



The Architecture of Well-Being at Work: An Eight-Dimensional Model for Sustainable Organizational Flourishing

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ABSTRACT

Workplace well-being is often approached through isolated initiatives such as mindfulness sessions, physical activity campaigns or employee assistance programmes. Although useful, fragmented interventions can overlook the interconnected conditions through which people actually experience work. This conceptual article proposes an eight-dimensional architecture of organizational well-being encompassing body, cognition, emotion, meaning, social connection, professional life, financial security and digital life. The model is grounded in multidisciplinary literature on flourishing, job demands and resources, self-determination, occupational health and digital work. It argues that sustainable well-being emerges from the interaction among dimensions rather than from the optimization of any single factor. The article introduces a practical diagnostic logic for identifying imbalances, discusses implications for leaders and human-resource professionals, and proposes a research agenda for testing dimensional interactions. The model offers an accessible but theoretically grounded alternative to wellness programmes that individualize problems generated by organizational design.

Keywords: workplace well-being; flourishing; organizational health; financial well-being; digital well-being; human sustainability

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations increasingly speak the language of well-being. Yet many employees encounter well-being as a collection of activities added to unchanged systems of work. A resilience webinar may coexist with chronic overload; a healthy-eating campaign may sit beside unpredictable schedules; a digital-detox message may be sent through an always-on communication culture. This gap between programme and lived experience explains why well-being cannot be reduced to benefits or isolated interventions.

Research on flourishing and occupational health points toward a systemic view. Human functioning depends on positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment, but also on the balance between demands and resources and on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Seligman, 2011). Contemporary work adds further pressures: financial insecurity, blurred boundaries and continuous digital exposure.

This article develops an eight-dimensional architecture intended to help organizations see well-being as an interconnected system. Its premise is simple: a person does not arrive at work as a fragmented set of variables. Physical energy affects cognition; financial anxiety affects attention; social exclusion affects emotion; digital overload affects recovery. Organizational well-being therefore requires an integrated map.

METHODOLOGY

An integrative review and conceptual synthesis were used. Constructs were drawn from positive psychology, occupational health psychology, self-determination theory, job demands-resources theory and emerging



research on digital well-being. Dimensions were retained when they met three criteria: conceptual distinctiveness, practical relevance to working life and plausible interaction with other dimensions. The resulting model is not presented as a diagnostic medical instrument but as an organizational design framework.

THE EIGHT DIMENSIONS

Body. Physical energy, sleep, movement, ergonomics and recovery shape the capacity to work sustainably. Organizations influence these through workload, scheduling and physical conditions.

Thought. Cognitive well-being concerns attention, mental clarity, learning and manageable complexity. Excessive interruptions and ambiguous priorities consume cognitive resources.

Emotion. Emotional well-being includes the capacity to experience, express and regulate emotion without fear of humiliation or retaliation. Psychological safety is especially relevant here (Edmondson, 1999).

Meaning and transcendence. People differ in their beliefs, but many seek a sense that work contributes to something beyond immediate transactions. Meaning can come from service, craftsmanship, community, values or legacy.

Social life. Belonging, trust and supportive relationships are resources. Loneliness and incivility are organizational risks, not merely private experiences.

Professional life. Growth, autonomy, fair recognition and opportunities to use strengths affect whether work is experienced as development or depletion.

Financial life. Pay fairness, predictability and financial security influence stress and decision-making. Organizations cannot solve every financial problem, but compensation practices and stability matter.

Digital life. Technology can enable flexibility and learning while also producing interruption, surveillance and boundary erosion. Digital well-being requires intentional norms rather than individual self-control alone.

INTERACTION EFFECTS

The principal contribution of the model is not the list of dimensions but their interaction. Consider an employee who sleeps poorly because late-night messages are normalized. Reduced physical recovery weakens attention; mistakes increase; anxiety rises; confidence falls; relationships become strained. A problem that appears to be “resilience” may originate in digital norms and workload design.

