

Organizational strategies and tools of employee well-being as perceived by employees

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Abstract. *The purpose of the study was to examine the organizational strategy and tools of employee well-being, as perceived by employees. Although improving physical, mental, and social conditions of employees have positive impact on economic performance and competitiveness of organizations, little is known about how employee wellbeing appears in human resource management strategy and practices of organizations. Few research is available examining the adaptability of well-being strategy and tools from the perspective of employees as stakeholders. Therefore, the methodology of the current study was an exploratory sequential mixed method, with an embedded case study. Qualitative exploratory phase consisted of 27 semi-structured interviews with human resource management experts of Hungarian and international for-profit organizations. The results supported the definition for selection criteria of case study sampling and the design of a research tool for the quantitative phase. In the case study, interviews and quantitative research were conducted at the selected organization. The self-developed questionnaire included the Workplace PERMA Profile, reflecting the five pillars of well-being: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. The questionnaire has been filled out by 222 employees. The data integration results explored that the well-being is less characterized by a strategic approach, despite its importance defined by respondents. Employee perception analysis has led to the creation of employee well-being profiles, mapping organizational tools supporting employee satisfaction, and highlighting the inconsistencies of organizational strategy and employee perceptions. The results could contribute to further studies and development of human resource management practices to improve employee well-being by directing the focus on its growing importance in economic and labor competitiveness.*

Keywords: employee well-being, organizational strategy, human resource management, competitiveness

Please cite the article as follows: Molnár, C., Csehné Papp, I., and Juhász, T., (2024), "Organizational strategies and tools of employee well-being as perceived by employees", *Management & Marketing*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 336-361, DOI: 10.2478/mmcks-2024-0015.

Introduction

The current article examines the organizational strategy and human resource management (HRM) tools for employee well-being in economic organizations. Since lacking a common definition, from the various terminologies (Laine and Rinne, 2015) 'employee well-being' has been applied in the study, expressing employee focus in its wholeness.

Although employee well-being is a determining factor for future labor market and economic efficiency (OECD, 2017), it appears little in the focus of organizational strategy and HRM tools. A topic that is not raised to strategic level may not receive sufficient attention (Molnár and Csehné, 2023) and resources for consistent implementation (Wright et al., 2018). On the contrary, since organizations operate along strategies, consistent strategic planning and implementation might ensure the promotion of employee well-being and concordance with organizational culture, values, and behavior. This leads to the question of how organizations revitalize their human resources to attain and preserve competitiveness.

Although workplaces play a key role in improving employee well-being, little is known about well-being strategies, HRM practices and related employee perceptions (Kun et al., 2017). Following Guest's recommendation (2002) to include employees' view when analyzing HRM practices, current study focuses both on the company and on the employee side. Therefore, current research has the following objectives, presented in research questions and hypotheses. It aims to map organizational practices of employee well-being (Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009). The study examines what well-being and family-friendly organizational strategy mean for employees (Guest, 2017; 2002; Stankevičienė, et al., 2021). It is examined whether there are distinctive employee characteristics that are related to positive and negative feelings at work (De Simone, 2014; Eurofound, 2023; Zheng et al., 2015). The research also intends to explore employees' perceptions of well-being practices and tools. Consequently, the research design follows an exploratory sequential mixed method with an embedded case study. Research results support the extension of available knowledge about employee perception both on well-being and on HRM practices organizations apply to improve their employees' well-being. Findings direct the focus on employee involvement in designing well-being tools and practices (Freeman et al., 2021; Guest, 2002).

Literature review

Approaches to employee well-being

Literature suggests that concepts of workplace and employee well-being have not been established yet, as they are closely intertwined and often used interchangeably (Laine and Rinne 2015). Although there is no unified approach in its definition or components (Schulte and Vainio, 2010; European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2013), individual and collective well-being appear among the objectives of several world organizations. United Nations 2030 framework has outlined the goal of "ensuring a healthy life and promoting well-being for all at all ages" (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). World Health Organization actively promotes health as a resource helping individuals to cope with stress caused by the normal challenges of life, to work effectively and help the community (World Health Organization, 2013). International Labour Organization (<https://www.ilo.org>) defines workplace well-being as a broad spectrum that encompasses various aspects of work, including quality and safety of work-environment, physical conditions, and employees'

feelings. It also includes employee perceptions and assessment about the work, the work environment, the workplace atmosphere, and about the organization itself. Similarly, OECD's Learning Compass 2030 (2019) formulates the future pursuit of emotional-physical-social individual and collective well-being. It emphasizes the importance of well-being for the sustainability of social and human capital.

Employee well-being in relation to positive psychology

The psychological, physical, and social well-being are the main aspects of work-related well-being (Fisher, 2014; Guest, 2017). Employee well-being includes employees' subjective perceptions and feelings, the psychological experience, and satisfaction with their work and personal life (Zheng et al., 2015). According to the multidimensional model of well-being at work (De Simone, 2014), subjective well-being includes positive feelings about work, good mood, cognitive assessment, job satisfaction, social well-being and negative feelings experienced at work. In Seligman's well-being theory (2018) the hedonic, eudaimonic, and social elements have been supplemented with the factors of performance and positive relationships. Therefore, the acronym of the PERMA model reflects five pillars of well-being: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. The Workplace PERMA Profile (Kern, 2016) has been adapted to work context, as workplaces are attributed a significant role in positive emotions, relationships, meaningful work, success, and involvement (Kun et al., 2017; Nistor et al., 2023). It also examines factors of negative emotions, health, and loneliness (Butler and Kern, 2016; Kern, 2016). However, the PERMA model is criticized for its individualism, suggesting that individuals can only achieve happiness through themselves (Christopher et al., 2008). Contrary to studies (Coffey et al., 2014), Lambert et al. (2015) assesses the empirical validity of the PERMA model as limited. The result of the research by Jimenez et al. (2021) highlights the lack of conceptual fit between the PERMA and the Workplace PERMA profiles. However, the method is considered a significant predictor of subjective well-being (Donaldson et al., 2021).

