

EXPLORING THE THEME OF WELL-BEING FROM PLURALISTIC PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The rapidly changing dynamics in the challenging work life have rendered the concept of well-being crucial and necessary for both organizations and employees. In recent years, there has been a consistent increase in studies focusing on employee well-being, driven by the understanding that happier employees tend to be more productive. However, the literature lacks a substantial number of critical examinations of well-being practices. While this gap in the literature has guided the scope of our work, it has also piqued our curiosity about criticisms of these practices, as well as positive attitudes and approaches towards them. With this study, our aim was to examine the positive and critical perspectives of various actors with different levels of knowledge and experience regarding well-being practices and to explore their needs to participate in well-being practices by relating them to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. In the light of the findings, another objective was to facilitate the integration of well-being practices as a philosophy/approach within organizations and enhance their more effective and comprehensive utilization.

Implications for Central European audience: When examining both common and differing views of the participants on well-being practices, the participants were positioned in different areas of a pyramid model. At the top, there are employees of the consultancy firm (Wellbees) and well-being experts, who evaluate well-being practices with a more idealistic, sophisticated and long-term perspective, without considering the current economic and social conditions of the country. In the middle level, there are HR managers whose views on well-being are limited to more job-oriented issues, rather than addressing employees' higher-level needs. At the low level, there are employees who evaluate well-being practices from an individual perspective and find them beneficial in terms of socialization, building interactions and increasing motivation. It is inevitable to consider the views and approaches of all actors involved in well-being practices holistically to effectively manage.

Keywords: Well-being; employee well-being; well-being app

JEL Classification: O15, I31

Introduction

In today's complex landscape, organizations are encountering a growing level of uncertainty, instability and complexity due to new world challenges. Organizations, while navigating the economic and social challenges brought about by COVID-19, have also needed to be cautious about employees who may be disproportionately affected by the ongoing changes in the work environment (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). In dealing with these challenges, which can be regarded as significant threats to organizations, considering employees' well-being is a strategic solution alternative that has received attention from organizations.

Well-being is an inclusive concept that captures the overall quality of working life and encompasses not only individual-level factors but also broader organizational and societal factors. It recognizes that individual well-being is not an isolated phenomenon confined solely to the workplace, but rather shaped within the wider social context (Schulte & Vainio, 2010). Recent scientific studies have revealed that employees with high levels of well-being demonstrate greater creativity, more involvement and increased opportunities for advancement compared to those with lower well-being. Additionally, they exhibit reduced healthcare expenses, lower rates of absenteeism and decreased intentions to quit when compared to their less satisfied peers. Considering the substantial costs associated with high absenteeism, illness-related expenses and employee turnover, organizations must prioritize the well-being of their employees as a matter of utmost significance (Jaiswal & Arun, 2020). According to the Future Workplace 2021 HR Sentiment survey, the well-being and mental health of employees emerged as a key focus for 68% of senior HR leaders, including 40% who held the position of Chief Human Resource Officer (Meister, 2021).

Especially after the post-pandemic economic, social and technological changes, the provision of well-being practices to employees by many companies can be regarded as fulfilling a significant need. However, whether these practices truly provide benefits that the parties expect from these practices and how they evaluate them are also subjects of curiosity. Therefore, we aimed to structure our study around these aspects. In this context, besides an evaluations of different actors regarding these practices, we examined their needs in preferring well-being practices using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory by considering the close relationship between the concept of well-being and motivation.

The following sections of the study present the background for the concept of well-being and related motivation theories. We then present research findings and discussions that encompass the participants' positive evaluations of well-being, as well as their criticisms and their needs in preferring well-being practices.

1 Background

Employee well-being is a concept that emphasizes the mental and physical health of employees as well as their emotional health (Mirabito & Berry, 2015). In the literature, workplace well-being is explained through a three-dimensional perspective. The initial dimension of well-being centres around personal perceptions and job performance, giving importance to commitment and satisfaction as crucial components of happiness in the workplace. The second dimension examines employee well-being through the lens of health,

encompassing both physical and mental aspects. This includes factors such as anxiety, stress and physical and psychological exhaustion. The third dimension refers to social well-being, which encompasses the relationships and interactions among employees and their managers. This dimension covers areas such as collaboration, support from colleagues or the organization and exchange of social interactions within the organizational context (Whitener, 2001; Gould-Williams, 2003; Spector & Jex, 1998; Grant et al., 2007; Tzafrir, 2005; Gelade & Ivery, 2003 cited in Pagán-Castaño et al., 2020).

