difficulties in unlearning routine skills and work procedures. They also are often less involved in training practices. It is worthy to note that job changes negatively affect employee well-being when they are involuntary, for example organization must lay off employees. Voluntary job changes often lead to positive employee outcomes. Unambiguous conclusions cannot be made from how employee age affects their adaption to changes and employee well-being. Employees' individual perceptions, and whether they are positive or negative, affect how changes are coped with. (Van Vianen et al., 2022, 1317-1318) Older employees, however, can experience fewer stress at work, because they have a better variety of coping resources

and strategies together with more occupational experience compared to younger employees. (Mauno et al., 2013, 412)

Selection, optimization, and compensation theory is a theory on lifespan development, which suggests that people set various personal goals and prioritize their resources to them. Goals can be related to growth, maintenance, or regulation of loss. The theory states that when employees age, they invest less resources towards growth, and more towards maintenance, or regulation of loss. These results in work motivation to change when employees age. When employees age, their security and intrinsic work motives increase, and growth work motives decrease. Age-related changes in motives should be considered when planning management practices to boost employee well-being. (Kooij et al., 2013, 20-21, 31-32)

Age diversity's effect on work engagement has been studied, since work engagement has shown to create meaningfulness and positivity for the employee, which further increases their well-being. Older employees are more engaged than the younger ones. Older employees can regulate and cope with their emotions more effectively. Moreover, when organizations do not emphasize competitiveness and public recognition, younger employees tend to be more engaged, and it enhances their employee well-being. (Kopperud et al., 2023, 1501-1514, 1516-1517)

Family demands cause pressure in work-life balance and cause health challenges to employees (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 225). Although providing flexible working hours to employees is seen as an age neutral management practice, age and family situation creates differences to how employees perceive it. Older and younger employees have different goals, motivations, and work-family roles, which impact their experience of flexible work and further employee well-being. When employees age, their work motivation transforms from work-related goals to more personal and family-related goals. The employee perception of flexible work also transforms as motivations shift. Younger employees have a higher need for the autonomy. This is because generally younger employees experience more work-family conflicts. Therefore, younger employees can benefit from flexible work more than older employees. On the other hand, older employees can set and keep boundaries better between work and family, which makes them get more use out of the autonomy. (Piszczek et al., 2021, 1908-1909)

3.3 Synthesis

Psychological well-being is affected positively by internal goals and the possibility to do meaningful work, whereas stress decreases psychological well-being (Sahimaa, 2022; Kuvaas et al., 2017, 248)

Psychological well-being and employee well-being are interrelated (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 79-81). The primary objective for managers in supporting employee well-being should be ensuring psychological well-being, which is seen as the objective in the author's model presented below (figure 4).

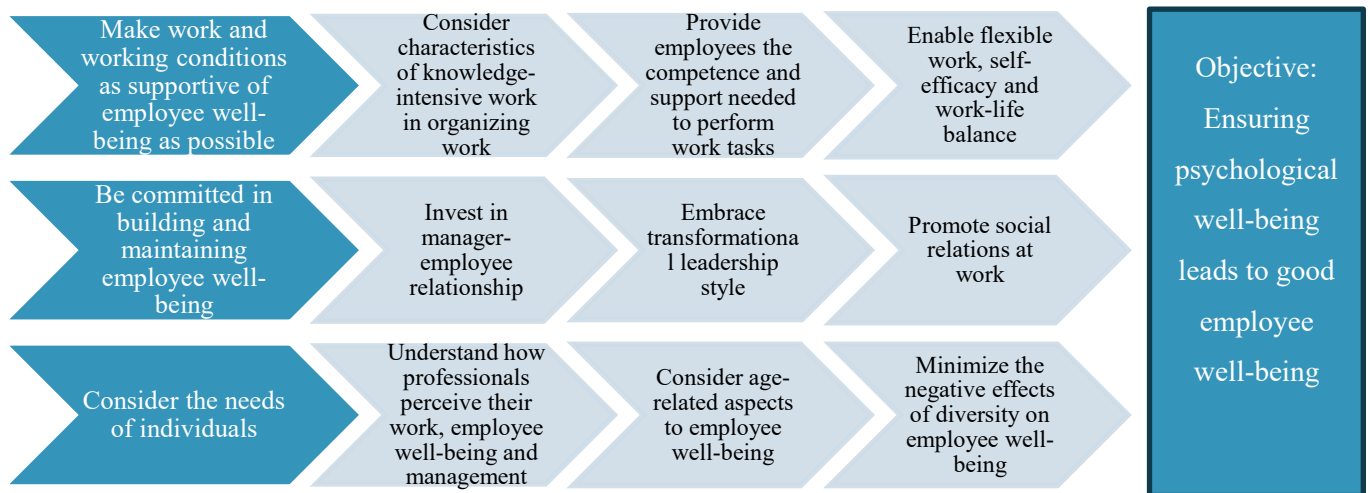


Figure 4. Model for managers to support professionals' employee well-being.

Along with psychological factors, there are numerous work-related matters, which also affect employee well-being. For example, the nature of work itself, how demanding it is for the employee, is there support available, and whether the employee feels that they are in control of their work, all affect employee well-being. (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, 82-84) Managers should make the working conditions as supportive of employee well-being as possible. This can be done by for instance ensuring professionals have the competence and support needed to perform their work tasks and possibility to work flexibly as presented in figure 4. Work demands must be reasonable to maintain work-life balance, which is needed for good employee well-being (Sørensen & Holman, 2014, 68-69).

Organizations must be committed to creating a work environment and culture, which promotes employee well-being (The Center for Occupational safety, 2019, 3-4). Social relationships at work and the support received from colleagues boost employee well-being (Schön Persson et al., 2018, 4303-4307). Therefore, managers that systematically introduce actions and practices, which promote positive social interaction can boost employee well-being. Manager-employee relationship is a key relationship that affects employee well-being (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 29-34). Managers can ensure that these relationships are high in quality and invested in, to ensure employee well-being. The

relationships can be strengthened by promoting employee autonomy and giving them regular feedback. Adopting a transformational leadership style can help strengthen the relationship and gain positive employee well-being outcomes, such as reducing employee stress. (Das & Pattanayak, 2023, 21313, 21320)

When employees are recognized as individuals who need personalized support and coaching, they can meet their full potential. Embracing a transformational leadership style, which values employees' uniqueness and different strengths is sufficient for employee well-being. (Bakker et al, 2023, 701) Professionals have different perceptions on employee well-being, how meaningful and worthwhile they find their work, how diverse they find their work community and how all these matters affect their employee well-being (Allan et al., 2018, 155-156; Homan et al., 2008, 1217-1218) Managers should understand these individual perceptions and consider them in different management practices. Individual perceptions on employee-manager relationship must also be noticed (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2012, 29-34).

Diverse working community might have negative effects on employee well-being if the management does not consider people's differences in age or cultural background. Individualistic approach to professionals' needs can help consider and understand such differences. Getting to know employees on a personal level and gain understanding on what kinds of task they work with and how, can improve manager's understanding of employees' differences. Setting individual goals with employees and finding their strengths and weaknesses can be useful in managing employee well-being. Employee well-being management is effective when it is a systematic practice, which is continuously assessed and developed. Next chapters cover the empirical part of this study, and the research design is discussed next.

4 Research design

4.1 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research refers to collecting and analysing nonquantitative data such as interview transcripts, documents, and video recording. It is commonly used to shed light on new insights, understanding the complexity of individuals and critical assessment of social patterns. Qualitative research is conducted in different fields, such as business, psychology, and education, to mention a few. (Saldana, 2011, 3-4) This study uses qualitative research method, since it suits the nature of this study, which is to understand professionals' perceptions on management practices that support employee well-being, whilst understanding the idiosyncrasies of professional work and working in a diverse working community. Figure 5 presents employee well-being as the primary research topic. Management practices, professional work and diverse working community have an explanatory role, which all explain and deepen understanding the perceptions on employee well-being.



Figure 5. Topics of the qualitative research.

Moreover, qualitative approach suits for research that studies a new phenomenon, and which aims to understand the chosen phenomenon in depth (Myers, 2013, 9). Employee well-being has gained more presence in organizations in the recent years, and it is something that management studies cover more and more. However, during the literature review, the author noted that research on the well-being of professionals has been more quantitatively researched than qualitatively. Due to the current nature of

this study, complex nature of employee well-being and the research gap noted, qualitative approach was found to be the most suitable for this study. Next section explains how data was collected.

