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The trickle-out effect of prioritizing well-being

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THE TRICKLE-OUT EFFECT OF PRIORITIZING WELL-BEING

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Abstract

This research builds upon previous studies of the effects of inequity theory on well-being at work. The purpose of this study was to understand the intersection of equity theory and well-being for US employees in modern corporate organizations. Specifically, the study aims to answer the research question—When one employee prioritizes their well-being, how does it affect their work teammates' well-being? Twenty full-time corporate employees from various companies and industries each participated in a survey and an interview. Overall, this research found that prioritizing well-being at work generally positively impacts those around them. However, it has a negative impact when the teammates already find that individual to be in an over-benefitting situation by either underperforming or consistently needing support.

Keywords: Well-being, Equity Theory, Teams, US Corporate

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

Even though employee well-being has been researched by social scientists since the mid-1900s (Magyar & Keyes, 2019), it is only recently that corporations have started to invest in well-being programs, which is evident in the growth of the industry. From 2011 to 2016, the well-being industry, which offers a variety of activities aimed at supporting behaviors conducive to health, increased its revenue from $1.8 billion to $8 billion annually (Pollitz & Rae, 2016).

It is no surprise that corporations are willing to invest in employee well-being when there is ample evidence of the business benefits. Businesses with employees who have higher levels of well-being tend to report greater customer loyalty, higher profitability, higher productivity, and lower rates of turnover (Harter et al., 2003).

Well-being is not just good for individuals, companies, and their customers—it's also important for society. Subjective well-being (SWB) is associated with more civic responsibility, local involvement, and volunteering (Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003).

However, the need to foster employee well-being is higher than ever in the aftermath of the COVID-19 global pandemic. In 2021, one survey of nearly 1,500 people from 46 countries reported that 89% of respondents are struggling with workplace well-being as a result of the pandemic and the changes to the way we work (Campbell & Gavett, 2021). It is essential to continue to explore how we can maximize employee well-being for everyone.

Throughout my career, I have worked at companies that both embrace flexibility in order to prioritize the well-being of employees and companies that are more focused on profits and external clients than employees. In both instances, I noticed some individuals prioritize their well-being while others seem to accept a lower level of well-being for themselves. Seeing situations such as these makes me wonder about those individuals that are able to prioritize their

well-being despite their environment and those that rarely prioritize their well-being even in a supportive environment. Why is there an unequal level of participation in well-being programs or a tendency to prioritize well-being within the same organizations and even within the same teams?

SWB, according to Magyar and Keyes (2019), is the combination of emotional well-being and positive functioning. “Those who are high in subjective well-being report both feeling good and functioning well” (p. 399). This is the definition of well-being that is used throughout this research.

Equity theory suggests that employees try to maintain a balance between the inputs they bring to a job and the outcomes that they receive from the job compared to the *perceived* inputs and outcomes of others (Adams, 1963). Using this definition, this study uses equity theory to explore how individuals who prioritize well-being affect those around them. Does prioritizing well-being encourage teammates to do the same? Or does it impact the balance of equality between teammates and negatively impact those around them? In other words, what is the trickle-out effect of prioritizing well-being in the modern corporate environment?

The United States has many sources of information for individuals to practice self-care, from corporations sponsoring meditation apps to reimbursing employees for gym memberships. However, without knowing how one person’s prioritization of their own well-being affects those around them, we cannot view the whole picture of well-being. We need to understand how to prioritize well-being in groups to benefit organizations and society as a whole, and this study provides one piece of information to inform that view.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the intersection of equity theory and well-being for US employees in modern corporate organizations. Two potential outcomes are

reflected in the overarching research question: When one employee prioritizes their well-being, how does it affect their work teammates' well-being?

1. Does one employee prioritizing their well-being encourage teammates to do the same?
2. Does one employee prioritizing well-being make their teammates feel under-benefitted?

Organization of the Study

Chapter One discussed the importance of studying well-being in a group setting by considering equity theory. Chapter two reviews literature related to well-being, equity theory, and their intersection. Chapter three provides the research method and design. Chapter four presents the results of the research. Chapter Five discusses the results and their implications for practice and future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to understand the intersection of equity theory and well-being for US employees in modern corporate organizations. While both equity theory and well-being are well-researched, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the original studies on each topic separately. Then, this chapter explores why linking equity theory and well-being is important, followed by an outline of the few studies that have already linked the two to understand where there is room for additional research.

Subjective Well-Being

The study of well-being began largely in response to an over-emphasis on negative states within the field of psychology when Wilson and other subjective well-being researchers began to desire to understand happiness (Diener et al., 1999). In the early days of the field, Wilson (1967) reviewed the available research and concluded that a happy person is young, religious, married, and well-educated, among other traits such as having high self-esteem. Since then, the definition of well-being has grown beyond the description of such specific traits. The field has grown, and well-being is regarded as more complex than just the absence of malfunction (Keyes, 1998). More recently, studies connecting higher employee well-being with higher employee productivity and, ultimately, higher company profits have expanded interest in well-being from the academic world into the corporate world (Rath, 2011).

The main term used widely today is SWB, and while the terminology is consistent, the definitions vary. Diener et al. (1999) defines SWB as a "broad category of phenomena that includes peoples' emotional response, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction" (p. 277).

Warr (2007) claimed that to focus on SWB is to focus solely on hedonistic happiness—the presence of more positive feelings compared to negative ones. He asserts that an additional layer of self-validation, or the desire for a meaningful life that may or may not be pleasurable, must be included in measures of happiness. While Warr's point is valid and useful for consideration when looking at happiness, the focus of this study remains on SWB as it pertains to the working world since working is a key source of self-esteem, prestige, and recognition (Buunk & Ybema, 1997).

In 2019, Magyar and Keyes published a book titled *Positive Psychological Assessment*, which both defines and outlines how to measure SWB. After taking a holistic view and comparing features of different definitions of well-being, they claim SWB includes a combination of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. Furthermore, they report that those who are high in SWB both report feeling positive and functioning well within society (Magyar & Keyes, 2019).

This study anchors on the above three-part definition of SWB and relies on the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHCSF) for adults that explicitly highlights each of these three parts (Keyes, 2005). This 14-question survey developed by Keyes asks three questions that tap into emotional well-being, five on social well-being, and six on psychological well-being.

History of Equity Theory

Although the discussion around equity in society began as far back as the 4th century B.C. by Aristotle, few social psychologists took an interest in bringing a perspective on equity theory into their work in the industrial age (Adams, 1965; Aristotle & Rackham, 1934). That changed in 1949 when social psychologists published their studies on soldiers after World War II in *American Soldier* (Adams, 1965; Stouffer et al., 1949). The book introduced a paradox—more highly educated soldiers were less happy with their military careers than those who were less

educated. The variation in happiness was due to unmet expectations around their military status– with more highly educated soldiers having higher expectations for their military careers than those who were less educated (Adams, 1965).

Social Comparison

Around the same time, Festinger (1954) published his theory of social comparison processes. While his theory was not focused on the workplace, it is critical to understand the evolution that Adams (1965) took to develop his theory of inequity. Social comparison theory states people evaluate their own capabilities in relation to others as a way to maintain a more accurate understanding of themselves (Festinger, 1954). These social comparisons ultimately have an impact on well-being, but the amount of impact depends on the proximity of the social comparisons (Bárcena-Martín et al., 2017).

As individuals use social comparisons to find their own place in society, their comparisons can be used in a variety of directions. Upward comparisons are comparing the self against someone whom one perceives as better off. Equal comparisons are comparisons against those one perceives as relatively equal to themselves. And downward comparisons are against those whom one perceives as worse off.

Typically, people feel better after a downward comparison and worse after an upward comparison (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). And people feel the need to compare themselves to others the most when they feel uncertain about their own feelings, attitudes, and responses (Buunk & Ybema, 1997).

Some research suggests that individuals strive to emulate their upward comparisons and contrast themselves against their downward comparisons to perceive themselves as better off than others on dimensions they personally value (Buunk & Ybema, 1997). When individuals

explain how they are doing, they use a downward contrast to say, “better than them,” but when asked about whom they strive to identify with, they prefer an upward comparison.

The baseline knowledge that individuals use directional comparisons to place themselves, their skills, their abilities, and their attitudes more accurately within society are critical to analyzing why individuals compare their well-being against others in their workplace–it is a core process humans invoke to navigate life.

Relative Deprivation, Distributive Justice, and Cognitive Dissonance

In 1956, an experiment to explore this paradox of unmet expectations, also called relative deprivation, confirmed that morale is, in fact, linked to expectations. When an individual does not meet a goal, their morale is higher if their expectation of meeting that goal is low, compared to if their expectation of meeting the goal is high (Spector, 1956). In other words, if the perceived probability of meeting the goal was high and the goal was missed, then morale is lower compared to when the perceived probability was low. That individual might then hold a sense of injustice.

Homans (1974) expanded the connection between unmet expectations, morale, and social comparisons to include a second party. Distributive justice theory states that among people who are in an exchange relationship with each other, each person obtains distributive justice, or a sense of fairness when each of their profits is proportional to each of their investments.

Around the same time, Festinger (1957) published his theory of cognitive dissonance, which claims that dissonance, or tension, occurs within an individual when their behavior does not match up with their values or belief system. Though this theory lacks a comparison factor, it shows that there are consequences and actions taken when an individual experiences inequity.

Equity Theory Defined

Adams created a theory of inequity that builds off both Spector's relative deprivation theory and Homan's distributive justice theories, while also incorporating the consequences that come from Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory (Adams, 1965). Equity theory says that inequity takes place for an individual whenever the ratio of their perceived inputs and outcomes is unequal to the ratio of Others' perceived inputs and outcomes.

This could happen when the individual and Other are in a direct exchange relationship, such as an employee and employer, or could happen when both the individual and the Other are in an exchange relationship with a third party, such as an employee and a co-worker working for the same employer. So, the Other in this theory could be either an individual or could be an organization. Most of Adam's discussion of this theory focuses on the employee-employer or employee-coworker relationships in the industrial and business worlds (Adams, 1965).

Inputs are the participant's contributions to an exchange. In a typical employee-employer relationship, the employee's inputs might include their time, their skills, their education, or their energy, but could also include dimensions such as effort and merit or loyalty through tenure. Inputs can also be negative such as absenteeism, dishonesty, or inability to do a job (Adams, 1965; Walster et al., 1978).

Conversely, outcomes are both the positive and negative consequences that the employee perceives they receive for the job. Outcomes do not just include salary and benefits but encompass all perceived rewards or consequences of a job, such as social status, power, access to a community, identity, or a sense of certainty and stability. Outcomes with negative valence could include monotony, poor working conditions, or uncertainty (Adams, 1965; Walster et al., 1978).