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), well-being can be conceptualized as having two distinct philosophical dimensions: hedonism, which pertains to the pursuit of pleasure and happiness and eudaemonism, which concerns the cultivation and actualization of one's potential. The hedonic view is based on the idea that the purpose of life is to seek pleasure and avoid pain, as suggested by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristippus. The eudaemonic perspective, associated with Aristotle, refers to the pursuit of happiness and a true spirit. This view emphasizes the development of one's full potential and considers psychological well-being to be achieved through engaging in meaningful and worthwhile activities, rather than simply seeking pleasure for its own sake (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Hedonic well-being entails experiencing pleasure and is evident through a heightened sense of positive emotions, reduced negative emotions, overall life satisfaction and contentment in different areas of life, including work and family (Diener et al., 2018). In organizational studies, hedonic well-being in the workplace has been linked to employee engagement, satisfaction and the presence of stress and fatigue. These connections have been investigated by examining leadership approaches, workplace characteristics and interpersonal dynamics within teams (Sonnentag et al., 2023). The concept of eudaemonic well-being can be understood as having two distinct dimensions: interpersonal well-being and intrapersonal well-being. Interpersonal well-being pertains to the effects of social interactions within the workplace, while the intrapersonal dimension focuses more on one's internal perception of value and meaningfulness in one's work. Essentially, eudaemonic well-being encompasses both the quality of social interactions and the individual's personal sense of purpose and significance in their professional life (Bartels et al., 2019 cited in Robertson et al., 2023).

In the literature, many studies have emphasized the benefits of well-being practices and the concept of well-being in various contexts. These studies highlight improvements in performance, job satisfaction and productivity in the workplace (Van der Voordt & Jensen, 2023; Russo et al., 2021; Ryan et al., 2021; Miller, 2016), as well as a decrease in turnover intention (Khairunisa & Muafi, 2022; Amin & Akbar, 2013) and an enhancement of employee resilience (Tonkin et al., 2018). However, it is observed that there is limited research in the literature critically examining well-being in the workplace (Spence, 2015; Ho & Kuvaas, 2020). This situation encouraged us to include not only positive approaches but also criticisms regarding well-being practices in our study. Additionally, we aimed to examine the participants' prominent needs and motivational orientations in their approaches and engagement with these practices by relating them to relevant motivation theories.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory encompasses five fundamental needs that must be fulfilled for individuals to realize motivation (Maslow, 1943). The typical depiction of Maslow's hierarchy of needs represents a pyramid structure where the foundational and essential

needs are situated at the bottom, while the need for self-actualization and self-transcendence occupies the pinnacle (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). Physiological needs are the fundamental physical requirements necessary for the sustenance of individuals; safety needs encompass various aspects such as the need for individual protection, in terms of personal security and financial stability, health and well-being, protecting against accidents or illnesses and safeguarding against their negative consequences; social belonging needs refer to interpersonal needs as individuals have to experience a sense of belonging and acceptance within their social circles, as well as the establishment of close and regular interpersonal connections; esteem needs include the need to have self-esteem and self-respect; self-actualization needs involve personal growth and pertain to the satisfaction of the aspiration to achieve one's utmost potential and attain an ideal life. It refers to the realization of certain latent aspects of oneself, such as talents or abilities, through an ongoing process of unfolding and actualization (Rojas et al., 2023; Heylighen, 1992; Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017).

2 Research Method

The qualitative research method is used in the research. This is an appropriate method if the researcher is interested in participants' comments and expressions about their different perspectives, life experiences (Holloway & Wheeler, 2016), perceptions of different events, their behaviour in the past and present, motivations and emotions (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993) in order to explore the complexity of the situation using a holistic framework. According to Burns and Grove (2008), qualitative research is a systematic and subjective research method that can be used to emphasize and explain daily life experiences and to give them more meaning (as cited in Khan, 2014). While quantitative research primarily seeks answers to the question "What is the impact/result of the programme?" qualitative research focuses specifically on the analysis of processes and tries to find the answer to the question "Why does the programme work or why exactly does it not?" (Walker, 1985; Andriessen, 1987; cited in Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). The role of social theory in the research process is also a significant point that distinguishes the two research methods. Accordingly, while quantitative research follows a deductive process and considers the hypotheses to be tested as the starting point of the theory, the essence of qualitative research is inductive thinking, which involves investigating a social phenomenon to investigate patterns that may be the beginning of a theory (Boeije, 2009). In this research, we aimed to elucidate how well-being, which has been frequently on the agenda of organizations in recent times, is perceived, realized and managed. The concept has formed through the approaches of different actors on the subject and our research has a function of discovering the reality expressed by this concept. For this reason, qualitative research, which is more appropriate to the essence of the research, was preferred instead of quantitative research based on hypothesis testing through a specific social theory.