4.2 Data collection

Interviews were selected as the data collection method to gain new insights on employees' perceptions on their well-being. Holding interviews with professionals individually was seen as the most effective way to gain new insights from their perceptions, experiences, and views on employee well-being. (Saldana, 2011, 3-4) Interviewees and key facts on them are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. Interviewees' profiles

Interviewee (Pseudonym)	Nationality (Finnish/ International)	Interviewee's generation	Work experience in knowledge-intensive work (years)	Type of diversity in working community
Ilo	Finnish	Generation Z	0,75	Works in an international team and with foreign customers, different aged colleagues
Blake	International	Generation Z	2,75	Works in an international team with different aged colleagues
Vanja	Finnish	Millennial	4,5	Works with foreign customers
Sumu	Finnish	Millennial	2	Works in an international organization with different aged colleagues
Kuura	Finnish	Millennial	16	Works in an international organization with different aged colleagues
Runo	Finnish	Generation X	5	Works in an international organization with different aged colleagues
Parker	International	Generation X	28	Works in an international team

Gender-neutral pseudonyms are used for describing each interviewee for anonymization purposes. Seven individual interviews were held with professionals in knowledge-intensive work. It is recommended that 5 to 25 individuals should be interviewed for qualitative research (Creswell et al.,

2007, 254). Ultimately the plan was to hold five interviews. However, two more interviews were added to gain more understanding on professionals' perceptions on employee well-being by diverse age groups and cultural backgrounds. Interviewees were chosen based on researcher's assumptions on how they could analyse and vocalize their experiences on employee well-being related matters. The researcher aspired to find interviewees with diverse age-profiles, different genders, different amounts of experience in knowledge-intensive work, from different organizations and diverse working communities to gain as diverse representation of professionals as possible. The interviewees represented different aged professionals, since there was two representatives of generation Z, who were born between 1997-2012, three millennials born between 1981-1996 and two representative of generation X born between 1965-1980, as shown in table 1 (Dimock, 2019).

All interviewees identified themselves as either male (3 participants) or female (4 participants), but genders are not specified in table 1 for anonymization purposes and since gender diversity is not studied in this research. A diverse group of interviewees was important for this study to understand the impact diverse work community has on employee well-being and individual perceptions on employee well-being of professionals in knowledge-intensive work. Participants work in different professional roles and fields of business, such as consultancy, international relations, people development and research. Professional roles are not presented on an interviewee level to guarantee confidentiality. Interviewees found their working communities to be diverse in different ways. Some interviewees work in international teams, some in international organizations, some with foreign customers and some with different aged colleagues. The types of diversity presented in table 1 are based on the interview answers.

Finnish interviewees were interviewed in Finnish and international interviewees in English. The interviews were approximately one hour long, which is a typical length for qualitative approach interviews (Hair et al., 2016, 154). One-hour private bookings were scheduled for the interviews, and they were held in Microsoft Teams. The researcher contacted all interviewees by either calling or emailing them beforehand and explained the purpose of the interview. The interviews were semi-structured with predefined interview questions (Appendix 1), but also flexibility to ask unstructured questions. The semi-structured interview method was chosen, because it allows participants to elaborate on their answers and answer in their own words. (Hair et al, 2016, 201). This supported the objective of the research, which is to discover professionals' perceptions on employee well-being. Open ended questions, which do not lead the interviewee to answer a certain way, were used to reveal the authentic and genuine experiences and opinions of the interviewees (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 82). Interviewees were presented open-ended questions such as 'What employee well-being

consists of in your opinion?’ and ‘What management practices would support your employee well-being?’ to make the interviewees reflect their own experiences and bring new insights as recommended in qualitative research (Saldana, 2011, 3-4). All interviewees agreed to the possibility to hold secondary interviews, if needed, but no secondary interviews were held.

Trust with the researcher and interviewees was built by emphasizing the confidentiality of the interview. The interviewees were given the opportunity to get the interview questions in advance if they wanted to prepare themselves for the interview. Three interviewees preferred receiving interview questions in advance. Trust was built to ensure the quality of the data collected from the interviews. (Hair et al., 2016, 200) In the next section, the process of data analysis is demonstrated.

4.3 Data analysis

Themes and patterns are identified, examined, compared, and interpreted by qualitative data analysis. In this iterative process, data from both the literature review and interviews are revisited repeatedly to find answers, new insights, and questions. The objective of the analysis is to find either consistent or inconsistent themes and patterns, which relate to the research questions. (Hair et al., 2016, 302) One of the most innovative approaches to data analysis is thematic analysis and its theoretical flexibility allows to engage different theories and perspectives. It also suits well for finding similarities in the data. The thematic approach to data analysis was chosen for this study. Thematic analysis consisted of seven phases, presented in table 2. (Lester et al., 2020, 94-106)

Table 2. Seven phases of thematic analysis (Adapted from Lester et al., 2020, 94-106).

	Phase in theory	Phase in this study
Phase 1	Preparing and organizing data for analysis	Video recordings and automatic transcriptions
Phase 2	Transcribing data	Manual revision of automatic transcriptions
Phase 3	Becoming familiar with data	Highlighting key words and phrases
Phase 4	Memoing data	Commenting data
Phase 5	Coding data	Color coding key words and insights
Phase 6	From codes to categories and categories to themes	Categorizing and developing themes based on the research topics
Phase 7	Making the analytic process transparent	Describing research ethics and trustworthiness of the study

Firstly, the data consisted of video recordings and transcriptions, which were collected during the interviews. Since the transcriptions were automatic transcriptions provided by Microsoft Teams, they

needed manual revision. Automatic interview transcriptions were made into Microsoft Word documents for manual revision. Manual revision was done as the second phase of thematic data analysis. While revising the data, the researcher also got familiar with the data by highlighting key words and phrases from the interviews (phase 3). Memoing data was done using the Comment feature in Microsoft Word, which enabled the researcher to write down initial findings and memos during the analysis phase. Coding was conducted by organizing key words and insights to a separate document with different color codes. Power point was used in this fifth phase of analysis. In the sixth phase, the researcher returned to literature review to compare it with the primary data from the interviews. Categories and themes were developed based on the research topics and grouping of interview questions (available in appendix 1), which were designed with the same logic. Categorized and themed answers were marked with the number of interviews, in which those insights were brought into discussion by the interviewee, as demonstrated in figure 6 below.

General findings on employee well-being (Number of participants who discussed the topic)	Findings on management practices (Number of participants who discussed the topic)	Findings on diverse working community (Number of participants who discussed the topic)	Findings on knowledge-intensive work (Number of participants who discussed the topic)
Private life affects employee well-being 7/7	Level of commitment to the employees and their employee well-being affects employee well-being Commitment is shown in activeness in communication with employees (for example by asking how are you, how is work load), being there for employees when needed even if something happens in private life, regular catch ups 6/7	Sense of community supports employee well-being Community is created by for example being able to chat with each other and participate in sports clubs or other activities together 5/7	Possibility to modify work supports employee well-being 6/7

Figure 6. Example of how the researcher created themes and categories from the data and visualized how many interviewees brought the matter into discussion.

This allowed the researcher to categorize findings based on how many interviewees brought out the same insights. Furthermore, this helped to find out the similarities and differences of professional's perceptions. Themes shown in the top row in figure 6 were created based on the research questions to answer them effectively. Phase seven, making the process transparent, was done by explaining and

demonstrating (table 2) the different steps that the researcher followed during data analysis. Transparency is further discussed in the next section.