The following formula visually represents Adam's (1965) theory of inequity using mathematical terms:

$$\frac{\sum \text{Perceived Outcomes of Person}}{\sum \text{Perceived Inputs of Person}} \neq \frac{\sum \text{Perceived Outcomes of Other}}{\sum \text{Perceived Inputs of Other}}$$

The summation symbol (∑) indicates the sum of the descriptions that follow. The mathematical formula indicates that when the ratio of the sum of all outcomes for Person and the sum of all inputs for Person is not equal to the ratio of the sum of all perceived outcomes for Other and the sum of all perceived inputs for Other, then inequity exists for Person.

According to the formula above, equity exists when Person's and Other's perceived inputs and outcomes are the same. For example, this would be the case when Other's perceived salary, role, and work environments are the same as Person's and there are similarities in their skill, seniority, education levels, etc.

However, equity can also exist if Person perceives Other's outcomes are higher (or lower) and Other's inputs are higher (or lower) in direct relation to maintaining equal rations. This might be the case if Other is a supervisor to Person. Person may perceive that Other has a higher salary, social status, and more power but it is in direct comparison to more skill, tenure, education, and/or poorer working conditions. Even though the inputs and outcomes between Person and Other do not match in this scenario, the ratio of perceived inputs and outcomes could still be equal, thus creating equity (Adams, 1965).

It is important to note here that both inputs and outcomes for both the employee and the other are based on the perceptions of the employee and no one else. Therefore, it is possible that an individual may feel under-benefitted because of the great value they put on their perceived inputs. But at the same time, their employer may have an alternate set of values that only place

minimal importance on the inputs they are receiving from the employee, and thus, they offer minimal rewards.

Since we know each individual has a unique view of their reality, it is easy to find oneself in an inequitable relationship. As Adams (1965) stated, “whenever two individuals exchange anything, there is the possibility that one or both of them will feel that the exchange was inequitable” (p. 276). The next section explores what happens when an individual is in an inequitable relationship, relative to well-being.

Equity Impacting Well-Being

Equity theory asserts that when individuals find themselves in an inequitable situation, they will feel distressed in proportion to the level of inequity felt (Adams, 1965; Walster et al., 1978). It seems common knowledge that employees would feel distressed if they were under-benefitting from a situation, such as being underpaid for their work. However, varying theories exist on the effects of over-benefitting from a work exchange, which the below section explores in more detail.

Fairness Hypothesis

One hypothesis regarding the effects of under-benefitting from a work exchange is the fairness hypothesis. The fairness hypothesis claims that individuals feel best when they are in fair situations. In the context of equity theory, the fairness hypothesis claims both under-benefitted and over-benefitted reciprocity situations have worse effects compared to a relationship with perceived balanced reciprocity (Moliner et al., 2013). Individuals feel the best when they perceive that their inputs and outcomes are equal to the inputs and outcomes of others.

One experiment conducted by Austin and Walster (1974) sought to understand the various reactions to being under-rewarded, equitably rewarded, and over-rewarded. They hired University of Wisconsin-Madison students to find spelling errors in a short paper. It was typical

on the campus at that time to be paid two dollars to participate in social experiments. They set the stage of the study with students in pairs and told them that a third party would decide how to split the four-dollar budget between them. After each student finished proofreading, they were each told that they found 94% of errors and were then paid either one dollar, two dollars, or three dollars and told the other student was paid the remainder. Before and after the students were paid, galvanic skin measurements of the students were taken to measure their levels of distress.

The results concluded that participants who were equitably compensated felt the most content, and participants who were both under and over-rewarded felt less satisfied (Austin & Walster, 1974). Without using the specific terminology, their lab experiment added support to the fairness hypothesis.

Self-Interest Hypothesis

The self-interest hypothesis claims that individuals will seek to maximize their personal gains while minimizing their costs in social interactions (Zey, 1992). In terms of equity theory, the self-interest hypothesis asserts that employees would seek to be in an over-benefitted situation with their employer and fellow employees to maximize their own outcomes.

Moliner et al. (2013) sought to better understand if the fairness hypothesis or the self-interest hypothesis prevailed with non-professional workers compared to their supervisors in Spain. Instead of SWB, the study used a combination of burnout and engagement to understand well-being. The findings indicated that burnout was low and engagement was high when non-professional workers perceived that they were receiving more than they deserved. This conclusion warned against the blanket adoption of the fairness hypothesis when it comes to equity theory. While this group of non-professional employees in Spain is outside of the scope of this study, it remains relevant to understanding opportunities for further exploration into the effects of equity theory on well-being.

The Shape of the Relationship Between Inequity and Well-Being

Both the fairness and self-interest hypothesis make claims based on the position (i.e., under or over-benefitted) of the individuals in the non-reciprocal relationships. However, there is reason to explore the relationship between being over-benefitted and practicing well-being in more depth. The findings from the study of Spanish non-professional workers imply that the relationship between inequity and well-being is actually linear—ranging from under-benefitted with the lowest well-being to over-benefitted with the highest well-being (Moliner et al., 2013). However, those findings are not consistent with a different audience.

Taris et al.'s (2002) study of Finnish workers sought to reveal the shape of the connection between equity theory and negative mental health effects such as cynicism and emotional exhaustion. This study again used the presence of negative feelings instead of SWB. The study found that the relationship between inequity and well-being is J-shaped rather than U-shaped—meaning that being under-benefitted has larger detriments to well-being compared to being over-benefitted. In other words, the threshold for an employee who is receiving more benefits at work to have a negative impact on well-being is much higher than if the employee were receiving too little. The Finnish workers studied were, in general, able to deal with the guilt of being over-benefited—if they had any guilt at all.

Audience

The recent literature linking equity theory and well-being in the modern workplace has focused on audiences in western and northern European countries (Bárcena-Martín et al., 2017; Moliner et al., 2013; Skakon et al., 2010; Taris et al., 2002). The cultures in these European countries and the United States are different—especially regarding work culture. One piece of evidence indicating the variation in work cultures is the length of the typical work week. Typical American workweeks are longer than many European countries, indicating a lower cultural value

placed on well-being (Hamermesh & Stancanelli, 2015). Due to these cultural differences, there is a need to apply many of the same questions linking inequity and well-being to a United States-based professional audience for further research.

Trickle-Out Effect of Well-Being

The literature explores the effects of over-benefitting on an individual's well-being, but it does not study the effects that over-benefitting has on those around them. People look to others who are proximate in their lives and situations to evaluate their own capabilities within their organization (Bárcena-Martín et al., 2017; Festinger, 1954). And although Adam's (1965) theory of inequity is based on the *perceptions* of inputs and outcomes of others, if one individual is over-benefitting at work it could negatively impact the level of equity felt by those around them.

For example, if Person A is over-benefitting at work (i.e., using benefits associated with well-being like gym membership, taking extra time off, etc.), and Person B uses Person A as a comparison point, it is possible that Person B will now view their own outcomes from work are unsatisfactory and could feel under-benefitted, thus impacting their well-being negatively. At what point would Person B feel under-benefitting, if at all, from Person A's ability to prioritize their well-being at work?

The trickle-out effect of well-being is the consideration that prioritizing well-being could actually negatively impact close work colleagues after a certain threshold. Put in the language of equity theory, this study examines if an individual creates an over-benefitting situation at work by prioritizing their well-being, will those around them feel more under-benefitted and have a negative impact on the others' well-being?

Summary

As the nature of work in the modern U.S. workplace continues to develop, there will be continued interest in the effects of inequity on well-being. The literature demonstrates that non-

reciprocal relationships result in lower levels of well-being, though there is debate regarding the thresholds of over-benefitting negatively impacting well-being. This study expands on the few pieces of literature that have explored the shape of the relationship between inequity and well-being by examining the effects of an over-benefitting relationship on the broader system, specifically within corporate work teams.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study was to understand the intersection of equity theory and well-being for US employees in modern corporate organizations. More specifically, this study aims to use equity theory to explore how one employee's prioritization of well-being impacts those around them. The overarching research question was: When one employee prioritizes their well-being, how does it affect their work teammates' well-being? Subquestions examined:

1. Does one employee prioritizing their well-being encourage teammates to do the same?
2. Does one employee prioritizing well-being make their teammates feel under-benefitted?

This chapter supports this research purpose by outlining the research methodologies, which include: the research design, sampling methodology, data measurement, and process for analyzing the data.

Research Design

The foundation of this research design was crafted based on a review of existing literature for measuring and understanding equity theory, SWB, and the ways the two intersect. It consisted of three phases. The first phase was to widely share a survey in order to find research participants. The second phase was to interview six of the survey respondents and two of each of their co-workers. The third phase was to measure the well-being of the respondents' co-workers.

The purpose of the first phase was to recruit individuals and ultimately find a sample of people who are employed full-time in the US in the corporate environment and are willing to participate in an interview and recommend their co-workers. The survey consisted of seven questions about the responder's basic information, current employment, and an assessment of their current well-being (Appendix A). The well-being assessment is the MHCSF for adults by

Magyar and Keyes (2019), which measures SWB over the prior 2-week time period. This survey also asked respondents if they are willing to participate in additional research. The survey was built in Qualtrics and was administered online. The intent of this survey was to source individuals who have high well-being and are currently employed in the corporate environment in the US. Additional demographic questions were included in the survey in order to help in selecting a diverse set of individuals to interview.

The second phase aimed to understand how the prioritization of those individuals' well-being affects their teammates and colleagues at work. This phase probed into equity at work by asking about inputs and outcomes (Adams, 1963, 1965). This phase was completed by first interviewing the survey respondents to better understand how they prioritize their well-being and how they see it affecting their colleagues. These interviews were semi-structured with a few consistent questions (Appendix B) and built-in flexibility to ask further probing or clarifying questions as needed. Some of the questions specifically intending to measure equity across colleagues were crafted by Taris et al. (2002) in their study of inequity at work. The open-ended questions were intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants on their prioritization of well-being and view of their current equity at work (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These interviews ended with them being asked for contact with at least two of the respondents' work teammates.

Next, two of their colleagues/teammates at work were interviewed using a similar interview protocol (Appendix C). These interviews were also semi-structured with a few consistent questions with the flexibility to ask further probing or clarifying questions as needed.

At the end of the interview, the participant was provided with a final survey (Appendix D). The survey consisted of the Short Form Mental Health Continuum for adults to rate their

SWB and compare it against the respondent's SWB (Magyar & Keyes, 2019; Taris et al., 2002). This survey was also sent using Qualtrics.