The research design is phenomenological. Phenomenology is a descriptive design that includes an intense description and analysis of existing experiences by concretizing lived perceptions to understand how meaning is created (Sokolowski, 2000). The reality in this design is grasped through embodied experience, as is also mentioned in its definition, so individual experiences form the base of design and researchers try to find the meaning, characteristics or essence of an experience or event through close examination of individual experiences (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Phenomenology focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have a detailed and deep understanding of. Therefore, it is useful for

studies that aim to investigate phenomena that we frequently encounter daily, that are not foreign to us, but whose full meaning we cannot understand, and constitute a suitable research basis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016; cited in Tekindal & Arsu, 2020). As we stated before, the purpose of this research is to reveal how the concept of well-being is handled by various actors in workplaces. Since, by its nature, the concept of "well-being in the workplace" emerges and becomes a reality in what actors do and in the relationships between them, it is essential to reveal the experiences, feelings and perspectives of these actors (well-being experts, HR managers and employees) to fully understand the concept and how it is created. In other words, as the main objective of this research is to reveal the essence of well-being in the workplace as a social phenomenon that takes place in practice, we preferred a phenomenological research design. In the phenomenology design, an in-depth interview is seen as a more appropriate data collection tool (Smith & Osborn, 2003 cited in Cropley & Millward, 2009). Contrary to the objectifying approach in natural sciences, meaning in social sciences and phenomenology can be seen in the social context in which it occurs. This requires direct participation of the interviewees in the research, rather than merely being a data repository, in the process of creating knowledge that reveals reality (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). In this context, data were collected using a semi-structured interview technique. The research sample is determined by purposive sampling, which is one of the non-probability sampling types. It is frequently used in qualitative research. The sample is selected according to the researcher's judgment on whether it is directly related to the research topic (Campbell et al., 2020).

2.1 Participants

After extensive searches and meetings with various companies, one of Turkey's leading consultancy firms Wellbees has agreed to support our research. Wellbees offers a diverse range of well-being practices to national and international companies through its own well-being application (app). The app can be accessed via the App Store and Google Play. It provides services to its users in their mother tongue with a translation feature in 24 languages. The app has a modular structure, in which companies can customize the product for themselves by adding modules to the web or application according to their wishes. Experts produce new content and share it with companies. Some content examples are "Ways to Save Money in the Times of Coronavirus" or "Yoga Guide: Find the Yoga Style That Will Do You Good". Also, the app uses gamification to change human habits and aims to ensure that employees gain healthy habits by challenging each other. The expert line is another module in the app. In this module, employees can reach experts such as psychologists, dietitians and sports instructors via a telephone/video call line. Moreover, webinars and workshops are regularly offered by experts.

The participants of the study were determined with the support of this consultancy company. Interviews were conducted with a total of 45 participants (Table 1) from three different groups, each with their own unique experiences and knowledge of well-being practices:

- The *first group* includes employees of the well-being consultancy company (top-level managers, mid-level managers, specialists and well-being experts such as fitness trainers, psychologists and dietitians).

- The *second group* includes HR Managers of companies that purchased the well-being app from the consulting company.
- The *third group* includes employees who use the well-being app offered by the consulting company and work in the same company as the HR Managers who are the participants of the second group.

Table 1 | Distribution of participants

		Top-level managers	Middle-level managers	Specialist	Fitness trainer	Psychologist	Dietitians
Wellbees	17	3	5	4	1	2	2
HR managers	8						
Employees	20						
Total	45						

Source: Authors

2.2 Data analysis

During the preparation process for the interview questions, we consulted academics, human resource managers and employees who have knowledge and experience of well-being practices. The pilot study of the research was conducted through interviews with three participants from the first group, two participants from the second group and three participants from the third group. Then, the final version of the interview questions was produced based on the participants' answers from the pilot study and the suggestions provided by the experts during the question preparation.

A total of 45 interviews from three different groups were conducted between December 2021 and June 2022. They lasted an average of 50–75 minutes. All the interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded. Before the interview, each participant was informed about the objective of the research and the content of the interview, its approximate duration and that their personal information would be kept confidential. Then, their approval was obtained to record the interviews. The interviews were video recorded, transcribed and analysed using a content analysis technique.

3 Findings and Discussion

In the selection of representative quotations, expressions from the groups that emphasized the relevant sub-dimensions the most were considered and are presented in the tables within the section.

The open-ended questions are designed to gather information from the participants on the following dimensions:

- Definitions of well-being
- Participants' *positive* comments related to well-being practices and to the company they work for
- Participants' *critical* comments related to

- companies' approach to well-being practices
 - employees' approach to well-being practices
 - the company they work for
 - critical comments from a macro perspective
- Their comparisons of digital well-being practices with in-person ones

3.1 Well-being concept definitions

Most of the participants defined well-being as “holistic well-being”, which includes mental, physical and social well-being. The first group, which consisted of professionals working in a well-being company and had extensive knowledge and experience of well-being practices, provided more detailed and professional definitions of well-being. In their definitions, the concept of well-being is depicted through a wheel symbol comprising eight primary themes: spiritual, physical, occupational, social, financial, intellectual, emotional and environmental well-being. Some participants in the third group described well-being as finding happiness through living well, enjoying life and balancing personal and work life (Table 2).