Economic and labor market dimensions of organizational context

The digitalization-driven Industry 4.0 is leading to evolving methods of work, resulting in the transformation of employment, a growing demand for new professions, and lifelong learning (Eurofound, 2023; FMLSA, 2017; Landy and Conte, 2016). The prolonged active employment and aging society reflected in workplaces (Hesketh and Cooper, 2019) are compelling workers to continuously enhance their knowledge, skill, and health related competitiveness in the constantly changing labor market (Kővári, 2019). Consequently, in the VUCA world (Millar et al., 2018) – an acronym for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous – well-being is a critical factor for effective functioning and competitiveness of global economy (Hesketh and Cooper, 2019). Empirical study by Nemteanu et al. (2021) highlighted link between job instability, employee insecurity, and perceived employee satisfaction, directing employers' focus on improving employee satisfaction. The pandemic-caused psychological strain (Eurofound, 2021; 2023) and work organization affected employee well-being, workplace atmosphere, retention, commitment, work efficiency, resilience, and the successful operation of organizations (Coun et al., 2021; Görgényi-Hegyes et al., 2021; Platts et al., 2022; García-Valenzuela et al., 2023).

While employee well-being is a challenge for organizations (ENWHP, 2018), the workforce must be considered not only as cost, but also as a success factor. Elevating

employee well-being to a strategic level might be considered as a competitive edge (Androniceanu et al., 2020; Szabó and Juhász, 2019), and branding advantage (Fehér and Reich, 2020). Studies (Johnson et al., 2020; Shuck et al., 2017; Sutton et al., 2016) underscore that well-being programs led to improved employees' engagement, mental health, well-being, and performance. Organizations might influence employee well-being through fostering positive psychological climate and increasing employee engagement and motivation. This improves individual and organizational performance (Shuck and Reio, 2014; Uka and Prendi, 2021) and productivity (Ozminkowski et al., 2016; Hendriksen et al., 2016; Gubler et al., 2017).

To achieve this, a comprehensive approach is required in the physical, mental, financial, and spiritual health programs beyond the traditional means (Agarwal et al., 2019; Laine and Rinne 2015).

Employee well-being supported by human resource management tools and practices

According to the study by Zhang et al. (2020) employee well-being is positively affected by human resource management practices. Similarly, the employee well-being-oriented HRM model of Guest (2017) and the diagnostic and developmental model of health-conscious corporate behavior (Karoliny, 2016) describe HRM practices supporting employee well-being.

Employee well-being is described as a comprehensive „concept that characterizes the quality of the part of life spent at work, including aspects of occupational health, safety, and workplace atmosphere, and which can significantly determine productivity at the individual, corporate and social levels" (Schulte and Vainio, 2010 p. 422).

According to survey of Agarwal et al. (2019), there is a shift from traditional financial metrics of organizational performance towards their relationship with employees, customers, communities, and the society. Research predicts a growing emphasis on corporate social responsibility, where organizations care for their social and labor ecosystem (Agarwal et al., 2019; Stankevičiūtė and Wereda, 2020). According to the European Quality of Life Survey (Eurofound, 2023) subjective well-being showed a strong correlation with income, age, employment and health. According to Guest (2017; 2002) and Stankevičienė, et al. (2021) a family-friendly approach in HRM practices supports employee well-being. The purpose of training and development methods is to expand employees' knowledge and skills, achieve organizational goals (Zhang et al., 2020), and support employee well-being through the achievement of career goals.

Among HRM practices, organizations, through their reward strategy - provide monetary and nonmonetary benefits to employees in return for their work, performance, and commitment. Therefore, organizations intend to attract, retain, and motivate their current and future employees with a combined and customized set of reward elements (Armstrong, 2010). According to literature (Armstrong, 2010; Cooper et al., 2019; Dube and Freeman, 2010; Han and Kim, 2018; Hesketh and Cooper, 2019; Poór et al., 2018; Reimagining Work and Rewards Survey: 2021-2022, 2022; Reward management survey, 2022; WorldatWork, 2007), reward and benefit models include compensation, performance management, development and career opportunities, and social elements.

Findings of global rewards survey (Reimagining Work and Rewards Survey: 2021-2022) show that employers recognize the need for developing health, physical, mental, financial, and retirement-related well-being tools. Although 28% of the respondents have

taken countermeasures, 52 % are still considering actions to enhance well-being. The results of a survey among HR professionals in the USA (2023-24 SHRM State of the Workplace Report), show that although 66% of the organizations find employee mental health as a key challenge, only 39% consider the improvement of mental health programs.

Findings of the UK Reward management survey (2022) on employers' benefits - with the participation of 280 reward professionals - show that pandemic directed employers' attention to workplace health and financial benefits. According to the results, 92% of employers offer training and career development, 62% have a workplace pension scheme, and 78% offer employee assistance and counseling programs, followed by free drinks (73%), and free eye tests (63%). Private medical insurance offered by 50% of employers, however, only for limited employee groups. The least available benefits are the on-site medical facility (6%), massage (7%) or workplace faith support (8%).