Both quantitative and qualitative research from the surveys and interviews were gathered. The quantitative data was used to evaluate levels of well-being in phase one and phase three. The qualitative data gathered was used for a more in-depth analysis of the thoughts, stories, reflections, and behaviors of those who participated in the interviews regarding their well-being and how they view their colleagues.

Sampling Methodology

Adults who are employed full-time in the US in a corporate environment were sought to participate in the interviews. The survey portion of the research was shared on LinkedIn (Appendix E) as widely as possible to find participants willing to participate in the interviews of the second phase. In addition to sharing the survey with a LinkedIn network of about 1,100 people, the survey was also shared across seven close friends' networks to increase visibility. The goal was to find five to eight individuals who have highly rated SWB, intentionally prioritize their well-being, are willing to participate in an interview, and have two teammates who are also willing to participate in an interview and complete a survey. The intent was that these individuals' genders, industries, ages, races/ethnicity, and locations would vary to increase the diversity of perspectives. These dimensions were included in the survey in order to seek diversity when selecting participants.

The first phase aimed to recruit individuals to the study and hoped to have as many respondents as possible. The second phase of interviewing had a target sample population of 15 to 24 individuals, which broke down to five to eight pairs of teammates that work with someone who prioritizes their well-being.

Data Measurement

As mentioned supra, the survey portions of the study utilized questions created by Taris et al. (2002) to measure inequity at work and used the MHCSF created by Keyes to measure SWB.

The four questions regarding equity at work were answered on a Likert scale from one to five. Those numbers were used to compare against fellow participants to understand the levels of perceived equity. Interview questions were the chosen format instead of a survey (as they were used originally) to use the opportunity to ask additional follow-up, probing questions. These four questions were created by Taris et al. (2002). One question measures the workers' investment in their work. The following three questions together measured the workers' outcomes from work. The same four questions were then asked about the interviewees' colleagues. Taris et al. (2002) reported the reliability of the three-item scale to be 0.68 (workers) and 0.71 (colleagues).

The MHCSF was used to measure participants' SWB. The MHCSF is a "useful, brief self-report questionnaire for assessment of positive mental health" (Lamers et al., 2011, p. 109). The MHCSF contains clusters and dimensions (Appendix F) that were used to sort and group the various types of well-being contained in SWB (Keyes, 2005; Magyar & Keyes 2019). The answers on the well-being portion of the survey were asked with a frequency, which was assigned to numbers from zero to five to quantify and compare the levels of well-being felt between participants. This scale contains 14 items–three that tap into emotional well-being, five that measure social well-being, and six that measure psychological well-being. The internal reliability of the overall 14-item scale is .74 (Magyar & Keyes, 2019).

The interviews were conducted over Zoom and transcribed using Otter.ai. Using the transcripts, key takeaways were identified from each interview. Interviews were conducted in phases so that most initial respondents and their co-workers were interviewed within the same

two-week period in order to better capture a direct comparison of their perceptions of equity and levels of well-being at one point in time.

Data Analysis Procedures

The basic information collected in phase one was used to select a diverse set of participants to study further. Diversity was assessed by gender, age, race/ethnicity, location, and industry.

The inputs and outcomes asked about in the interview were used to create a ratio of interpersonal equity to use as a comparison point between initial participants and their co-workers (Taris et al., 2002). Per Taris et al. (2002), this ratio was computed as:

$$\frac{\text{initial respondent's inputs}}{\text{average of initial respondent's outcomes}} - \frac{\text{perceived colleagues' inputs}}{\text{average of perceived colleagues' outcomes}}$$

A positive number here indicates that the participant's colleagues are benefitting from work more favorably than the participant; the negative number indicates that the participant is better off than their co-workers. A zero score indicates a balance between inputs and outcomes between the participant and others (Taris et al., 2002).

The numbers assigned to the MHCSF frequencies were totaled for each participant to compare levels of well-being between respondents (Iasiello et al., 2022).

Otter.ai transcribed the Zoom interviews. Then, the transcripts were used to code language and seek themes across the data using inductive reasoning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). During the data analysis phase, open codes were created, and Tesch's (1990) eight steps were blended with the coding process described by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Through the coding of the information, patterns, and themes were found across participants that are over-benefitting, under-benefitting, and feeling equity.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology consisting of the research design, the sampling methodology, data measurements, the data analysis procedures, and limitations of the research approach. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the data collected.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to understand the intersection of equity theory and well-being for US employees in modern corporate organizations. More specifically, this study aims to use equity theory to explore how one employee's prioritization of well-being impacts those around them. The overarching research question was: When one employee prioritizes their well-being, how does it affect their work teammates' well-being? Subquestions examined:

1. Does one employee prioritizing their well-being encourage teammates to do the same?
2. Does one employee prioritizing well-being make their teammates feel under-benefitted?

This chapter reports on the results of the study and provides an overview of the findings and themes generated from the study. The chapter begins with an analysis of the participants, then explores the impact of one person prioritizing well-being on the well-being of their teammates with consideration for equity theory.

Quantitative Data

Interpersonal Equity Ratio Results

A key component of the survey and interview data are the interpersonal ratios of inequity for each participant (n = 20). Following Taris et al. (2002), this ratio was computed as:

$$\frac{\text{initial respondent's inputs}}{\text{average of initial respondent's outcomes}} - \frac{\text{perceived colleagues' inputs}}{\text{average of perceived colleagues' outcomes}}$$

A positive number here indicates that the participant's colleagues are benefitting from work more favorably than the participant (i.e., under-benefitting); the negative number indicates that the participant is better off than their co-workers (i.e., over-benefitting). A zero score indicates a balance between inputs and outcomes between the participant and others (i.e., equal).

Table 1 indicates the frequency of interview participants that indicated over-benefitting, under-benefitting, or equal interpersonal equity ratios. The majority of participants indicated they were over-benefitting from work according to the interpersonal equity ratio. Results are organized into:

- Overall: results for the participant group overall
- A Contacts: results for individuals who highly prioritized their well-being at work
- Others: results for participants not designated as A Contacts

Table 1

Interpersonal Equity Ratio Frequency

	Overall (*N* = 20)		A Contacts (*N* = 6)		Others (*N* =14)	
Interpersonal Equity Measure	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Over-benefitting	11	55%	2	33.3%	9	64.3%
Under-benefitting	7	35%	2	33.3%	5	35.7%
Equal	2	10%	2	33.3%		

Recruiting was focused on individuals who prioritized their well-being at work, so we might have expected A Contacts to be in equal or over-benefitting work situations. However, that is not the case. Instead, A Contacts were evenly distributed between over-benefitting (*n* = 2), under-benefitting (*n* = 2), and equal (*n* = 2) interpersonal equity ratios. Alternatively, the Others population have a majority reporting over-benefitting (*n* = 9) and far fewer reporting under-benefitting (*n* = 5), with no participants reporting equal interpersonal equity ratios.

Mental Health Continuum Short Form Results

Each participant (whether A Contact or Other) was asked to complete the MHCSF to assess their level of SWB. The MHCSF SWB scores are identified as “well-being scores” throughout this research. The highest possible score on the MHCSF is 70, which indicates that the participant answered “every day” for all 14 questions (Keyes, 2005; Magyar & Keyes 2019).

Two participants received a score of 69, which was the highest score across all 20 participants. One participant received a score of 39, the lowest score among all participants. The score range across participants was 30. Table 2 presents the scores for the participant group overall, the A Contacts group, and the Others group.

Table 2

Distribution of Well-Being Scores

	Overall (N = 20)		A Contacts (N = 6)		Others (N =14)	
Well-Being Score Ranges	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
31-40	1	5%			1	7.1%
41-50	5	25%	2	33.3%	3	21.4%
51-60	10	50%	4	66.7%	6	42.9%
61-70	4	20%			4	28.6%

A Contacts were expected to report high SWB scores because they were sourced specifically for their ability to prioritize their well-being at work. While the highest portions of both A Contacts and Others fall in the 51-60 range on the MHCSF, the Others have a higher range (30 points) compared to the A Contacts (9 points), meaning their well-being scores are more spread out. Surprisingly, the two highest-rated individuals of well-being scores came from the Other group (n = 2). The mean well-being score for A Contacts is 51.2 (SD = 3.8), and the mean SWB score for Others is 54.6 (SD = 9.7), indicating that the Other well-being score was typically higher but also had higher variation.

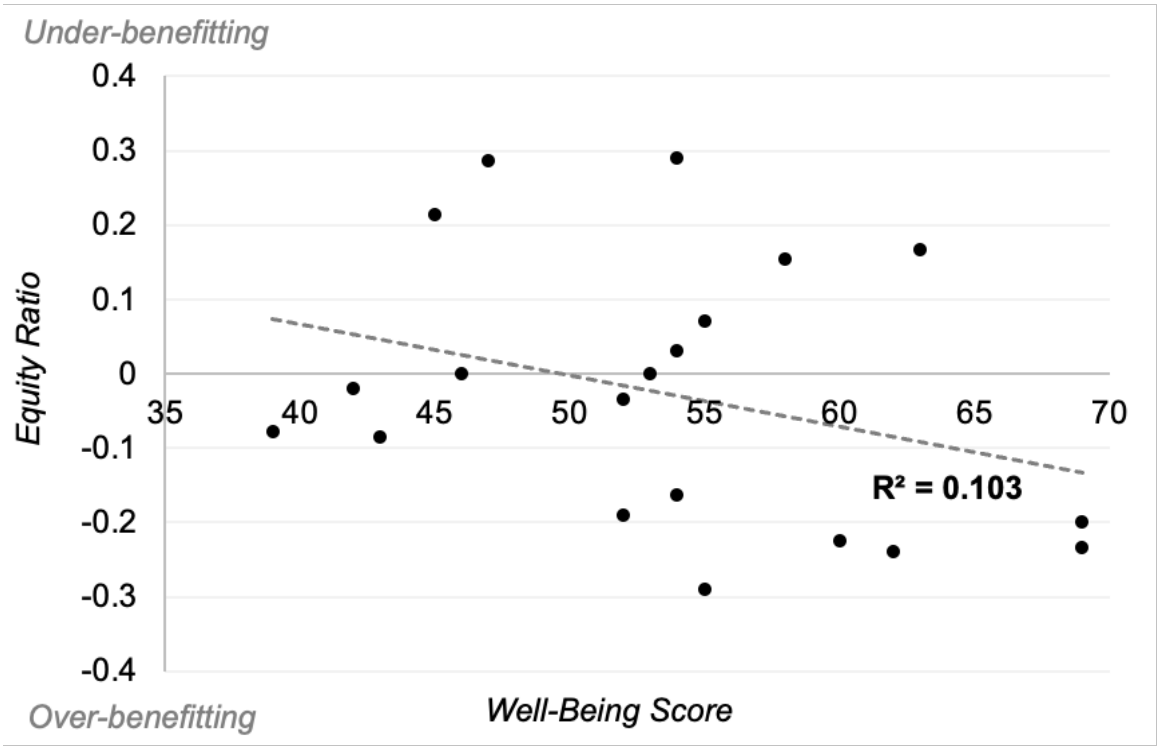
Relationship between Equity Ratios and Well-Being Scores

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between interpersonal equity ratios, displayed on the y axis, and well-being scores, displayed on the x axis, amongst all research participants (n = 20). The dotted line indicates the correlation between the interpersonal equity ratio and the well-being

scores, which is -0.32. Correlation describes the relationship between two variables and how they vary together (Punch, 2014).