4.4 Evaluation of the study

4.4.1 Research ethics

Ethical issues rise while conducting research. Ethical issues can be either anticipated or unexpected. (Wiles, 2012, 9) The research topic of this thesis can be perceived sensitive to some, and this was an anticipated ethical issue of the thesis. However, the data that the interviewees provide cannot be anticipated and ethical issues may rise during data collection. Research participants must have informed consent, which means that participants must be provided with necessary information about what participating in the research involves. They must also be given an opportunity to decide, whether they want to participate in the research or not. When providing information on what the project is about, researcher must consider how and when to provide relevant information. Research participants were informed what the research is about when the researcher contacted them to see, whether they would be willing to participate in the interview or not. Therefore, there was a possibility for not participating in the interview, whilst knowing what the research is about. (Wiles, 2012, 25-27)

Meeting invitations for the interviewees were marked private for the protection of the participants. Participants were informed that the data is collected with Microsoft Teams and a consent for recording the interview was asked before the interview. The participants were informed how the data is collected and that it is used for research purposes. Participants can be recognized from the video recordings and automatic transcription in Microsoft teams. Video recordings and transcriptions were stored safely on a cloud service maintained and implemented by University of Turku IT Services. Data is not passed to any third party and the data from which the participants can be recognized is only handled by the researcher. Consent for the use of data was discussed during the interview and some gave their consent for the storage and use of data prior the interview. All interviewees had the possibility to withdraw from the research, and they were informed about the removal of their data.

Confidentiality, in a research process, means that identifiable information about individuals collected during the research are not revealed and that the identity of participants is protected by anonymising them (Wiles, 2012, 42). Participants were guaranteed confidentiality that individual responses cannot be tracked back to any participant. Therefore, names, job titles, or organizations, from which the participants could be identified, are not published in the study. Only the relevant information to justify, why the participants are suitable for the research, are presented. While qualitative research

typically poses minimal risk to participants, some risks might occur when covering topics which may be perceived sensitive. Sensitive topics might contain personal issues or taboo issues. (Wiles, 2012, 55) The researcher recognized that the research might be perceived sensitive, since participants might reveal health related matters and that can be perceived taboo for some. Because of this, caution was put on anonymising responses. On the other hand, participants of the interview might experience personal benefits from taking part in research, when they for example feel that they are listened to (Wiles, 2012, 56). Some participants expressed during the interview that answering the interview questions was useful for their personal growth.

Ethical issues can also occur when analyzing data and reporting findings. The researcher must distance their own experiences from the research (Aaltio & Puusa, 2011, 158). The researcher pursued distancing themselves from the participants to not let personal opinions impact on analyzing data or reporting findings. Transcribed text was constantly re-examined during both phases. The researcher also listened to the interview recordings numerous times to ensure that the context is understood correctly. Microsoft Team's artificial intelligence was used for the transcriptions, which brought a risk that the transcriptions were not reliable. To minimize the risk, the researcher invested in thorough data analysis.

4.4.2 Research trustworthiness

The research trustworthiness is evaluated by *four trustworthiness criteria* presented by Lincoln and Cuba (1985). Firstly, research trustworthiness can be evaluated by the *credibility* of findings, which can be achieved by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985, 301). To meet the credibility criteria, the researcher studied the researched topics by participating in various management and international business courses during their master's studies and focusing efforts on the research during the last year of their studies. Trust with the participants was built by offering to send the research questions to the participants beforehand, emphasizing confidentiality, and active listening during the interviews. The researcher familiarized with employee well-being topics by consuming different media, where the topics were discussed about, to gain a comprehensive understanding on professionals' experiences on it. The interviews were one on one meetings, where the researcher asked the respondents to elaborate their answers by giving examples, to ensure their answers were understood correctly. However, two respondents were not interviewed in their native language, which may impact on how they disclose their subjective experiences. In those two interviews, the researcher was neither using their native language, which might impact on the depth of the interview.

Second criterion to evaluate research trustworthiness is *transferability*, which assesses how the findings could be transferred to a similar setting and whether the research has connections to prior research (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985, 297, 316; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 294). To meet the transferability objective, the researcher interviewed professionals with diverse age-profiles, diverse cultural and national backgrounds, different genders, different amounts of experience in professional work, from different organizations and industries. Although generalizations cannot be made based on seven interviews, some findings can be transferred to different industries or organizations. The findings were also in line with previous studies and literature, which supports meeting the transferability criteria.

Thirdly, the researcher strived to meet Lincoln and Cuba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria of *dependability*. Dependability criteria ensures that the research process is traceable, logical, and well-documented (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 294). This study meets dependability criteria by the researcher justifying the decision-making throughout the research. Justification begins by motivating the study in introduction, continues in defining the research questions, which is followed by the literature review. The researcher creates synthesis to ensure that literature review is logical to answer the research questions. In the methodology chapter, research process is documented by explaining how data has been collected and how it has been analyzed. The analysis process consists of multiple different phases to ensure the analytic process and results are documented well.

The fourth criteria, *confirmability*, assesses whether data is interpreted without researcher's own motives and that findings are neutral interpretations of data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 294). In the interviews, the researcher asked open questions and avoided asking questions that would lead the respondent answer a certain way. This was done to ensure objectivity in data collection. The researcher continuously revisited the video recording whilst analyzing the data and ensured that they retained an objective approach also in data analysis. The findings must be grounded in the data to ensure confirmability (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985, 323). Confirmability in presenting the findings was secured by not relying on the automatic transcriptions of the interviews. Instead, the researcher relistened the interview recordings to ensure that respondents' answers were interpreted correctly, and they were grounded in the data. The researcher also used citations to ensure confirmability. The next chapter presents the findings of the empirical study.

5 Professionals' perceptions on employee well-being in a diverse working community

5.1 Psychological factors affecting employee well-being

Based on the interviews, professionals evaluate their level of employee well-being by how happy they are to go to work, how much energy they have to do things on their leisure time, and how they experience their work-life balance. The research data highlighted that when professionals feel happy to go to work, they perceive their employee well-being to be at a good level. Personal employee well-being is evaluated based on work-life balance and how much positive energy work gives them. Distinguishing work and leisure time from each other, to ensure employee well-being is important for professionals. Professionals need to also feel that they can cope at work and have the resources to do their work to ensure employee well-being. The research data arises that employee well-being is created by doing work, which employees find meaningful. Some respondents perceive receiving equitable monetary compensation important for employee well-being.

Employee well-being consists of many things: having a meaningful job, good compensation for it, nice colleagues, and overall good atmosphere. – Runo, generation x

Employee well-being is being equipped with competences and skills to deal with all the challenges to come and that you have a nice balance between being a human being with a meaningful work life and at the same time having other things important things in your life in order. – Parker, generation x

Having a support network in both work and private life was considered important for employee well-being. The people in one's private lives affect their employee well-being. For example, when a partner takes more role at home when the professional is changing jobs, it helps their employee well-being. The research data emphasized that private and work life cannot be viewed separately when discussing employee well-being. All interviewed professionals found it important to realize that private and work lives are interrelated, and both together influence employee well-being. Therefore, employee well-being is not only influenced by psychological factors at work but also such factors at home.

Freedom and autonomy to organize professionals' own work were seen as key elements of knowledge-intensive work that support professionals' employee well-being. Majority of respondents felt that the possibility to modify working days is an important employee well-being supporting element of professional work. For example, having the possibility to work for a few hours and then

go do sports while taking a break, can create a sense of freedom. It also makes the employee more energetic, and they get a fresh new start to the day.

Professional work comes with responsibility. I am responsible for my projects, but I also get freedom and margin to organize my work how I want to. – Vanja, millennial

The research data also disclosed that one's own sense of how capable they are, affects their employee well-being. Feeling confident in what you do and having the right knowledge to perform well your job tasks boosts employee well-being. Also, the feeling of being capable to perform well, positively affects employee well-being. Respondents indicated that people are different in terms of how confident and capable they feel. Some people may require more praises from colleagues than others, whereas some might be confident by nature. Employees' competence also affects their employee well-being since competence is perceived to impact work performance and satisfaction.

In my current organization, where everyone is in a professional role, I have learned a lot and gained confidence, when talented colleagues express that the work I have done, or my idea is great. This boosts my employee well-being. – Vanja, millennial

I can utilize the competence I have built in my previous job. Therefore, now I can take it easy and perform well in my current job. – Sumu, millennial

The research data externalized that employee well-being consists of a balance of three element: physical, social, and emotional well-being, which all affect each other. Physical well-being can be supported by for example having a proper ergonomic workspace, sleeping, and eating enough, moving one's body, and relaxing during the weekend. These practices also boost one's emotional well-being. This perception was highlighted by the millennial and generation z respondents.