Summarizing how literature supports research aims and methods

In summary, the research aims are supported by the literature review of well-being enhancing HRM practices (Guest, 2017; Zhang et al., 2020; Dube and Freeman, 2010; Han and Kim, 2018; Hesketh and Cooper, 2019; Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

To map organizational strategy and practices of employee well-being, qualitative interviews have been conducted. Literature (Armstrong, 2010; Cooper et al., 2019; Poór et al., 2018; Reimagining Work and Rewards Survey: 2021-2022, 2022; Reward management survey, 2022; WorldatWork, 2007) supported the identification and categorization of the identified HRM tools and practices. As a result, well-being-targeting HRM practices and tools have been summarized in a structured way.

To identify what well-being means for employees and what their preferences on related practices, the research tool has been developed based on qualitative data. According to Wang et al. (2020), HR practices are considered as mechanisms, which are conveying messages perceived by employees. Based on this, the current study examines how employer well-being approach is perceived by employees. As the examined organization identifies its well-being strategy as family-friendly (Guest, 2017; 2002; Stankevičienė, et al., 2021), therefore employees' perception has been examined according to this approach. To study what family-friendly organizational strategy mean for employees the positive psychology rooted Workplace PERMA questionnaire (Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2018) has been applied. As subjective well-being includes positive and negative feelings experienced at work (De Simone, 2014; Butler and Kern, 2016), the study examined whether there are distinctive employee characteristics that are related to positive and negative feelings at work. The examination has been conducted using the Workplace PERMA questionnaire.

Research methodology

Research objectives and research design

Employees' physical, mental, and social conditions affect the performance and competitiveness of organizations. Although workplaces play a significant role in the development of employee well-being, at the same time, little is known about how employee well-being appears in the strategies and practices of organizations. Little research is available (Kun et al., 2017) that examines it from the perspective of employees as stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2021). Therefore, this study examines the following research questions:

1. What does employee well-being mean for employees?

2. How employees' approach to well-being can be described through HRM practices and tools?
3. Does a family-friendly organizational strategy make employees feel that well-being is important?
4. What are the distinctive factors of employees' positive and negative feelings about work?

The first and second research questions have led to an exploratory research approach. The third and fourth research questions were designed to examine employee subjective perceptions and feelings related to physical, psychological, and social well-being (Guest, 2017; Zheng et al., 2015). Based on the qualitative phase and literature (Guest, 2017; 2002; Stankevičienė, et al., 2021; De Simone, 2014; Wang et al., 2020) the following two hypotheses have been defined:

Hypothesis 1. Employees consider that employee well-being is important for the organization and it is identified with family-friendly strategy and tools.

Hypothesis 2. Within the organization, employees' positive and negative feelings about work depend on gender, age, education, and position.

To support the examination of research questions and hypotheses, the research design follows the model of an exploratory sequential mixed method with embedded case study, described by Creswell and Clark (2018). Figure 1 presents the research design. The method exhibits the characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative methods. As novelty of the applied method, current research examines and compares both the employer and the employee perspectives regarding employee well-being. The qualitative exploratory phase of semi-structured interviews has been conducted with HRM experts. The results together with literature served to define the selection criteria for case study sampling and to establish the questionnaire of the quantitative research within the case study. The case study also consisted of both qualitative and quantitative sections. Semi-structured interviews with the leaders and HRM professionals of the examined organization have been conducted. It was followed by an online survey examining employees' perception of well-being strategy and toolkit of the examined organization. Employees' feelings have been examined through the measurement tool of Workplace PERMA Profile, included into the questionnaire. Statistical analysis of the data was conducted with the SPSS program. The integration and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data focused on drawing conclusions and identifying further research opportunities.

