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What are key components of workplace well-being? - examining real life experiences in different work contexts

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What Are the Key Components of Workplace Well-Being?: Examining Real-Life Experiences in Different Work Contexts

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Abstract

Debate among researchers and practitioners persists as to how to define a workplace well-being construct that measures people's experienced well-being. Existing definitions often have a differing narrow focus on eudaimonic or hedonic aspects of well-being. An inductive approach to determining key features of workplace well-being through exploring real-life work experience might alleviate this issue as checking the meanings people assign to well-being would create further insight into key aspects of the workplace well-being concept. Further, the endeavor to understand how different people at work experience well-being is important as their understanding is likely to impact on how they maintain and enhance well-being, how they rate their well-being in occupational surveys, how they respond to interventions, and how they manage their own well-being. Therefore, this research explores through two studies of lay descriptions of workplace well-being and extends previous research by using an inductive framework of an occupationally heterogeneous sample. Different groups of employees in different work settings were given qualitative surveys and took part in interviews and focus groups in order to establish components of workplace well-being. Dominant components were established through thematic content analysis. Similarities and differences were found between lay and theoretical conceptualizations of well-being. Results indicate that a multicomponent measure of workplace well-being should go beyond hedonic and eudaimonic aspects by including an energy component and social and physical aspects of well-being at work. Further, the use of a context-specific definitions and resulting implications for designing workplace well-being interventions is also discussed.

Keywords

Well-being
Lay perspectives
Work context
Thematic content analysis

Debate among researchers and practitioners persists as to which components are central to the well-being concept (see Dodge et al. 2012) and what necessary features distinguish well-being from other types of workplace experiences, such as stress, which have been thought to be connected to the well-being construct (Fisher 2010). Diener (1994) gives a reason for the continuing debate about what well-being comprises. Several phenomena are involved when defining workplace well-being, as individuals assess different aspects when assessing their well-being, such as job satisfaction, self-development, and experiencing joyful moments. Furthermore, different theoretical approaches (e.g., hedonic and eudaimonic understanding; Ryan and Deci 2001) to the concept of well-being have led to an abundance of definitions of workplace well-being.

In addition, many researchers study well-being as a context-free concept (Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie 2011). Indeed, in organizational psychology, some researchers argue that workplace well-being measures should be broad enough to assess fully an individual's experience of well-being (Fisher 2010; Vella-Brodrick et al. 2009) and concise enough to have predictive utility for outcomes such as work performance (Daniels and Harris 2000). In fact, current literature also highlights the importance of context in how an organizational phenomenon is understood by people who engage with it (e.g., Johns 2006). Certain individual characteristics (job role or identity), direct work environment (features of the job, characteristics of organization one works for), and wider environment (occupation, economic climate) can have an influence on how well-being is understood. Considering context makes it possible to create understanding and theory that might be more applicable in the workplace, as they recognize aspects unique to a workplace setting that influence organizational behavior (Rousseau and Fried 2001). Context issues have been explored in well-being research, particularly in relation to designing successful well-being interventions. Context and process issues are increasingly highlighted as key to designing interventions that "fit" (Karanika-Murray et al. 2012). Johns (2006) defines context as "situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organisational behaviour…" (p. 386). Rousseau and Fried (2001) state that through contextualization, observations, in this case the well-being of employees in a specific organizational or job context, can be linked to relevant aspects that influence the phenomenon that is being studied.

So, how do people understand their own well-being at work? To what extent do lay representations of the concept overlap with dominant theoretical concepts and organizational understanding? Do these understandings differ depending on their work or organizational context? Knowledge of this would shed light on how people make sense of their well-being in the workplace and would inform organizational attempts to create a healthy workplace.

To explore the relevant components of workplace well-being, this chapter examines lay descriptions of well-being experienced by people in different work contexts. It adds to the current debate about well-being in the literature generally (e.g., Dodge et al. 2012) and about workplace well-being specifically (Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie 2011; McMahan and Estes 2011) by investigating descriptions of experiences of well-being by managers, consultants, and staff to see what they identify as the relevant components of their individual workplace well-being. This approach has specific advantages as lay descriptions of well-being, which are not cued for a particular understanding of the concept, can provide insight into relevant components of well-being (Lay people are all those who are not well-being scholars.). Move full stop after end of previous sentence. One of the aims of well-being research is to improve individuals' work experience (Dewe and Cooper 2012). It would therefore be consistent with this aim to explore what individuals experience as important in terms of their well-being. Furthermore, the

study of lay people's perceptions of well-being has implications for how individuals judge their own well-being as well as others' and what attempts they make to achieve well-being (McMahan and Estes 2011). Employees are likely to draw their understanding of well-being from a number of sources, such as organizational policies and interventions, the media, and personal beliefs. How people try to achieve well-being has been found to have an effect on their life satisfaction (see Vella-Brodrick et al. 2009).
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Several studies explore lay descriptions of well-being (Munoz Sastre 1999; Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie 2011; McMahan and Estes 2011; Delle Fave et al. 2011, 2016 Please delete.). However, there has been no inductive approach to exploring workplace well-being with men and women working in different sectors, organizations, and indeed work roles. In the following sections, this paper better?: chapter reviews current academic knowledge on components of workplace well-being before describing the studies on which this research is based. Following analysis of the study findings, recommendations for future research and practice on maintaining workplace well-being are discussed.
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Components of Workplace Well-Being

Definitions of Workplace Well-Being

There is ongoing research into what components of workplace well-being can (Fisher 2010) and should (Page and Vella-Brodrick 2009) encompass. In a keyword search in Web of Science, (Search conducted on 16 February 2018) *well-being and work and measures* (specification of publication dates between 1970 and 2018 in peer-reviewed journals; *well-being* in the major heading of the paper) yielded 751 studies investigating well-being in work contexts. Most key categories of the literature related to personnel attitudes and job satisfaction; personality traits and measurements of well-being; links between perceived well-being and characteristics of people who work; descriptions and reviews of well-being models and measurements in the workplace; and approaches to promotion and maintenance of health and well-being.