The reverse is also possible. A supportive manager can improve social connection, clarify priorities, protect recovery time and create professional growth simultaneously. This suggests that high-leverage interventions often influence several dimensions at once. The architecture therefore encourages leaders to ask where a problem originates, where it is expressed and which organizational conditions maintain it.

A PRACTICAL DIAGNOSTIC LOGIC

Organizations can use a three-question review for each dimension: What is helping people thrive? What is draining sustainable energy? What is within organizational control? The objective is not to score employees as healthy or unhealthy. It is to identify design conditions.

At team level, leaders can review meeting load, after-hours communication, role clarity, recognition, interpersonal climate, learning opportunities and workload predictability. At organizational level, compensation, staffing, flexibility, technology governance and leadership behaviour should be included. Well-being metrics should be interpreted alongside turnover, absence, engagement and qualitative feedback rather than as isolated survey scores.

The architecture also integrates hedonic and eudaimonic traditions of well-being. Subjective well-being research emphasizes evaluations and affective experience, whereas psychological well-being highlights dimensions such as purpose and growth (Ryff, 1989; Diener et al., 2018). Task significance research further shows that perceived contribution can influence motivation and performance (Grant, 2008), while recovery research demonstrates that detachment from work is an important restorative process (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

Scholarly Contribution and Testable Propositions

Table 1 summarizes the proposed framework and its principal analytical dimensions.

Table 1. Analytical framework for eight-dimensional well-being

Dimension	Organizational design question	Illustrative indicator
Body	Does work permit recovery and sustainable physical energy?	Recovery time; fatigue
Thought	Can people focus, learn and understand priorities?	Interruptions; role clarity
Emotion	Can concerns and emotions be expressed safely?	Psychological safety
Meaning	Can employees connect work to valued contribution?	Meaningfulness
Social	Do relationships provide belonging and support?	Belonging; incivility
Professional	Does work enable autonomy, growth and fair recognition?	Autonomy; development
Financial	Do pay and predictability reduce avoidable insecurity?	Pay fairness; predictability
Digital	Do technology norms protect attention and boundaries?	After-hours load; notification burden

Research propositions

P1. Cross-dimensional interventions will produce stronger well-being effects than isolated wellness activities when they alter underlying work design.

P2. Digital and professional design conditions will indirectly influence physical and emotional well-being through recovery, autonomy and cognitive load.

P3. The relationship between well-being initiatives and sustainable performance will be stronger when organizational demands are redesigned rather than merely compensated by individual coping programmes.

DISCUSSION

The model resists the individualization of organizational problems. Personal practices matter, but telling employees to become more resilient cannot compensate indefinitely for harmful systems. The job demands-resources model demonstrates that demands and resources jointly influence strain and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Similarly, the proposed architecture suggests that well-being improves when organizations reduce avoidable demands while strengthening resources across multiple dimensions.

The model also offers a bridge between well-being and strategy. Sustainable performance depends on human energy, learning and trust. Well-being is therefore not simply a moral add-on; it is part of organizational capacity. However, instrumental arguments should not obscure dignity. People are not resources to be



optimized solely for output. A mature well-being strategy values both performance and the quality of human experience.

LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH AGENDA

The framework requires empirical validation. Future studies should test whether the eight dimensions are statistically distinguishable, how they interact and whether certain dimensions act as multipliers or buffers. Cross-cultural research is essential because meaning, social connection and financial security are interpreted differently across contexts. Researchers should also investigate whether improvements in digital norms produce measurable gains in sleep, attention and psychological safety.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable workplace well-being is architectural. It emerges from the relationships among physical, cognitive, emotional, meaningful, social, professional, financial and digital conditions. Organizations that treat these dimensions as a connected system can move beyond episodic wellness activities toward human sustainability by design. The practical shift is from asking employees to cope better to asking how work itself can be designed better.

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