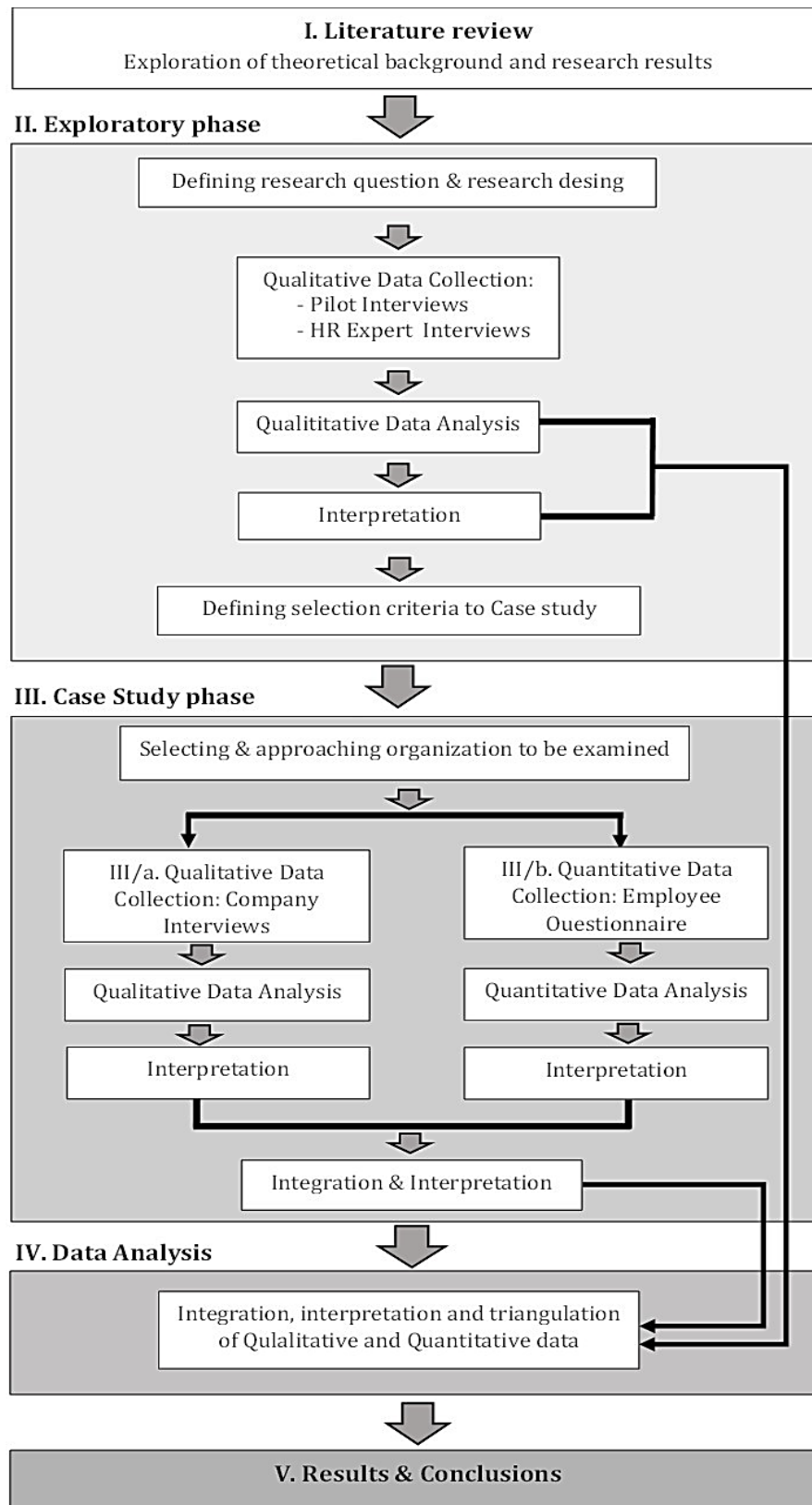


Figure 1. Exploratory sequential mixed method with embedded case study research design

Source: Authors' own contribution.

Exploratory qualitative research phase

Data collection. Interviews have been conducted with 27 leaders and HRM experts of local and international for-profit organizations, located in Hungary. Participants have been approached via non-probabilistic, access-based - convenience and snowball - sampling and through professional organizations. Data collection was carried out from 2022 till first half of 2023.

Method. The interview guide of the semi-structured interviews focused on the main research questions: “What kind of employee well-being strategy is defined by the organization?” and “What kind of tools, practices and methods are applied by the organization to support employee well-being?”. The interviews have been recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Results supported to define the selection criteria of case study sampling and to develop a research tool to investigate employees’ perception of well-being.

Case study

Method for selection of case study sampling

Based on the results of the exploratory qualitative phase, selection criteria (Table 1) have been established to define the participating organization in the case study research. Criteria of company size, background, labor market conditions, employment structure, activity and approach to well-being have been defined.

Although multinational companies provide well-established and rigorous methods to their local branches in the field of employment, compensation, and benefits, these are lacking a developmental approach of the local entities at a specific labor market. Therefore, a selection criterion was to study a locally registered company with no multinational background. Small-, and mid-sized companies were targeted, ensuring lower power distance of leadership. Regarding the contextual background, as a characteristic of a competitive labor market, the low unemployment rate is considered a potential driver of retention. Employment of white- and blue-collar workers, and production or manufacturing activities were considered as decisive to ensure diversity in workforce and presumably also in well-being approach. Related HRM practices or dealing with employee well-being at some level, were important criteria.

Table 1. Organizations meeting selection criteria for case study

Selection aspects	Selection criteria	Number of organizations meeting criteria
Size	Small-, mid-sized: <500 employees	9
Background	No multinational background	8
Competitive labor market	Low unemployment	16
Employment structure	Having blue-collar workers	10
Field of activity	Production, manufacturing	7
Approach to employee well-being	Having related tools and practices	13
Organizations meeting all criteria		2

Source: Authors’ own research.

Qualitative research phase within case study

Data collection. Qualitative interviews were focusing on the well-being strategy and related tools of the selected organization. Data collection has been conducted in June-July 2023. The

semi-structured interviews followed the interview guide of the exploratory qualitative research phase.

Method. Semi-structured qualitative interviews (7) have been conducted with leaders and HRM professionals of the company.

Quantitative research phase within the case study

Data collection. Based on the results of the exploratory quantitative phase, employees' perception of well-being, and feelings at work of the employees have been investigated. Employees of the examined organization have been contacted via email and internal newsletter. Research has been conducted in 2023 August-September, following the ethical and GDPR regulations. Accordingly, personal information suitable for respondents' identification was not included in the questionnaire. The online survey was carried out on designated tablets, where respondents logged in directly to the researchers' questionnaire interface. This ensured anonymity and provided employees with more confidence and willingness to participate. The questionnaire could be filled out by both white- and blue-collar employees during working hours. To check interpretability problems, 10 employees answered the questions, and as they were able to interpret all questions, the survey was sent out without changes.