The well-being measures used in these studies differ according to (1) positive or negative conceptualizations (e.g., absence of stress or existence of job satisfaction); (2) hedonic or eudaimonic conceptualizations (e.g., pleasure resulting from one's experiences at work, evaluation of work, or personal growth at work); (3) the breadth of conceptualizations (ranging from one dimension of the well-being experience, such as positive affect, to several dimensions, such as psychological and affective well-being); (4) the degree of context specificity (context-free, such as life satisfaction, context-specific, such as work satisfaction, or facet-specific, such as satisfaction with pay); and (5) degree of specificity in terms of overlap in antecedents and components included in the measure. (For example, the Ryff scales of psychological well-being (Ryff 1995; Seifert 2005) measure autonomy, which is an antecedent, and personal growth, which is a component.)

Contemporary well-being research is divided into different schools of thought based on the perceived meaning of well-being. While scholars in the hedonic well-being tradition understand it as an experience of happiness, satisfaction, and avoidance of pain, the "eudaimonic approach [to well-being] focuses on meaning and self-realization, and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning" (Ryan and Deci 2001; p. 141). The core components of eudaimonic and hedonic well-being have been instrumental in the formulation of the definitions of workplace well-being currently in use and in guiding current research (Ryan and Deci 2001). Definitions used by researchers either focus on individual components or consist of a mixture of components. Most definitions of (workplace) well-being refer to hedonic well-being (Fisher 2010). However, many measures of individual workplace well-being focus on single aspects of the construct and are typically based on the hedonic notion of well-being

(Fisher 2010; Page and Vella-Brodrick 2009). These are, for example, job satisfaction (Spector 1997), affective workplace well-being (Warr 2003), and vigor at work (Shirom 2011).

Some definitions also use a mixture of domains. Danna and Griffin (1999), for example, use a mixture of domains and components for their definition of workplace well-being and state that the construct consists of life/nonwork satisfaction, work-/job-related satisfaction, and mental and physical health in the workplace. The domains they refer to are work life and nonwork life. The components they use are hedonic well-being (satisfaction) and health. Further examples are shown in Table 1 (i.e., Page and Vella-Brodrick 2009; Cartwright and Cooper 2008) Would delete this as more examples are featured in the table. .

Table 1

Selection of definitions of workplace well-being

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		Definitional elements relate to the following well-being concepts	
Author	**Term**	**Hedonic**	**Eudaimonic**
Wright and Cropanzano 2000	Psychological well-being	Positive affect, negative affect, global evaluation	
Page and Vella-Brodrick 2009	Employee health	Life satisfaction, dispositional affect, job satisfaction, work-related affect	Psychological well-being
Sirgy 2006	Employee well-being	Life satisfaction, job satisfaction, happiness	
Danna and Griffin 1999	Well-being in the workplace	Life/nonwork satisfaction, work-/job-related satisfaction, [health in the workplace (mental and physical)]	
Warr 2003	Workplace well-being	Three key indicators of affect: displeasure–pleasure, nxiety–comfort, depression–enthusiasm	
Daniels 2000	Affective well-being at work	Five key indicators of affect: (1) depression–pleasure, (2) anxiety–comfort, (3) boredom–enthusiasm, (4) tiredness–vigor; (5) anger–being placid	
Cartwright and Cooper 2008	Psychological well-being	Affect	Purpose

The field can be described as diverse but not unified, as different aspects of the concept are emphasized in the definitions. This heterogeneity is illustrated in Table 1, which displays individual definitions of workplace well-being that are commonly cited in research. Most measures focus on hedonic aspects; two out of the six measures include a eudaimonic aspect. The most common dimensions assessed are affect and satisfaction, with some measures assessing both and others assessing either one or the other.

With the growing interest in eudaimonic aspects of workplace well-being, more research is being conducted on concepts like the meaning of work, thriving, and flourishing (e.g., Kopperud and Vitterso 2008; Ménard and Brunet 2012; Rosso et al. 2010; Seligman 2012). Concepts of workplace well-being that refer to aspects of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, such as flow (Csíkszentmihályi 1992) and

work engagement (Schaufeli et al. 2002; Bakker et al. 2006), also receive widespread attention. AQ8

Flow is a concept that could relate to both research traditions as it is characterized by high positive affect and the acquisition of learning, self-development, and mastery through immersion in a task that matches an individual's skills (Csíkszentmihályi 1992). Work engagement could also relate to both traditions as it is characterized by affective and cognitive states at work and enjoyment of work tasks (Schaufeli et al. 2002). It encompasses three dimensions: (1) vigor, i.e., high levels of energy while working; (2) dedication, i.e., being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge; and (3) absorption, i.e., being fully concentrated and engrossed so that time seems to pass quickly. In short, there is diversity and a lack of unity about the conceptualization of well-being as outlined in Table 1 due to the focus on negative or positive aspects of work experience (negative versus positive affect in Warr's (2003) definition); the inclusion of only one or both aspects of hedonia and eudaimonia (e.g., Page and Vella-Brodrick 2009; Cartwright and Cooper 2009 Should be 2008.); and the inclusion of concepts related to well-being (mental health and physical health in Danna and Griffin 1999; Page and Vella-Brodrick 2009). However distinct or broad these definitions, all term their concepts "well-being." A broad conceptualization highlights the complexity of well-being. One approach to capture what components are involved in workplace well-being is to ask people what they perceive constitutes their experience of well-being. To do so with people from different work contexts (i.e., sectors, organizations, or job roles) would also shed light on if there are differences in experiences and perceptions of well-being. The existing research in these approaches is outlined in the next section.