In addition to mental health, I think physical health is important, because if there is a lot of stress, it can be accumulated in the body and it leads to poor physical health as well. Mental and physical health are interrelated. – Blake, generation z

If only one of these elements' [physical, social, and emotional well-being] functions well, it will be a struggle for survival and next in line is burnout. – Sumu, millennial

Understanding own resources and setting boundaries to how much one can do or stress over work is an important element in employee well-being. There must be a balance between the quantity of work, the quality of it, and one's own resources. Employee well-being challenges can act as 'stopping points' or 'interventions', and make employees think about their own boundaries, how much they can

work or stress over work, what motivates them and what they want to do in life. If employee well-being challenges occur, it is important to find ways to boost the factors, which increase one's employee well-being. Next section dives into work-related factors to adduce perceptions on how professionals' work affects employee well-being.

5.2 Work-related factors affecting employee well-being

All respondents explained that they to some extent, work remotely, and have flexible working hours. Majority of them stated that flexibility and remote work positively affects their employee well-being by making everyday tasks easier. Flexible remote work can ease everyday tasks, such as walking the dog, when one does not need start working at a predefined time. Practical chores can be done while taking breaks from work, when working from home. The research data indicated that flexible remote work makes life smoother. Employees can design their work with personal preferences, for example one respondent prefers to work remotely on Mondays since it is the most difficult day for them. When the organization provides good work equipment and efficient VPN connections to work remotely, employees can focus on what matters the most, which is to work smart and without outside distractions.

Professionals' workdays often consist of sitting down most of the day, and the work itself is stressful. These might lead to people not being able to physically release stress. Therefore, professionals' work itself creates challenges for employee well-being. Professionals' work also has loading factors, for example things change and something new always comes up. One also needs to handle details and the big picture at the same time. When professional need to adopt new things, it requires a lot of brainwork, which also makes them more tired. Professionals are expected to learn all the time. These elements of professionals' knowledge-intensive work, grounded in the research data, negatively affect employee well-being.

Not being able to focus on one task at a time is a risk factor for professionals' employee well-being. Respondents perceived this to be one of main negative sides of professional work. With many ongoing tasks and things to keep in mind, losing the feeling of having things under control was experienced by some of the respondents. Respondents claimed that this can cause burnout, which obviously decreases employee well-being. Professionals' work often involves many interruptions, while there are many demands and deadlines. Different work matters, which have a sense of urgency were seen as something that decreases employee well-being. On the other hand, the generation x respondents explained that they are not affected by this type of urgency. Understanding that work

matters do not need to be done as per now, seems to be something that the respondents have learned by experience.

I have witnessed it in my previous job that people burn themselves out. People need to understand that they are not irreplaceable and only few things need to be done today. – Runo, generation x

Other factors that the respondents found negatively impacting their employee well-being was having many different communication channels, such as email, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp. Some respondents also felt that there is a presumption in the organization that employees can be reached even after working hours. Some felt the need to answer emails or chats after working hours when they received notifications. Some respondents explained that the workload is too extensive to handle within working hours, which urges them to work after hours. On the other hand, other respondents explained that they do not have a need to do work related matters on leisure time. Generation x respondents found it easy to separate work and leisure time. One of them explained that before it was more difficult to separate work and leisure time, but the perk of getting older is that now it is easier. Effective time management, work experience and setting personal boundaries for working time can make separating work and leisure time easier.

When clock turns 16.00, the computer shuts down and my thoughts go elsewhere [away from work]. – Sumu, millennial

I know people who write e-mails at 23.30 o'clock and I believe this is an example, which shows that the working hours are not enough to do the workload. – Kuura, millennial

Separating work and leisure time is truly important. – Runo, generation x

I think it [know-how in separating work and leisure time] is something that grows with experience. – Parker, generation x

Some respondents perceived that with professional work comes a lot of personal responsibility and independent working. This can lead to workdays suddenly being for instance 12 hours long. There are also many deadlines, which professionals need to meet. Respondents experienced that these aspects of professionals' work can negatively effect on employee well-being. However, this type of independency can also boost employee well-being. The research data indicated that older employees value independent working. Some respondents explained that personality traits, for example perfectionism and high expectations for oneself, also impact on how much employees work. If one is

not confident in the work they do, or feel like what they do is not enough, it can negatively impact their employee well-being.

Professionals' days can be full of meeting and there might be no time to take notes to process all information. Taking enough breaks might be impossible sometimes and having many meetings leads to some work tasks needing to be pushed aside. Professionals also have a lot to remember, and there are many internal customers to satisfy. One respondent experienced more stress now that they need to satisfy external customers, compared to their previous work setting, where they worked for organization's internal customers.

I cannot say no to our customers, and I always want to give them 110% service. External customers pay for the service you provide. This gives me a lot of pressure. – Vanja, millennial

I have seen people whose calendars are so full that there is no time to take breaks. – Runo, generation x

It is important for the employee, their manager and organization to note that professionals' work is perceived demanding, and it involves a lot of pressure. Time management, scheduling breaks and finding effective ways of working can support employee well-being. Making these actions can help professionals manage their stress. Organizational factors, such as working in a diverse working community, are covered next.

5.3 Organizational factors affecting employee well-being

5.3.1 Working in a diverse working community

Respondents expressed that diversity appears in their organization by having employees with different genders and ages within ones' team. Some respondents also expressed that their colleagues are from different cultural backgrounds and that makes their working community diverse. Some respondents also explained that working for international customers makes their working community diverse. The respondents were in different phases of lives in terms of family based on their answers. Some have older or adult children and others have either small children or no children. Some explained they are in a relationship, but not all. Diversity is viewed as a matter that is not black or white. It can have both positive and negative effects on employee well-being. However, mostly diversity in working community was seen as good thing, and a factor, which can create balance in the team or organization.

I think it is just interesting that we can exchange ideas, cultural backgrounds, and views [in multicultural working community]. – Blake, generation z

If we look at the relationship side of diversity in the workplace, diversity can be an extremely good thing, because it creates a more colorful social life, where people bring in their own ideas and practices. It can be very enriching for life. But it can also cause a lot of trouble when people are not willing or unhappy to engage with these differences. – Parker, generation x

Sense of community within the working community was seen as an element, which supports employee well-being in a diverse working community. According to some respondents, sense of community can be created by being able to chat and interact with each other, organizing sport clubs and other activities for the employees, which promote togetherness. Supportive colleagues and a positive spirit created by the people in the working community was seen as an employee well-being promoting factor. For example, in one respondent's work team, positive spirit is created by team members always praising each other, when getting together. Some respondents experienced positive reinforcement from colleagues to boost their sense of community and employee well-being. The research data implied that a supportive organizational culture promotes employee well-being.

A good team spirit, close relations with colleagues and professional support from them is irreplaceable. When I can easily ask for help, it supports my employee well-being. – Vanja, millennial

The quality of social relations at work impact on respondents' perception of employee well-being. Working remotely can decrease communication with team members. Being geographically distant from each other can also affect negatively on social relations. When social relations at work face difficulties, employee well-being can also face difficulties.

I would love to have my peers more around me. – Blake, generation z

Sometimes I wish our working community was more diverse so that I could also fit in, and people would not talk about things that have happened years and years ago. – Vanja, millennial

Diversity was seen as something that affects social relations at work. Respondents explained that it is important to find likeminded people, who you can relate to. On the other hand, having diversity can enrich life and teach you about others. Social relations were seen as an important factor affecting

employee well-being. Diversity can be perceived differently and depending on how individual perceives it, diversity can have either positive or negative consequences on employee well-being.

Treating diverse employees equally, regardless of for example how long they have worked in the organization, was seen important for employee well-being based on the research data. One respondent felt that employees without children might sometimes be in secondary position, when choosing vacation dates, which creates injustice and makes them unmotivated. In diverse organizations, managers should be extremely cautious about equality to ensure that employees are treated equally.

5.3.2 Age-related diversity

Respondents found age differences being a richness for the working community. For example, older experienced employees might have knowledge that newer employees do not have. Sharing that knowledge can help others perform better in work, or diverse aged team members can help the team perform better. Having employees who have worked for the organization for a long time also indicates that the organization treats its employees well. When employees have diverse experiences, they can provide more effective support for one another.