Method. A self-developed online questionnaire was designed based on the well-being-oriented tools identified in the exploratory qualitative phase and on literature review (Armstrong, 2010; Dube and Freeman, 2010; Han and Kim, 2018; Hesketh and Cooper, 2019; Poór et al., 2018; Reimagining Work and Rewards Survey: 2021–2022, 2022; Reward management survey, 2022; WorldatWork, 2007). The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The structure of the questionnaire is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Structure of the questionnaire

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3				Section 4	
Sample specification	Employees' perception on wellbeing	Employees' preferences and utilization of wellbeing tools				Employees' feelings and experiences regarding work, work, content, job satisfaction	
	How employees define wellbeing at work	Benefits	Learning & Development	Health promotion programs	Community events	Workplace PERMA Profile	
						Positive emotions	Negative emotions
Gender	"Does the organization have a wellbeing strategy?"	Short term monetary	Job role & competencies	Information sharing	Joint activities	"In general, how valuable, and worthwhile you feel what you do at work?"	"How often do you feel anxious at work?"
Age	"How important employee wellbeing is at the organization?"	Recreational	Organizational	Physical health	Family	"How purposeful and meaningful is your work?"	"How often do you feel angry at work?"
Education		Health related	Advancement	Psychological health	Charity		
Position	"What is the purpose of developing employee wellbeing?"	Employee life cycle & situational	Health		Mixed	"How exciting and interesting do you find your work?"	"How often do you feel sad at work?"
Employment	"Which organizational unit is responsible for employee wellbeing?"	Long term care & counselling				"How often do you feel joy during your work?"	"How lonely do you feel at work?"
	"What does employee wellbeing mean for you?"	Work environment				"How often do you achieve the important work-related goals you set for yourself?"	
						"How often do you feel positive at work?"	

Source: Authors' own contribution.

The first section was asking respondents' characteristics, such as gender, age, education, position, and employment. The second was asking employees about their perception on the strategy, importance, and purpose of employee well-being. Employees have been asked to identify the organizational unit responsible for employee well-being. The respondents were also asked to answer the open question of "What does employee well-being mean for you?". In the third section, respondents were asked to rate their utilization and preferences of benefits, learning and development, health development programs, and community events provided by the organization. In case of each well-being tool respondents had to rate their answer on a five-grade scale: 1: "I use it and it is useful". 2: "Available, but I don't use it", 3: "Not available, but would be important", 4: "Not available and not needed", 5: "I don't know". The fourth section of the questionnaire was examining employees' feelings and experiences at work. For this purpose, the Workplace PERMA profile questionnaire (Kern, 2016) with 23 items had been applied.

Respondents had to answer 44 questions in total, out of that 2 were open, the rest were closed questions. The questions were based on metric and categorical variables. For metric variables, the Likert scale was used. To test the reliability of the questionnaire, a new random group of 10 respondents answered the questions. As they gave results comparable to the other respondents, the researchers accepted the reliability of the questions.

Results and discussion

Results of exploratory qualitative research phase

According to interviewees, organizations lack a conscious strategic approach regarding employee well-being, however a wide range of tools have been identified. Supported by literature (Armstrong, 2010; Dube and Freeman, 2010; Han and Kim, 2018; Hesketh and Cooper, 2019; Poór et al., 2018; Reimagining Work and Rewards Survey: 2021–2022, 2022; Reward management survey, 2022; WorldatWork, 2007), interview results contributed to identify well-being tools in the following categories as presented in Table 3:

- Benefits: Short-term monetary, Recreational, Work environment-related, Health-related, Life cycle and situational, Long-term care and counselling;
- Training and development programs: Job role and competence related, Organizational, Advancement- and Health-related;
- Health promotion programs: Information sharing, Physical health-, Psychological-health related;
- Community events: Joint activities, Family-related, Charity, Mixed items.

The codes in Table 3 are as follows: B: Benefits, LD: Learning & Development programs, H: Health development programs, C: Community events. Although the categories of some learning and health development programs showed overlap, they are kept separately due to their different approach.

Table 3. Organizational tools supporting employee well-being

Benefits							
Short term monetary		Recreational		Health related		Employee lifecycle & situation	
B1	Loyalty bonus	B10	Variable benefit system	B7	Occupational health service	B8	Schooling support
B2	13th month salary					B12	Child birth gift
B3	Commuting support	B1	Recreational	B9	Medical checks	B16	Social, funeral support
B4	Performance bonus	8	variable benefit	B14	Health insurance	B21	Salary advancement
B5	Gifts	B32	Cultural, sport tickets	B20	Glasses support	B22	Kinder garden support
B6	Performance based wage					B23	Specialists' Medical checks
B11	Overhead cost support	B34	Vacation, recreation support	B24	Healthfund	B38	Relocation support
B15	Company car usage, sharing, parking					B33	Vaccination
B17	Private usage of phone	B36	Sport support	B33	Vaccination	Long term care & counselling	
B19	Company bus	B40	Company gym	B42	Dental service	B25	Voluntary pension
B27	Meal support, canteen	Work environment		B45	Massage	B26	Stock option
B28	Partner discounts	B13	Rest area			B30	Study contract
B29	Home office overhead cost	B43	Dog friendly office			B41	Financial counselling
B31	Fruit day					B44	Mental counselling
B35	Own product discount					B47	Legal counselling
Learning & Development programs							
Job role & competencies		Organizational		Advancement		Health	
LD2	Professional	LD	Team cooperation	LD5	Leadership development	LD12	Training on physical health
LD6	IT, computer	LD3	Mentoring				
LD13	Language	LD4	Knowledge sharing	LD8	Career planning	LD14	Training on mental health
LD9	Soft skill development						
		LD7	Coaching	LD11	Support to higher & secondary education		
Health development programs							
Information sharing		Physical health		Psychological health			
H1	Covid related	H5	Healthy lifestyle, nutrition	H3	Time management		
H2	First aid					H4	Self-awareness
		H7	Sleep-health	H6	Stress management		
		H9	Quitting smoking	H8	Psychology themed		
Community events							
Joint activities		Family		Charity		Mixed	
C1	Teambuilding events	C3	Family day	C6	Donations	C8	Events related to world days
C2	Christmas dinner, party	C7	Santa's celebration	C9	Blood donation		
C4	Company trip					C11	Volunteering
C5	Employee anniversaries, retirement						
C12	Joint sports activity						