Using Lay Descriptions of Well-Being to Describe Relevant Components of the Well-Being Experience

Some studies have explored lay descriptions of well-being to identify what components of the concept people consider important for their experience of well-being. Determining key features of the well-being experience through exploring real-life work experience might alleviate this issue as checking the meanings people assign to well-being would create further insight into key aspects of the workplace well-being concept. Further, the endeavor to understand how different people at work experience well-being is important as their understanding is likely to impact on how they maintain and enhance well-being, how they rate their well-being in surveys, how they respond to interventions, and how they manage their own well-being. The majority focuses on general rather than workplace well-being (Munoz Sastre 1999; McMahan and Estes 2011; Delle Fave et al. 2011); the exception is Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie (2011) who focused specifically on workplace well-being.

Their study looked at whether a definition derived from their inductive research had similarities with existing (theoretical) definitions of well-being. However, the contexts from which the inductive components were retrieved were unspecified by the authors; furthermore, respondents were mainly female Caucasian Canadians. The generalizability of the study is therefore limited.

Several aspects for researching lay descriptions of well-being could be explored further. First, a truly inductive approach might allow components to emerge from lay descriptions of well-being experiences rather than using measurement or coding schemes based on theoretical definitions. The categories and components should emerge from the data. Asking people to describe indicators of their well-being experience with open questions (i.e., no cues for particular components or definitions of well-being) would reveal prevalent components of workplace well-being. Second, a sample of male and female workers from a variety of backgrounds could be used in the research to tap into the workplace well-being experiences of a wider range of the working population. This would allow for the generalization of findings.

The aim of this research is to develop current understanding of what constitutes workplace well-being and implications for how to enhance it. To do so, the relevant components of individual workplace well-being were explored by asking heterogeneous samples of working people – managers and consultants from different organizations and managers and staff from the same organization – for indicators of their well-being. The next section describes the methodology of the present research.

Methodology

Two studies were conducted. The first study explores the components of workplace well-being through qualitative survey data. We analyzed responses from 44 managers and consultants to a questionnaire consisting of open-ended and closed questions about their experience of workplace well-being. The second study examined further through interviews with 3 managers from a specific department and 23 call center workers of an emergency services organizations if understandings of well-being were similar of people working in the same organization but with different job roles (in contrast to Study 1 where participants came from different organizations and sectors).

We chose an inductive qualitative approach in both studies because it recognizes the multiple perspectives of what different people perceive to be important or integral to their work role, based on personal experience (Silvester 2008). Because qualitative methods give respondents the freedom to report on their experiences, they allow researchers to overcome preconceived ideas about how stress or well-being is experienced at work (Mazzola Schonfeld and Spector 2011; Schonfeld and Farrell 2010). Consequently, the data in both studies was analyzed using inductive thematic qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000, 2010). The methodology for both studies is explained in detail in the following sections.

Study 1

Sample. Of the 44 study participants, 54.54% worked in the private sector, 31.82% in the public sector, 2.27% (one person) for a nongovernmental organization (NGO), and 11.36% (five people) in other sectors (e.g., LLP partnership, armed forces). The types of positions occupied by the participants included managing director (15.91%), senior manager (20.45%), middle manager (15.91%), consultant (20.45%), self-employed (18.19%), and others (9.09%, LLP partnership, armed forces). The sample can be described as having often experienced well-being at work ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.26$, range = 2–7). Most participants had seldom experienced low well-being ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.09$, range = 1–5).

All participants were interested in leadership and personal development (characteristics of professional networks). Their backgrounds were likely to influence their knowledge and understanding of well-being and by extension their responses.

Procedure and Material. The hard-copy questionnaire was handed to 44 participants of a professional affiliate network conference at a UK business school. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended and closed questions on well-being. The following questions were used for the present analysis: the relative level of well-being at work (frequency of experience of high and low well-being on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 being not at all and 7 being all the time) and an open question on indicators' own high well-being ("Imagine you are at work and you have high well-being. How do you know you are in a period of high well-being?"). Space was provided for participants to note their answers, and we used these data for the study.

After the written responses were transcribed, the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately. Descriptive statistical analyses were done with the quantitative data obtained from the closed

questions on the frequency of the experience of well-being and demographic data. These sought to determine whether the sample was experientially biased (e.g., experienced only high or only low well-being). Inductive thematic qualitative content analyses (Mayring 2000, 2010) were carried out with the data obtained from the open-ended question to obtain components of workplace well-being. These were then mapped onto existing theoretical concepts of well-being in order to establish key components of workplace well-being.

Data Analysis. An inductive approach was useful for this study as our aim was to establish workplace well-being components from the participants' descriptions. In particular, an inductive thematic qualitative content analysis approach (Mayring 2000, 2010) was chosen in order to group the reported experiences of well-being into categories. This approach includes a step-by-step formulation of inductive categories out of the material (regarding category definition and levels of abstraction).

To start the coding process, we began by coding words, word groups, and sentences that contained enough information (Mayring 2010) to retrieve inductive categories for components of well-being. Initial coding was primarily descriptive and aimed to summarize the data according to the key themes. This involved a thorough reading of the transcripts of each of the answers to obtain a general sense of their content. This was followed by focused coding in NVivo (QSR 2012). Here, the responses were put into the coding scheme based on the initial coding.

At the first level of coding, coding categories were formed for experiential domains to establish themes that would allow us to capture the full breadth of experiences. These domains were determined by indicators contained in participants' descriptions: mind and body (processes that include mental and physical aspects such as being energized, centered, feeling well, or vitality), emotional (states that include feelings, mood, temperament, etc. such as being present, excited, confident, or balanced), cognitive (mental processes that include attention, memory, solving problems, making decisions, etc. such as creativity, flow, motivation, or being stimulated), social (processes that include others such as interaction, communication, or relatedness), task-related (processes, feelings, etc. that relate directly to work tasks such as work is enjoyable or everything is possible), and physical (physical symptoms such as being not tired, being fit, or healthy). As some indicators did not refer to a specific experiential domain, a domain called "other" (any processes which cannot be aligned to other categories such as achievement/success, in control, or taking risks) was formed. This initial inductive coding was conducted to minimize the influence on the findings of our knowledge of existing theoretical dimensions of well-being.