Figure 1

Relationship between Equity Ratios and Well-Being Scores



The correlation coefficient of -0.32 states that as the well-being score increases by one unit, the equity ratio will decrease by 0.32 units. Since a negative interpersonal equity ratio indicates over-benefitting, a decreasing in the interpersonal equity ratio indicates an increase of benefitting, moving in the direction of over-benefitting. In other words, as well-being increases, the feeling of benefitting will increase slightly.

The square of the correlation coefficient, denoted as R^2 or R squared, is a numerical estimate of the proportion of the variance in one variable which accounted for by the other (Punch, 2014). The R squared of .103 shown in Figure 2 indicates that the well-being score explains 10.3% of the movement in the equity ratio. The reverse would also be true that the

equity ratio would explain, or hold in common with, 10.3% of the movement in the well-being score.

With only 10.3% of well-being score and equity ratio accounting for the other, we cannot conclude any significant findings in their relationships according to the numbers alone. In addition, the small population size (n = 20) is a hindrance in coming to any large conclusions as they relate to the equity ratio and well-being scores.

Prioritizing Well-Being Rating

The final piece of quantitative data that was collected and analyzed is the rating of prioritizing well-being. Research participants were asked, "On a scale of one to five (1 = very little and 5 = very often), how much do you feel you prioritize your well-being at work?" Table 3 reports the results for the group overall, for A Contacts, and for Others. Overall, 35% (n = 7) stated they prioritize their well-being at work very often, 55% (n = 11) stated they prioritize their well-being at work often, 5% (n = 1) stated they prioritize their well-being at work sometimes, and 5% (n = 1) stated they prioritize their well-being at work little. No participants reported prioritizing their well-being at work very little.

Table 3

Prioritizing Well-Being Ratings

Prioritizing Well-Being	Overall (N = 20)		A Contacts (N = 6)		Others (N =14)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
1 (Very Little)	0	0%				
2 (Little)	1	5%			1	7.1%
3 (Sometimes)	1	5%			1	7.1%
4 (Often)	11	55%	4	66.7%	7	50.0%
5 (Very Often)	7	35%	2	33.3%	5	35.7%

The intention was to identify individuals that answered five on this question and also indicated high levels of well-being to participate in the A Contact population of the study. However, due to a limited amount of time and availability of research participants, A Contacts were accepted if they indicated a prioritizing well-being score of either four or five, and their well-being score was not taken into consideration.

Ninety percent of participants rated their prioritizing of well-being at work as either "often" at a four, or "very often" at a five (n = 18) with only 10% rating their prioritizing of well-being at work as a three meaning "sometimes," or two meaning "little" (n = 2). Since most individuals that participated in the research, regardless of their classification as A Contact or Other, rated their prioritization of well-being as often or very often, the study of differentiating and comparing these two groups is less useful.

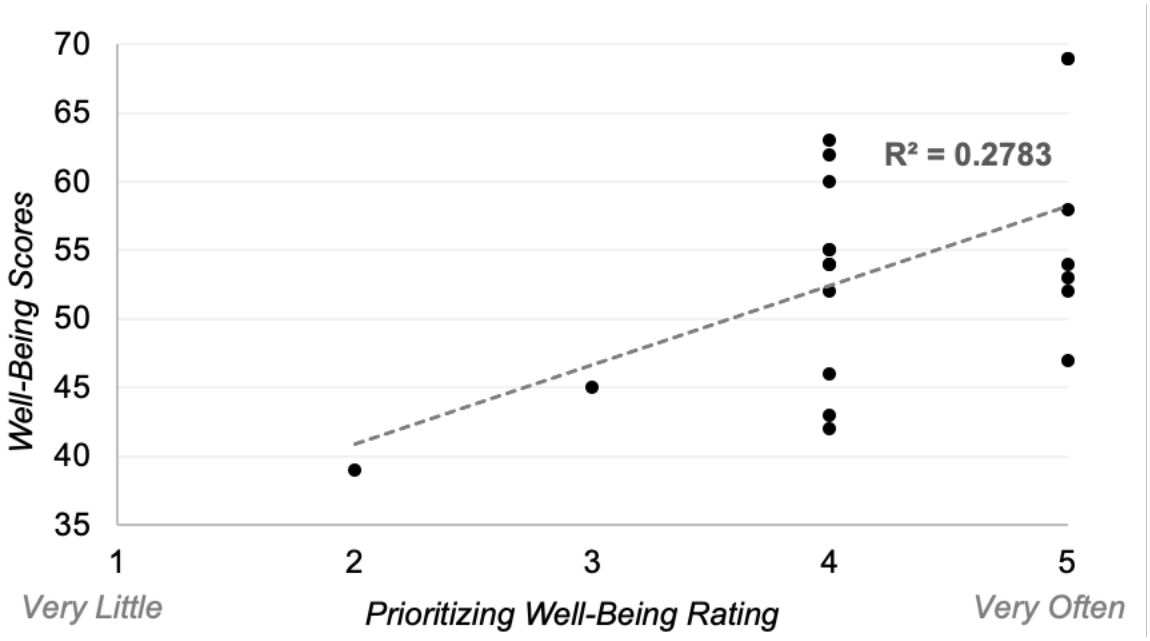
One caveat is that one research participant verbally cited their prioritization of well-being at work as a two during the interview but then selected four in the post-interview survey to the same question. Since the participant also emphasized how little they prioritized their well-being at work during the interview, the verbal response of two was used throughout this study instead of the higher survey response.

Relationship between Well-Being Prioritization and Scores

Figure 2 shows the relationship between prioritizing well-being at work rating, displayed on the x axis, and well-being scores, displayed on the y axis, amongst all research participants (n = 20). The dotted line indicates the correlation between the rating of prioritizing well-being and well-being scores, which is 0.53.

Figure 2

Relationship between Prioritizing Well-Being Ratings and Well-Being Scores



The correlation coefficient of .53 states that as the rating for how much a participant prioritizes well-being at work increases by one unit, their well-being score will increase by 0.53 units. In other words, as a participant increases their effort in prioritizing well-being at work, their overall well-being will increase slightly.

The R squared of 0.278 shown in Figure 3 indicates that the prioritizing well-being rating explains 27.8% of the movement in the well-being score. The reverse is also true; the well-being score explains 27.8% of the prioritizing well-being at work rating.

While the small sample size (n = 20) hinders our conclusions about the relationship between prioritizing well-being at work and the well-being score, the solid R squared rating indicates that the amount someone prioritizes their well-being at work does influence their overall well-being scores, among other factors.

Overall Findings

When reviewing the relationships of quantitative data available between the A Contacts and the Others, there is little indication that the group varies in either the equity ratios, their well-being scores, nor their frequency of prioritizing their well-being at work. And since there is no statistical significance shown in this study for the relationship between equity ratios and well-being scores, the quantitative data does not answer the research question of how prioritizing well-being at work impacts the well-being of those around them.

It is possible that the A Contact participants selected co-workers that were similar to them in their levels of prioritizing well-being at work to participate in the study. Another possibility is that A Contacts are able to prioritize their well-being and have high well-being scores because their whole team has built a culture of prioritizing their well-being.

A Contacts were intended to be those that prioritized their well-being and rated highly in well-being scores. Since we have a population that qualifies for those criteria in both the A Contacts and the Others group, the population of research participants will be split up differently. Instead of using A Contacts and Others as the differentiator, the remainder of this chapter will instead differentiate participants from those that prioritize their well-being at work often or very often (n = 18) or those that do not (n = 2) based on the results outlined in Table 3.

The remainder of Chapter 4 is dedicated to analyzing the qualitative data collected through interviews with each participant.

Qualitative Data

The research question of this study asks how one employee prioritizing their well-being affects their work teammates' well-being. This was addressed by the two below questions during the interviews:

- How do you think your prioritization of well-being at work affects your closest work colleagues?
- How does it affect you when your colleagues prioritize their well-being? How do you feel? What actions do you take?

Prioritizing Well-Being Impacting Colleagues

Table 4 represents the overarching themes that emerged across all participants when asking individuals how their prioritization of well-being impacts their closest work colleagues. Comments about the impacts on colleagues ranged from positive influences, no impact, and two responses that did not directly answer the question.

Table 4

Prioritizing Well-Being Impacted Colleagues Themes

Theme	Sample Comment	*n*	%
Positively Influences Others	"A reminder of like, yeah, we can still work and do fun things, too. So um, I feel like that is helpful."	16	80%
	"You know, it's positive generally. I'm trying to create that culture and [it is] starting to trickle in."		
	"My hope is positively you know. I hope it's like a rising tides, you know, scenario."		
	"I would say hopefully positively because I'm not a hangry mess or like exhausted."		
	"It has a positive impact."		
	"I think it has a good impact."		
No Impact	"I don't think it does at all. No. I don't think so. Because we don't really ever talk about well-being."	2	10%
	"It doesn't really impact [my teammates] because I'm an individual contributor. I don't really think it impacts my leadership either."		
Did Not Answer Question	"You know, if I'm putting in a little bit of effort it might help them finish something or, you know, get to the finish line a little sooner or more efficiently. Yeah, basically, I'm hoping it makes their lives a little easier."	2	10%
	"Hmm. That is a very interesting question. Oh man, I wish I knew exactly what they're thinking. Um, I would say I really have to think about this one. I think, again, for the most part, if I had to guess, we're pretty aligned. So like, we all want to just get it done. Like, we all recognize what it is that we need to do."		

