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HOW DO WORKPLACE STRESSORS AFFECT EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

AUTHOR Niko Kolari

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Author Niko Kolari	
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The working life is changing rapidly nowadays, demanding continuous readiness from employees to adapt to the evolving work environment. These work-related changes, in turn, have made the uncertainty that characterizes the job market more visible, significantly impacting individual well-being. Repeated time pressure, the need for work efficiency, and the mental strain of work challenge both the individual and the adaptability of the work community. These changes in the job market are reflected in employees' experiences of how work is perceived. The key factors related to work well-being are quite diverse. For this reason, it is important to examine which factors have a proven impact on an individual's work well-being. A well-being employee is also a more productive employee. Workplace well-being is a key factor when considering employee efficiency, work results, job sustainability, and, therefore, the overall operation and productivity of a workplace.</p> <p>The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and describe how workplace stressors affect employee well-being, which factors might potentially weaken employees' workplace well-being and Additionally, and which factors promote employees' workplace well-being and how it affects to job performance. The thesis is carried out as a descriptive literature review with both a narrative and an integrative approach. The literature review examines and presents a total of 32 different studies that aim to answer the formulated research questions.</p> <p>From the research findings of this thesis, it can be stated that the changes in working life and the pressures it creates affect in many ways the ability of employees to work. A well-being employee is usually more motivated and committed to their work, in which case he is also a more productive and profitable employee for the employer. A physically healthy person often also has more psychological resources at his disposal, and these resources often show themselves as good productivity at work. This thesis found that several work-related stressors, such as high job demands, unpredictability, and excessive workload, affect employees' psychological and physical well-being. Employee well-being supports organizational success: sufficient resources enhance job satisfaction and commitment, while high job demands can lead to burnout. Employee well-being supports productivity, but improving it also requires actions at the supervisor and organizational levels. Performance-based pay can increase anxiety and depression during high work-related stress, while it can also enhance motivation when employers set clear goals and provide feedback.</p> <p>In conclusion this thesis found that individual well-being is connected to work productivity. Supporting an individual's well-being at work is the responsibility of both the individual and the employer.</p>	
<p>Keywords Well-being, productivity, job performance, job stressors, work related stress, motivation</p>	

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1 INTRODUCTION

The key factors related to work well-being are quite diverse. For this reason, it is important to examine which factors have a proven impact on an individual's work well-being. These factors can be broadly divided into two groups: those related to the individual and their circumstances, and those related to the organization. An individual's mental and physical performance are the absolute foundation for work well-being. A well-being employee is also a more productive employee. Workplace well-being is a key factor when considering employee efficiency, work results, job sustainability, and, therefore, the overall operation and productivity of a workplace. Promoting workplace well-being brings significant economic benefits—according to the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, every euro invested in workplace well-being gives a return of six euros.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and describe how workplace stressors affect employee well-being. The secondary objective is to determine which factors might potentially weaken employees' workplace well-being. Additionally, the thesis also aims to explore the factors that promote employees' workplace well-being and how it affects to job performance. The thesis is carried out as a descriptive literature review with both a narrative and an integrative approach. The literature review examines and presents a total of 32 different studies that aim to answer the formulated research questions.

The topic of this thesis was chosen partly due to the writers' own interest and partly because of personal and acquaintances' work-related experiences. A lot of research information was found on the topic, which encouraged further exploration. The topic is also very timely when thinking about modern working life and the constant pressure to perform, develop and produce results. Under these ever-increasing pressures, more and more people experience exhaustion and negative feelings, which can weaken employees' well-being in the workplace as well as in their personal lives.

2 DIMENSIONS OF WORK WELL-BEING

The working life is changing rapidly nowadays, demanding continuous readiness from employees to adapt to the evolving work environment (Nummeli 2008, 15-16.). These work-related changes, in turn, have made the uncertainty that characterizes the job market more visible, significantly impacting individual well-being. Repeated time pressure, the need for work efficiency, and the mental strain of work challenge both the individual and the adaptability of the work community. These changes in the job market are reflected in employees' experiences of how work is perceived. (Nummelin 2008, 17.)

The employees' experience of the meaningfulness of work has suffered inflation throughout much of the 21st century, despite the fact that employees nowadays have more opportunities to influence their work. The following paragraphs introduces factors that impact individuals work well-being, job performance, and delve into how goal-oriented work affects these factors. (Nummelin 2008, 15-16.)

Work ability itself is the foundation of workplace well-being. It is formed by the balance between a person's internal resources and the challenges of the job. The resources a person has consist of several factors: education and skills, functional capacity, health, and values and attitudes. The job itself includes the work community, the work environment, and the content of the work, its demands, and organization. Work is generally also associated with managerial work, meaning the management of work. Work ability can be perceived as a kind of structure with multiple layers. (Kauhanen 2016, 23.)

2.1 The concept and history of workplace well-being

The concept of workplace well-being itself is relatively new, having only emerged in the 2000s. However, when examining its content, it is evident that the elements within it are old. Over time, organizations have always, to some extent, taken care of their employees' health, well-being, and overall work ability. It has not always been about maintaining people's well-being but rather about the employer's pursuit of profit, either directly or indirectly. There has been no significant change in this regard. Only the methods and the arguments for them have become slightly more sophisticated. (Kauhanen 2016, 22.)

The concept of work ability and activities to maintain work ability (TYKY) originated in Finland in the 1990s. These aspects are also defined in the Occupational Health Care Act. At that time, the importance of work ability gained value, and ways to support and develop it began to be actively considered. Separate TYKY committees were established within organizations to plan various often short-term activities, typically lasting a few months to a year. Half-day outdoor physical activity events in nature were the most common of these activities. The effects of the aforementioned events were often short-term, but they nevertheless raised awareness and generated thoughts on the topic. (Kauhanen 2016, 23.)

The concept of workplace well-being became widespread in the early 2000s, and during that time, discussions about workplace well-being activities also began. Workplace well-being has been de-

scribed in countless different ways throughout its existence and its scope is quite extensive, as illustrated in Figure 1. A definition created by researchers from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the Helsinki School of Economics is undoubtedly one of the clearest: "Workplace well-being is a state in which the employee feels satisfaction and holistic well-being, is active, copes at work and at home, and tolerates uncertainty and adversity". In organizations, the concept of work ability management emerged in the 2010s. It emphasizes personal responsibility for oneself, leading to an active approach to maintaining one's work ability. The employer and society also assist in managing work ability by offering services such as exercise programs, free or paid counseling services, and the opportunity to tailor work to suit one's own work ability. Workplace well-being must be seamlessly integrated into the organization's strategy as well as its implementation, and it must be seen as an inherent part of organizational management. Its development is involved in so many different aspects that it cannot be considered a separate element from overall management. (Kauhanen 2016, 26-27.)



Figure 1. Areas of occupational well-being (Adapted Kauhanen 2016, 28.)

2.2 Workplace wellbeing: Key factors

The key factors related to work well-being are quite diverse, as presented in Table 1. For this reason, it is important to examine which factors have a proven impact on an individual's work well-being. These factors can be broadly divided into two groups: those related to the individual and their circumstances, and those related to the organization. An individual's mental and physical performance are the absolute foundation for work well-being. The underlying factors influencing this include an individual's genetic heritage, growth and working conditions, values, attitudes, skills, health, and motivation throughout different stages of life. It is clear that some of these factors are beyond the individual's control, while others can indeed be influenced. The key factors related to the organization are presented in the table on the start of the next page. (Kauhanen 2016, 29.)

Table 1. Organizational factors (Adapted Kauhanen 2016, 29.)

Quality of employment, job content, rewards
Work environment and working conditions
Working hours and work time arrangements
Internal communication
Participation in decision-making
Functionality of the work community (colleagues, equality)
Expertise, job control, professional skills
Supervisory work (management)
Opportunities for development (learning new skills)
Career paths (job transitions)

The well-being of an individual consists of the entirety of psychological, physical and social well-being. In addition, various factors, such as biological factors, environmental factors, and the individual's socioeconomic background, can particularly affect mental health. If mental health of an individual is in good shape, they are able to work and be an active part of the community. These aforementioned aspects of individual's well-being, including health, form the foundation for an individual's ability to work. Many factors related to the individual and the work environment influence wellbeing in work, which will be discussed in more detail next. (WHO 2024.)

2.2.1 Physical wellbeing

The concept of an individual's physical well-being includes perspectives on exercise, nutrition, sleep, sexual health, and substance usage. Physical well-being significantly affects an individual's overall well-being, but additionally, it plays a crucial role in influencing the individual's long-term health. By improving one's own physical well-being, not only are the aspects of physical well-being affected, but also other aspects of well-being are positively impacted, such as emotional and psychological well-being. (Harvard University 2024.)

An active lifestyle plays an important role in preventing and managing diseases that can threaten or impair work and functional capacity (Työterveyslaitos 2020b). The employee's physical ability to function, together with psychological and social ability to function, has a crucial effect on the employee's ability to work as a whole. Exercise supports not only physical ability to function, but also psychological ability, and thus together they promote the employee's ability to work. Physical functioning ability has also been found to develop social functioning ability. All of these things mentioned above form a good basis for comprehensive activities that maintain work ability. It is possible for employee to take care of their physical ability by including exercise in their working day and in their free time as much and as versatile as possible: instead of using a car, you can travel by bicycle, you can change the elevator to stairs, and you can walk to your workplace. Although the workplace and occupational health care can provide help and support for exercising, maintaining a good basic condition ultimately depends on each individual's own activity. (Työterveyslaitos 2023a.)