Table 2 | Definitions of well-being by participants of all three groups

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Illustrative examples	1st group	2nd group	3rd group
Definitions of well-being	Holistic well-being	Physical and mental well-being	94%	100%	87%
		Physical, mental and social well-being			
	Well-being wheel	Spiritual well-being Physical well-being Occupational well-being Social well-being Financial well-being Intellectual well-being Emotional well-being Environmental well-being	94%	25%	15%
	Employee happiness	Living well	30%	37%	45%
		Enjoying life			
		Building work life-private life balance			

Source: Authors

3.2 Positive comments in all three groups

The participants' positive comments are classified under two main headings: positive comments related to well-being practices and positive comments related to the company they work for (Table 3).

Table 3 | Positive comments from participants in all three groups

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Demonstrations	Representative quotations
Positive comments related to well-being practices	Improving employees' well-being awareness	Participating in well-being practices more regularly as time goes on	<i>"So, at first, their approach is more hesitant. But over time, when they see that they are getting results from the sports coach or psychologist, they feel much more comfortable and start participating more regularly."</i> (1 st group)
		Trying out different well-being practices	
		Volunteering in creation of new well-being practices	<i>"There are certain volunteers in our company for well-being practices. Like one or two people from each department. We send direct messages to our friends (colleagues) on Instagram, saying 'Have you seen this published in the application?', especially when there are posts that we like. For example, I share challenges and beautiful articles with my friends so they can participate."</i> (3 rd group)
		Encouraging colleagues to participate in well-being practices	
	Improving employees' life quality	Providing support for stress management	<i>"...they say 'my work efficiency has increased, my quality of life has increased. I feel more peaceful and better.' Both mentally and physically."</i> (1 st group) <i>"Intense stress, performance and competitive pressure cause more people to 'burn out' and more people start looking for 'meaning in the workplace'. Stress becomes more manageable with well-being practices. We observe this in the feedback received from employees."</i> (2 nd group)
		Developing healthy habits	
		Contributing positively to employees' mental and physical health	
	Improving their work motivation	Improving their socialization	<i>"According to what I've heard from the employees, everyone likes this and finds it motivating. The platform helps to socialize us. There are some chat sections, challenge activities, etc. It creates an environment where we can reach each other in that sense. To some extent, we post some photos, someone comments on them. It supports us to increase interaction."</i> (2 nd group) <i>"Exceptions aside, well-being activities are very important for an employee's motivation. First of all, it gives people the impression that 'my company thought I might need this and provided me with such an opportunity'."</i> (2 nd group)
		Making employees feel valued	

Table 3 | Continued

Positive comments related to well-being practices	Supporting employer brand	Improving the quality of work life	<p><i>“Well-being is at the heart of our corporate culture. With people (our employees), we get these business results. Therefore, we aim to create and maintain a work environment where employees feel good, healthy and whole.”</i> (2nd group)</p> <p><i>“I’ve heard this a lot: ‘I hear that employees share their satisfaction with well-being activities outside the organization. They also share it with their family members and friends. I believe that they are indirectly advertising the company’.”</i> (2nd group)</p>
		Improving employees’ organizational commitment	
		Improving the company’s reputation	
		Ensuring positive differentiation and development of existing organizational culture	
Positive comments related to the company they work for	Employee-oriented management approach	Sincerely supporting the well-being practices of employees within the organization	<p><i>“We see well-being as a support programme to help employees achieve work-life balance. In our opinion, well-being is an application that can give them ideas as it has a lot of content that will guide them in this sense. And in this sense, I can say that it works.”</i> (2nd group)</p> <p><i>“In the well-being application, we not only organize events for the employees of this bank but also for their children. And the feedback we get from here is very nice.”</i> (2nd group)</p>
		Caring about employee autonomy	
		Supporting work-life balance	
		Presenting well-being practices to all levels of employees, even their family members	

Table 3 | Continued

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Demonstrations	Representative quotations
Positive comments related to the company they work for	Inclusiveness	Giving importance to employees' opinions and thoughts	<p><i>"Although blue-collar and white-collar employees cannot come together in their daily work routines, thanks to these well-being practices, they participate in many activities together and have the opportunity to get to know each other. These applications, in a sense, bring together the differences and it's really nice."</i></p> <p>(3rd group)</p>
		Valuing diversity	
	Easy and open communication	Openness to employees' feedback	<p><i>"I think it affects a lot the manager and employee relationships in your department at work. Sociability is the key here. You turn that relationship into a positive one and you think that you are working with better people and in a happier way. That's why I think the interaction here is so important and we see this in the companies we work with."</i></p> <p>(1st group)</p> <p><i>"We do not discriminate against anyone, all employees can participate in well-being practices. Even our General Manager is an active user of the app."</i></p> <p>(2nd group)</p> <p><i>"So far, the system is obviously progressing well and there is good work going on. But of course, when an idea comes to our mind, it is shared. These are already considered. Let me explain it this way: Frankly, there is no such thing as 'We suggest it, but it doesn't work!' They take it into consideration and actions are implemented accordingly."</i></p> <p>(3rd group)</p>
		Being able to communicate easily with managers	
		Supporting interactions without a hierarchical level	