I have colleagues who have been in the same organization for longer than me and experienced different changes. They are still happy to be here. – Sumu, millennial

The research data emphasized that age itself does not impact employee well-being, but team members who are age diverse, may see the world differently and that might create differences in opinion, which may affect employee well-being. Older and younger employees have different strengths, which need to be valued. For example, younger employees can possibly adopt new systems quicker. Older employees are perceived to be calmer and more balanced, whereas younger employees can suffer from impostor syndrome and feel a need to prove their worth, which makes them more stressed. Older employees can support and encourage younger ones, since they are more experienced. However, all aged employees must feel that they are capable to perform well at work to have good employee well-being.

The ones [older employees] who have more experience can say if something has gone wrong: Hey that is alright. The same has happened to me many times. – Vanja, millennial

One respondent felt that managers might evaluate whether to take a risk and give a project or work task to a new young employee, or to an experienced old employee, who provides steady results. This evaluation was perceived as lack of trust, which harms employee well-being.

When a young employee gets an opportunity to develop their competence at work and succeed in work tasks, they become motivated, which improves their employee well-being. – Ilo, generation z

Diversity in working community was also seen as something that can create a feeling of loneliness if the employee is the only one different from others. People tend to be with likeminded people and having likeminded colleagues is important for not being lonely. When all generations are equally represented in the team, diversity is likelier to have positive effects.

Generational differences may cause clashes between employees, and it can weaken psychological safety in the team. If you have a large age difference to other team members, you might feel like an outsider...I find it important to find age-mates at work. For example, colleagues who have also recently graduated can more easily understand you. – Ilo, generation z

I feel like it is natural to gravitate towards colleagues, who are same generations, in same phases of life, have similar interests, values and leisure time interests. – Sumu, millennial

Respondents perceived that not having colleagues with similar age or phase in life can negatively affect employee well-being, since there are less common talking points with colleagues. This is something that organizations and managers can for example note when forming teams or recruiting new employees. Working in teams, that are equally age-diverse, can support employee well-being.

5.3.3 Cultural diversity

One respondent explained that in a multicultural working community, language can cause misunderstandings or conflict, which might lead to negative atmosphere in the team. Based on their experience, conflicts in organizations are quite normal. People in diverse working communities can face either task conflicts or relationship conflicts. Although conflicts are often not pleasurable and can therefore harm employee well-being, if task conflicts are well managed, they can create innovation or help in problem solving. The manager should be able to understand what is really going on in the social interactions of team members, interpret it correctly, and know how to solve the possible issues. Creating trust is needed. If conflicts are handled poorly, employee well-being can suffer. Different cultural norms can also create anxiety, when practices are different, unusual or they are not understood. Diversity can be viewed as a moderating factor, which makes problems bigger or smaller and, in that manner, affects employee well-being.

In my understanding, there is a very clear link between well-being and how you deal with task conflicts, which I said can be positive to some extent. With relationship conflicts, which are typically negative, you [the manager] need to have this skill of understanding situations and then intervening in an appropriate way. – Parker, generation x

Cultural background and attitudes toward working can also affect employee well-being. Culture can for instance create inherent perfectionism as explained by one of the respondents. Adopted cultural attitudes can however change when you move to a different culture and society. It requires consistent efforts from the individual to change their way of thinking. In diverse working communities, where there are employees from different cultures, people may bring interesting insights to the working community, for example a sharing and caring culture. The effects cultural diversity has on the working community, might be influenced by how diverse those communities are compared to each other. Next, managerial factors affecting employee well-being are discussed.

5.4 Managerial factors affecting employee well-being

Managers' level of commitment to employees and their well-being was seen as a key factor that influences employee well-being. The respondents evaluated their immediate manager's level of commitment by the activeness in manager-employee communication. If the manager consistently communicates with the employee by asking for example, how the employee is doing, and how they feel about their current workload, this practice can enhance employee's well-being. Holding regular catch ups was seen to enable consistent communication.

Catch ups and exchanges of information also make the manager aware of the work situation and [employee's] general mood. – Ilo, generation z

In managing employee well-being, the strength of it [management] and commitment to it have great impact in it [employee well-being] – Kuura, millennial

Managers' level of commitment towards employee well-being can also be projected by being there for the employees when difficult thing happens in ones' personal lives. One respondent shared a story about losing a close relative, and how important it was for them that the manager approached them like human to human by telling "*Just take your time, you do not need to worry about work. We will get it covered.*". Another respondent shared that their supervisor is always supportive and willing to help solve visa related matters.

Respondents explained that well-being culture created and invested in the organization effects on their employee well-being. If it is seen as an everyday practice to ask and understand how people are doing, it is likelier that the level of employee well-being is higher in the organization. The research data highlighted that employee well-being must be seen as a priority for the organization and its management. For example, sending employee surveys once a year is not a culture that cares about employee well-being. Employee well-being should be seen as a necessity and managers should understand that it is needed. Managing employee well-being while managing the people was seen important for employees' well-being. For example, one respondent explained that their employee well-being used to be better, when there were development talks with the manager. Another respondent explained that they have experienced different types on development talks during their career, and the ones that promote employee well-being are open to mutual feedback and discuss openly about:

How I as an employee feel? What is going on in my life? Is everything fine and if I would like something to change? – Blake, generation z

Open, and close relationship and communication with the immediate manager was seen important in positively affecting employee well-being. Open communication enables the employee to express their own boundaries and resources available for doing the work in a manner that also supports their employee well-being. Managers should create a feeling that you can approach them with a low threshold and tell them even personal matters. To promote professionals' employee well-being, managers should show employees emotional intelligence and trust. Trust was highlighted by generation x respondents but also brought up by other respondents.

Sometimes just listening to you already helps. – Blake, generation z

Manager must be easily approachable so you can [as an employee] open up and say you are struggling or really tired. They must be empathic so that they see the employee perspective. – Sumu, millennial

Active contact with the manager is important. We [employee and their manager] are in contact with a low threshold, and we are equal colleagues. – Runo, generation x

The research data indicated that some professionals experience positive reinforcement from superior to boost their employee well-being. Positive reinforcement was especially important for the generation z and millennial respondents. When employees feel seen by their manager in a positive

light, it can positively impact their employee well-being. Professionals must also know what is expected from them by the manager.

Work must be psychologically safe. For example, that you feel heard and seen at work...For me it is important that the manager brings up successes, even small ones. – Ilo, generation z

Manager should be nice, encouraging, and trustful. – Sumu, millennial

Helping employees manage their work was seen as a management practice, which supports employee well-being. Some respondents expressed that they need supervisory support in organizing their work. For example, one respondent expressed that they would wish to get concrete help from their manager to organize work and divide it equally within the team. On the other hand, another respondent explained that their manager supports employee well-being by trusting them by giving a total freedom to organize their work freely. Professionals found it important for employee well-being to have enough time to do their work as they wish. Alongside with own time management skills, this requires that the manager helps employees organize work and give them reasonable amounts of work tasks.

Everyone must have goals to reach, and they need to know what tasks they need to prioritize.

How you do it, should be up to you [the employee]. – Sumu, millennial

Generation x respondent explained that for their employee well-being, working independently works well. However, if they need help or support, it should be available. The other generation x respondent viewed managerial support similarly and argued that a manager should have a good sense of who needs support and who does not. Development discussions are an effective place for the manager to ask if employee needs more support. Based on the research data there seemed to be age-related differences in how much and what kind of supervisory support professionals' wish to receive. Younger professionals required more concrete support and help in organizing work, whereas older professionals preferred to do that by themselves.

Knowing and understanding how much employees work was seen important for managers managing professionals. Respondents explained that they would want their manager to proactively say for example, that now you need to slow down and take it easier the upcoming days. Knowing what the employees do on everyday basis is needed to manage employee well-being. This can be achieved by for example job shadowing employees. The respondents explained that small gestures are enough for them to feel that the manager recognizes the work they have done. Organizing work in a way that if employee is absent, they do not need to stress about their work, or its impact on one's peers, was seen

as a management practice, which truly supports employee well-being. Modifying work to fit employees' current resources is a useful practice to support employee well-being.