A healthy, varied diet in accordance with nutritional recommendations helps to maintain the level of alertness, supports health and thus maintains the individual's ability to work (Työterveyslaitos 2023b). Taking a break from work during meals boosts the employee's concentration, increases productivity and makes work feel more meaningful (YLE 2017). The workplace can support employees' meals with e.g. meal benefits (lunch voucher/cheaper price in the workplace canteen) (Hakanen, Kaltiainen & Mäkineniemi 2022). Healthy eating during the workday also leads to better choices at home and other food choices as well. Not eating lunch (meal) at the workplace easily leads to eating high-energy snacks, which means you miss out on the necessary vitamins, trace elements and nutrients. In a long run, it easily leads to weight gain (Työterveyslaitos 2023b).

Additionally, to the aforementioned matters, sleep also plays a crucial role in examining an individual's physical well-being. How well a person sleeps and how refreshed they feel can impact their motivation and efficiency in the workplace. Stress from work or personal life can significantly impair the quality of sleep. Work-related stress can also be influenced by working hours – about one-third of workers engage in shift work, irregular hours, or other non-standard work schedules. These non-standard work schedules can diminish the restorative effect of sleep as they often conflict with a person's natural sleep rhythm. Therefore, shift planning plays a crucial role in the recovery of shift workers. For the well-being of individuals, it is important that the workload and recovery from work are balanced because continuous stress depletes an individual's resources significantly. Sleep deprivation resulting from insufficient sleep adversely affects various cognitive functions of an individual, such as memory, learning, and mood, as well as attention and executive functions. Sleep deprivation also leads individuals to think in a routinized manner, which diminishes creativity. (Työterveyslaitos 2024c.)

2.2.2 Mental wellbeing

The WHO defines mental well-being, or mental health, as a component of well-being that enables an individual to cope with stress, helps individuals recognize their own strengths, and facilitates learning and working effectively, as well as helps individual to be a part of the community. Mental

well-being is a central aspect of an individual's overall well-being. It supports individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships, and influence the surrounding environment in which we live. Mental well-being plays a crucial role in personal, community, and socioeconomic development. Mental health does not solely refer to addressing mental health disorders but should be viewed on a broader scale. When considering mental health, it is observed to be a complex continuum that each individual experiences differently, with varying levels of severity and levels of anxiety. Individuals diagnosed with a mental health disorder are likely to experience poorer mental well-being. (WHO 2022.)

Individuals' mental well-being can be protected or undermined by individual, social, and structural factors present in their lives. Psychological and biological factors of individuals, such as emotional skills and genetics, influence how an individual's mental well-being develops. Exposure to adverse economic, social, and geopolitical conditions, such as poverty, inequality, or violence, increases the risk of experiencing challenges in mental well-being. Factors that strengthen or weaken mental well-being can occur at all stages of an individual's life. Similarly, there are factors at various levels of society that either support or undermine mental well-being. (WHO 2022.)

The role of good mental well-being and mental health is highlighted when examining an individual's ability to work, as our current society relies on skills and innovations. In addition to this, the workplace is in constant flux, which in turn burdens the individual and consequently affects their mental well-being. The relationship between mental well-being and work is crucial in understanding how mental health affects workability and how, in turn, work impacts an individual's mental well-being and resilience. Several structural factors in the workplace affect employees' resilience - in demanding jobs, time management challenges and emotional strain are often present, impacting an individual's ability to perform their job. If the presence of emotional strain and constant rush characterize the work environment, then employees are more likely to experience mental well-being issues such as fatigue and difficulties in concentrating. (Työterveyslaitos 2024b.)

If the work is not meaningful or does not align with an individual's values, these factors can lead to a decline in workability. Conversely, if the work is appropriately challenging and feels meaningful, these factors can have a strengthening effect on workability (Työterveyslaitos 2024a). Additionally, workplace conditions can affect an employee's well-being in various ways, especially their mental well-being, at the workplace (Työterveyslaitos 2024b). The work itself and the working conditions can also positively impact performance. For example, fair leadership, efficient processes in the workplace, and clear appreciation for the work done positively influence job satisfaction. Simply being employed and working seem to have positive effects on mental health (Työterveyslaitos 2024b). However, if stress and burnout occur in the workplace, there are several methods for prevention and alleviation. For instance, ensuring adequate recovery from work, regularly assessing one's well-being status, and allocating time for activities outside of work can potentially prevent stress and burnout. (Työterveyslaitos 2024c.)

2.2.3 Social wellbeing

Social well-being encompasses an individual's relationships both within and outside of work. Social well-being supports an individual's commitment to work and enhances resilience at work (Ojala 2005, 30.). Work provides individuals with a sense of meaning and belongingness (Ojala 2005, 22.). The concept of social well-being is not clearly defined, which significantly complicates its operationalization, monitoring, and promotion at various levels. However, social well-being has been observed to be constructed at least on two levels: individual and community levels. Factors contributing to an individual's social well-being may include their social relationships, self-realization, participation, and social capital. On the other hand, community-level social well-being can describe living conditions, such as housing and the environment, as well as factors related to work and education, such as income, employment, and working conditions. Individual participation enhances social well-being, including being in relationships, unity, compatibility, inclusion, participation, influence, democracy, and organizing and leading these aspects. Therefore, social well-being is a significant component of an individual's overall well-being, which, briefly put, combines three dimensions - quality of life, capability, and the social quality of society. The social quality of society is a newer concept referring to how society can support individuals' good quality of life and sense of capability. In a work community, social capital can be examined based on individual experiences, but also as a collectively shared perception of the entire work community. (Vesa et al. 2020.)

One aspect of social well-being is also social capital. Social capital refers to the networks created between individuals, as well as the trust in and dependence on other individuals within these networks. Social capital describes the interaction between people and their trust in each other. When there is mutual dependence among people, certain norms are established within the community, which in turn create a safe environment and trust in the prevailing systems. This, in turn, creates good conditions for networking within a specific sector or area and facilitates the group's collective activities. (Ojala & Ahonen 2005, 209.)

2.2.4 The steps of work well-being

Individual's well-being in work can be examined through Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Figure 2). The lowest level depicts an individual's basic needs, such as nutrition and hydration, as well as adequate sleep. Human physical fitness and health can be compared to these basic needs. Thus, physical well-being serves as the foundation of work well-being. Needs at the second level, on the other hand, relate to safety. Both physical and psychological safety are required in the workplace. Physical safety in the work environment includes, for example, the safety of work tools. Psychological safety at work includes aspects such as a work atmosphere free from bullying and ensuring that individuals know what needs to be done and how to succeed in their tasks. The first two levels can be seen as representing an individual's physical well-being. (Ojala 2005, 28-30.)

Levels three and four, on the other hand, depict an individual's social well-being. The needs at the third level relate to intimacy and an individual's desire to belong to a community, such as a work or professional community. The fourth level represents the individual's need for esteem. In the work-

place, esteem often takes shape based on an individual's competence and professionalism. Competence is also related to needs on other levels. In today's workplace, esteem enhances an individual's sense of security, which in turn supports social well-being. Competence is a crucial factor in selecting employees for various job roles .(Ojala 2005, 28-30.)

The needs at the highest levels are significant for an individual's mental well-being. These uppermost levels encompass the opportunity for self-actualization and growth, which includes creativity, a desire to develop one's own methods of operation, skills, and the desire to achieve self-set goals. Upon these highest levels, there can be one more level set – spirituality and inner drive, consisting of an individual's values, motives, and inner energy. These aforementioned factors guide an individual's enthusiasm and commitment to various matters. It largely pertains to spiritual well-being. Ultimately, an individual's well-being largely depends on their own values, desires, and ideals. No actions by employers are effective if individuals do not take care of their own holistic well-being, especially their mental well-being. If mental well-being declines, it often leads to deterioration in other areas of well-being as well. (Ojala 2005, 28-30.)

Figure 2. Work well-being described through Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Adapted Ojala 2005, 29.)