A second-level coding was then conducted to determine key indicators for each experiential domain. We noted the frequency with which indicators within the experiential domains were mentioned to determine common aspects among participants' descriptions (see Appendix 1). Indicators that were mentioned by more than two people were noted for each experiential domain. We also noted how many people from the sample referred to an experiential domain in their descriptions (see Appendix 2). In allocating the indicators of the different domains, it became apparent that they could sometimes fit several of them. For example, "enthusiastic response to challenges" (Participant 4, consultant) could fit into emotional domain due to the feeling of enthusiasm/excitement but also cognitive domain as a motivation and stimulation to solve a challenge are addressed. In this case, it was decided to allocate the response to the cognitive domain. To facilitate analysis between domains, we decided to allocate an indicator to a single domain.

In the second coding stage, the indicators used most often (i.e., indicators that were mentioned by at least three participants; see Appendix 1) were mapped onto existing theoretical categories of well-being whose components were outlined in a prepared coding scheme. Our aim here was to identify whether the inductively established themes and indicators would map onto theoretical well-being categories in order to determine a common language for key components of workplace well-being. Here, indicators

mentioned by participants were mapped onto the components of the subdimensions of the concepts: hedonic well-being (Diener 1984; Warr 2009 Should be: 2003 ; positive affect, negative affect, (life) satisfaction), eudaimonic well-being (Ryff 1998; Should be: 1989 Diener 2009; positive and rewarding relationships, functioning in one's environment, attitude toward oneself, self-development), work engagement (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; vigor, dedication, absorption), flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1992; focus, immersion, experiencing success during activity), and vigor (Shirom 2011; physical vitality, cognitive liveliness, emotional energy).

Study 2

Sample. The participants of Study 2 were managers and call center staff of an emergency services organization in the UK. The call center staff took part in focus groups, and the managers were interviewed individually.

The call handlers take emergency calls. In contrast to the well-being team, their work is characterized by relatively low autonomy and task variety, a large workload, and possible job loss. A convenience sampling approach was taken as call center employees have a high workload. We were able to hold five focus groups with differing subsamples ($n = 4–6$) and to gain a total sample size of $N = 23$. Call center employees were asked to take part in this study by a senior line manager on the basis that they either had a break between shifts or were attending a training day and had time before the start of the session.

The call center workforce is divided into 42.05% men and 57.95% women (this includes supervisors). Our sample has a similar distribution and consists of 43.48% ($n = 10$) men and 56.52% ($n = 13$) women. Their tenure ranged from 2 to 34 years.

The well-being managers work together in a team of three that oversees the well-being intervention and liaises with senior management and line managers to promote well-being in the organization. Their work is characterized by relatively high autonomy and task variety; and they are not facing job losses. Their role in the organization is to provide a proactive approach to employee welfare as well as a reactive approach to occupational health.

Procedure and Material. The focus group discussions and interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the participants. Each interview and focus group lasted 1 h. At the beginning of the focus groups, participants were asked to describe their role in their team and how long they had been working for the organization. In the interview, participants were asked to describe their role and tenure. Several questions about workplace well-being were asked as part of a larger study. For the current study, we asked for employees' accounts of their experience with the well-being intervention in their organization and what they understood by the term "well-being." The well-being team was asked what the term "well-being" means to them.

Data Analysis Procedure. Audiotapes were transcribed by an external transcription service using the intelligent verbatim method. The first author then read each transcript several times while listening to the recordings. Deductive thematic qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2010) was then carried out to allocate the themes to the established well-being components from Study 1. Significant words and phrases were allocated a code based on the developed coding scheme.

In the analysis and interpretation process, matrices were used to display within-case comparisons between focus groups and interviews (Miles and Huberman 1994). The matrix showed which codes had been mentioned in each focus group and in each interview. This gave an overview of the themes mentioned or seen as important by call center employees and well-being managers and enabled us to check whether

both groups talked about similar issues. This process did not allow us to see how often each code was referred to. However, a frequency analysis would have shown a skewed picture, particularly in the focus groups, as it is in the nature of focus groups for participants to repeat what has been said while agreeing or discussing the issue mentioned in more detail (Krueger 1994).

Findings

First, the inductively obtained components for the experiences of well-being described by participants in Study 1 are presented, based on experiential domains. It is then suggested how these components can be aligned with components of theoretical concepts of well-being. Finally, based on the findings in Study 2, we then outline how well-being descriptions might differ across different contexts.

Lay Descriptions of Workplace Well-Being

To the question of how someone recognizes that they are in a state of high well-being, participants gave responses such as “I feel fit, healthy, not tired, energetic. I feel more creative and motivated. In some ways feeling more extraverted (being a natural introvert).” (Participant 2, managing director); “Feeling engaged. That what I am doing matters to others.” (Participant 10, middle manager in public sector); and “A warm emotional feeling.” (Participant 13, consultant). The analysis indicated that participants described high well-being along seven experiential domains. Most responses refer to the mind and body, cognitive, and emotional domains of the experience. Table 2 summarizes participants’ descriptions of the experiential domains, including the rank and percentage relating to how often each domain was mentioned by participants as an indicator of high well-being experiences. The rank and percentage were included to examine the centrality of each dimension to the concept of workplace well-being.