Work duties must fit the level of resources available, and they must be motivating. We [their team] are in a good position that work duties can be modified, and I would assume that this is truly possible in professional work, if there is a need and want to it. – Kuura, millennial

Some respondents expressed that building and reinforcing sustainable future for the team is a management practice, which has positive effects on employee well-being. Managers should create a feeling of what we do now is something we can continue doing and have good employee well-being while doing it. Employees cannot continually be pushed to their limits. One respondent introduced their organization's philosophy, which supports employee well-being:

Sometimes less is better and sometimes 80% of what you can deliver is your 100%". – Blake, generation z

Some respondents experienced injustice within their organization in terms of job benefits and division of workload, which decreased their motivation and negatively impacted on their employee well-being. Inequality in terms of who gets praises from managers was also seen a management practice, which can negatively impact on employee well-being. Treating employees equally was therefore seen as an employee well-being promoting factor.

Equality and equity at work is important for employee well-being. – Ilo, generation z

Treating everyone in the team equally is really important. If you feel inequality, employee well-being suffers. – Vanja, millennial

When the manager understands and knows their employees on a personal level, it supports professionals' employee well-being.

The better the manager knows employees' different characters, the more competent they are to manage employee well-being. – Sumu, millennial

Manager should understand that people come from different starting points, they are in different phases of life and going through different things. They [manager] should have the skills to support each individual in their personal employee well-being. – Kuura, millennial

It was emphasized in the research data that good employee well-being is created by the manager having an individual approach to all their team members. The manager should find out how they can

help and support each individual. Individual personalities should also be considered by the manager. Having an emphatic approach to people in general, was seen as a good trait in managing employee well-being. Key findings of the empirical study and a revised model for managers to support professionals' employee well-being are presented in the following sections.

5.5 Key findings of the empirical study

5.5.1 Ensuring professionals' psychological well-being leads to good employee well-being

A revised figure from the synthesis is introduced to answer the research questions and visualize key findings. Based on the empirical study, the concrete actions for managers to take have been revised and they are presented in bolded letters in figure 7.

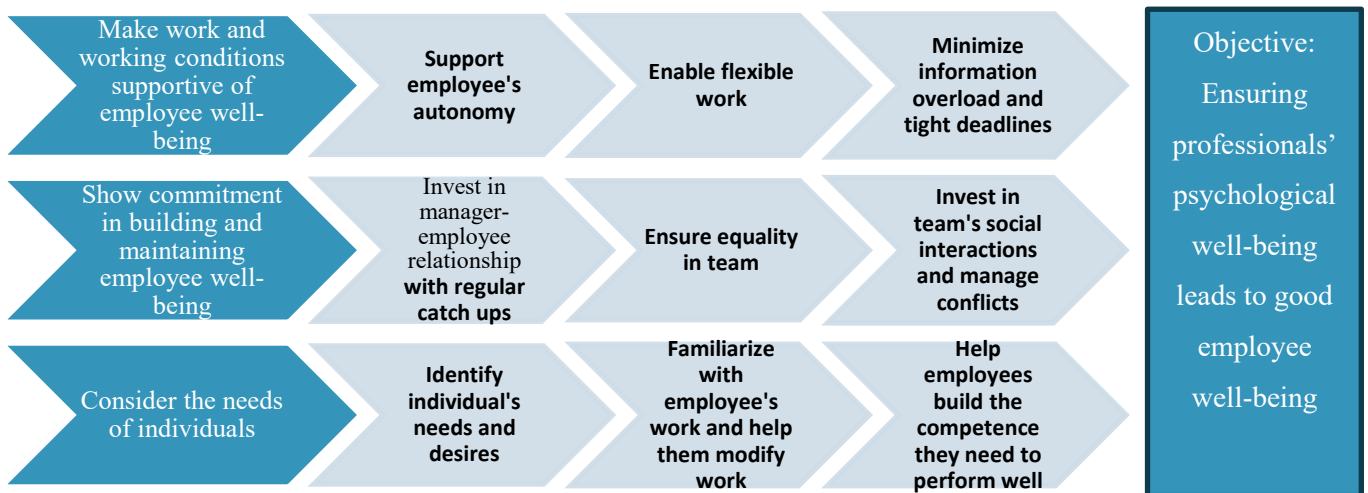


Figure 7. Revised model for managers to support professionals' employee well-being.

Professionals perceive that being happy to go to work and having energy after work signifies that employee well-being is at a good and healthy level. Meaningful work, having the competence to perform well at work, and having a good work-life balance are psychological well-being factors, which professionals' find positively affecting their employee well-being. Broaden-and-build theory suggests that finding positive meaning and experiencing positive emotions can counteract negative emotions, which positively affect one's well-being. In a work and employee well-being context this can mean that having meaningful work and experiencing a connection with colleagues boosts employee well-being. (Fredrickson & Seligman, 2000, 1-18) The findings of this qualitative research study support the broaden-and-built theory. Respondents experience meaningful work being a key factor, which impacts their employee well-being. Moreover, work that involves positive emotions,

makes professionals feel happy and that boosts their employee well-being. These perceptions compliment the theories on enhancing positive emotions to support employee well-being.

Employees' immediate manager's role in supporting professionals' employee well-being is crucial since they are the most influential managers in employees' everyday lives, and their practices can either positively or negatively affect employee well-being. To support professionals' employee well-being, managers should find employee well-being management a priority and their practices should strive for ensuring that psychological well-being factors are fulfilled.

All respondents perceive employee well-being as something that is also influenced by their private lives. Private and work lives are interrelated, and both influence employee well-being. Therefore, employee well-being is not only influenced by work related matters. The qualitative study confirms that employee well-being does not happen only at work and that it is created with the combination of private and work life. However, some respondents found separating work and leisure time from each other easier than others. Interestingly, the oldest generation X respondents experience it to come naturally for them. The objective for managers should be to ensure that employees' private and work lives are in balance. Getting to know the employee in person can help managers manage their employee well-being.

5.5.2 Making work and working conditions supportive of employee well-being

The model (figure 7) presents that managers should make work itself and the working conditions supportive of employee well-being. Professionals perceive freedom and autonomy as the benefits of knowledge-intensive work, which boost their employee well-being. Autonomy is one of the basic psychological needs, which creates positive well-being outcomes when being met, according to the self-determination theory (Deci et al., 2008, 14-15). Managers can support autonomy by giving employees freedom to organize their work as they wish. Providing a work setting, which supports flexibility is something that supports employee well-being. Respondents find working flexibly and remotely to ease their everyday life. Enabling flexible work supports employee well-being by making it easier to balance work life with private life.

On the other hand, professionals' work has features, which can decrease employee well-being. Most respondents experience that their work involves many different ongoing tasks, even urgent ones, and professionals cannot focus on one task at a time. There are also many interruptions and communication channels professionals feel required to react to. Personal responsibility is also required from professionals, and often workdays may exceed the working hours. Workload and

deadlines should be set in such a way that they can be handled during working hours. Setting too high demands can hinder the positive effects of flexible work. Professionals' perceptions and personal goals should be considered when designing work. Professionals' work is cognitively demanding, highly complex, contains a great variety of interactions and many interruptions, which can cause stress. (Sørensen & Holman, 2014, 68-69). The study's findings compliment how theory describes the nature of professionals' work. Therefore, the author recommends that managers minimize employees' information overload and provides them with the needed support to keep the work demands reasonable and in balance with employees' resources.

5.5.3 Showing commitment in building and maintaining employee well-being

The second area for the managers to focus on is to show commitment in building and maintaining employee well-being. When it comes to management practices and how they can support employee well-being, respondents agree that managers must be committed to managing employee well-being. Both prior literature and interview findings request that managers invest in employee-manager relationship by holding regular catch ups with the employees. Catch ups are an effective management practice, where employees can build a close relationship with their manager and communicate openly about how they are doing. Open communication and close relationship with the immediate manager were seen as key managerial factors, which impact employee well-being. Active communication, showing emotional intelligence and listening to employees, for instance, are ways to promote open communication and building a close manager-employee relationship. Manager's trust in their employees was brought up as a factor impacting employee well-being. Trust was highlighted mainly by generation x respondents. Catch ups is also a way to create mutual trust, which supports employee well-being.

Ensuring equality within the team is an important management practice, especially in a diverse working community. Being in different phases of life can cause inequality if employees with family are treated differently compared to employees without family. Managers should ensure that employees are treated equally, and work is divided fairly. Equality can also be supported by having equal representation of different-aged employees in the team. If one person is significantly more diverse compared to others, for example much younger than everyone else, diversity can create a feeling loneliness for them. The possibility for experiencing loneliness in a diverse working community was emphasized in the answers of generation Z respondents, who are the youngest respondents.