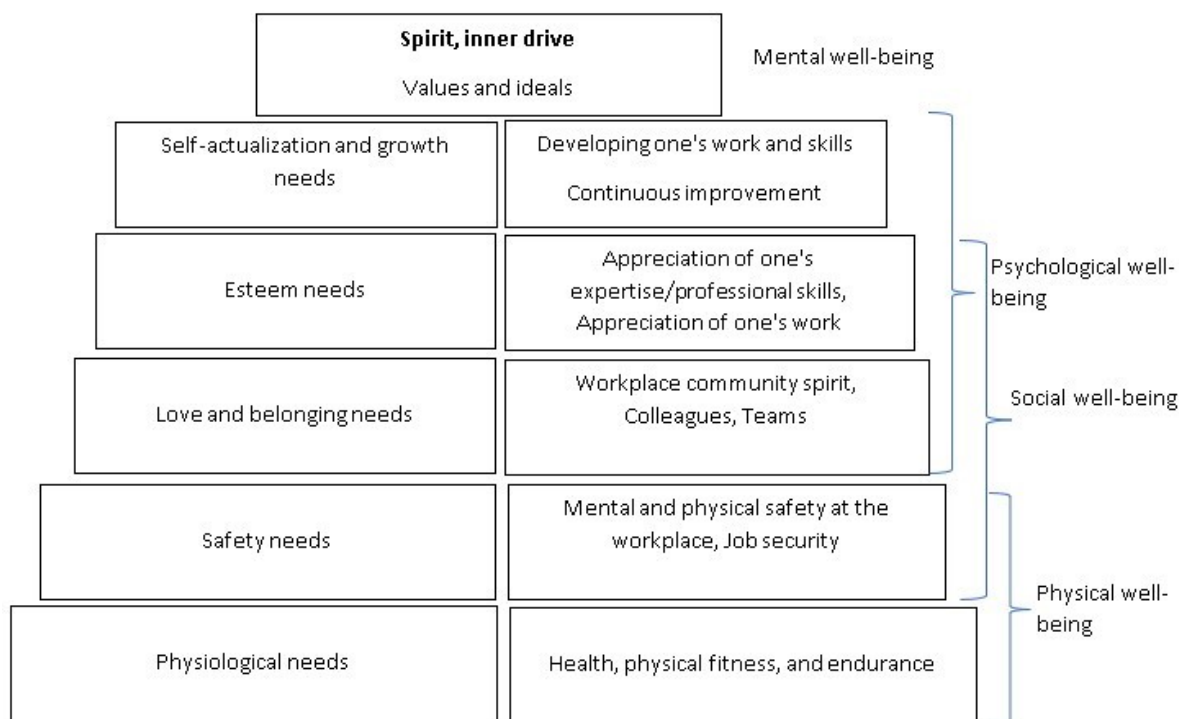


Figure 2. Work well-being described through Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Adapted Ojala 2005, 29.)

2.3 Workplace well-being: The role of the employer and the workplace

Workplace wellbeing means safe and productive work that employees do in a correctly managed organization. The work they do is perceived as meaningful and relevant. The work is challenging as right amount and the employee's skills are in balance with the challenging nature of the work. Work supports the life as a whole. (Työturvallisuuskeskus 2023.)

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health lists following things that affect workplace wellbeing for example lifestyle, ergonomics, leadership and the nature of the work (Työterveyslaitos 2023b). Work

communities have the opportunity to support the employee's ability to work and encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles in multiple different ways (Työterveyslaitos 2023a). It is possible to create a work environment where the employees' own better choices have a positive effect on their health, recovery and workplace wellbeing as well as that of the entire work community (Työterveyslaitos 2023a).

In addition to the factors mentioned above, work well-being is significantly influenced by the nature of work, i.e., how meaningful and fulfilling the work is perceived to be (Työolobarometri 2022). Furthermore, the opportunity to influence one's own tasks is a key factor affecting work well-being. Factors supporting an individual's sense of control include good work motivation, competence matching the job, as well as general psychosocial skills and resources. (Nummelin 2008, 29-30.) Additionally, the perception of workload should be in the right proportion to the quantity and quality of work. Work should provide a suitable level of challenges and be at the right level in terms of quantity. If the work is perceived as too challenging or excessive in quantity, it becomes overwhelming. As the employee's stress level increases, work motivation often declines due to growing fatigue and lack of initiative. (Nummelin 2008, 76.) This, in turn, is reflected in the efficiency and productivity of work, further increasing the employee's feelings of stress and burden, thus completing a vicious cycle (Työolobarometri 2022).

2.3.1 Productivity, effectiveness and efficiency

Productivity is often defined as the relationship between output and input, meaning that the better the productivity, the smaller the input needed to achieve a higher quantity and quality of outputs. In other words, achieving more with less is considered better productivity. (Tilastokeskus 2023.) On the other hand, a goal is aimed at describing what or how much is intended to be achieved within a specific evaluation period (Karlöf & Lövingsson 2009, 283-284.).

The value of productivity is assessed based on effectiveness and efficiency to determine an accurate and reliable value (Roghianian et al. 2012). Drucker (1963) has practically observed the distinction between efficiency and effectiveness. According to him, "doing things right" is considered efficiency. In Drucker's view, an efficiency metric evaluates an organization's ability to achieve the best possible outcome with the minimum level of input. Chan (2003), on the other hand, defines efficiency as the effective utilization of resources such as labor, machinery, capacity, and energy. Chan emphasizes that efficient use of resources can lead to significant savings in both time and money, thereby improving a company's performance. Efficiency is often related to the execution of tasks.

"Doing the right things" and the correct selection of actions are defined as effectiveness (Drucker, 1963). Efficiency also measures an organization's ability to achieve predetermined goals. Simply put, an organization is most efficient when it achieves its goals. (Keh, Chu & Xu 2006, 265-276.)

The pursuit of efficiency benefits both employers and employees, as efficiency leads to profitable business. However, the pursuit of efficiency can go too far, and when it does, it begins to affect employee well-being. The demands for efficiency in the workplace are constantly increasing, with the goal of achieving better results with fewer resources. The ongoing development of digitalization contributes to the fact that fewer hands are needed to achieve the same outcome, but this is not the

whole story. For the development of various companies and organizations, optimizing efficiency is crucial—it ensures that the business remains profitable even during economically challenging times. A company that does not generate profit has no opportunity to grow and develop. If work efficiency does not meet the desired goals, ultimately, individual jobs are at risk. Clear leadership and clearly defined goals are key factors for efficiency—pursuing efficiency should not compromise the quality of leadership, as this increases the risk of sick leave and employee resignations. Finding a balance between good leadership, employee well-being, and efficiency is challenging but not impossible. (Ahlroth 2019.)

Workplace well-being is a key factor when considering employee efficiency, work results, job sustainability, and, therefore, the overall operation and productivity of a workplace. Promoting workplace well-being brings significant economic benefits—according to the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, every euro invested in workplace well-being gives a return of six euros. (Murto 2024.) For this reason, work efficiency should primarily be improved through means other than increasing the workload or reducing working hours, even though these measures may appear to boost productivity in the short term (Ahlroth 2019). However, such efficiency measures, if continued for a long time, are likely to lead to employee burnout. When working conditions are good and the required tasks do not exceed the employees' tolerance, they are more motivated to find smarter and more productive ways to carry out their daily work. (Ahlroth 2019.)

2.3.2 Performance-based work and performance-based compensation

Goals can be categorized into different types, with examples including outcome, performance, and process goals. Outcome goals are directly related to the end result. Additionally, outcome goals are simultaneously linked to the productivity of the company. Performance goals, on the other hand, focus on improving performance – this can be expressed, for example, as a percentage of a team's or individual's achievement. In this scenario, performance improves according to a defined criterion, and this criterion change is expressed in percentages. Process goals, on the other hand, indicate how the performance should be done to achieve a specific outcome. Process goals are more challenging to measure compared to, for example, outcome or performance goals. (Liukkonen, Jaakkola & Suvanto 2022, 248-249; Karlöf & Lövingsson 2009, 282-285.)

When an employee's salary, potential bonuses and other financial incentives are tied to his personal work performance or the overall result of the company, then we talk about performance-based compensation. The idea of this reward model is to make employees interested in succeeding in their task and at the same time increase the company's financial result by tying these two factors together. Reward systems like this have increased in popularity because many employees, for a reason, enjoy the opportunity to receive rewards based on their own performance. 75 percent of employer organizations use performance-based rewards as part of their reward system, and 65 percent of employees recommend the use of bonuses that are based on personal performance, according to a study by salary.com. According to research, carefully designed and well-functioning performance-based reward models can potentially act as promoting factors in terms of job satisfaction, reduced

absenteeism and company performance. If the reward system is poorly designed, it can have negative effects in terms of the company's results and employee motivation. (Link 2024.)

The most common ways to apply performance-based reward models are merit-based salary increases, bonuses and rewards. The salary increase system is a form of compensation where the basic salary is increased based on personal performance, and such a system requires an evaluation of performance and an agreement on a salary increase. Bonuses are one-time rewards that the employee earns based on the goals they have achieved. Bonuses like this can be given to individuals, groups or even the entire organization. One reward model that allows you to comfortably increase your earnings with your own work results is commission-based compensation, where the employee receives a predetermined percentage of the sales they produce. A system like this encourages you to increase your own sales, achieve set sales goals and acquire new customers. The compensation plans vary between different models, for example models with a commission on top of the basic salary and a more direct version where the entire salary comes from the sales made. (Link 2024.)

The strength of various pay systems is to offer benefits to employees and companies, and they work particularly effectively in larger companies where performance metrics are easier to predict. Money is a good incentive that increases employee commitment. Rewards based on personal performance can especially strengthen employees' commitment to the company and strengthen their motivation to work hard. Performance-based pay reduces ambiguities in earning salary increases and bonuses and offers a clear structure when an individual's performance is tied to increases in the basic salary. This kind of reward can also help to bring talented employees to the organization and keep them within the organization. The ability of the organization to show financial success and with the help of this success to reward its most productive employees acts as a good attractor for top employees. Effective performance management can also, in addition to improving employee performance, facilitate the organization to identify potential development targets. Additional motivation for employees and company management to change underperforming business areas can be provided by combining salary benefits with performance improvement. Clarity of performance expectations and competitive salary serve as an incentive for employee development and growth, which are vital parts for success now and in the future. (Link 2024.)