Source: Authors

When **the first dimension** – positive comments related to well-being practices – was reviewed, participants in the *first group* (including employees of the well-being consultancy company) emphasized the benefits of well-being practices as "improving employees' life quality" (82%) and "improving employees' well-being awareness" (76%). The *second group*, which includes HR managers, prioritized "supporting employer brand" (85%) and "improving employees' work motivation" (75%) benefits. Participants in the *third group* mentioned that the most important benefit of well-being practices is "improving employees' work motivation" (70%).

Participants in the *first group* evaluated the benefits of well-being practices with an idealistic approach, taking into account their long-term effects and the intense meaning they attribute

to well-being. According to them, well-being practices meet the participants' high-level needs. HR managers in the *second group* emphasized in their positive comments the sub-dimensions that provide both organizational (employer brand) and individual (employees' motivation) benefits. These are more pragmatic and related to their positions and fields of work within the organization. The participants in the *third group* consisted of employees who actively participate in and experience well-being practices. Unlike the first group, they evaluated well-being practices as a tool that contributes to workplace motivation, rather than with an idealistic approach. Furthermore, in contrast to the participants in the second group (HR managers), they emphasized the individual benefits that enable them to socialize and feel valued, rather than the organizational benefits of the practices.

According to the results obtained from **the second dimension** – positive comments related to the company they work for – it was observed that 94% of the participants in the *first group* highlighted the importance of "easy and open communication" in their companies. The participants in the *second* and *third groups* emphasized "employee-oriented approaches" in their companies, with 87% and 65% of the participants, respectively. Since both sub-dimensions reflect the characteristics expected to be present in organizations that provide their employees with well-being services and adopt the well-being approach, the findings are highly consistent.

3.3 Critical comments in all three groups

The participants' critical comments were classified under three dimensions and are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 | Critical comments from participants in all three groups

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Demonstrations	Representative quotations
Critical comments related to companies' approach to well-being practices	Misinterpreting the concept of well-being	Despite offering well-being practices, they continue to put work pressure on employees.	<i>"There are companies that do it just for the sake of it. But these are definitely not successful. Neither the user nor the company is satisfied, nor are we satisfied. Because everyone is doing it by force. But the more a company embraces well-being and understands well-being philosophy, the more the employees can feel good while doing their job."</i> (1 st group)
		Companies offer these practices for their own image rather than considering their employees.	
		Providing well-being practices just for the sake of having done it.	<i>"Participation in the challenges was very low in our company. I think this is actually due to people not being able to understand and adopt this concept sufficiently."</i> (3 rd group)

Table 4 | Continued

Critical comments related to companies' approach to well-being practices	Lack of awareness regarding well-being concepts and practices	Some companies see well-being practices as an unnecessary expense or luxury.	<p><i>"Actually, this is partly related to the business owner's mindset. While one business owner may be interested in well-being and think that well-being will change many things, another may think that well-being is not important. He/she may say 'What is well-being? There is no need to buy an application. It is a waste of money!' etc. And when the economy is like this, another one might also say, 'why should I care?' I think there is a need to change this kind of mentality."</i></p> <p>(1st group)</p>
		Upper-level management does not prefer to participate in personal well-being practices such as psychologist and dietitian support.	
	Neglecting potential benefits of well-being practices on employees' productivity	The impact of well-being practices is not measured during the performance evaluation process.	<p><i>"I don't know if they will work better, become more peaceful. Well, I can't say that. Because most of them (companies) have a tendency to abuse employees."</i></p> <p>(1st group)</p>
		The relationship between well-being practices and intention to leave or job commitment is not considered.	<p><i>"In some way, companies caring about their employees and offering well-being practices can provide employee loyalty. But just because of this... I'm not sure. For example, we have a well-being application now. I don't think our employees will stay loyal to this organization just because of this. I think there is a need to handle this issue more holistically. This cannot be achieved by merely providing a well-being application."</i></p> <p>(2nd group)</p>
Critical comments related to employees' approach to well-being practices	Participating in well-being practices for the purpose of gaining financial benefit	Participation in challenge activities without rewards within the well-being app is comparatively lower.	<p><i>"Only the rewarded activities catch the employees' attention. I mean their only motivation is the reward of the well-being activities."</i></p> <p>(2nd group)</p>
		Some employees, who could not achieve the economic rewards they expected, have given up using the well-being app.	
	Lack of awareness regarding well-being concepts and practices	Instability of participation in well-being activities.	<p><i>"There is stability in some employees' attendance, but not that much. I would say it is in the range of 30-40%, especially for those who continue to do sports persistently. Employees who are unstable in well-being practices represent the majority."</i></p> <p>(1st group)</p>
		Some employees participate in well-being practices not to improve their own well-being, but rather to show off to management.	<p><i>"Some employees, especially in highly participatory meetings, insist on talking about their success in well-being activities. They try to explore successful personal image in the eye of management, rather than their personal development."</i></p> <p>(3rd group)</p>