N = 20

The majority of interview participants (n = 16) felt that prioritizing their well-being at work had an overall positive impact on their closest work colleagues. Many participants used words such as “positive,” “helpful,” or “good” to describe the impact on their colleagues. The themes across the explanation of those positive themes will be broken out further in the next section.

Two participants (10%) stated their prioritization of well-being at work had no impact on their closest work colleagues. One participant said, “we don’t really ever talk about well-being” as a reason for no impact, and the other said, “because I’m an individual contributor.”

The remaining participants (n = 2) did not give direct answers to the questions. One participant described how her prioritization of getting work done, or her lack of prioritizing her well-being, helped her colleagues. The other participant stated that their team is aligned in getting work done. Interestingly, the two participants that spoke more about getting work done, instead of prioritizing well-being, are colleagues themselves, so it’s possible that their definition of well-being includes a facet of getting work done.

Table 5 identifies themes within the positive responses (n = 16) to the question of how prioritizing well-being at work impacts colleagues. Some participants mentioned multiple themes in their responses; therefore, the frequencies, if summed, exceed the number of interview participants.

Table 5

Prioritizing Well-Being Impacted Colleagues: Positive Themes

Theme	Sample Comment	*n*	%
Better Me is Better for Everyone	"I think I'm probably a lot more productive and a lot easier to be around because I probably say yes to a lot more things."	9	45%
	"Because I'm not a hangry mess or like, exhausted. Like when I'm rested and I'm doing well I feel like I work better with people and I'm more understanding and innovative."		
	"Absolutely. Because if I don't show up as my best self, then people notice."		
	"I think it's then how my attitude is towards working with them and how I approach them and how they ask them for things. If my well-being is not good, and I'm too stressed. I'm going to stress them out."		
	"If I am in a better headspace, if I have appropriately managed my own workload, and I can approach every conversation or ask if I'm saying yes to it, from a team member, leadership, whatever might be with a better headspace, or in a better place, it's probably fair to say it's gonna be more valuable."		
Promotes Prioritizing Well-Being	"I take time for my own well-being and try to promote that within my own team, and circles."	9	45%
	"Sharing about the things that I'm doing for myself and it's like, and then hearing back from my colleagues saying, 'Oh, that's a good idea.'"		
	"Like we're all very much encouraging each other of like, yeah, go do that thing."		
	"I think it certainly rubs off."		
	"Trying to create awesome teamwork and psychological safety and well-being on all the teams that I'm running."		
	"I think it probably motivates them, you're probably, you know, creates a reminder that hey, you can be a successful salesperson or a successful employee and also have successful relationships."		
Connection	"I think it's made us bond a lot more … And then that just you know, obviously brings us closer together."	2	10%
	"Let me take care of some things for you today. And I think that there's a very strong camaraderie amongst my colleagues."		

N = 20

Of the interview participants who answered positively to the question around their prioritization of well-being impacting their colleagues (*n* = 16), nine of them mentioned that bettering themselves was ultimately better for those around them. Participants generally stated that if they took care of themselves by prioritizing their well-being at work, then it would

ultimately make them better to be around and easier to work with, which would be better for everyone around them. Similar to the idea of securing your oxygen mask on an airplane before helping those around you, by taking care of themselves, they are ultimately helping those around them. Participants mentioned that they would be more likely to "say yes to things" if they prioritized their well-being.

Nine participants (45%) also mentioned actively trying to promote, or model, prioritizing their well-being to their colleagues. Participants used words such as "reminds them," "motivates them," "promotes," "sharing," and "encouraging" to describe how they are trying to create a culture of prioritizing well-being to those around them.

While less common than the themes above, 10% of participants (n = 2) mentioned increased connection through closeness or camaraderie, or a willingness to help each other. One participant mentioned that when their team shares more information about their lives outside of work, including how they are taking care of their well-being, it increases their authenticity, vulnerability, and thus brings them closer together. The other participant told a similar story, except focused on when one person has life stress increase, then the team will step in to decrease work stress for that individual, so there's more of a collective sense of prioritizing well-being as a team.

One participant reflected an outlier theme (Envy) in the interview data, indicated by the following comment:

> I am sure that there's a little bit of envy that goes with that too. I kind of wish the only thing that you had to worry about as the day ends was taking your dog out, cooking dinner for your wife, as opposed to the entire family or whatever, or going to a soccer game or you know all those things that you do when you have small children that I don't have to do anymore. So, there's, I'm sure, a little sense of envy, but you know, but certainly, coupled with a lot of admiration.

This participant, who had answered positively when describing how prioritizing their well-being impacts their colleagues, also mentioned a bit of envy alongside the positive impacts. The participant described themselves as an empty nester and explained that many of their colleagues are in a life stage where they have young children and prioritizing their well-being is just more difficult. The participant said their colleagues have vocalized a bit of envy, "coupled with a lot of admiration."

This participant's response is in the positive category because the participant did not mention the envy in a negative light; instead envy as a longing for a future circumstance they will likely find themselves in as they age (Parrott & Smith 1993). This mention of envy is still worth mentioning as it indicates a longing for something that they do not have. Since that exact individual was not available to participate in the study, we do not know if this statement is accurate or whether the participant's prioritization of well-being ultimately positively or negatively impacts the well-being of the others.

Colleagues Prioritizing Well-Being Impacting Participant

Table 6 represents the overarching themes that emerged when asking individuals how their colleagues prioritizing their well-being impacted them. Comments about the impacts on them ranged from positive, to dependent on a variety of situations, or had no impact.

Twelve participants (60%) positively described how their colleagues' prioritization of well-being affects them. Comments described feeling happy, loving to see others prioritizing their well-being, generally thinking it's good, and having a positive or encouraging impact on participants. The variations in these positive responses will be broken down further in the following section.

Table 6

Colleagues Prioritizing Well-Being Impact Themes

Theme	Comments	*n*	%
Positively Influences Self	"I love when people know the value of their work and aren't taken advantage of by the system. Yeah, I think it's awesome."	12	60%
	"I'm all for it. Go for it, do it. Go to gym, go to yoga. Go to the bar and shoot up your emails on your computer while you're watching a football game. Like go for it, you can do it. I'm all for it."		
	"It makes me feel good."		
	"It's great, I'm just like, get on the band. It makes me happy."		
	"It has a very positive effect on me."		
	"It makes me feel more comfortable to also prioritize mine … so I love it. For sure."		
	"I mean, certainly not negatively. If anything, I would feel pleased that I had that opportunity to do that, you know, to say, you need to go take some time for you. And let me take some of the work pressure off of you so that you can focus on you."		
	"I mean, I would say always positively as well."		
	"I think it's good because we're in a very stressful business."		
	"I'm happy to see that."		
	"Like positive reinforcement? Because I'll definitely do that."		
	"I think it's important for everybody so I think that there's just a value there that if you're taking care of yourself, you're gonna be better calling back to me because I just think it's important for people in general to prioritize themselves these days."		
Reaction Depends	"Sometimes I get jealous and sometimes it's encouraging for me."	7	35%
	"I mean, through the roof like if it's right you know, and then when it's wrong, it's like this interesting drag down of their kind of spiral energy."		
	"It can be positive or negative as well, when I can tell their high stress, it makes me nuts, or if I can tell they're not prioritizing their well–being and they're not doing well."		
	"So sometimes it does impact me if people are out or people are, for whatever reason, not able to do whatever they need to do for me. I just tried to reframe and realize that people need to be able to do that."		
	"I don't mind if that's what they want to do. I feel like sometimes it's a little harder for me to, like accept that. I mean, I understand that well-being is important. But sometimes I feel like, is it deserved? Because I'm putting so much work in compared to like them."		
	"Um I'm thinking about the guy whose personal life creeps into his work, you know, a little too much. And it's like always something, you know? I mean, I gotta reflect on why that came to mind. I hope that my reaction is 'Oh, that's great. You know, I'm glad you're taking your mom to see a show. I won't call you up to four, right or whatever.' I try to support and celebrate that stuff."		
No Impact	"It doesn't impact me. It just doesn't impact me at all. So, if they are prioritizing their well-being I just I don't know. Yeah, I couldn't say. So interesting. Yeah. I know that sounds odd, but I really don't know."	1	5%

N = 20

Seven participants (35%) stated some sort of variation or dependency in their response to this question. One participant simply stated, “sometimes I get jealous and sometimes it’s encouraging for me.” These responses will also be broken out into more detail in the following section. One participant stated that it has no impact on them when their colleagues prioritize their well-being at work; explaining that they simply don’t discuss it so she wouldn’t even know if it’s happening. Table 7 provides more detailed themes amongst the positive responses to the question of impact to the participants when their colleagues prioritize their well-being.

Table 7

Colleagues Prioritizing Well-Being Impact Positive Themes

Theme	Sample Comment	*n*	%
Actively Encourage It	“I'm like, absolutely take the vacation. Don't call me honestly.”	8	40%
	“Yes, definitely. I'm not afraid to tell my direct reports but then I also kind of share it with my people who have the same job role as me.”		
	“I'm always like, rah rah and like good job.”		
	“I think I usually encourage them to do those things.”		
	“It does concern me if I see somebody that never takes any time off or takes any time for themselves or vacations, that sort of thing … I may bring it up to like a colleague.”		
	“Like positive reinforcement? Because I'll definitely do that.”		
Better Them is Better for Everyone	“I think people are just better able to like communicate and work together when they're taking care of themselves and when they feel good and like they're happier and people can like handle mistakes a little better.”	7	35%
	“Because sometimes I feel like even the mental break, helps you be more efficient.”		
	“I think it's good because we're in a very stressful business. I think if we didn't, if the company didn't prioritize their well-being, it would come through to the clients.”		
Model Well-Being	“And have that model like I mean, our team is always among the top teams in the country and it's like, hey, like we've learned that we can do this without feeling like you have to, you know, do all the outside of hours things.”	3	15%
	“If anyone is, it’s impactful. But the more like, if it's my boss, or if it's my boss's boss, like the more senior of a person that does it, and the more impact it has, because it's like, modeling that.”		
	“It makes me feel more comfortable to also prioritize mine and again I think this is because I'm the youngest person on my team by like, a decade or two.”		

N = 20

Forty percent of participants (*n* = 8) actively encourage their colleagues to prioritize their well-being through reminders, celebrating when they see it, or mentioning it if they notice their well-being slipping. Thirty-five percent of participants (*n* = 7) follow a similar theme to the previous question stating that when their colleagues take care of themselves, it's better for everyone around them. This is a more holistic view of well-being, stating that even if they don't see the prioritization of well-being happening, they know that it ultimately impacts the work that they are doing. And 15% of participants (*n* = 3) mentioned that others prioritizing well-being at work is a way to model the behavior to them and again create a climate that encourages the behavior through example versus verbal reminders or reinforcement.