However, performance-based compensation involves risks that should be taken into account. One risk is the subjectivity of the year-end evaluation processes in particular. These may include recency bias, as well as a halo or Horn effect (in this case, a single positive or negative characteristic affects the evaluation more widely than it should) which creates an unwanted lack of stability in the evaluation results. If the performance bonus system is perceived as unfair, it can negatively affect employee morale, job satisfaction and the general level of trust in the employer. Other mild phenomena that incentive bonuses may cause are the employees' focus only on personal productivity, which weakens the level of working in a group, which can weaken the dynamics of groups and thus affect the company's success negatively. Another potential problem is too much strain on employees to achieve goals, which easily leads to burnout. This kind of work environment creates a potentially unhealthy and overburdened way of thinking, which in the longer term can be harmful to employees and the company. (Link 2024.)

2.4 Areas of workplace distress

The sole purpose of workplace well-being is not just to address the factors that contribute to workplace distress, but these factors can hinder the realization of workplace well-being if they are not addressed correctly. Among the most common of these factors are undoubtedly stress and work-related pressure. If these symptoms of workplace distress persist for a long time, they can lead to serious consequences, such as fatigue at work, loss of joy in work-related tasks, and even full-blown burnout. Next, we will take a closer look at the different aspects of workplace distress. (Virolainen 2012, 30.)

When discussing stress, it can refer to a few different things: a threat posed by the environment to an individual, a harmful effect, or the individual's response to these factors. Work-related stress indicates a conflict in the relationship between the employee and the work that has not been resolved. A stressful situation in itself is a burden on the body, but it can simultaneously temporarily increase the body's performance, which can be considered beneficial. (Virolainen 2012, 30.) In English, there are two words for stress, with slightly different meanings. When referring to beneficial stress that motivates an individual to exert the necessary effort to achieve goals, the term "pressure" is used. When the level of pressure at work is appropriate, the work is typically perceived as challenging, and the goals seem attainable. As a deadline approaches, the individual strives to complete their objectives to the best of their ability. The term "stress" is used to refer to stress that is harmful to the individual. When the demands of work exceed the individual's ability to cope with them, stress shifts from being beneficial to harmful. The experience of stress is highly individual; for example, one employee might experience beneficial stress in a situation, while their colleague might experience harmful stress in the same situation, which negatively affects their health and work efficiency. The longer stress continues, the more its negative effects harm an individual's physical and mental health. Even beneficial stress can, in the long run, shift from energizing the employee to becoming harmful. (Virolainen 2012, 31.)

The impact of stress on workplace well-being cannot be underestimated. Work-related stress causes significant problems for organizations, such as increased costs and reduced work efficiency. A large proportion of sick leave is directly related to work-induced stress. For example, according to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, stress was the second most common occupational health issue at the turn of the 21st century, right after back problems. Research by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions shows that as many as 47 percent of EU citizens suffer from work-related stress. (Virolainen 2012, 31.)

When stress persists over a long period, there is a risk that it will create a chronic stress response in the body. This can lead to negative effects, such as a weakened immune system and an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. Another major concern is the unhealthy habits that can arise indirectly from prolonged stress, such as increased alcohol consumption and smoking. (Virolainen 2012, 31-32.)

One of the typical stressors in the workplace is a work environment that causes strain. The stress factors within the work environment and the job itself impact an individual's ability to perform their

work, regardless of who they are. An incorrect working temperature, noise at the workstation, and other various working conditions can cause strain on an individual, especially when these conditions persist over long periods. The level and severity of strain caused by different factors are, of course, individual and vary for each employee. (Virolainen 2012, 32.)

If possible, employers should strive to eliminate or at least reduce strain classified as harmful by analyzing these stress factors and assessing the level of strain experienced by employees. Work-related stressors can be categorized into qualitative and quantitative factors, and they can result in either overloading or underloading employees. (Virolainen 2012, 32.)

Workload is considered quantitative when there is simply too much work relative to the available time, leading to a constant state of urgency. This constant urgency is one of the biggest stressors in the workplace. It often manifests at the beginning of a new job or task when the employee's current skill level does not match the job's challenges, and there is a lot to learn. The situation becomes easier for the employee when they receive sufficient support, have colleagues to share the burden with, and as their skills develop over time to meet the demands of the job. (Virolainen 2012, 32.)

When the strain is caused by work that requires memory, heightened attention, and quick reaction times, it is considered qualitative strain. Overload can result from factors such as tight deadlines, heavy physical labor, highly demanding tasks, and goals perceived as too challenging. When an employee experiences overload, it can cause stress, fatigue, and anxiety. Harmful strain on an employee can be short-term, in which case it is expected to subside within a few days. However, if the employee experiences long-term exhaustion, it can, at worst, lead to burnout (Virolainen 2012, 32-33.)

Overly simple and easy work is not always a good thing, as it can lead to a state of underload, which can quickly result in frustration and stress. When there are not enough tasks, and the work does not offer physical or mental challenges, this is considered underload. In such cases, an individual's effort and interest in the work can easily decrease, leading to underperformance. This situation is referred to as the "boreout" phenomenon, where the employee feels bored, dissatisfied, and lacks enthusiasm for their job. In a state of underload, the individual's commitment to the work is easily negatively affected, and they may seek different tasks or another employer. For this reason, balancing the level of challenge in relation to the individual's skills is crucial to maintaining a high level of interest in the job. (Virolainen 2012, 33.)

3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK

This section presents the implementation of the thesis. It provides a detailed overview of the objectives, research questions, and research methods of the work. Additionally, this section addresses the evaluation of ethical considerations and reliability.

3.1 Objective of the work

The primary objective of the work is to investigate how workplace stressors affects employee well-being. The secondary objective is to examine which factors might potentially weaken employees' workplace well-being. Additionally, the thesis aims to explore the factors that promote employees' workplace well-bwing and how it affects to job performance.

3.2 Research questions

The objective of this thesis is to examine:

1. How do workplace stressors affect employees' well-being?
2. What factors might potentially weaken employees' workplace well-being?
3. What factors promote employees' workplace well-being and how it affect to job performance?

3.3 Research approach and research method

3.3.1 Qualitative research

The purpose of qualitative research is to examine and describe the phenomenon under investigation comprehensively and thoroughly (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 161–162). The term qualitative research generally refers to any research approach that yields findings without the use of statistical methods or any other numerical measurement processes. It can refer to studies on a wide range of topics, such as people's lives, stories, behaviors, as well as the functioning of organizations, interactions, and social movements. The analysis itself is always qualitative, even if certain aspects, like census data, have been processed quantitatively. The term qualitative research can be somewhat confusing because it can mean different things to different people. In some studies, interviews and observations are used for data collection, practices that are typically associated with qualitative research. However, the collected data is then transformed in a way that allows for statistical analysis. In effect, the qualitative data obtained is quantified. The intention here, however, is not to refer to this process, but rather to a non-mathematical procedure where findings are derived from information gathered through various means. These methods can include interviews and observations, documents, books, and, in some cases, even data that has been quantified for other purposes, such as census data. (Corbin & Strauss 1990, 17-18.)

There are multiple good reasons for using a qualitative research method. Stability based on the researcher's research experience is one of these. A contributing factor may also be the researcher's or researchers' field of study, which could be one where the use of qualitative methods for data collection is traditionally encouraged, such as in the field of anthropology. The nature of the research problem is also one of the reasons, as some research areas are naturally better suited for qualitative research. Good examples of these are studies related to the nature of human experiences, such as

diseases or addictions. Qualitative methods can be used to understand new phenomena for which there is little existing information, and conversely, to offer fresh perspectives on topics that are already well-researched. (Corbin & Strauss 1990, 19.)

Qualitative data in its simplest form consists of material that is in text format. This data may have been created with or without the contribution of the researcher. Examples of such data include various interviews and observations, personal diaries and letters. The purpose of the open research design is to highlight the interweaving of the different phases of the research, which are data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting. Focusing on a small number of cases and analyzing them thoroughly is often part of qualitative research. As a result, the criterion for data becomes quality rather than quantity. Discretionary sampling is based on the researcher's ability to build strong foundations for his research, which thereby guides the data collection process. In qualitative research, it is possible to start without pre-existing settings and definitions. This approach is known as grounded theory, where theory is built from empirical data, moving figuratively from the ground up. Grounded analysis is especially important in those cases where basic knowledge about the essence of a phenomenon is needed. Establishing research hypotheses in advance before acquiring data is one of the possibilities of statistical research. However, in qualitative research, preconceived examination of the data and the emergence of new ideas from this examination have often been considered inappropriate. When the researcher has no prior assumptions about the object of research or the outcome of the research, then we speak of absence of hypothesis in qualitative research. In a qualitative analysis, the researcher should learn and be surprised by his research and not have preconceived assumptions that could limit research measures. Thus, qualitative research offers the opportunity to discover new perspectives on a particular phenomenon or topic, rather than merely confirming an existing opinion about the research subject. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998.)

3.3.2 Literature review

The thesis is carried out as a descriptive literature review with both a narrative and an integrative approach. There are several reasons for conducting a literature review – at its best, a literature review can develop existing theories or construct completely new theories. A literature review can also be used to evaluate existing information. Additionally, the main objective of the literature review is to build an comprehensive understanding of a certain issue and to try to identify problems and frames of reference. With the help of a literature review, the results of existing studies are compiled - these serve as a foundation for creating a new research result. (Salminen 2011.)