Moreover, employee well-being can be built and managed by investing in team's social interactions and managing possible conflicts. Another basic psychological need for people's well-being is relatedness (Deci et al., 2008, 14-15). When professionals in a diverse working community have a sense of community, it can benefit employee well-being by creating a balanced environment that promotes togetherness and teaching one another. The findings of this study support relatedness since professionals' experience having a sense of community to be important for their well-being. In addition, positive social relations and feeling of togetherness boost employee well-being. Conflicts may rise in working communities, where there is for instance cultural diversity, because people interpret language differently and misunderstandings can occur. Managers should be able to handle conflicts well to minimize conflicts' harm on employee well-being.

5.5.4 Considering the needs of individuals

Finally, managers should understand that professionals have different needs and desires to support their employee well-being. Getting to know employees on a personal level is important in making employees' work have meaning and purpose for them, setting their goals and in providing them support, to mention a few. Some respondents felt confident in their work and feel that they have enough competence to perform well in their work, whereas some would prefer getting more support and praises to boost their employee well-being. Individual needs must be recognized by the manager in supporting employee well-being. Individual employees also have different strengths, for instance some young employees might easily adapt to new systems, whereas it might be more difficult for older employees. Older employees on the other hand may be better at regulating their negative emotions than younger employees as proposed in literature (Mauno et al., 2013, 411-412).

Majority of the respondents also found it important for the manager to know and understand what they do and what their workdays consist of. When managers know what happens on an everyday basis, it is easier for them to help to modify professional's work in a way that it supports their employee well-being. An effective practice to get to know professionals on an individual level, understand what they do, and find the most effective ways to support their employee well-being, is to familiarize with employee's work by for example job shadowing. Knowing what the employees truly do also helps in reinforcing a sustainable future for the team. Employees need to experience that what they do now is something they can do for years to experience good employee well-being. Employees cannot be constantly pushed to their limits.

The third basic need, which creates employee well-being outcomes when met, is competence (Deci et al., 2008, 14-15). Employees must feel that they are competent enough to perform well in their

work tasks, which can be supported with manager helping employees build the competence they need to perform well (Ryan & Moller, 2017, 214-219). The nature of professionals' work holds challenges to maintain competence, since professionals are required to continuously learn and adopt new things. Helping employees build their competence requires that the managers understand their employees' work-related challenges and what their work consists of. Frequent employee-manager communication, which involves feedback, can make this possible. Following the practices presented in figure 7 should ultimately lead to positive employee well-being outcomes for professionals working in a diverse working community. The model notices the main factors of professionals' work which should be considered in managing their employee well-being and the idiosyncrasy of working in a diverse working community. Next the conclusions of this study are discussed.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Theoretical implications

Professionals' perceptions and therefore, the findings of this study support the broaden-and-build theory, which suggests having meaningful work and experiencing a connection with colleagues boosts employee well-being (Fredrickson & Seligman, 2000, 1-18). The self-determination theory, which proposes that positive well-being outcomes are experienced, when people meet basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness is highly confirmed by the empirical study (Deci et al., 2008, 14-15). The researcher concludes that adopting a transformational leadership style can act as a method to implement the theories on positive emotions in practice (Fredrickson & Seligman, 2000, 1-18). Therefore, transformational leadership has a mediating role in putting employee well-being supporting management practices into action.

In this study a model for managers to support professionals' employee well-being was introduced. The model significantly contributes to existing literature by presenting a framework, which can be utilized by managers to support professionals' employee well-being. Prior research suggested to further research interventions that can be utilized to influence the fulfilment of basic psychological needs of professionals (Piiro et al., 2022, 41). The model created by the author answers to this research gap from a managerial perspective and adduces management practices, which strive to ensure professionals' psychological well-being and lead to good employee well-being.

This study, which emphasizes professionals' perceptions on employee well-being and management practices that support it, brings valuable insights to the academic fields of business and psychology. Professionals' perceptions enhance understanding on these matters. The model for managers to support professionals' employee well-being, created by the author, contributes to employee well-being management theories. In addition, the perceptions broaden understanding of working in a diverse working community and how it impacts on employee well-being. This study provides novelty value for the academic literature by introducing the most recent insights of professionals' working in diverse working communities. Moreover, professionals' perceptions on professional work, diverse working community and their role in employee well-being, can be utilized in different academic fields, such as international business, management, and occupational healthcare.

In academic literature, age-related diversity is highlighted, when defining how diversity can affect employee well-being. This study did not find age itself having a significant role in affecting employee well-being. However, this study proposes that having relatable colleagues in a similar phase in life,

who employee can connect with, can positively influence their employee well-being. Therefore, this study highlights peers' positive effects on employee well-being. The disadvantages that professional work can have on employee well-being presented in the literature review were similar to what the professionals interviewed perceived. This confirms that the literature available is up to date even though professional work constantly changes. The conclusions chapter continues by discussing the managerial implications of this study.

6.2 Managerial implications

For managers, this study reveals effective management practices to support professionals' employee well-being. The model presented (figure 7) can be utilized by managers in practice. Managers should show commitment towards their employees' well-being by scheduling catch ups, where employees can discuss both work and private life related matters. It is important to note that work and private lives are interrelated and what happens in employees' private life affects their work and vice versa. Employee-manager communication should be consistent to build mutual trust, which positively affects employee well-being. Moreover, fostering a culture where there is daily exchange of information between the manager and employee, supports employees' well-being. Regular interaction and being present in employees' everyday lives builds a foundation for open communication and close leader-member relationship. It is important to emphatically approach employees and show emotional intelligence towards them. That makes it easier for employees to approach managers proactively. In employee-manager interactions, managers should be able to take the role of a listener. Employees should feel as they are equals to their manager, and that they are not lead from top down.

Managers should view employees as individuals, who have different needs towards their manager. Having an individualistic approach to employees helps to find how everyone's employee well-being could be supported, in the best way possible, and create psychological safety. Some employees might need more positive reinforcement from their manager than others, which requires the manager to point out employee's successes and give them positive feedback. Other employees might need support from their manager in organizing their work. The manager should understand how much work the employees do to help them manage that work. Employees' resources do not remain the same all the time and helping them modify their work to meet the resources available, is expected from the manager. Although professional work often comes with a lot of personal responsibility, positive employee well-being outcomes can occur, when work is organized in a way that employees do not need to stress about work-related matter when they are absent.

Professionals' work can be hectic with many ongoing tasks and deadlines. Professionals may feel obligated to cross their boundaries to perform well. Employee well-being should however go before performance when looking at employee well-being management. Managers can affect employee well-being by setting demands, which can be reached. Employees cannot be pushed to their limits continuously. Understanding and communicating to employees that sometimes it is alright to deliver 80 percent instead of 100 percent can benefit employee well-being. Helping employees manage their time and prioritize some work tasks over others, can be useful practices for the managers to support professionals' employee well-being.

Managers must treat every employee equally. Employees can experience inequality if workload is not divided fairly between the team members. This may create a feeling that some employees are favoured over others. Knowing everyone's workload and what they actually do, is crucial in being able to divide workload equally. However, this is not an easy task for managers since they must also consider everyone's own resources available to perform work tasks. The author suggests that division of work, and what affects it, is discussed openly in teams of professionals. Perception of inequality might also come from the manager giving different amounts of positive feedback to the employees. Managers should focus on equally noticing everyone's successes.

Professional work has characteristics, which managers should consider when managing professionals' employee-well-being. Promoting freedom and autonomy support employee well-being. Therefore, managers should create a premise for work, which enables autonomy. Understanding the nature of professional work, that it is cognitively demanding, and employees constantly need to learn new things, is important for managers to note. The author suggests that managers should evaluate with their employees, which demands employees have, do they have enough resources to cope with them, do they feel like they are in control of them and whether they need support with them. Managers should be careful in adding new demands for the employees so that employees' limits are not over exceeded. Although many professionals enjoy autonomy and working independently, they also require support from their managers. Needs for support are different to all and they vary depending on the situation. The author suggests that managers encourage employees to ask for help. Employees should also be told how to and where to ask for help. When employee-manager communication happens in low-threshold, and it is easy for the employee to approach their manager, getting the support needed happens more easily.

Multichannel communication can harm employee well-being by causing technostress. Some employees feel obligated to respond to work messages immediately, even after working hours.