Table 2

Ranking according to frequency of experiential domains mentioned by participants when describing how they experience high workplace well-being and mapping of components onto existing theoretical well-being concepts

Domain	Rank[a]	Components	Relation to existing concepts
Mind and body	1 47.73%	Energy, flow	Vigor (physical energy), flow
Cognitive	2 43.18%	Motivation, creativity, stimulation, optimism	Engagement (dedication), vigor (cognitive liveliness), engagement (dedication), eudaimonic (optimism)
Emotional	3 40.91%	Contentment, confidence	Hedonic well-being (positive affect, satisfaction), eudaimonic well-being (mastery)
Task-related	4 27.28%	Engagement, productivity, contribution	Engagement, outcome, eudaimonic (contribution)
Social	5 25.00%	Interaction, communication, exchange	Eudaimonic (positive relations with others), eudaimonic (positive relations with others), vigor (emotional energy), or eudaimonic (positive relations with others)
Others	5 25.00%	Work–life balance	Antecedent
Physical	6	Feeling fit and	Physical health

	13.64%	healthy

[a]1 means most components mentioned referred to this domain. Out of seven domains, the mind and body domain was used by 21 people of the sample of 44 (see Appendix 2). Therefore 47.73% of people referred to the mind and body domain in their description of high well-being. If one person is related to several components of one domain, the domain was counted only once full stop missing at the end of the sentence.

Just like theoretical concepts such as eudaimonic well-being (Seifert 2005), participants' descriptions of the well-being experience show a degree of overlap in antecedents and components. For example, work–life balance which can be seen as an antecedent of well-being or productivity which can be seen as an outcome of well-being was mentioned by participants when describing indicators of their well-being experience. Also, 70.46% of people referred to two or more domains (see Appendix 3) when describing indicators of their own well-being which suggests that well-being is a multifaceted phenomenon. Furthermore, different people used different domains to describe well-being. For example, the verbatim of Participant 2 outlined above refers to the physical domain (feeling fit, healthy), vigor (not tired, energetic), cognitive (creative and motivated), and social (extraversion); Participant 10 refers to task-related domain (engaged) and social domain ("what I am doing matters to others"); and Participant 13 refers to emotional domain (warm emotional feeling). We could therefore argue that the experience and understanding of well-being are subjective (see Diener 2009). Referring to different domains could stem from the fact that the participants had different kinds of jobs, work experiences, and knowledge of the topic and therefore highlighted different aspects of the experience, based on the work they carry out. For example, someone who works in isolation might not focus on the social domain of well-being as much as someone whose work requires constant interaction with others. This possible context dependency of well-being is further examined when outlining the findings of Study 2.

The Components of Lay Definitions of Workplace Well-Being

Comparing the indicators with theoretical concepts, most of the components refer to aspects of eudaimonic well-being, vigor, and work engagement (see Table 2). Eudaimonic well-being was referred to by five indicators of well-being and referred to in total by 18 people in their descriptions of well-being. Vigor was referred to by 3 indicators and mentioned in total by 23 people, work engagement was followed by 3 indicators and was mentioned by 15 people, hedonic well-being was referred to by 1 indicator and was mentioned by 14 people, and flow was referred to by 1 indicator and was mentioned by 5 people (see also Table 2 and Appendix 1). The results of this study complement existing studies of lay descriptions of well-being, in the sense that eudaimonic well-being plays an important part in workplace well-being (see Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie 2011) and that several components of different theoretical concepts of well-being are part of the well-being experience (see McMahan and Estes 2011). However, the present study extends previous studies by focusing on uncued descriptions of the experience of workplace well-being. It also uses a wider array of theoretical concepts to compare the lay components. Previous studies (e.g., Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie 2011) used only hedonic and eudaimonic conceptualizations and did not include an activated state of well-being, which is covered by the concepts of vigor, work engagement, and flow and to which components of lay descriptions in the present study refer to a great extent.

The social dimension of well-being was mentioned by several participants with a range of indicators. This indicates that a definition of well-being that highlights social aspects such as a feeling of belonging and contributing to one's environment (e.g., Keyes 1998) would be useful in integrating existing conceptualizations of workplace well-being. Eudaimonic well-being relates to the social aspects of well-being in terms of warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others (Ryff and Keyes 1995), concern for

others' well-being, and contribution to it (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2009 cited in Diener et al. 2009; p. 263). Vigor relates to the social aspect of well-being in terms of emotional energy, which encompasses the ability to show warmth to others, sensitivity to others' needs, and emotional investment in others (Shirom 2003). However, the components of the lay descriptions go beyond the aspects covered by eudaimonic well-being and vigor. Daniels (2000) attempts to integrate several concepts of well-being and the social domain by conceptualizing individual (workplace) well-being as hedonic (affect and satisfaction) and consisting of competence (environmental mastery, fulfillment of potential), aspiration (having goals and motivation), autonomy, and integrative functioning. Integrative functioning relates to the social domain in terms of social integration, coherence, acceptance, and contribution (Daniels 2000).

The social aspect of the well-being experience is commonly acknowledged in the literature, mainly in terms of the appraisal of stressors or facilitating coping. However, the results of this study highlight the social aspect of the well-being experience itself, mirrored in descriptions of the need for connection (see Cacioppo and Patrick 2008; Cacioppo et al. 2006) that is satisfied through interactions and feelings of belonging. The social aspect of the well-being experience can in fact impact upon the appraisal of the appraisal of a stressor and social support behavior.

It is interesting that physical aspects of well-being were mentioned by the participants in Study 1, as most concepts of workplace well-being are psychological and focus on emotional and cognitive aspects. This was also referred to by participants of Study 2, which is further explored in the next section. The concept of vigor, however, acknowledges the physical aspect of well-being as it includes the dimension of physical strength in addition to cognitive and emotional energy (Shirom 2011). However, as Danna and Griffin (1999) state, there has been a vast amount of research on issues of health and well-being in the workplace that emphasizes either physical, emotional, psychological, or mental perspectives, depending on the discipline in which well-being or health is studied. The results suggest that it might be worthwhile to consider research from all these multiple perspectives to gain a good understanding of what constitutes the experience of well-being at work.