Literature review can be classified into three basic types: descriptive and systematic literature review and meta-analysis. One of the most used types of literature review is the descriptive literature review. A descriptive literature review is a more informal overview of the researched topic without precise rules. The sources often used are extensive, and their selection is not limited by methodological guidelines. Despite its informality, a descriptive literature review is able to describe the phenomenon under study in all-rounded manner. If necessary, it can also be used to classify the characteristics of the phenomenon under study. The research questions are broader compared to a systematic review or meta-analysis. Descriptive literature review is an independent method, but it can

also be seen as offering new researchable phenomena for a systematic literature review. (Salminen 2011.)

Two different orientations can be distinguished from a descriptive literature review – narrative and integrative. Narrative literature review is methodically the lightest form of literature review. With its help, it is possible to create a multidimensional picture of the topic under consideration. A narrative literature review unifies existing information, which is why the final result is easy to read. An integrative literature review is used when the researched phenomenon is to be described as comprehensively as possible. This is one way to generate new insights on a previously studied topic. It also helps in literature review, critical evaluation and synthesis. The key difference between a narrative and an integrative literature review is in the critical examination of the researched topic - in an integrative literature review, critical examination is thought to be part of the process, while in a narrative one, it is not. (Salminen 2011.)

3.4 Data gathering

A comprehensive literature search utilizing various information retrieval methods was necessary to enable the thorough investigation and analysis of factors affecting employee well-being and job performance. The primary approach was systematic information retrieval from academic databases to successfully gather relevant studies and reviews. The key databases used included Google Scholar, PubMed, and PsycINFO, which provided access to a wide collection of peer-reviewed articles and research papers. Specific search terms were employed to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the search. The keywords included "employee well-being," "job performance," "work-related stress," "psychosocial factors," "job stressors," "motivation," "performance-based," and "organizational support." The terms "AND," "OR," and "NOT" were used between keywords to refine the search results and save time. Additionally, the search considered recent studies and key works in the field to provide a comprehensive overview of current trends and foundational research. Utilizing all these methods and resources enabled a well-rounded summary aimed at exploring the connections between employee well-being and job performance. This thesis examines a total of 32 studies from the time period 2003-2024. The studies mainly consist of quantitative research and meta-analyses.

4 RESULTS

This paragraph discusses the literature review results organized by research question.

4.1 How work-related stressors affect employees' well-being?

The hedonistic well-being experienced by the person, along with the sense of fulfillment and purpose, constitutes the well-being of the individual. The employee's experiences at work influence their well-being, which in turn affects how they behave at work, how do they perform of task and other activities related to work. When examining job-related factors (stress factors at work, work resources, and interpersonal environment), personal resources, and the interface between work and home life, the literature has shown factors that can affect both positive (e.g. enjoying work) and also negative well-being indicators (e.g. exhaustion). (Sonnentag 2015.)

Organizational culture has the opportunity to promote employees' well-being and performance at work, especially when the expectations it creates for employees are reasonable. In this case, it must also offer employees' sufficient skills and resources to succeed. The organization's several stakeholders, both inside and outside the organization, influence the kind of job performance expected from employees' - these expectations are often related to workload (quantity, quality and timeliness of work), customer service, innovation and internal relations. Smollan and Mooney (2024) aimed to find out how employees' expectations are shaped and how they affect their performance at work and further their overall well-being. In their research sample, they focused on the financial sector, as this sector is often associated with excessive pressure in many cultures, which is believed to increase employee stress. The study found that increased workload during various lockdowns was certainly the key factor that caused higher levels of performance. Study also found that the organization's support and care for the well-being of the personnel helped to survive in a difficult time, when the Covid-19 pandemic had caused an increase in the workload and the expectations for performance were high under stressful conditions. The support of superiors has had a special meaning in balancing work and family life, when it has been tried to achieve satisfactory results for the organization even with the help of extra work. The employers' high expectations were considered acceptable because of the employees' belief that the employer also tried to avoid maximizing profits at the expense of the employees' well-being. However, the mental health of some employees had been at stake due to the heavy workload, despite the management's efforts and the organization's care. (Smollan & Mooney 2024.)

In the study conducted by Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen (2007), the work engagement and its antecedents of Finnish healthcare workers were examined. Their study showed that the resources available to work were better predictors of work engagement when compared to work demands. Work stressors had little effect on work commitment. No change was observed in dedication to work during the two-year follow-up period. (Mauno et al. 2007.) However, there are also conflicting research results. In the study conducted by Hakanen, Schaufeli & Ahola (2008), motivational and health impairment processes among Finnish dentists were observed. They found that good work resources improved commitment to work and the organization. At the same time, however, it was found that high job demands predicted burnout and depression. Employees' burnout was weakly

affected by the limited resources of the job. In other words, commitment to work decreased as workload increased. (Hakanen et al. 2008.)

If employees' encounter many factors that increase job strain, their stress levels will increase over time. Work-related stressors have a cumulative effect on an individual's well-being, and stress levels increase over time due to long-term exposure. Ford et al. (2014) found that chronic stressors lead to increased strain, with anxiety, irritability, and tension being more prominent than exhaustion. The study also showed that strain increases after exposure to stressors, confirming that the negative impact of stressors worsens over time. (Ford et al. 2014.)

The predictability of work also has potential effects on employees' well-being even after the workday ends. Schoellbauer, Sonnentag, Prem & Korunka (2021) investigated in their study how unpredictability in work, as a stress factor, affects employees' after working hours. Work unpredictability was found to increase the stress experienced by employees, affecting both their work and leisure time. When employees are unable to anticipate the course of their workday or the time required for different tasks, they feel more exhausted afterward. This increased exhaustion after a workday may manifest as restlessness before going to bed. (Schoellbauer et al. 2021.) Lawson, Noblet & Rodwell (2009) also found that unreasonable job demands weaken employees' psychological well-being and job satisfaction. Sufficient social support, in turn, was found to support these. The experience of work management increases employees' job satisfaction, but this does not directly increase psychological health. Additionally, perceived organizational justice was shown to have a significant relationship with job satisfaction. (Lawson et al. 2009.)

In summary, it can be observed that work-related stressors affect an individual's well-being in many ways. Prolonged exposure to stressors increases strain, which can lead to anxiety, irritability, and tension that intensify over time (Ford et al. 2014). The unpredictability of work increases stress in both work and leisure time, and this can be seen as fatigue and restlessness after the day (Schoellbauer et al. 2021). Higher work demands can decrease work commitment and affect on employees mental health (Hakanen et al. 2008). Excessive work demands weaken employees' psychological well-being and job satisfaction, but adequate social support and organizational justice can improve these (Lawson et al. 2009). In Table 2, the studies discussed in this chapter and their most important results are presented in detail.

Table 2. Stressors that affects employees' well-being

Reference and country of the study	Data	Objective of study	Implementation	Results
Ford et al. 2014 United States	Collected through a meta-analysis based on 68 longitudinal study samples.	To examine the role of time in the effects of three different types of occupational stressors and strain.	The meta-analysis included longitudinal panel studies which included literature search, coding and calculation of synchronous, lagged and reverse causation effect sizes across studies.	Synchronous stress effects tend to increase over time, indicating that the impact of chronic stressors accumulates with prolonged exposure. This weakens employees well-being.
Hakanen et al. 2008 Finland	2555 dentist members of the Finnish Dental Association.	To test the motivational and health impairment processes of the Job Demands-Resources model, and to examine the additional impact of home resources and demands on these processes over time.	Cross-lagged analyses based on two waves over a 3-year period.	Job resources positively influenced future work engagement, leading to increased organizational commitment. Job demands predicted burnout, which was associated with future depression.
Lawson et al. 2009 Australia	587 members of the police, recruits, PSOs and reservists.	To evaluate the effects of work characteristics and perceptions of organizational justice on employee well-being, focusing on psychological health and job satisfaction.	Survey and the use of DCS-model.	Focusing on organizational justice has potential for protecting and enhancing employee well-being.
Mauno et al. 2007 Finland	1600 Finnish healthcare workers.	To examine work engagement and its antecedents among Finnish healthcare personnel.	Questionnaires in 2003 and in 2005.	Participants frequently experienced work engagement, particularly in terms of vigor and dedication, with average levels remaining stable throughout the follow-up period. Commitment to work is often combined with better employee well-being
Schoellbauer et al. 2021 Austria/ Germany	126 individuals with knowledge-intensive jobs.	To investigate how work unpredictability acts as a contemporary occupational stressor that affects employees beyond working hours.	One initial questionnaire (demographics and job) followed by three daily questionnaires over two consecutive work weeks.	Work unpredictability negatively affects evening serenity by increasing employees' strain levels after work.

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Smollan et al. 2024 New Zealand	24 participants, working in various sectors of the finance industry.	To enhance understanding of the impact of organizational culture in the finance sector on performance levels and well-being.	Literature review and semi-structured interviews.	If performance expectations were set reasonably, taking into account employee well-being and a manageable workload, this had no negative impact on well-being.
Sonnentag S. 2015 Germany	Reviewed and integrated longitudinal and experience-sampling research on changes and variability in well-being.	To investigate job stressors, resources, interpersonal environment, personal resources, work-home interface, and performance, while exploring affect symmetry, individual-group relationships, and the reciprocity between well-being and other variables.	Literature review and research on empirical studies.	Occupational well-being varies based on employees' work experiences and the work-home interface.