Table 8 details the different types of reactions that were not entirely positive to the question about colleagues prioritizing their well-being impacting interview participants. While these themes were only mentioned by a minority of participants, they were worth diving into since they probed directly into the research question.

Three participants (15%) consciously reframed how they felt about their colleagues prioritizing their well-being at work. When one participant mentioned feeling both jealousy and encouragement, they then described the jealousy as "not bitter" and talked through how they remind themselves not to be jealous and focus on the positive ways they can prioritize their own well-being in their life. One participant shared that they immediately thought of someone whose "personal life creeps into work a little too much" and volunteered that they need to reflect more on why that was their thought but stated that they try to be encouraging. These reframed examples are intriguing because they hint at some negative reactions (i.e., jealousy, annoyance) before they then find the positive, encouraging standpoint.

Table 8

Colleagues Prioritizing Well-Being Impact Other Themes

Theme	Sample Comment	*n*	%
Conscious Reframe	"It's not necessarily like a bitter jealousy. It's more like a, I wish I could be in that scenario right now. Yeah. It's still encouraging to me. It's just more like, I wish I could go do that. But then I have to remind myself of like, oh, I can go do X, Y, and Z that they can't go do right now."	3	15%
	"I gotta reflect on why that came to mind. I hope that my reaction is 'Oh, that's great … I try to support and celebrate that stuff.'"		
	"I just try to reframe and realize that people need to be able to do that."		
"Too Much"	"Um I'm thinking about the guy whose personal life creeps into his work, you know, a little too much. And it's like always something, you know, so I gotta reflect on why that came to mind."	2	10%
	"When somebody's kind of little Chicken Little in a situation that is outside of my capacity to impact."		
Contingent on Performance	"I mean, I understand well-being is important, but sometimes I feel like, is it deserved? You know, so it's like here I am putting in more time to do improve something that they should know. And then they just kind of, you know, disappear for two or more hours kind of thing. Sometimes it's a little bit harder for me to feel better about them, prioritizing certain things. I mean, I feel like everyone should take like their PTO, but at the same time, it's like, well, you know, make sure you're managing your responsibilities better."	2	10%
	"If you're not even doing the bare minimum at work, like I really don't feel like you even deserve the time off that the company gives you because you're not even putting in the time required to do your job that would make me feel like you deserve that time."		
Higher Workload	"I mean, certainly not negatively. I would feel pleased that I had that opportunity to do that to you know, okay, you know, you need to go take some time for you. And let me take some of the work pressure off of you so that you can focus on you."	2	10%
	"I rely on certain people within my org to be able to do a job. So sometimes it does impact me if people are out or people are for whatever reason, not able to do whatever they need to do for me."		

N = 20

Two participants (10%) alluded to some colleagues needing "too much" in terms of well-being. One participant used the metaphor of Chicken Little to describe someone who is always crying out for help without necessarily always having a reason.

Another two participants (10%) stated that how they felt about their colleagues' prioritization of well-being was contingent on the colleagues' performance. One participant stated that, "if you're not even doing the bare minimum at work, like I really don't feel like you

even deserve the time off that the company gives you." Both responses mentioned there needing to be a baseline level of performance at work before they felt that prioritizing well-being was acceptable in their view.

Yet another two participants (10%) also mentioned that when their colleagues prioritize their well-being at work, then it would result in more work for the participants. One stated a "pleasure" to take on work to support a colleague, and the other mentioned perhaps needing to reframe to a more positive thought while taking on additional work for others.

Comparing Between Levels of Prioritizing Well-Being

The qualitative analysis above included all research participants (n = 20). This section will compare results between those that do and do not prioritize their well-being at work based on Table 3. Table 9 identifies the connotation of participant answers to the question, "How do you think your prioritization of well-being at work affects your closest work colleagues?" while distinguishing between those that prioritize their well-being from those that don't.

Table 9

Prioritizing Well-Being Impacted Colleagues Comparison

	Prioritize Well-Being Often or Very Often (n = 18)		Prioritize Well-Being Little or Somewhat (n = 2)	
Theme	*n*	%	*n*	%
Positively Influences Others	15	83%	1	50%
No Impact	2	11%	0	0%
Did Not Answer Question	1	6%	1	50%

N = 20

Of the participants that do not prioritize their well-being often or very often, 50% (n = 1) still reported that prioritizing their well-being impacted their colleagues positively. This participant also described their well-being practices in detail, including taking breaks, exercising, and prioritizing time with family. The remaining 50% of participants (n = 1) did not answer this

question. The participant said, “If I'm putting like a little bit of effort in it might help them finish something or get to the finish line a little sooner or more efficiently. I'm hoping it makes their lives a little easier.” This response essentially answers the question of how prioritizing work over the participant’s well-being impacts their colleagues. In essence, the participant sees a positive impact on their colleagues when they do *not* prioritize their well-being.

Table 10 presents the results for the reverse question by identifying the high-level themes of participant’s responses to the question, “How does it affect you when your colleagues prioritize their well-being? How do you feel? What actions do you take?” while distinguishing between those that prioritize their well-being from those that don’t.

Table 10

Colleagues Prioritizing Well-Being Impact Comparison

	Prioritize Well-Being Often or Very Often (*n* = 18)		Prioritize Well-Being Little or Somewhat (*n* = 2)	
Theme	*n*	%	*n*	%
Positively Influences Self	12	67%	0	0%
Reaction Depends	5	28%	2	100%
No Impact	1	6%	0	0%

N = 20

All participants who do not prioritize their well-being at work often reported that their reactions to their closest colleagues prioritizing their well-being was dependent on something else. One of these participants was in the “Conscious Reframe” category in Table 8 and mentioned that they sometimes feel jealous and other times feel encouraged when their colleagues prioritize their well-being at work. This participant described their efforts to reframe. They stated, “It’s not necessarily a bitter jealousy. It's more like, I wish I could be in that scenario right now.” Their reaction seemed to be dependent on the activity their colleagues were doing in order to prioritize their well-being, with easy access to skiing being one example.

The other participant was more specific about their reaction being "Contingent on Performance" in Table 8. It was noticed that the participant distinguished between those team members that the participant perceived did "high-quality work" compared to those who did not. Follow-up questions were asked about how they reacted to the two types of colleagues. The participant described feeling "kind of happy" when those who perform their work functions well prioritize their well-being. In contrast, the participant said, "it's a little harder for me to accept that" when those who have perceived unsatisfactory work performance prioritize their well-being.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis. Chapter 5 will conclude the study by discussing how the findings presented in this chapter hint at answers to the research question outlined in chapter one. Chapter 5 will also include implications for this research on the existing literature around the intersection of equity theory and well-being, limitations of the research, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to understand the intersection of equity theory and well-being for US employees in modern corporate organizations. More specifically, this study aims to use equity theory to explore how one employee's prioritization of well-being impacts those around them. The overarching research question was: When one employee prioritizes their well-being, how does it affect their work teammates' well-being? Subquestions examined:

1. Does one employee prioritizing their well-being encourage teammates to do the same?
2. Does one employee prioritizing well-being make their teammates feel under-benefitted?

This chapter concludes the research study and provides a discussion of the results of the study and the implications, provides limitations to the research, makes recommendations for future research, and summarizes the conclusions.

Findings

The results of this research build on the limited existing research on the intersection of inequity theory and well-being at work for US employees in modern corporate organizations. Recent literature explores the effects of over-benefitting on an individual's well-being, but it does not study the effects that over-benefitting has on those around them (Austin & Walster, 1974; Moliner et al., 2013; Taris et al., 2002).

This research found individuals who claimed to prioritize their well-being often or very often, and sought to understand the impacts on their colleagues through interviews and surveys. Though this research was not able to achieve statistical significance in the relationship between equity ratios and well-being scores, there was an indication that the movement in an equity ratio explains 10.3% of the movement in the well-being scores. Through the qualitative data received

in the interviews with participants ($N = 20$), we can begin to understand how prioritizing well-being impacts close work colleagues.

The majority of individuals who prioritize their well-being at work often or very often assume that doing so positively impacts their colleagues ($n = 15$, 83%). Many believe ($n = 9$) that prioritizing their well-being makes them better–improving their performance, increasing their patience, opening up their innovation and creativity, and overall improving their attitudes–which ultimately improves their colleagues' experience of them at work. This holistic mindset describes a belief that prioritizing well-being at work is a benefit to both the individual and the collective team. Many participants ($n = 9$) also intentionally try to promote prioritizing their well-being to build a culture where taking care of themselves is accepted and celebrated. These individuals think about well-being in an intentional way and firmly believe that prioritizing well-being at work makes everyone better.

The majority of participants who prioritize their well-being at work often or very often also stated that seeing their colleagues prioritize their well-being positively affected them ($n = 12$, 67%). However, not all participants who answered the reverse question positively answered this question the same. It's interesting that when asked how it impacts them, the answers were more varied. Some participants stated that their reaction was dependent on something else ($n = 5$), meaning it was not universally positive.

Those that were positively impacted (without contingency) reported similar themes to the previous question–they believe that prioritizing well-being at work creates a better individual, which is better for the collective ($n = 7$). They also made efforts to actively encourage their colleagues to prioritize their well-being ($n = 8$) and were intentional about modeling prioritizing their well-being ($n = 3$) in hopes that it would remove mental hurdles to make it easier for their

colleagues to do the same. These participants responded consistently about the impact of prioritizing well-being on others regardless of the point of view the question was asked from.

Alternatively, the participants that stated their reaction is dependent on another variable (n = 5) described a few different scenarios. Some participants (n = 3) made efforts to reframe their thinking, either stating that outright or demonstrating a reframe in their responses. These individuals desire to promote a culture of prioritizing well-being but might have personal reservations (i.e., jealousy or frustration). Despite these initial feelings, these individuals make a conscious effort to reflect on that feeling, then make a choice to frame the situation differently to feel more positive.

Two participants touched on the theme of "too much." They describe individuals whose "personal lives creep into work a little too much," insinuating that there is a threshold to prioritizing well-being at work and that some of their colleagues might have surpassed that threshold. This claim of having a threshold around prioritizing well-being brings back our question about the equity ratio of those individuals. Do these participants deem that some of their colleagues are in over-benefitting situations, which are prompting the "too much" comments? Interestingly, neither of these participants made any mention of colleagues who might be over-benefitting when asked about their colleagues' input and outcomes from work. Though this research is unable to connect their responses to equity ratios, it is an opportunity for further research.