The Context Dependency of Lay Definitions of Workplace Well-Being

In Study 2, when asked what workplace well-being means to them, all center employees referred mostly to hedonic well-being and vigor (see Table 3). The latter was referenced as *not being tired*, *not exhausted*, and *having physical vitality*. These descriptions could also be allocated to physical health indicators. In comparison to the call center employees, the well-being team referred to more aspects of eudaimonic than hedonic well-being. In addition to common psychological well-being components, health seemed to be an important component for the participants. The well-being team referred mainly to physical health, while the call center employees referred mainly to mental health. A relation to other well-being concepts, such as quality of life and stress, was also drawn. Furthermore, as also found in Study 1, antecedents rather than components were mentioned by several participants (see Table 3).

Table 3

Indicators of individual workplace well-being identified by call center employees and well-being team

Well-being concept	Concept dimensions	Call center staff	Well-being team
Hedonic well-being (Diener 1984; Diener 2009)	Affect Satisfaction	Enjoyment, happiness, pleasure, sense of calm, contentment, satisfaction, feeling positive	Happiness, feeling grounded, contentment

Eudaimonic well-being (Ryff 1989; Diener 2009)	Relationships Functioning in one's environment Attitude toward oneself Self-development	Feeling valued, being confident	Feeling valued, feeling in control (i.e., environmental mastery), confidence, empowerment, sense of purpose and achievement
Vigor (Shirom 2011)	Physical vitality Cognitive liveliness Emotional energy	Not tired, not feeling drained, energy, vitality	Energy
Engagement (Schaufeli and Bakker 2001)	Dedication Absorption Vigor	"Don't mind going to work."	"Engagement is closely aligned with well-being."
Flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1992)		"Work is easier."	None
Physical well-being		Being healthy, physical health, being fit	Physical health, health
Other concepts related to well-being		Not stressed, low stress, mental health	Mental health, quality of life, "Workplace well-being is a contradiction; work and life cannot be separated."
Antecedents of well-being		Time affluence, time for oneself, know what one is doing, know what will happen in the next year, support from others when ill, going to work when one feels 100%, happy when right staffing levels are present, easier to manage work when staffing levels are right (i.e., control, support, workload), work-life balance AQ9	Work–life balance; balance between work, rest and, play; recognize when one needs to rest (i.e., sustainable behavior, pacing oneself); know the environment one works best in, time management, coping
Outcomes of well-being		Work is more tolerable in a difficult job, do better job (i.e., good work performance), customers are served more quickly	Productive at work

A wide range of well-being aspects and related concepts was mentioned, while call center employees and the well-being team talked about different aspects of workplace well-being. This might be explained by the different job context of each group. The call center employees have a large workload and face changes in the tasks they have to fulfill and possible job loss. They use terms such as *not being stressed*, *not feeling drained*, *being confident*, *having a sense of calm*, and *feeling positive* to describe well-being. They also seem to equate low well-being with stress. Even when participants were directly asked what well-being is, they made a link with stress. The well-being team mentioned coping but did not mention stress once when asked to describe components of well-being. The call center employees might perceive well-being as the opposite of stress because current conditions do not provide the opportunity to experience well-being in the sense of positive affect and thriving. They experience their work in terms of stress and coping with stress; they think about minimizing bad feelings and stress and about coping in a harmful environment. As

for the well-being team, they may simply not perceive well-being in this way because of their professional background. They do not work in the same environment; think about well-being, learning, and development as part of their job description; and describe well-being in eudaimonic terms of thriving and self-development (All well-being team members were working in learning and development at the time the study was conducted or had held a past job that involved elements of learning and development.). Their current working conditions provide the opportunity to experience a high level of well-being. They are not facing job losses. Even though their workload is heavy, they have autonomy over their work tasks. Thus well-being is understood differently by both organizational groups because of the different environments in which they work.

Physical components of well-being (e.g., feeling fit) were mentioned by both groups. In the emergency service, to which the participants belong, physical fitness is required for most employees to be able to perform their job effectively. So the organizational context can also influence what aspects of well-being are emphasized in descriptions of the experience.

Discussion

A diverse and rich template was needed to code participants' data adequately. This suggests that the experience of workplace well-being is multifaceted and that there is potential heterogeneity in participants' experiences that is determined by context.

The Multifacetedness of the Workplace Well-Being Concept

Participants named an array of components relating to multiple well-being concepts. Indeed, participants described well-being along seven experiential domains. Individuals would usually refer to multiple components when describing their experience of well-being and different people mentioned different components. This has already been recognized and mirrored in some definitions of workplace well-being that adhere to Page and Vella-Brodrick's (2008 Should be: 2009), Ryan and Deci's (2001), and Huppert's (2009) argument that hedonic and eudaimonic well-being should be combined to capture the complete experience of well-being.

Some scholars argue that it might be more useful to see well-being as an umbrella term (Xanthopoulou et al. 2012) or as an area of study (Daniels 2011) rather than a distinct concept. We argue that it is useful to conceptualize the experience of well-being at work as a multifaceted phenomenon where aspects of eudaimonic well-being, vigor, and work engagement play a central role. The wide variety of interpretations and tensions show that it might be fitting to treat well-being as an umbrella term. A multicomponent measure of well-being should go beyond hedonic and eudaimonic aspects by including an energy component, related to work engagement, vigor, and flow, and social and physical aspects of well-being at work. Fisher (2010) states that the concepts of work engagement, vigor and flow are part of the well-being "family." One could argue that the constructs described capture different aspects of the well-being experience as they focus on either cognition or affect and have a broad or distinct target, such as work in general or a particular work event.

The multifaceted nature of the well-being construct and the heterogeneity of understanding and assessments of well-being have a number of important implications for researchers. First, to interpret empirical findings accurately, researchers need to draw attention to what aspects of well-being are assessed in studies. This should make it easier to create a synthesis of the literature and conduct meta-analyses. A multicomponent approach to the measurement of well-being should be taken into account to capture the complete experience of workplace well-being (see also Deci and Ryan 2001 Should be: Ryan and Deci 2001). Moreover, using several distinct components to assess well-being, compared to

using a broad scale, would provide more clarity in linking well-being with outcomes like work performance (see also Daniels and Harris 2000). But even more importantly, well-being should be viewed as an experience that is understood and conceptualized differently depending on the context in which it is experienced and described. We discuss this key finding in more detail in the next section.