4.2 What factors might potentially weaken employees' workplace well-being?

According to Karasek and Theorelli (1990), negative factors at work can have a significant but long-term weakening effect on the employee's well-being. Non-existent work management and disproportionate demands compared to work resources weaken an individual's well-being at work. The lack of social support also burdens employees more. Work-related stress refers to a situation where an employee experiences negative emotions, especially in connection with intensive work. This perceived stress continues to affect the employee's well-being in a multidimensional way. (Chou, Hu & Lo 2015; Park et al. 2016.)

The stress caused by work affects an individual's psychological well-being, which in turn influences the employees' contribution to the job (Chen, Wang, Li & Liu 2022). The psychological well-being and work-related stress of employees' significantly impacts their job performance (Cohen, Schiffler, Rohmer, Louvet & Mollaret 2019; Soeker et al. 2019). An individual's work performance depends on how much effort they are willing to put into his work (Robbins 2005). In previous studies, however, it has not been possible to unequivocally state how work stress and employees' performance at work affect each other (Chen et al. 2022). It has been partially observed that a higher amount of stress can also have a positive effect on an employee's performance at work. These studies suggest that work-related stress motivates employees' to work more efficiently. (Ismail et al. 2015; Soomro, Memon & Bukhari 2019.) At the same time, it has also been shown several times in the literature that a greater feeling of being overwhelmed at work weakens the employee's work performance (Yunus, Mansor, Hassan, Zainuddin & Demong 2018). Mental strain reduces employees' ability to concentrate, further impairing job performance. In stressful situations, employees' also exert more effort to adapt to the work, further increasing psychological strain. (Hennekam, Richard & Grima 2020.) In such cases, employees' need to invest more energy and time in coping with stress, which further impairs efficiency (Yunus et al. 2018). In addition, a non-linear U-shaped relationship between perceived workload and success at work has been identified in the literature. In this scenario, employee performance is lower when there is too little or too much perceived work stress. Optimal job performance is achieved with an optimal level of perceived work stress. (Hamidi & Eivazi 2010.)

The time pressure at work is known to increase the stress of employees' and thus weaken the employees' perceived well-being. In a study by Oberlechner and Nimganen (2005), factors influencing work stress and performance among financial market professionals were examined. The participants identified the pressure to meet performance targets as the primary stressor, which for their part led to long working hours. 32% of the subjects reported their stress level as either 'very high' or 'extremely high'. The work-related stress experienced by the research subjects mainly comes from four factors: the pressure set by the performance targets, social pressure, workload and challenging decision-making. In this study, however, no connection was found between a high stress level and job performance - employees experiencing a high stress level did not therefore perform worse at their work. On the other hand, employees' who were more self-motivated at work were found to experience less stress. (Oberlechner & Nimgade 2005.)

Increased workload has been found to contribute to negative psychological and physiological reactions. According to Ilies, Dimotakis, and De Pater (2010), decreased daily well-being experienced by an individual is the result of an unreasonable increase in workload. If the employee feels that the increased workload is unreasonable, this also increases anxiety symptoms. Stress resulting from an increased workload can also cause physical symptoms that are harmful to health, such as high blood pressure, especially for employees who feel they do not receive enough support at work. (Ilies et al. 2010.) The experience of excessive workload can often predict issues such as stress and discomfort, according to studies. Increased workloads are known to elevate the risk of depressive symptoms experienced by employees, especially in jobs where there is usually not much time pressure. If the employer provides sufficient resources to complete tasks within the desired timeframe, the impact on potential depressive symptoms is reduced. Also, how an employee evaluates their own work situation in relation to colleagues doing similar work also affects their mood. Therefore, the experience of fairness is a key factor when considering work-related stress caused by job demands. (Ford & Jin 2013.)

If the work environment at a workplace is toxic or harmful, it can have negative effects on employees' well-being. Working in a negative work environment is known to weaken an individual's well-being and commitment to their job. When employees work in such an environment, they often take out their stress and decreased well-being on others in the same workplace. This creates a negative, uninspiring work atmosphere. Weak team spirit and a negative work environment have several adverse side effects. In such workplaces, for example, there is more bullying and harassment, which also increases the risk of poorer psychological well-being. Stress, anxiety, and burnout, in particular, are known to increase in a toxic work environment. (Rasool, Wang, Tang, Saeed, & Iqbal, 2021.)

The use of performance-based salary systems has increased in recent years, and this also affects individual well-being at work. A performance-based pay system can influence an individual's well-being at work. The introduction of a performance-based salary model has increasingly become a factor in enhancing employee motivation. However, a Korean study (Liam et al., 2023) highlighted the opposite results—performance-based pay systems weakened employees' well-being by increasing symptoms of depression and anxiety. The effect was found to be even more significant when employees experienced heightened work-related stress. Therefore, the greatest risk of a decline in work well-being and psychological health is for those employees who combine a performance-based salary model with unreasonable work pressures. (Lim et al., 2023.)

In Table 3, the studies discussed in this chapter and their most important results are presented in detail.

Table 3. Factors that negatively impact employee well-being in the workplace

Reference and country of the study	Data	Objective of study	Implementation	Results
Chen et al. 2022 China	196 experienced employees whose tenure in the companies was at least two years.	The relationship between work-related stress and employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Questionnaire by email.	Work-related stress had negative effects on employee performance, particularly on employees' mental health.
Chou et al. 2015 Taiwan	576 medical workers.	To investigate the relationships between stress, mental health, work-related burnout, and arterial stiffness among healthcare professionals.	Electronic questionnaire and measurements.	The study found a connection between mental health, work-related burnout, long work hours, shift work, and job strain.
Cohen et al. 2019 France	281 french students without disability.	To demonstrate how beliefs about disability can influence performance and self-reported motivation.	Participants performed tasks that focused on cognitive functions, with simulated disabilities that had either no effect or a significant impact on the task.	The psychological well-being and work-related stress of employees' significantly impacts their job performance.
Ford & Jin 2013 United States	485 participants in study 1 and 822 participants in study 2	How workload is associated with depression symptoms when while working under time pressure?	Two cross-sectional studys	Job strain was strongly associated with symptoms of depression to the extent that it surpasses occupational standards for time pressure.
Hamidi & Eivazi 2010 Iran	120 employees of Hamadan Urban Health Centers	To determine the level of job satisfaction and job stress among employees and how these levels were related to the performance of their organization.	Two different questionnaires and performance indices.	The majority of employees had normal stress levels, and the participants' dissatisfaction with their salaries was associated with increased job stress.

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Table 3 continues

Hennekam et al. 2020 France	257 individuals with mental health problems in the first phase of the study and 17 individuals in the second part of the study.	To examine the impact of mental health issues on individuals' perceived job performance.	The first part of the study consists of a qualitative questionnaire, and the second part involves in-depth interviews.	Mental health issues were found to have potential negative effects on self-perceived job performance, such as a decline in the quality of work, a slowdown in work pace, and an increase in mistakes.
Ilies et al. 2010 United States	71 employees of midwestern university.	To examine how job strain affects an individual's stress at work and their daily well-being.	An online survey at the beginning of the study. Following that, for two weeks, participants responded to five surveys each working day.	Job strain was found to have an exacerbating effect on affective distress and blood pressure.
Ismail et al. 2015 Malaysia	132 executive and non-executive employees from a private investment bank in Peninsular Malaysia.	To examine the relationship between workplace stress and job performance.	Survey questionnaires.	Psychological and physiological stress are significant predictors of job performance.
Lim et al. 2023 South Korea	27,793 participants.	To find if there was association between performance-based reward systems and symptoms of depression and anxiety.	Triennial cross-sectional survey	Performance-based reward systems had found to notably grow the risk of symptoms for depression and anxiety.
Oberlechner & Nimgade 2005 United States	326 financial traders who worked in foreign exchange banks in North America.	To examine the factors involved in job stress and performance ability among decision-makers in financial markets.	Two questionnaires.	Over three out of ten participants were found to have high or extremely high stress levels.
Park et al. 2015 South Korea	333 individuals in irregular employment in the provinces of Seoul and Gyeonggi.	To investigate the relationships between dimensions of mental health and work-related stress.	Questionnaire for the workers.	When job insecurity was high and the receiving of rewards was inadequate, it was found to be associated with poor mental health.
Rasool et al. 2021 China	301 individuals who worked in SME enterprises in China.	How toxic workplace environment effects employee engagement.	Online survey method.	A toxic work environment was found to have a negative effect on the engagement of employees.
Soeker et al. 2019 South Africa	Four individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia and two occupational therapists.	To investigate the coping strategies and facilitators used by individuals with schizophrenia when returning to the open labor market after a vocational rehabilitation program.	Semi-structured interviews.	Individuals with schizophrenia face barriers that make it difficult to adapt to their work environment.

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Soomro et al. 2019 Pakis- tan	310 employees of Sindh universities.	To examine and measure the impact of stress on employees' ability to perform.	Quantitative research method, questionnaire.	Stress was found to have a clear connec- tion to employee performance. Positive stress improved employee performance, while negative stress hindered daily activi- ties and the completion of work tasks.
Yunus et al. 2018 Malay- sia	120 employees of tele- communications cen- ters in Shah Alam.	To aim to identify the relationship between job-related stress and job performance and to evaluate the impact of the supervisor's role in the relationship between job stress and job performance.	Three-part questionnaire	Job stress was found to have a clear im- pact on job performance. The supervisor's role was not found to affect the relation- ship between job-related stress and job performance.