Another two participants mentioned that how they felt about their colleagues prioritizing their well-being at work was contingent on their colleagues' performance at work. These participants worked for the same company and described the individuals on their team that they perceive meet performance expectations and those who do not meet expectations. When they perceive their colleagues to be performing well, they feel positive about those colleagues

prioritizing their well-being. However, when they see colleagues whom they do not perceive as meeting performance expectations prioritizing their well-being at work, they feel frustrated and resentful. When we think about performance expectations, we can consider equity ratios. The perception from these participants is that some of their colleagues (the underperformers) are not putting in the same inputs as they are expected, thus putting them in an over-benefitting situation. However, when equity ratios are deemed equal (colleagues who are performing as expected), these participants are able to feel positively toward those individuals when they prioritize their well-being.

Out of the two participants who only prioritized their well-being sometimes or a little, neither felt entirely positive when their colleagues prioritized their well-being. One participant made an effort to reframe their jealousy, while the other claimed that their reaction was contingent on performance, as described above. Those that don't prioritize their well-being feel less positive about their colleagues doing the same. This is logical because they view their colleagues as getting additional outcomes in the form of the ability to prioritize their well-being, which thus puts them in an under-benefitting scenario with that individual. Unfortunately, this research did not ask questions to measure equity ratios based on each individual on a team and instead more generally about colleagues' inputs and outcomes, so we cannot confirm this thinking.

Conclusions

This study began with the research question, "When one employee prioritizes their well-being, how does it affect their work teammates' well-being?" The conclusion is that "It depends." When individuals believe that prioritizing well-being is better for collective teams, then they are more likely to be positively impacted by a colleague prioritizing their well-being at

work. These individuals are also likely to make efforts to be intentional about building a team culture that encourages and celebrates the prioritization of well-being at work.

This effort to intentionally encourage and model prioritizing well-being is successful with the participants. All the participants that consciously reframed their initially negative thinking about when a colleague prioritizes their well-being, are on teams of individuals who intentionally discuss, model, and encourage well-being at work. One of the reframing individuals was even personally called out as an excellent example of celebrating well-being amongst their colleagues that participated in the research.

While most of the research found positive implications from prioritizing well-being at work, there are thresholds. From the research, these thresholds were either performance related or related to the frequency of needing to prioritize well-being over work. Both thresholds indicate an over-benefitting situation from the colleague that has surpassed one of the thresholds. The answer to the research question, "Does one employee prioritizing well-being make their teammates feel under-benefitted?" is that "It could." When the employee prioritizing their well-being has surpassed a threshold (performance or frequency of requests) and is deemed to be in an over-benefitting situation, their colleagues might be negatively impacted.

Overall, this research concludes that prioritizing well-being at work positively impacts those around them and has a negative impact when the teammates already find that individual to be in an over-benefitting situation by either underperforming or consistently needing support.

Discussion

I first became interested in the intersection of well-being and equity theory in 2020, when the world shifted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Gatherings of all kinds were canceled and US corporate knowledge workers were stuck at home with their work. I had colleagues taking leaves of absence to manage deteriorating mental health, and personally felt the difficulty in managing

life when no social activities were allowed, but work was ever-present. Reports in the news stated that burnout was at an all-time high. It seemed that there was a crisis of overworking and a need for time and space away from work.

Then, I heard something contrarian—two people whom I knew well were expressing frustration at their bosses taking time away from work to golf or spend time with their families. I wondered how they felt frustrated with what I saw as a beautiful stand against the pandemic-era workaholism. This is when I found equity theory and began to hypothesize that these two individuals felt overworked and underpaid compared to their bosses, who were working less and getting paid more.

After completing this research study, I have a better understanding of what was going on there—and generally how one person prioritizing their well-being impacts their teammates.

The research suggests that equity theory can help teams to get a baseline understanding of the very common need to compare themselves against others at work (Adams, 1963; Homans, 1974). However, the nuance of how one person prioritizing their well-being impacts the rest of the team is dependent on the beliefs the team holds about well-being.

Those who take a holistic perspective on well-being believe that prioritizing their well-being makes them easier to work with, better at problem-solving and decision-making, and generally more able to have good ideas. In other words, these teams see a connection between well-being and performance. When a team consists of individuals who have a holistic perspective on well-being, then prioritizing well-being is seen as a right. These teams see the ability to take care of yourself as a necessary responsibility of your job, or an input in the equity equation.

Conversely, teams that do not identify a connection between well-being and performance take a more individualistic approach to well-being. They may see individuals who are

prioritizing their well-being as doing less work. When teams hold the individualistic well-being perspective, then they view the action of prioritizing well-being as an output in the equity formula and are at risk of feeling they are in an inequitable position.

Ensuring that a team is made up of individuals who can take care of themselves while supporting each other is not a straightforward task. While everyone will need different things (actions, boundaries, rest, support, etc.) to ensure they have high well-being, creating a team of individuals who are able to do what they need to have high well-being is critical. Equity theory is a helpful tool in understanding how teams might think of well-being in relation to work. However, the findings suggest that ensuring a team has a holistic perspective on well-being is the most critical to ensuring that the team positively views prioritizing well-being at work.

To create a holistic perspective on well-being, teams should have conversations about well-being regularly. An example agenda for such an initial team conversation about well-being could include (a) defining well-being together, (b) sharing individually what each person does to increase their own well-being, (c) discuss how maintaining high well-being improves job performance, and (d) ask each other how they can support each other on their well-being journeys. Subsequent conversations could then just focus on item d to ensure the team is a well-being support system. Lastly, it is also important that the team leader continues to encourage, model, and support well-being efforts across the team.

Implications

The implications of the research are helpful for those who participate in or lead teams at work in modern corporate organizations in the US. Individuals should know that making intentional choices to prioritize their well-being at work, to model the behavior, and encourage the same in others will ultimately help to build a team culture that is able to collectively think

about well-being. When teams think about well-being as a collective effort to improve everyone's conditions, then they are better able to celebrate taking care of themselves at work.

The pitfall to be aware of is when an individual is deemed to be in an over-benefitting situation by their colleagues. Regardless of whether or not that individual is actually over-benefitting is irrelevant. If their teammates feel they are either underperforming or overly taking time away to prioritize their well-being, they will perceive them as being in an over-benefitting situation. When that individual prioritizes their well-being, it will not be seen in a positive light by their team members who hold the over-benefitting belief. As team members or leaders, we would recommend being aware of these situations and addressing the perceived inequity. In addition, you can also continue to grow and encourage the collective well-being mindset in your team to offset the perceived inequity.

The linear relationship between well-being scores and equity ratios shown in Figure 1 support the self-interest hypothesis of equity ratios impact on well-being. This supports Moliner et al.'s (2013) findings in Spain, which suggested that well-being increases as over-benefitting increases. This study did not have a large enough sample size nor the statistical significance to add to the research around the shape of the relationship between equity ratios and levels of well-being (Taris et al., 2002). This research supports Adam's (1965) theory of inequity that the perception of someone over-benefitting at work could negatively impact the level of equity felt by those around them. This research also further confirms that people look to others who are proximate in their lives and situations to evaluate their own capabilities within their organization (Bárcena-Martín et al., 2017; Festinger, 1954).

Limitations

The limitations of the research include the sample size and makeup, timing, the reliability of the measurement tools used, and biases from both the participants and the researcher.

1. Small sample size. A larger, more diverse, and more balanced sample would strengthen this research. With 20 participants, the sample size was inadequate to find statistical significance and was not able to be representative of modern organizations across industries in the US. Diversity was not able to be prioritized in participant selection. The participants were 65% white, 75% female, and 50% worked in the technology industry. There was diversity across generations, with 45% being between 30 and 39 years old and the rest scattered across older generations.

2. Imbalanced participation. There was an imbalance between the number of participants in each company. Instead of having three participants from each company, the number of participants from the same company varied from two to four. When asking initial survey respondents to refer their colleagues to participate in the research, many participants referred people who worked at their company and were their friends, as opposed to their direct teammates. This meant that their distance at work might have been further than intended, which meant their impacts of prioritizing their well-being would have been lessened. In addition, some participants thought the same requirements carried over for referrals and specifically referred their colleagues who also prioritized their well-being at work. This method of gaining participants could have left out those that the initial respondent had negative feelings towards and would have skewed the results of this study to be more positive. This also meant that most participants rated their prioritization of well-being highly.

3. Timing challenges. The well-being scores from the MHCSF ask about well-being over a two-week period (Magyar & Keyes, 2019). However, the distance between completing the well-being survey and participating in the interview was over 14 days apart for two of the participants, which means their well-being might have adjusted during that time and not have been reflected in their scores. In addition, many of the participants from the same companies had

interviews scattered over multiple weeks due to scheduled conflicts. This time difference again allows for more changes in circumstances influencing participants' responses. Lastly, one team reorganized and was no longer a team by the time they were interviewed, so their answers about their colleagues were not speaking about each other but instead about new teammates that they did not know well. Specifying how long a team worked together before participating might have added insights.

4. One question on inputs. The interview protocol only asked one question about participants' and participants' colleagues' inputs to their jobs. The reliability of this measure cannot be estimated since it is only one question.

5. Participant and researcher biases. Participants answered a variety of questions on Likert scales and could have had rating bias, influencing the way they answered those questions. The researcher is also an individual that believes strongly in prioritizing well-being at work and is a big advocate of doing so amongst her own team at work. This could have led to confirmation bias, leading the researcher to find what they hoped to see.

Recommendations for Future Research

Replicating this study with a larger sample size would be advantageous to validate and expand the results. The study could also be replicated with multiple work teams and an added level of validation that participants were work teammates (versus colleagues on different teams) before participating. Validating that participants were on the same core team would increase the ability to tie equity ratio results to well-being scores with greater confidence.

Summary

This chapter discussed the study results, conclusions, and implications for employees of modern corporate organizations in the US. Limitations of the research and potential future research opportunities were identified. The Gallup CEO said, "If you're not thriving at work,

you’re unlikely to be thriving at life,” which is why it is imperative that employees are able to prioritize their well-being at work in a way that encourages their teammates to do the same (Gallup, 2023).

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Appendix A: Well-Being Recruitment Survey

IRB Number # 22-08-1917

Study Title: THE TRICKLE-OUT EFFECT OF PRIORITIZING WELL-BEING

Invitation

Hi,

My name is Kelsey Stout. I am conducting a study on the "trickle-out" effects of prioritizing well-being. If you are 20 years of age or older, live in the U.S., are employed full-time in a corporate job, and are willing to share the names and contact information of four of your co-workers, you may participate in this research. This is a research project that focuses on the intersection of well-being and equity theory.