Managers should let employees know, what they are expected from. Some work tasks might need quick response to, and others not. Whether employees are expected to work after working hours, it must be communicated to them, and vice versa, if they are not expected to do that. Expectations should be reasonable, and when it comes to managing employee well-being, they should be sustainable that the employee can reach the expectations also on in a long run.

Managers should also understand the idiosyncrasies of a diverse working community if professionals work in such. Managers should lead the creations of community that promotes togetherness and eliminates a distinction of “us and them”. The author suggests that this can be achieved with regularly getting together, even if team members are geographically distant from each other, and doing exercises, which help in grouping and create a common purpose for the team. If possible, managers should strive to have equal representation of different generations in a team to ensure that employees have peers, who they can relate to. Diverse cultural backgrounds should also be considered by managers. Language or behavioural differences can for instance cause conflicts that the manager needs to be able to manage. Manager must understand the causes of the conflicts, interpret those situations correctly, and know how to solve conflicts, even cultural ones. It is important for managers of a multicultural teams to have and develop cultural intelligence.

Studies show that older employees can more easily regulate their negative emotions, and they therefore experience more positive emotions. Younger employees might need more positive reinforcement from their manager. On the other hand, job changes are shown to create more distress for older employees. The author suggests that managers discuss possible changing situations with team members individually, to support them in those changes. Employee motivation changes, when they age, and that needs to be considered by managers. Each employee is motivated differently, and they have different strengths. What drives the employee forward, should be considered in personalized coaching, for instance. Management practices, which support employee autonomy, can benefit especially younger employees, who need to balance and handle work-family conflicts. It is important for the managers to treat employees equally even though employees are in different phases of life, in terms of age or family for instance. Next section covers the limitations of the study and proposes suggestions for future research.

6.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

This study was conducted by interviewing professionals in diverse working communities. The qualitative research was conducted based on existing literature and interviewing professionals. Existing literature on professionals’ employee well-being was mainly built on quantitative research,

and therefore the finding of this qualitative study cannot be compared to other qualitative studies. Although the respondents represent different generations and have different types of diversity in their working community, generalizations that the findings are universal cannot be made. However, it is likely that some findings apply to other professionals as well, since there were already many similarities in the answers of this diverse group of professionals.

In this study, there were respondents from different organizations. Different organizations and organizational practices reportedly affect how employees perceive management and its practices. Therefore, this study's findings might adduce both organizational factors and management factors that support employee well-being, and they might be mixed. The researcher suggests that future qualitative research is done in one working community to gain more insights on perceived management practices that support employee well-being.

The interviews addressed broad topics of employee well-being, management practices, which support employee well-being, professional work, and diverse working community. The interview questions were open and gave the respondents room to discuss the topics based on their experiences and preferences, to provide valuable new insights. This, however, meant that in some interviews, the focus was more on management practices supporting employee well-being, whereas in some the focus was more on how employee well-being can be supported in diverse working communities. All interview questions were not presented to all respondents, which might affect that some subtopics gained more focus over others. Only four respondents experienced working in a culturally diverse working community and therefore, additional research on how employee well-being can be supported in multicultural teams is suggested by the author. This study also proposes that peers' effects on employee well-being are studied further.

This study's findings can be perceived contradictory since managers are expected to support everyone individually and take individual needs and resources into account to support employee well-being. On the other hand, employees experience that inequality decreases employee well-being and sometimes taking individual resources into account might lead to work being divided unequally. The experience of inequality in diverse teams and how it affects employee well-being would need more research to fully understand its significance to employee well-being.

The author found the researched topics interesting and multifaceted. Similar research questions could be formed for a study that interviews human resource management professionals to unravel, whether they have different perception compared to the employees interviewed for this study. When making literature review, the author found employee well-being and its impact on organizational performance

studied in quantitative research. The author suggests that this topic is further studied in a qualitative manner. The study is recapitulated in a summary presented in the next chapter.

7 Summary

In the last decade, employee well-being itself has gained higher focus in organizations. Organizations have been shifting towards prioritizing employee well-being over performance, whereas prior organizations invested in employee well-being to increase performance. Employees are showing more signs of well-being challenges, such as negative stress and burnout. Meanwhile, organizations face challenges in retaining and attracting employees. Megatrends, such as globalization, demographical and technological changes, are also shaping work. Employees from diverse cultural and national backgrounds are being brought together. At the same time, workforce is constantly aging, and organizations have employees from different generations working jointly. All these changes affect managers since demands and standards for them rise at the same time. Managers are expected to consider individuals' divergence, whilst managing all employees equally, and handling conflicts that might arise from misunderstandings caused by language barriers or employees' different interpretations of situations. Professionals' work also comprises disadvantages, such as tight deadlines and information overload, and employees need manager support in handling these challenges.

With all these different aspects to consider, this thesis studied professionals' perceptions on management practices that support employee well-being in a diverse working community. The literature review examined the psychological and work-related aspects to employee well-being, to gain understanding on it. Employee well-being management, employee-manager relationships and transformational leadership were described in the literature review to reveal effective management practices to support professionals' employee well-being. Professional work and diversity's effects on employee well-being were studied to understand the idiosyncrasies professionals' face working in a diverse working community. The objective of the thesis was to answer the following research question: **How can management practices support employee well-being among professionals in a diverse working community?** Sub-questions to be answered were the following:

- How the features of professional work impact employee well-being among professionals?
- How can employee well-being be supported in a diverse working community?

An initial model for managers to use as a framework to support professionals' employee well-being in a diverse working community was presented. The initial model was built based on literature findings and developed further based on empirical qualitative research conducted by interviewing professionals working in diverse working communities, and the research findings. Interviews were

organized by virtual meetings, where interviewees were asked open-ended questions, to reveal new insights and understand their perceptions. The interview questions were semi-structured.

The key findings of this thesis were firstly, that management practices should aspire to ensure professionals enjoy going to work, find their work meaningful and have a good work-life balance. This can be achieved by making work and working conditions supportive of employee well-being. Management practices can involve enabling flexible work, strengthening employee autonomy by participating them in decision-making, setting reasonable demands and offering support. Secondly, managers should commit to building and maintaining employee well-being. This can be achieved by holding regular catch ups, which deepens employee-manager relationship, dividing work fairly, and handling possible conflicts smoothly. Thirdly and finally, managers should get to know their employees on a personal level, to consider the needs of individuals. This can be achieved by familiarizing themselves with employees' work, and helping employees' build their competence to perform well. A revised model for managers to support professionals' employee well-being was developed by the author.

The study provided both theoretical and practical implications to for instance managers, academics, and psychologists. The author suggested that adopting a transformational leadership style can act as a method for managers to implement Fredrickson's theories on positive emotions in practice. This thesis proposed that in a diverse working community, having relatable peers in a similar phase in life, can positively influence professionals' employee well-being. Professionals' perceptions on employee well-being, professional work, diverse working communities, and their role in employee well-being, broaden understanding of these phenomena, and can be utilized in different academic fields, such as international business, management, and occupational healthcare.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview questions

The objective of this thesis is to discover how professionals' (=knowledge intensive workers') employee well-being can be supported in diverse working communities with the right management practices.

Interview questions cover the following themes: employee well-being, professional work management practices, diverse working community.

General facts about the interviewee

- Age/generation and gender
- Could you talk about your professional background? For how many years have you worked in professional work (knowledge intensive work)?

Employee well-being

- What does employee well-being mean to you, how would you define it?
- From which elements employee well-being consists of, in your opinion?
- What practices support employee well-being, in your opinion?
 - At work
 - On leisure time
- Have you faced challenges related to employee well-being?

Professional work

- How professional work affects employee well-being, in your opinion?
- What elements of professional work create challenges for employee well-being?

Diverse working community

- How diverse do you find your work community to be? How does diversity appear in it?
- How does diverse working community affect employee well-being, in your opinion?

- Which factors challenge employee well-being in diverse working communities, in your opinion?

Management practices

- Which management practices support employee well-being? Which practices help to overcome employee well-being related challenges?
 - You can think about practices from different perspectives for example: personnel management practices, immediate supervisor practices, senior management practices.
- What kind of support would you like to receive from your employer for maintaining or improving employee well-being?
- What works well/poorly in your current work community? Could you tell about your current experiences and experiences in previous jobs?