Source: Authors

Table 4 | Continued

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Demonstrations	Representative quotations
Critical comments related to the company they work for	Presence of deficiencies or wrong management approaches in implementing the well-being concept	Although the company senior management is knowledgeable and expert in the field of well-being, the well-being status of employees is not good.	<p><i>"...I think it's for the sake of maintaining formality. You know, our managers can stay away from the practice to maintain that formality."</i> (2nd group)</p> <p><i>"The top management does not highlight this concept enough. There is a need to push these activities by myself as an HR Manager."</i> (2nd group)</p> <p><i>"The top managers use the well-being app only for motivating and encouraging employees, rather than integrating these activities into their own lives."</i> (1st group)</p>
		Some managers do not participate in well-being practices to maintain formality in their relationship with their subordinates.	
		Human resources (HR) need to be persistent in offering or diversifying well-being practices.	
		The top management has a well-being vision and understanding. However, this understanding cannot be conveyed to lower-level managers.	
	The fact that the company has not completed its institutionalization	Rearranging the work plans and programmes often creates a tiring effect on the employees.	<p><i>"Because of our system, we find ourselves constantly resetting things instead of establishing and developing them. It takes lots of time."</i> (1st group)</p> <p><i>"Some jobs can get very confusing when they are not drawn with job descriptions and boundaries. Yes, it is nice that we work for each other's business, but since it is a structure that is developing very quickly, things can be very complicated."</i> (1st group)</p> <p><i>"Sometimes I can work like crazy, forgetting that I am an employee of a well-being company that should provide well-being to its own employees. It really does happen. Yes, my company is selling a well-being application to companies, alright, but does it prioritize the well-being of its own employees?"</i> (1st group)</p>
		The organizational structure and job descriptions have not been clarified.	
		Lack of a Human Resource Department	

Table 4 | Continued

Critical comments in the macro view	Effects of macroeconomic challenges on employees	Economic instability in the country affects the well-being of people negatively.	<i>"It's more about the economic situation of the country, your economic earnings... Everything comes back to the fold: The better your economic conditions are, the higher your satisfaction with this kind of activities."</i> (3 rd group)
		Companies' low-wage policies	
	Lack of well-being and understanding of cultural codes	Limited availability of services that could enhance people's well-being hinders the development of such habits within the culture.	<i>"I think well-being practice efficiency is related to the national culture and how much everyone puts well-being at the centre of their lives. If the person doesn't have an interest in a healthy life, I don't think the application will encourage them to do so."</i> (3 rd group)
		Experiencing problems in fundamental issues such as security and justice in the country affects the participation of individuals in well-being practices negatively.	

Source: Authors

3.3.1 Participants' critical comments related to companies' approach to well-being practices

The critical comments from the *first group* of participants focus on two sub-dimensions related to companies' approach to well-being practices. Accordingly, the participants' most emphasized criticism are about **companies' lack of awareness related to well-being practices** (76%). The other one is related to **companies' neglect to consider the relationship between their well-being practices and employee productivity** (70%). They mentioned that the effects of these practices, particularly on job-related commitment and intention to leave, including the performance evaluation process, have not been sufficiently examined. According to these, the first group of participants with extensive expertise and experience in well-being, have an idealistic approach and high expectations in their critical comments as well as in their positive ones. The other actors, on the other hand, do not address the second subdimension. For HR managers, offering employee well-being programmes is seen as contributing to achieving organizational goals. If these programmes are not seen to have a positive impact on performance, employee engagement and retention rates, HR managers may be concerned about the reputation damage of these programmes and their being perceived as unsuccessful. When considering all approaches and comments related to well-being practices, it is observed that participants in the third group do not evaluate them through macro topics such as employee productivity, job commitment and intention to leave.