4.3 What factors promote employees' workplace well-being and how it affects to job-performance?

Research on well-being at work has generally recognized that psychosocial and organizational factors such as workload, employee participation in decision-making, and availability of social support play a key role in protecting and promoting employee well-being. Well-being also has an impact on employee productivity. (Noblet, 2003.) An overall healthy employee is likely to perform work more efficiently compared to individuals with poorer health conditions (Institute for Health and Productivity Studies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2015, p. 17). Employers strive to support employees' well-being through various health promotion programs, but these often focus largely on modifying individual lifestyles rather than improving the work environment. (Noblet, 2003.)

The employees' well-being can be supported by paying attention to work-related factors - adapting to work demands, pressures and flexibility and investing in the interaction between colleagues and supervisors. Work shift planning and the length of workdays also have a central effect on an individual's well-being. (Williams, Kern & Waters 2017.) In particular, good interaction between employees' and supervisors has been found to increase employee well-being. In particular, job characteristics related to work management and the social support received from supervisors are strictly related to the better well-being of employees. These factors largely explain the variability in employees' work-related satisfaction and psychological well-being. The employer has the opportunity to create a health-promoting work environment by providing sufficient guidance and support for tasks that require it. (Noblet 2003.) The literature has shown that different strategies for improving well-being at work can support the well-being of employees. By supporting well-being at work, the productivity of employees also improves. If the support received from the employer increases compared to before, this will have a positive effect on the employees' well-being. Comprehensive health risks decrease as well-being increases. (Hamarin, Coberleyn, Popen & Rulan 2015.)

Recovery from work also has an effect on how committed employees' are to their work. A study by Sonnentag, Mojza, Demerouti & Bakker (2012) examined the connections between an individual's level of recovery (i.e. alertness and recovery) and work commitment during the day. The review also took into account the recovery level after the workday. The findings showed that morning recovery level had a positive effect on work engagement, and work engagement in turn predicted a better level of recovery after the workday. The job demands were not found to weaken these connections, but instead, situational constraints were found to disturb the interaction processes between the level of recovery and commitment to work. (Sonnentag et al. 2012.)

Adequate physical activity has an impact on an individual's well-being. Studies have repeatedly proven that regular physical activity reduces the risk of various somatic diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity. In addition to preventing diseases, physical activity supports an individual's psychological health - regular exercise is known not only to improve mood, but also to positively affect sleep, cognitive functions, learning and critical evaluation. (Institute for Health and Productivity Studies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health 2015, 14.) In a meta-analysis of 111 studies by Ford, Cerasoli, Higgins & Decesare (2011), it is found that an individual's physical

and psychological health, together with general satisfaction, strongly correlates with good performance at work. Therefore, by promoting an individual's physical well-being, one can support the overall well-being of the individual and thus also success at work. In addition, the meta-analysis found that alcohol use and smoking were faintly associated with poorer performance. Sleep disturbances, on the other hand, were moderately associated with performance problems. (Ford et al. 2011.)

In addition to exercise, diet also has a connection to an individual's well-being. The effect of diet can be seen not only in disease prevention, but also in performance at work. Overweight and obese workers have more sick leave and often work less productively. They also end up on disability pension more often. (Dor, Ferguson, Langwith & Tan 2010.) However, quite a bit is known about the connection between commitment to work and a healthy diet. The cross-sectional study by Virtanen et al. (2022) tried to find out this connection. The study found that commitment to work and a healthy diet had a positive connection. This connection remained statistically significant despite the apparent changes in age, educational background, financial situation and physical activity. In addition, it was found that anxiety and depressive symptoms decreased linearly as healthy foods increased. However, at the same time, unhealthy foods and commitment to work were not found to have a connection one way or the other. (Virtanen et al. 2022.)

Motivation can also have an impact on employees' perceived well-being and satisfaction. It has been found that individuals who work on more challenging, higher-level tasks have better motivation compared to employees who perform easier tasks. Those working in more demanding jobs also report higher satisfaction with their work. To support employees' job satisfaction and, consequently, improve work results, it is essential to foster the development of employee motivation. (Ahmed, Elsayed & El-Nagger 2013.)

When functioning properly, appraisal systems can have a significant impact on employee motivation and well-being. Contrary to what was stated above, the performance-based salary model can also provide benefits in the workplace. Well-structured evaluation systems can significantly increase employee motivation. If it is clear to employees which factors are assessed in the performance-based pay model, this can enhance employee motivation and further improve performance at work. Therefore, employees become more committed to their work, leading to increased productivity for the employer. The benefits of a performance-based pay model can be even more significant if employees are allowed to influence the setting of the goals (Walter, 2024).

In Table 4, the studies discussed in this chapter and their most important results are presented in detail.

Table 4. Factors that support employee well-being and performance

Reference and country of the study	Data	Objective of study	Implementation	Results
Ahmed et al. 2013 Saudi Arabia	70 nurses working in Hera General Hospital at Makkah Al-Mukramh	Examine the impact of motivation and de-motivation on job satisfaction.	A self-administered questionnaire.	Motivation is key to achieving job satisfaction and reducing de-motivation. Increased motivation among nurses correlates with higher job satisfaction.
Dor et al. 2010 United States	94 American studies examining the impact of obesity on individual and societal costs.	Investigate the cost-effectiveness of overweight and obesity from the individual perspective.	A systematic literature search was performed using Medline, PubMed, EconLit, and Embase databases. Research only included US-based studies before the year 2010.	Overweight and obese workers tend to take more sick leave, work less productively, and are more frequently placed on disability pensions.
Ford et al. 2011 United States	11 independent studies examining the relationships between employees' psychological, physical, and behavioral health variables and work performance.	Investigate the relationships between an individual's health and job performance.	Data were collected from literature using keywords related to performance and various health factors.	Psychological health is closely linked to work performance, while somatic complaints and high blood pressure have a weaker connection. Sleep issues are more moderately associated with performance challenges.
Hamar et al. 2015 United States	1136 employees of a midsize employer in the insurance and financial sector in US.	To assess changes in employee well-being, productivity, and health risks over two years after implementing a well-being improvement strategy.	Employee well-being was assessed with WBA data, regional information from the Gallup-Healthways WBI survey, and productivity metrics via self-assessment surveys.	Employee well-being and productivity improved over two years, while health risks decreased. Employer support positively influenced both well-being and productivity.
Institute for Health and Productivity Studies Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health 2015 United States	The review encompassed scientific literature, public health reports, industry publications, expert opinions, and interviews with representatives from companies with notable health promotion programs.	To develop a guide for employers that helps them create a work environment that supports employee well-being.	Literature review and semi-structured questionnaire.	The best health programs create a culture of health by connecting individual efforts to company goals and having leadership support. They work best when customized for specific groups and encourage employee participation.

Continued on the next page

Noblet A. 2003 Australia	210 individuals who primarily worked in professional, administrative and clerical positions in a medium-sized, public sector organisation in Australia.	To address 1. how psycho-social work characteristics can influence health 2. how to identify or address organizational-level issues	Questionnaire	Good job control and social support enhanced employee well-being, while unrealistic deadlines and time constraints increased strain.
Sonnetag et al. 2012 United States	111 participants from 30 different organizations, including commercial clerks, employment center staff, engineers, IT specialists, and employees from banks and government.	To examine relations between morning recovery level and work engagement throughout the day and the subsequent recovery level at the end of the workday.	Data were collected at the day and the personal level through a general and daily survey.	Morning recovery improves work engagement during the day, and work engagement supports recovery at the end of the day. Situational constraints weaken this effect, but job demands don't.
Virtanen et al. 2022 Finland	630 woman employees from different professions, like social workers, nurses, general office staff.	To examine the association between employee's lifestyle behaviors (like diet) and level of work engagement	Physical examinations were performed by nurses. Other factors were collected from the self-administrated questionnaires and medical records.	Regular intake of healthy food items is linked to increased work engagement, regardless of the consumption of unhealthy nutrients.
Walter E. 2024 Tunisia	This study gathered data from existing resources due to its cost-effectiveness.	To examine the relationship between performance appraisal systems and employee motivation.	Data were collected from online journals and libraries.	Effective appraisal systems can enhance employee motivation for example by setting clear goals
William et al. 2017 Australia	51 school staff members.	To examine how employees' conscious and subconscious attitudes develop and influence each other, and how they impact organizational culture, positive employee attitudes, and work happiness.	Surveys at three different timestamps.	Employee happiness at work positively affects the performance of both employees and the organization.

5 DISCUSSION

This section evaluates the overall thesis process in relation to the objectives of the work. Additionally, factors affecting the reliability of the work are assessed, and the work process is examined from an ethical perspective.

5.1 Implementation and evaluation of the work

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate and describe how workplace stressors affect employees' well-being. Additionally, the purpose of the work was to identify the factors that both undermine and support an individual's workplace well-being and how these factors further impact the employee's performance at work. The goal of the work was to process reliable information related to the topic from many different angles and to bring out different perspectives on the topic. The research method was a descriptive literature review.