Participation in this study will require a maximum of approximately an hour and a half of your time. You will be asked to complete the following survey which should take no more than 15 minutes. You may also be asked to schedule a 45-minute virtual interview with the researcher over Zoom if you so choose.

There is minimal to no risk in participating in this study.

The results of this study will be used to better understand how the concept of equity theory at work applies to prioritizing well-being.

Your responses to this survey and to the potential future interview will be kept confidential. All responses will be saved on a personal Google Drive that is protected with a strong password.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s): Kelsey Stout
kelsey.stout@pepperdine.edu

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):
Phone:
Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw') at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By clicking on the I Agree button below, your consent to participate is implied. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

a. I agree (if selected, survey will continue on)
b. I do not agree (if selected, survey will end immediately)

PART ONE: BASIC INFORMATION

1. Gender Identity
    a. Female
    a. Male
    b. Non-binary
    c. I prefer not to say

2. Current Age
    a. Less than 20 years of age
    b. 20-29 years
    c. 30-39 years
    d. 40-49 years
    e. 50-59 years
    f. 60 years or more
    g. I prefer not to say

3. Race / Ethnicity - Select all that apply
    a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
    b. Black or African American
    c. East Asian
    d. Hispanic or Latinx
    e. Middle Eastern or North African
    f. South Asian
    g. Southeast Asian
    h. Two or more races
    i. White
    j. I prefer not to say

4. Do you live in the United States?
    a. Yes (If yes, the survey will continue to questions 5 and 6, but will skip 6)
    b. No (If no, the survey will skip to question 7)

5. What city and state do you live in?
    a. (Free response)

6. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?
    a. Employed Full-Time
    b. Employed Part-Time
    c. Self-Employed

   d. Unemployed
   e. Student

7. Which of the below best describes the sector you work in?
   a. Healthcare
   b. Financial Services
   c. Technology
   d. Industrials
   e. Consumer Cyclical
   f. Energy
   g. Real Estate
   h. Consumer Defensive
   i. Communication Services
   j. Basic Materials
   k. Utilities

8. On a scale of one to five (one = very little and five = very often), how much do you feel you prioritize your well-being at work?
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. 5

PART TWO: WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT

Please answer the following questions about how you have been feeling and how you have been functioning during the *past two weeks*. Select the option that *best* represents how often you have experienced or felt the following.

During the past two weeks, how often did you feel …

During the past two weeks, how often did you feel …	**Never (0)**	**Once or twice (1)**	**About once a week (2)**	**About 2 or 3 times a week (3)**	**Almost every day (4)**	**Every day (5)**
Happy?						
Interested in life?						
Satisfied?						
That you had something important to contribute to society?						
That you belonged to a community (like a social group or your neighborhood)?						
That our society is becoming a better place for people?						
That people are basically good?						
That the way our society works makes sense to you?						
That you liked most parts of your personality?						
Good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life?						
That you had warm and trusting relationships with others?						
That you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person?						
Confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions?						
That your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it?						

Source: From Magyar, J. L., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2019). Defining, measuring, and applying subjective well-being. In M. W. Gallagher & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures* (2nd ed., pp. 406–407). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000138-025

9. Would you be willing to participate in further research? If you select "Yes," you may be invited to participate in a phone screen and/or a one-hour video conversation.

a. Yes (If yes, the survey will continue to question 11)
b. No (If no, the survey will end)

10. Do you have four co-workers that you would be willing to recommend to be interviewed about their well-being?
    a. Yes (If yes, the survey will continue to question 12)
    b. No (If no, the survey will end)

11. Thank you for being willing to participate in further research! Please provide your name, phone number, and email address below so the researcher can contact you.
    a. Name: (Open text field)
    b. Phone Number: (Open text field)
    c. Email: (Open text field)

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to this research.

Your response has been recorded.

Appendix B: Participant Interview Questions

Equity Questions

12. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel you invest in your work in terms of skills and energy? Why did you give that answer? Do you have examples?
13. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel you get in return from your work in terms of income, job benefits, etc.? Can you help me understand why you answered the way you did?
14. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel you get in return from your work in terms of recognition and prestige? Other probes for more information…
15. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel you get in return from your work in terms of personal satisfaction? How do you define personal satisfaction?

More Conversational:

16. Do you consider yourself to be someone who is generally doing well? Can you elaborate?
17. Do you prioritize your well-being at work?
18. How do you prioritize your well-being at work?
19. If you thought of everyone around you, where would you rank in your prioritization of well-being? What percentile would you please yourself in compared to your closest teammates? How so?
20. How do you think your prioritization of well-being at work affects your closest work colleagues?
21. How does it affect you when your colleagues prioritize their well-being? How do you feel? What actions do you take?

Equity Questions About Colleagues:

22. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel your colleagues invest in their work in terms of skills and energy? Probing questions…
23. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel your colleagues get in return from their work in terms of income, job benefits, etc.?
24. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel your colleagues get in return from your work in terms of recognition and prestige?
25. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel your colleagues get in return from your work in terms of personal satisfaction?

Appendix C: Participant's Colleagues' Interview Questions

Equity Questions

1. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel you invest in your work in terms of skills and energy? Why did you give that answer? Do you have examples?
2. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel you get in return from your work in terms of income, job benefits, etc.? Can you help me understand why you answered the way you did?
3. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel you get in return from your work in terms of recognition and prestige? Other probes for more information…
4. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel you get in return from your work in terms of personal satisfaction? How do you define personal satisfaction?

Equity Questions About Colleagues:

5. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel your colleagues invest in their work in terms of skills and energy? Probing questions…
6. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel your colleagues get in return from their work in terms of income, job benefits, etc.?
7. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel your colleagues get in return from their work in terms of recognition and prestige?
8. On a scale of one to five (one being very little and five being very much), how much do you feel your colleagues get in return from their work in terms of personal satisfaction?

More Conversational:

9. Do you consider yourself to be someone who is generally doing well? Can you elaborate?
10. Do you prioritize your well-being at work?
11. How do you prioritize your well-being at work?
12. If you thought of everyone around you, where would you rank in your prioritization of well-being? What percentile would you please yourself in compared to your closest teammates? How so?
13. How do you think your prioritization of well-being at work affects your closest work colleagues?
14. How does it affect you when your colleagues prioritize their well-being? How do you feel? What actions do you take?
15. *Will you please take 5-10 minutes to complete a survey to measure your well-being? I will email it to you right after we hang up.*

Appendix D: Co-Worker Survey

Thank you for participating in this research! Please provide your name and email address below.

1. Name: (Open text field)
2. Email: (Open text field)

2. Gender Identity
    b. Female
    a. Male
    b. Non-binary
    c. I prefer not to say

27. Current Age
    a. Less than 20 years of age
    b. 20-29 years
    c. 30-39 years
    d. 40-49 years
    e. 50-59 years
    f. 60 years or more
    g. I prefer not to say

28. Race / Ethnicity - Select all that apply
    a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
    b. Black or African American
    c. East Asian
    d. Hispanic or Latinx
    e. Middle Eastern or North African
    f. South Asian
    g. Southeast Asian
    h. Two or more races
    i. White
    j. I prefer not to say

29. Do you live in the United States?
    a. Yes (If yes, the survey will continue to questions 5 and 6, but will skip 6)
    b. No (If no, the survey will skip to question 7)

30. What city and state do you live in?
    a. (Free response)

31. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?
    a. Employed Full-Time
    b. Employed Part-Time
    c. Self-Employed
    d. Unemployed
    e. Student

32. Which of the below best describes the sector you work in?
    a. Healthcare
    b. Financial Services
    c. Technology
    d. Industrials
    e. Consumer Cyclical
    f. Energy
    g. Real Estate
    h. Consumer Defensive
    i. Communication Services
    j. Basic Materials
    k. Utilities

33. On a scale of one to five (one = very little and five = very often), how much do you feel you prioritize your well-being at work?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5

Please answer the following questions about how you have been feeling and how you have been functioning during the *past two weeks*. Select the option that *best* represents how often you have experienced or felt the following.

During the past two weeks, how often did you feel ...

During the past two weeks, how often did you feel …	**Never (0)**	**Once or twice (1)**	**About once a week (2)**	**About 2 or 3 times a week (3)**	**Almost every day (4)**	**Every day (5)**
Happy?						
Interested in life?						
Satisfied?						
That you had something important to contribute to society?						
That you belonged to a community (like a social group or your neighborhood)?						
That our society is becoming a better place for people?						
That people are basically good?						
That the way our society works makes sense to you?						
That you liked most parts of your personality?						
Good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life?						
That you had warm and trusting relationships with others?						
That you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person?						
Confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions?						
That your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it?						

Source: From Magyar, J. L., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2019). Defining, measuring, and applying subjective well-being. In M. W. Gallagher & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures* (2nd ed., pp. 406–407). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000138-025

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to this research.

Your response has been recorded.

Appendix E: LinkedIn Recruitment Survey Post

Hi friends! I am pursuing a Master's Degree in Organization Development in the Graziadio School of Business at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study on the effects of well-being at work on fellow co-workers, and I need your help!

I am seeking volunteer study participants to complete a short survey. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes to complete and will be open until the end of the year.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time that study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place during and after the study.

At the end of the survey, there is also an option to participate in future research consisting of an hour-long interview for you and four co-workers. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

#graduateschool #research #wellbeing #wellbeingatwork #organizationaldevelopment #od

[link survey]

Appendix F: Dimensions of the Mental Health Continuum Short Form

Symptom Clusters and Dimensions:

- Cluster 1:
  - Items 1–3 = Hedonic, Emotional Well-Being

- Cluster 2:
  - Items 4–8 = Eudaimonic, Social Well-Being
  - Item 4 = Social Contribution
  - Item 5 = Social Integration
  - Item 6 = Social Actualization (i.e., Social Growth)
  - Item 7 = Social Acceptance; Item 8 = Social Coherence (i.e., Social Interest)

- Cluster 3:
  - Items 9–14 = Eudaimonic, Psychological Well-Being
  - Item 9 = Self-Acceptance
  - Item 10 = Environmental Mastery
  - Item 11 = Positive Relations With Others
  - Item 12 = Personal Growth
  - Item 13 = Autonomy
  - Item 14 = Purpose in Life

Source: From Magyar, J. L., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2019). Defining, Measuring, and Applying Subjective Well-Being. In M. W. Gallagher & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures* (2nd ed., pp. 407). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000138-025