Source: Authors' own research.

Results of case study phase

Characteristics of the case study sample. The number of organizations that meet the defined selection criteria is presented in Table 1. From the interviewed companies, two have met the selection criteria, and the one with higher number of employees (325 employees) has been requested and agreed to participate in the research. According to criteria (Table 1), the selected organization is a mid-sized company registered in Hungary, manufacturing metal structures, although under foreign ownership, but having no multinational background. It employs 325 employees and has a flat structure with four leadership layers. The company operates in a highly competitive labor market with 2.4% unemployment rate vs. country average of 3.9% (KSH, 2023), coupled with the absorption effect of the neighboring Austrian labor market (Konszenzus Alapítvány, 2018) due to 30% higher median hourly earnings (Eurostat, 2018).

Results of qualitative research phase within the case study

In the selected organization, the analysis of interviews revealed that there is no defined well-being strategy, however, employees are the focus. The company identifies itself as a family-friendly workplace and considers it as a distinctive employer branding strategy in the competitive labor market. According to the interviewees, the purpose of the family-friendly approach is to support the quality of life and to attract potential employees. Although interviewees referred to 'family-friendly employer' as a strategy, and there is a wide range of tools and benefits, the company is lacking a conscious strategic planning and execution in the field of well-being. Employee satisfaction surveys are conducted, however, not systematically, and results are not channeled back neither into HRM practices, nor into employee communications. Based on the well-being-oriented tools defined in the exploratory phase (Table 3), the analysis of case study interviews supported to identify well-being tools at the examined organization. The HRM practices and tools available in the examined organization are indicated in gray (Table 4).

Table 4. Employee well-being-oriented tools at the examined company

Benefits							
Short term monetary		Recreational		Health related		Employee lifecycle & situation	
B1	Loyalty bonus	B10	Variable benefit system	B7	Occupational health service	B8	Schooling support
B2	13th month salary		B1	Recreational variable benefit	B9	Medical checks	B12
B3	Commuting support	8			B14	Health insurance	B16
B4	Performance bonus	B32	Cultural, sport tickets	B20	Glasses support	B21	Salary advancement
B5	Gifts		B34	Vacation, recreation support	B23	Specialists' Medical checks	B22
B6	Performance based wage	B36			Sport support	B24	Healthfund
B11	Overhead cost support	B40	Company gym	B33	Vaccination	B38	Relocation support
B15	Company car usage, sharing, parking	Work environment		B42	Dental service	B39	Workers hostel
B17	Private usage of phone	B13	Rest area	B45	Massage	Long term care & counselling	
B19	Company bus		B43	Dog friendly office	B46	Physiotherapy	B25
B27	Meal support, canteen					B26	Stock option
B28	Partner discounts					B30	Study contract
B29	Home office overhead cost					B41	Financial counselling
B31	Fruit day					B44	Mental counselling
B35	Own product discount					B47	Legal counselling
Learning & Development programs							
Job role & competencies		Organizational		Advancement		Health	
LD2	Professional	LD	Team cooperation	LD5	Leadership development	LD12	Training on physical health
LD6	IT, computer	LD3	Mentoring		LD8	Career planning	LD14
LD13	Language	LD4	Knowledge sharing	LD10		Study contract	
LD9	Soft skill development	LD7	Coaching	LD11	Support to higher & secondary education		
Health development programs							
Information sharing		Physical health		Psychological health			
H1	Covid related	H5	Healthy lifestyle, nutrition	H3	Time management		
H2	First aid		H4	Self-awareness	H6	Stress management	
		H7	Sleep-health	H8	Psychology themed		
		H9	Quitting smoking				
Community events							
Joint activities		Family		Charity		Mixed	
C1	Teambuilding events	C3	Family day	C6	Donations	C8	Events related to world days
C2	Christmas dinner, party	C7	Santa's celebration	C9	Blood donation		C10
C4	Company trip				C11	Volunteering	
C5	Employee anniversaries, retirement						
C12	Joint sports activity						

Source: Authors' own research.

The organizational toolkit is dominated by short-term monetary and employee lifecycle-related benefits. Community events are considered as determinant means of strengthening engagement, positive feelings of employees through social relationships, and also reflecting the family-friendly approach of the company. The organization lacks both physical and mental health development tools, benefits, or learning programs, which might contribute to the renewal of its human assets.