The selection of this topic for my thesis was due to my own interests and partly to my acquaintances and my own experiences in working life. A lot of interesting literature and studies were found on the topic, which encouraged me to continue working on the topic. The topic is also very timely when we think about modern working life and the constant pressure to perform, develop and produce results. Under these ever-increasing pressures, more and more people experience exhaustion and negative feelings, which can even lead to leaving working life in the form of burnout.

When I was searching for information for this thesis, I noticed that it was important to use precise search terms, or else the information that was found was mostly general information next to the main topic. There was a lot of information, literature, and studies available, but the precision of the search words and the importance of the right topic were emphasized in this context. Individual well-being and well-being at work have been studied quite a lot as separate research questions, but I personally found it challenging to find studies that combine these two perspectives. In addition, the perspective of performance-oriented work brought its own challenge to the search for information. I found the definition of result-oriented work to be particularly challenging - several different terms were used in the literature on this same topic, such as goal-oriented work, result-based work and performance-based job. These terms appeared in the studies mainly as synonyms of each other, but differences were also found. Understanding the meaning of these concepts took time and required special attention as the work progressed.

Taking the above into consideration, I feel that the main challenge in conducting the literature review was the overly broad and open research questions. Since there were a large number of studies related to workplace well-being, I found it difficult to distinguish which studies most directly addressed my research questions. In my opinion, this made the systematic review of the sources, as well as identifying similarities and differences, more challenging. I believe that my work provides a good overview of the research questions, but a deeper understanding of individual perspectives remains somewhat superficial. As a result, individual perspectives are not presented in much detail.

Since workplace well-being, as well as the factors that weaken or support it, is quite a broad concept, and my literature review offers a broader overall picture rather than a deeper understanding, I found drawing conclusions from the work somewhat challenging.

In addition to narrowing down the research questions, another area for improvement was the more precise selection of studies included in the literature review based on their publication dates. Since there was a large amount of research data related to the research questions, the material could have been more moderately reduced by excluding, for example, studies conducted before 2010. Although I believe it was important to include some older, foundational studies for a comprehensive understanding of the topic, they may have impacted the reliability of the results. If the literature review had focused more on recent studies, for instance, those conducted after 2020, the research findings would likely have reflected more contemporary theories and perspectives relevant to the thesis's research questions. I consider this an important area for improvement, as the thesis dealt particularly with the factors that enhance and weaken workplace well-being – factors significantly influenced by the surrounding society and the pressures it creates in both personal and professional life. Therefore, the focus of the literature review results might have been different if the included studies had been more precisely limited by their publication dates.

5.2 The ethical and reliability issues related to thesis

The thesis adheres to Savonia's ethical guidelines. The thesis has aimed for careful and precise work. The work has been conducted honestly, without distorting research results or plagiarizing the work of others. Both Finnish and English sources were used in the information search. A wide range of studies and other material on the topic were found, which made it challenging to narrow down the sources to only those containing necessary information. The complex vocabulary of the Finnish sources and the need to convey the required context in English presented challenges. The reliability of the work is supported by the use and interpretation of previously produced scientific material. The availability of studies has partly guided the selection of studies, and as a result, some studies significant to the topic may have been excluded from the end product.

6 DEDUCTIONS

This section provides a summary of the results of the literature review, along with the conclusions.

6.1 Summary

In summary of the research findings, it can be stated that the changes in working life and the pressures it creates affect in many ways the ability of employees to work, their success at work and their overall well-being. Understanding these aspects is particularly important in order to improve both the individual's well-being and commitment to work. A well-being employee is usually more motivated and committed to their work, in which case he is also a more productive and profitable employee for the employer (Sonnentag et al. 2012; Walter 2024.)

Based on the research, it can be concluded that there are several factors that affect the employee's well-being, and these can be roughly divided into factors related to the individual himself and factors related to the employer. Factors related to the individual themselves often touch everyday choices, such as diet, amount of exercise and sleep, and substance use (Institute for Health and Productivity Studies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health 2015, 17). The effect of these is often seen in the individual's physical health and disease prevention. As a summary of the studies, it can be stated that a physically healthy person often also has more psychological resources at his disposal, and these resources often show themselves as good productivity at work (Ford et al. 2011; Institute for Health and Productivity Studies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health 2015). It can be thought that it is important not only for the individual, but also for the employer to support the overall well-being of the individual with, for example, employment benefits like fitness subsidies or lunch programs. Although Virtanen et al's study did not find that unhealthy foods impair performance at work, it cannot be thought that food choices do not have any importance from a well-being point of view. Rather, this shows that the flexibility of the diet as a whole is an important factor when thinking about an individual's well-being. Instead of banning unhealthy food, the individual should rather pay attention to increasing healthy foods. In this way, the individual's well-being and performance at work increases without forgetting flexibility. Excessive avoidance of unhealthy foods can increase the pressure and stress experienced by the individual, which in turn can negatively affect the individual's well-being and further weaken performance at work.

This thesis found that several work-related stressors, such as high job demands, unpredictability, and excessive workload, affect employees' psychological (anxiety, depression) and physical well-being (burnout) (Hakanen et al. 2008; Ford et al. 2014; Schoellbauer et al. 2021). However, sufficient personal and organizational resources, such as adequate support from supervisors and appropriate workload, can improve employees' well-being, enhance productivity, and alleviate the stress they experience (Mauno et al. 2007; Smollan & Mooney 2024).

Based on the literature review of the thesis, it can be concluded that employees' well-being at work plays a central role when looking at the success factors of an organization. First of all, sufficient work resources, such as support and work tools, improve enjoyment at work and commitment to

the organization (Mauno et al. 2007; Sonnentag 2015). High job demands, on the other hand, can lead to burnout and the further development of depression, which undermines employee well-being (Hakanen et al. 2008). A high workload reduces commitment to work and the organization and increases stress over time, especially when chronic stressors accumulate (Ilies et al. 2010; Ford et al. 2014). Although a high stress level did not directly affect work efficiency, according to this thesis, more motivated employees experience less stress (Oberlechner & Nimgade 2005). The studies found that recovery from work has a positive connection with enjoyment at work and success at work, and the higher demands of the job did not weaken this connection. Only situationally limiting factors interfered with recovery, which still affected work commitment. (Sonnentag et al. 2012.)

Time pressure at work can be considered one of the situational factors that limits work performance. Based on the thesis, it can be concluded that time pressure increases stress, thereby weakening an individual's well-being (Oberlechner & Nimgade 2005). While the studies do not exclusively conclude that increased stress impairs work performance (Oberlechner & Nimgade 2005), it can be inferred that, over the long term, mismatched work demands in relation to time significantly weaken an individual's well-being, which ultimately reflects in their work performance and, further, in the organization's success (Ismail et al. 2015; Yunus et al. 2018). On the other hand, it can also be argued that moderate levels of stress may positively influence an individual's job engagement, thus supporting job success. In summary, appropriate short-term stress can be beneficial for employees, but if the stress continues for an extended period and the workload repeatedly increases, this will negatively affect the individual's well-being. As VanWormer et al. (2011) suggested, there is likely an optimal level of stress at work, and as stress increases, it may lead to reduced productivity and efficiency (VanWormer et al. 2011.).

In the thesis, it was found that individual well-being is connected to productivity (Nobler 2003; Hamar et al. 2011; Institute for Health and Productivity Studies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health 2015). However, it cannot be assumed that the employees' work well-being and productivity would improve based solely on individual-level changes. Increasing well-being at work also affects the supervisor level and the entire organization to at least an equal extent (Williams et al. 2017). It can be thought that a productive and well-being employee is created when the employee, the work community and the positive work factors collaborate effectively. Interaction plays a very central role in this regard, as stated in the studies (Noblet 2003). The guidance and support offered by the employer promote the individual's work well-being and health, which continues to manifest itself in increased productivity (Noblet 2003). In summary, the importance of cooperation can not be emphasized enough: it is important for the individual and the supervisors to communicate openly about the goals of the work, the boundaries set and how the employee feels that these affect their own well-being at work. The key would be to address grievances or, for example, too unrealistic work expectations in sufficient time, so that their effects on the individual's ability to cope at work could not become too great.

The impact of compensation on employee well-being appears contradictory in this study (Lim et al. 2023; Walter 2024). Lim et al. (2023) found that performance-based pay systems significantly increase the risk of anxiety and depression among employees, especially when work-related stress is

perceived as high. In contrast, Walter (2024) suggested that performance-based compensation positively affects employee motivation. If employers set clear goals, provide regular feedback, and involve employees in the compensation process, this can enhance employee motivation and, consequently, improve job satisfaction and performance. In summary, it can be stated that, when implemented correctly, compensation systems may potentially improve employee well-being, but the criteria for compensation must be clear and reasonable.

6.2 Conclusions

This thesis found that individual well-being is connected to work productivity (Hamar et al. 2015; Institute for Health and Productivity Studies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health 2015). However, the factors affecting an individual's well-being at work and success at work consist of several different factors. The effect of individual factors on well-being cannot be assessed in a completely straightforward manner, because many things affect an individual's well-being as part of a larger whole. Many negative things must pile up at the same time in order for an individual's well-being at work and thus work productivity to decline. Supporting an individual's well-being at work is the responsibility of both the individual and the employer. There is a need to emphasize the importance of the resources and support provided by the workplace as part of an individual's well-being - ultimately, it is precisely the organization that determines the goals of the work and the resources used for it.

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