The most prominent criticisms of the *third group* participants towards companies are related to their **misinterpretation of the concept of well-being** (70%). They have particularly

emphasized some issues while criticizing companies' approaches to well-being practices. Regarding one of the highlighted issues, many companies seem to have embraced the concept of well-being by offering well-being practices to their employees, but at the same time, they create distressing work-related pressures on their employees and adopt approaches that are completely contradictory to the idea of well-being. This creates a dissonance between the well-being practices that companies promote and their actual implementation, as perceived by the employees. The other issue that participants mentioned is that companies offer well-being practices to their employees either to do something just for the sake of having done it or to strengthen their external image. The participants in the *first* and *second groups* criticized **lack of companies' awareness regarding the well-being concept and practices** (76%, 75%).

3.3.2 Participants' critical comments related to employees' approach to well-being practices

The participants in the *second* and *third groups*, based on their own observations and experiences, criticized the employees' focus on financial benefits, such as rewards in the well-being app or incentives offered on the well-being market, rather than considering the holistic benefits that the well-being activities provide them with (75%, 55%). *Third group* participants also emphasized the challenges posed by the country's economic and social conditions, as well as companies' weak wage policies (45%). They stated that these factors negatively affect individuals' engagement in well-being practices. Consequently, some employees mentioned the presence of colleagues who solely use the well-being app for financial gain. This behaviour contradicts the sophisticated expectations of well-being practices held by top-level managers of Wellbees (the first group of participants).

The participants in the *first group* criticized the deficiencies of their company regarding institutionalization (76%). In their criticism, they particularly emphasized the lack of clearly defined organizational structure and job descriptions and the absence of a Human Resources Department in the company, despite its growth and expansion of operations. Besides these, rearranging the work plans and programmes also creates a tiring effect on the employees. These criticisms, when combined with some participants' statements about their poor well-being, are ironic for a company whose area of activity is well-being.

3.3.3 Participants' critical comments related to their company

The participants in the *second* and *third groups* focused their criticisms on the sub-dimension of "the presence of deficiencies or wrong management approaches in implementing the well-being concept". Accordingly, HR Managers criticized that the Human Resources Department needs to put a lot of effort and be persistent in persuading senior management to offer these practices to employees and diversify them (75%). They also find it exhausting.

The most prominent criticisms of the *third group* participants towards companies were related to their misinterpretation of the concept of well-being (55%). They particularly emphasized some issues while criticizing companies' approaches to well-being practices. According to one of these issues, even though there is an understanding of well-being in the company, there have been some wrong approaches or deficiencies in the implementation process.

Specifically, they criticized some managers for not participating in the well-being programmes in order to maintain their formal relationships with their subordinates.

3.3.4 Participants’ critical comments in the micro view

The well-being experts among the participants in the *first group* emphasized "lack of understanding of well-being in cultural codes" in their criticisms related to this dimension. According to the participants, the limited availability of services in the country that could enhance people's well-being hinders the development of such habits within the culture. The participants in the *third group* equally emphasized both sub-dimensions in their criticisms.

3.4 Participants' comparisons of digital well-being practices with in-person ones

In this dimension, findings are presented on why participants in all three groups preferred well-being practices presented on different platforms (Table 5).

The participants in the *first group* preferred digital well-being practices offered on digital platforms more than the ones provided in person (59%). This preference is consistent with their employment in a company that offers well-being practices on digital platforms. However, it is noteworthy that 40% of the participants in the same group emphasized the necessity of using both platforms. The participants in the *second group* show an approach towards using both platforms, while most participants in the *third group* (60%) preferred in-person platforms over digital ones. The participants' preferences are observed to be influenced by the fatigue caused by excessive use of technology during the long pandemic period, as well as their longing for socialization and interaction. Moreover, they find in-person participation in well-being practices more motivating.

Table 5 | Participants' comparisons of presentation of well-being practices in digital platforms and in-person ones

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Demonstrations	Representative quotations
Comparison of well-being practice platforms (digital vs. in-person)	Digital platforms are better than in-person ones	Easy to reach and participate	<i>"The advantages are definitely that it is very easy to use and people are very accustomed to using mobile applications. The company has already made an interface update recently and it looks more like a social media application now. So, it is very easy to use."</i> (2 nd group)
		Employees feel more comfortable and express themselves easier.	
		It is a safer tool for employees' health during pandemic periods.	
	Both platforms are necessary	For practices that involve physical activities, an in-person platform may be preferred, but for activities such as personal development seminars, workshops and talks, an online platform is better.	<i>"For physical activities, face interaction may be needed. For example, we cannot benefit from classical scales. We have to proceed with the data given to us by the clients. We may not be able to detect weight loss very clearly as we cannot measure fat-muscle scales."</i> (1 st group)
	Both platforms are necessary	Conducting sessions with psychologists and dietitians online, in an environment preferred by the person, without the stress of travel and time constraints, reduces stress.	