The Context Embeddedness of the Well-Being Concept

As different participants described different aspects of the components of workplace well-being, these results call for recognition of individual subjectivity. The role of subjectivity in understanding well-being has been recognized in recent research on stress and well-being interventions (see Karanika-Murray et al. 2012), which emphasizes the role of context. The characteristics of people, work, and organizational boundaries within which stress and well-being interventions take place are context factors that influence whether an intervention is successful. Karanika-Murray et al. (2012) outline that research should not solely focus on "what" works but why and under what circumstances it does so.

Job role and job characteristics might play a part in determining how well-being is understood and how people react to certain well-being interventions. Different employee groups might have different understandings of well-being as they use work for identity formation in a different way. White-collar workers, for example, knowledge workers, tend to identify themselves through their work (live to work, work centrality, e.g., Mannheim et al. 1997; Doherty 2009) and might see workplace well-being more in terms of eudaimonic well-being, that is, how much they experience meaning and purpose at work. Blue-collar workers might see work mainly in terms of earning a living (work to live) and derive meaning and purpose outside the workplace. Their definition of well-being might relate more to the hedonic conceptualization of well-being.

The embeddedness of well-being in the occupational context has been addressed in the well-being literature in terms of antecedents of well-being but not in terms of its components. It is recognized that certain occupations have specific stressors (see Langan-Fox and Cooper 2011). Juniper et al. (2011) surveyed several public service sector organizations on what are perceived as central aspects of their workplace well-being. Each organization (library, hospital, and police service) highlighted different work characteristics.

Different job roles are accompanied by different work characteristics. Managers usually have more autonomy than staff, and this might be reflected in their understanding of well-being. Indeed in Study 2, the call center staff described their workplace well-being in mainly hedonic terms, linking low well-being with stress. The wellness managers referred to aspects of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. So work context, in terms of work characteristics, can have an influence on the way in which well-being is experienced and understood. If people have to cope with stressors such as work overload but cannot draw on resources such as autonomy (e.g., Karasek 1979) or personal resources such as self-efficacy (e.g., Bakker and Demerouti 2007), they are likely to experience negative affect, anxiety, exhaustion, etc. Their efforts to maintain well-being probably revolve around restoring levels of positive affect and relieving exhaustion. Issues like self-development are unlikely to be salient for them. This has implications for the success of well-being interventions or individual and management efforts to increase well-being.

These findings suggest that the context embeddedness of the understanding of well-being is anchored in several aspects. First, the occupation (e.g., emergency services might emphasize the physical aspects of well-being); second, the particular job or work context (department with high stress versus low stress); and third, the job role in terms of status (blue- versus white-collar workers), resources, and demands made (managers and employees usually have different degrees of autonomy). As the results suggest that the understanding of well-being is likely to be influenced by the work context, a general conceptualization of

well-being is not useful due to its contextual dependency.

Limitations of Current Research and Future Directions for Research

By engaging with lay descriptions of well-being, an explorative approach allowed for greater appreciation of the complexity of the well-being construct and of the dependency of well-being and its antecedents on the context in which they are experienced. However, this approach also means that the statements made in this paper are reflections based on explorative rather than inferential research. Furthermore, the sample size of the study is relatively small and limited to specific work settings. Empirical investigations with structural equation models, for example, could determine how much the postulated components contribute to the experience of workplace well-being.

For future research, definitions of well-being could be explored in different specific occupations and job roles. In our research, we suggested that several aspects of the work environment might influence the understanding of well-being: the job, its work context, its role in its sector or profession, resources, and demands. Considering these aspects in future research on concepts and functional relationships would make it possible to create understanding and theory that might be more applicable to workplace well-being (see Rousseau and Fried 2001). It might also be worthwhile to investigate differences in perceptions according to hierarchy, as managers' beliefs will inform policies and practices, whereas employees' beliefs will determine which policies and practices are likely to be resisted. Complexities of the workplace could be recognized by amending general theory for particular work environments. Furthermore, exploring these contextual aspects would also enable future theory building, as new relevant factors would be assessed (Johns 2006). More importantly, well-being seems to be a flexible concept with an ideological component that can be used to support whatever position the organization would like to adopt. For example, if the organization sees physical health as important and easy to support, policies and practices will focus on definitions of workplace well-being that highlight physical health. Lay representations can therefore also give insight into the well-being culture of an organization.

Practical Implications

The findings highlight that different results about relevant well-being components are obtained, depending on whose well-being is explored. If an organization aims to implement an intervention to address a certain group's well-being, that intervention needs to fit the target population (Randall and Nielsen 2012) – that is, what the group perceives as relevant for their well-being. Interventions might fail if they do not take into account contextual factors like the characteristics of the people involved and the boundaries of their work (Karanika-Murray et al. 2012) that influence their understanding of workplace well-being. The characteristics of people in their job role, their work environment, norms, and expectations influence the understanding of well-being and what resources need to be invested in to improve it. A general well-being intervention that does not take individual job roles and work characteristics into account is unlikely to capture and address the well-being experience fully. This research highlights that the understanding of well-being is crucial to creating acceptance of well-being interventions. Using interventions that tackle aspects of well-being that employees do not see as part of their workplace well-being experience will be unsuccessful. Juniper et al. (2011) argue that, in terms of the antecedents of well-being, generic scales are not sufficiently sensitive to well-being issues that are important to people in a specific occupational sector. Therefore, it might be advantageous to include individual employees in the design of interventions to take advantage of both their "content" (Randall and Nielsen 2012) and "context" expertise (LaMontagne et al. 2007) and to ensure an intervention person.