Results of the quantitative research phase within the case study

Out of the total of 325 employees of the examined organization, the long-term inactive (14), leased (18) and contracted (10) workforce have been excluded from the survey to ensure data quality. The total number of eligible employees to participate in the survey was 283. Of the total number of eligible employees, the online questionnaire has been filled out by 222 persons, with a 78.44% response rate. The sample number was calculated according to Yamane's formula in Figure 2 (Louangrath and Sutanapong, 2019). At the 95% confidence level ($p=0.05$), the value of the formula is: $N=283, 283/(1+ 283*0.05*0.05)=166$. The sample number was 222, which is higher than 166; therefore, sample number has been accepted.

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e^2)}$$

Figure 2. Yamane's formula
Source: Louangrath and Sutanapong, 2019

The first section of the questionnaire was asking about respondents' characteristics, such as gender, age, education, position, and employment. The sample identified as 90 women and 132 men. 21.2% of the respondents were under 30 years of age, 33.3% were between 30 and 40 years, 29.7% were between 40 and 50 years and 15.8% were over 50 years of age. Most women in the sample were between 40 and 50 years of age (36.7%), while most men were between 30 and 40 years old (36.4%). In terms of education, 46.4% did not have a high school graduation, 33.3% had a high school graduation, and 20.3% had a college or university degree. 52.2% of women and 42.4% of men did not have a high school graduation. The split of employment is as follows: blue-collar employees (57.7%), group leaders (5.9%), white-collar employees (27.5%) and mid- and senior management (9%) of the total workforce. Most of the respondents were subordinates (85.1%), while 14.9% were leaders. 11% of women were leaders, for men this ratio was 17.4%.

The second section of the questionnaire was asking employees about their perception on the strategy, importance, purpose of employee well-being and about the related responsibility of the organization. Regarding strategy, 71.1% of respondents think that the organization has a well-being strategy - either as a company (52.25%) or as an HRM strategy (18.91%) - while 22.9% answered as „I do not know”.

Respondents have been asked to consider how important employee well-being is at the organization by evaluating it on a scale of five, where 1 meant 'Not agree at all', and 5 meant 'Fully agree'. The average result of 4.48 reflects that employees perceive the organization as paying attention to well-being. The standard deviation value was 0.765, i.e., respondents had a similar opinion. The metric variable was not normally distributed,

therefore, a nonparametric test has been performed to determine how much personal characteristics influence their perception. The Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis test has been applied to analyze whether there is a difference based on gender, age, education, and position (Table 5). According to data, the respondents did not have a different opinion on the given question based on their distinctive characteristics.

Table 5. How important employee well-being is in your organization? $p=0.05$.

Factors	Mann-Whitney-test	Kruskal-Wallis test
Gender	Mann-Whitney U:5906 sign.:0.933 $p>0.05$	
Age		Kruskal-Wallis H:7.679 sign.:0.053 $p>0.05$
Education		Kruskal-Wallis H:1.674 sign.:0.433 $p>0.05$
Position	Mann-Whitney U:2628.5 sign.:0.096 $p>0.05$	

Source: Authors' own research.

For the question of "What is the purpose of developing employee well-being?" respondents could choose from multiple choices. The top three answers were: "higher employee satisfaction", "engagement", and that "employees to feel themselves better". While the least important reasons were "lower fluctuation", and "acquiring new businesses or growth".

Respondents have been asked to identify the responsible organizational unit designated to employee well-being. According to 60.3% of respondents, "HR department" is the designated organizational unit responsible for employee well-being, 14.9% consider the responsibility of "Senior management", 11.7% answered as "I do not know", 6.3% voted for "Health and Safety department", while 5.4% believes that "There is no designated responsible unit".

Respondents were asked to provide input for the open question of "What does employee well-being mean for you?". Table 6 presents the most frequent responses.

*Table 6. Summary of respondents' feedback to question
"What does employee well-being mean for you?"*

The concept and definition of well-being according to respondents
A living wage
Balancing work and private life
Adequate work environment
Employee physical and mental well-being
Good atmosphere at work

Source: Authors' own research.

Based on results, the employees' view reflects a complex interpretation of well-being. To the open question of "What does employee well-being mean for you?", respondents answered that it is when employees feel themselves well at the workplace. For employees, well-being is mostly associated with a salary range, which allows the individual to work

without being anxious about making a living is. According to results, well-being also identified with good atmosphere, physical and mental health, suitable working conditions, social, collegial relationships, and work - life balance. Considering the results, it can be stated that although the examined company pays attention to the well-being of its employees, respondents in the sample interpret employee well-being as more complex than what is defined in the hypothesis; therefore, the first hypothesis has not been accepted.

In the third section of the questionnaire respondents have been asked about their preferences and utilization of well-being tools of benefits, learning and development, health development programs, and community events. The most used and useful benefits are monetary related, such as loyalty bonus (83.7%), 13th month salary (82.4%), commuting support (68.4%), performance bonus (66.6%) and gifts for Christmas and Women's Day (65.7%). Contrasting the results with the interviews, employees believe that the 13th-month salary as a benefit element is existing; however, due to the inconsistent approach of the organization, the company-level performance bonus is referred to as 13th month salary. Those benefits that are not available, but respondents would consider as useful are reflecting non-monetary, recreational, and health-related aspects, such as, vacation and recreational support (64.8%), variable benefit system (63.9%), medical check-ups (62.1%) and massage (61.2%). The high need for meal support or canteen (68%) could be considered a mixed benefit featuring the characteristics of both monetary and health purposes.