Table 5 | Continued

	In-person platforms are better than digital ones	Improving the motivation of employees through physical socialization and interactions.	<i>"The most important thing about being with people is body language, tone of voice... Being able to act with these. According to research that I've read recently, what people say verbally or especially with their body language seems to be transmitted to the other party at a much higher level. I would also choose this option for better focus."</i> (3rd group)
		Participation in practices more focused and active.	

Source: Authors

Conclusion

The actors in all three groups involved in the research shared a mutual perspective when defining the concept of well-being. They collectively described it as a state of comprehensive well-being. Nevertheless, notable disparities are observed among these actors' approaches towards well-being practices.

Actors from the consultancy firm (Wellbees), due to fundamental reasons such as their knowledge and experience of well-being, the importance they attach to their work and the meaning they attribute to it, evaluated well-being practices from a more idealistic, sophisticated and long-term perspective compared to the other actors, disregarding the country's current economic and social conditions. Therefore, they anticipated significant positive changes in the quality of life of employees, productivity of organizations and internal understanding of organizations regarding the benefits of well-being practices. However, it was observed that most of these predictions were not taken into account or realized when examining the comments and approaches of other actors. The evaluations of actors in this group regarding well-being practices align more with the "self-esteem" and "self-actualization" needs, which are represented in the pyramid of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, as they relate to employees' higher-level needs.

The actors in the second research group consisted of HR managers aware of and knowledgeable on the concept of well-being. The comments made by these actors regarding well-being primarily focused on work-related and pragmatic aspects. When examining the connection between HR managers and well-being practices, two main scenarios come to mind. The first one involves the provision and management of well-being practices for employees, while the second one pertains to how the success of these practices affects the evaluation of HR managers' individual performance. As a result of these factors, HR managers' comments on well-being tended to be confined to job-oriented matters, such as supporting the employer brand and enhancing employee motivation, rather than addressing employees' higher-level needs, such as improving their quality of life and fostering well-being awareness. It was observed that the motivational needs influencing the approaches of actors in this group towards well-being practices were more task-oriented and pragmatic compared to the other actors. This observation aligns with the needs of safety and security, belonging and self-esteem in Maslow's theory.

The actors in the third group had limited knowledge and experience compared to those in the other groups when it comes to the subject of well-being. They evaluated well-being practices from an individualistic perspective and found these practices beneficial for socializing, building interactions and increasing motivation. Accordingly, it was observed that these evaluations are more closely aligned with the concept of "social belonging" in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Some significant comments from actors in the third group were related to their company's flawed approach or insufficient implementation of well-being practices. Accordingly, actors in this group expected all managers, including top management, to actively participate in well-being practices. They believed that such involvement would effectively encourage hesitant employees to join well-being initiatives and foster stronger internal communication within the organization. They mentioned that middle-level managers play a critical role in implementing organizational strategies and conveying key messages from top management to employees. According to the participants, if any new well-being-oriented approach or change is to be introduced within the organization, it should be accompanied by a people-oriented approach. However, in reality, despite the acceptance and approval of such an approach by senior management, middle-level managers often struggle to effectively communicate the senior management's well-being-oriented approach to employees. This challenge stems from their limited knowledge and awareness of well-being, as well as concerns about potential work disruptions and a perceived threat to their authority. For example, as reported by one of the actors in the third group, the company granted one day of leave for parents to attend their children's schooling, as per the top management's decision. However, middle-level managers prevented employees from taking advantage of this leave. Instances like this, among others, can lead employees to lose faith in well-being practices, perceive them as ordinary fringe benefits and fail to internalize the underlying concept.

All the positive and critical comments in the study demonstrate that well-being practices are comprehensive and multifaceted applications that have a unique philosophy that needs to be accurately understood. Therefore, in order to effectively manage, widely utilize and properly comprehend all processes related to well-being practices, it is inevitable that the views and approaches of all actors involved in well-being practices, as well as their needs that motivate them to prefer these practices, be taken into account holistically.

For future research, we suggest the following: One of the significant limitations of this study is its sole reliance on well-being practices offered through the app described above. Therefore, comparing these practices with in-person ones is conducted based on participants' assumptions and their past experiences. In line with this, researchers can include participants who have taken part in face-to-face well-being practices. Forging a link between well-being practices in organizations and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is essential for gaining insights into the significant influence of these practices on the workforce. It is clear that well-being practices address various human needs as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy. By harmonizing these practices with the theory, researchers can investigate more effectively the degree to which workplace well-being programmes fulfil essential human needs and how this fulfilment subsequently influences employee motivation, engagement and overall job satisfaction. Moreover, in this study, the majority of employees in the third group consisted of those who obtained high scores from well-being apps. Therefore, in future research, participants with different levels of engagement in well-being applications, such as infrequent

users or those with low scores, can be included to achieve a more diverse and critical approach. Finally, in future research, top-level executives of the organizations criticized in this study can also be included as participants. This can make a significant contribution to gaining different perspectives on the research topic.

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