AQ10

The social aspect of well-being highlighted by our findings suggests that well-being is not just important

in itself but is also important for successful co-working. Investing in employees' well-being meets an organization's duty of care and the business incentive of increasing individual performance; but it is also important to facilitate the capacity for teamwork through the well-being of team members. The connection between the social component of well-being and job performance, particularly in team settings, should be explored further.

Well-being action needs to be supported by a genuine interest in employees' well-being; this implies recognition of job/occupational/role-specific understanding and needs. The term well-being is frequently used in organizations and among well-being professionals without regard to its various connotations for individuals, i.e., what meaning people assign to the term. "Off-the-shelf" interventions will not work and will not demonstrate a genuine interest or duty of care to employees, as no real understanding of the employees is demonstrated. Well-being interventions based on healthy eating or fitness classes will be met with cynicism by employees, whose engagement levels and sense of fulfillment are likely to languish swiftly.

Conclusion

This research intended to shed light on key components of the workplace well-being concept as it is a vacuous term that is used extensively by organizations, consultancies, and policy makers. We argue that we need to bring existing well-being concepts together in order to capture the workplace well-being experience fully. Different interpretations of the concept (i.e., heterogeneity and context dependency of the concept) and the described tensions to categorize experience indicators (i.e., dimensions of different well-being concepts tend to overlap) show that it might be fitting to treat well-being as an umbrella term. A multicomponent measure of well-being should go beyond hedonic and eudaimonic aspects by including an energy component related to work engagement, vigor, and flow and social and physical aspects of well-being at work. Furthermore, if an organization aims to implement an intervention to address a certain group's well-being, that intervention needs to fit the target population – that is, what the group perceives as relevant facets of their well-being.

AQ11

Appendix 1 Second-Level Coding Results for Descriptions of High Well-Being

AQ12

Category	Subcategory	Example	Frequency
Cognitive	Concentration	Focused	2
	Motivation	Feel motivated	6
	Stimulated, positively challenged	Everything seems possible, positively stretched	5
	Feel positive, optimistic	Same as subcategory description	3
	Absorption	Lost sense of time	1
	Feeling of accomplishment	Same as subcategory description	2
	Creativity	Sense of creativity	5

Mind/body	Energy	Feel energised	15
	Centred	Sense of being centred, still centre	2
	Feel well	Same as subcategory description	2
	Vitality	Vitality, feel alive	2
	Flow	Feeling of flow, feeling in the zone, being in the groove	5
	Connected	Feel connected with the world	2
Emotional	Excited	Same as subcategory description	2
	Content	Happy, warm emotional feeling, content	14
	Enjoyment	Enjoyment & fun	1
	Confident	Same as subcategory description	4
	Relaxed	Same as subcategory description	1
	Valued	Feel valued and useful	1
	Enthusiastic	Feel elevated	1
	Satisfied	Same as subcategory description	2
Social	Interaction	Interact with colleagues, extraversion	4
	Communication	Communication and chatty	3
	Exchange	Responsive to others, interaction and reaction	3
	Relatedness	Relatedness, compassion	2
	Supportive towards others	Support others, contribute to others success	2
	Respect from and influence over others	Will be listened to attentively and with respect; will have the opportunity to influence	1
	People appear content	Fewer complaint, fewer nastiness	2
Body	Physical symptoms	Absence of negative physical symptoms	1
	Not tired	Same as subcategory description	1
	Fit, healthy	Feeling good with own body, feeling fit, feeling healthy	3
Task related	Enjoyable	High level of job satisfaction, work is enjoyable	2
	Rich	Work is rich	1
	Engaged	Fully engaged with work, feeling engaged	3
	Productive	Things get done easily, capacity to deliver more, growth	3
	Contribution	Contribution to work, others success	4

	Gets done easily	Solution found easily, work gets done easily	1
		Same as subcategory description	
Others	Success	Same as subcategory description	1
	In control	Same as subcategory description	1
	Not stressed	Same as subcategory description	2
	Low absenteeism	Same as subcategory description	1
	Want to be at work	Same as subcategory description	1
	Purpose	Clear purpose, sense of purpose	2
	Work-life balance	Work and life fit together, able to make decisions about balance	4
	Open	Same as subcategory description	1
	Things go well	Same as subcategory description	1

Appendix 2 Domains Referred to by Participants when Describing High Well-Being[a]

Participant	Cognitive	Emotional	Mind/body	Physical	Social	Task-related	Others	No. of domains
1.					x			1
2.	x		x	x	x			4
3.	x	x	x				x	4
4.	x				x	x	x	4
5.	x	x	x					3
6.	x	x						2
7.	x	x	x					3
8.			x					1
9.	x	x	x			x		4
10.						x		1
11.			x	x				2
12.						x		1

13.		x						1
14.		x	x		x			3
15.	x				x	x		3
16.		x	x				x	3
17.	x		x					2
18.	x	x						2
19.			x					1
20.	x		x					2
21.	x			x				2
22.	x	x			x		x	4
23.					x			1
24.			x					1
25.				x		x		2
26.							x	1
27.		x	x					2
28.	x	x						2
29.			x					1
30.			x					1
31.			x	x		x		3
32.		x			x			2
33.	x	x			x	x		4
34.	x		x					2
35.						x	x	3
36.		x				x	x	3
37.	x		x					2
37.		x						1
38.					x	x	x	3
39.							x	1
40.	x		x			x		3

41.		x			x		x	3
42.	x		x				x	3
43.		x		x				2
Frequency of domain	19/44 43.18%	18/44 40.91%	21/44 47.73%	6/44 13.64%	11/44 25.00%	12/44 27.28%	11/44 25.00%	

[a]If an individual used several indicators of the same domain to describe well-being, the domain was counted only once

Appendix 3 Number of Domains Mentioned Together in Descriptions of Own Well-Being

Number of domains	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 (mentioned by itself)	13/44	29.54
2	13/44	29.54
3	12/44	27.28
4	6/44	13.64

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AQ13

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