According to the second hypothesis, the analysis focused on how employees feel during work and what personal factors influence their feelings. Therefore, the fourth section of the questionnaire examined employees' feelings and experiences at work. For this purpose, respondents were asked to rate their answers on a 10-point Likert scale in the Workplace PERMA profile (Kern, 2016). The Likert scale has been re-coded into a 5-point scale for easier interpretation, where one meant 'Not typical at all', and five meant 'Completely typical'. Table 7 shows the mean (M) and standard deviation values (SD).

Table 7. Positive and negative feelings at work (M, SD)

Questions	N		M	SD
	Valid	Missing		
Questions about positive feelings				
How often do you feel joy during your work?	222	0	3.3559	1.14332
How often do you feel positive at work?	222	0	3.6216	1.11797
How exciting and interesting do you find your work?	222	0	3.9324	1.14549
How purposeful and meaningful is your work?	222	0	3.9865	0.99537
In general, how valuable, and worthwhile you feel what you do at work?	222	0	4.0450	1.01471
How often do you achieve the important work-related goals you set for yourself?	222	0	3.9369	0.97738
Questions about negative feelings				
How often do you feel anxious at work?	222	0	2.6802	1.36586
How often do you feel angry at work?	222	0	2.8288	1.30001
How often do you feel sad at work?	222	0	2.1532	1.18205
How lonely do you feel at work?	222	0	2.0721	1.31618

Source: Authors' own research.

Data shows that negative feelings during work received a much lower average than positive feelings in the sample. Employees feel the meaning and importance of their work, so the content of work usually provides satisfaction for them. This is probably also the reason why the positive meaning of the completed task causes less anger, anxiety, and loneliness during work. It has also been analyzed which factors are closely correlated with workplace sadness and joy. Those relationships have been examined where the Pearson's correlation coefficient was stronger than 0.4. Based on this, it can be concluded that joy has a close positive relationship with the set goals ($r: .485$), the content of the work ($r: .582$), how interesting the work is ($r: .614$), the frequency of positive feelings ($.723$), while there is a negative correlation between sadness and joy ($r: -.423$). Analyzing sadness, it has a strong positive correlation with anxiety ($r: .462$), loneliness ($r: .466$), anger ($r: .624$), and a negative correlation with positive feelings ($r: -.523$). For further analysis, the variables in Table 8 have been compressed into factors. All variables were suitable for factor formation: the KMO Bartlett test: 0.853, Approx. Chi-square: 1016.710, $df:45$, $sign.:0.000$. The factors were created with Varimax rotation, the explained variance ratio is 62.932%. Two factors have been created and the rotated component matrix and Cronbach Alpha values are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Component matrix

Factors	Items	Component		Cronbach Alpha
		1	2	
Positive emotions	In general, how valuable, and worthwhile you feel what you do at work?	0.844		0.893
	How purposeful and meaningful is your work?	0.835		
	How exciting and interesting do you find your work?	0.821		
	How often do you feel joy during your work?	0.743		
	How often do you achieve the important work-related goals you set for yourself?	0.689		
	How often do you feel positive at work?	0.678		
Negative emotions	How often do you feel anxious at work?		0.736	0.771
	How often do you feel angry at work?		0.753	
	How often do you feel sad at work?		0.775	
	How lonely do you feel at work?		0.709	

Source: Authors' own research.

Out of the two factors created, one contains positive and the other includes negative feelings. Cronbach-Alpha values show that the reliability of the factors is acceptable. Using the factors, clusters have been created to examine which homogeneous groups could be formed from the sample based on positive and negative feelings. The clustering has been completed by applying the K-means method and, as a result, three clusters have been formed (Table 9).

Table 9. Cluster centers

	Cluster		
	1	2	3
Positive feelings	-1.66469	0.48091	0.12022
Negative feelings	-0.11678	-0.61128	1.20776

Source: Authors' own research.

Based on results, three clusters have been formed:

- Cluster 1: Positive and negative feelings are very low in this group, but especially positive feelings are low.
- Cluster 2: A strong positive feeling can be identified in this group.
- Cluster 3: There are employees with strong negative feelings in this cluster.

There are 39 respondents in the first cluster, 119 in the second, and 64 in the third. The influence of personal characteristics – such as gender, age, education, and position - has been examined in relation to the defined clusters. Based on gender, 51.5% of men and 56.7% of women can be classified in the second cluster, and based on gender, there is no significant correlation between classification in the cluster and gender (Chi-square: 1.106 sign.:575 $p > 0.05$). Based on the age classification, for all ages there are the most people in the second cluster, and no significant relationship can be verified (Chi-square: 3.712 sign.:716 $p > 0.05$). According to education, 50.5% of those without a high school degree, 54.1% of those with a high school education, and 60% of college and university graduates are in the second cluster, but the correlation was not identifiable here either (Chi-square: 2.368 sign.:668 $p > 0.05$). According to position, 51.9% of subordinates and 63.6% of leaders are in the second group (Chi-square: 1.665 sign.:435 $p > 0.05$). Based on the above results, it can be stated that there is no correlation between work-related feelings and the examined individual characteristics (gender, age, education, position) in the given sample.

Results of data integration

As a result of analysis, the Workplace PERMA profile (Kern, 2016) of the examined organization has been defined and presented in Figure 3. The analysis of the Workplace PERMA profile resulted in an average overall well-being indicator of 7.25 at the examined organization on a scale of 0-10.

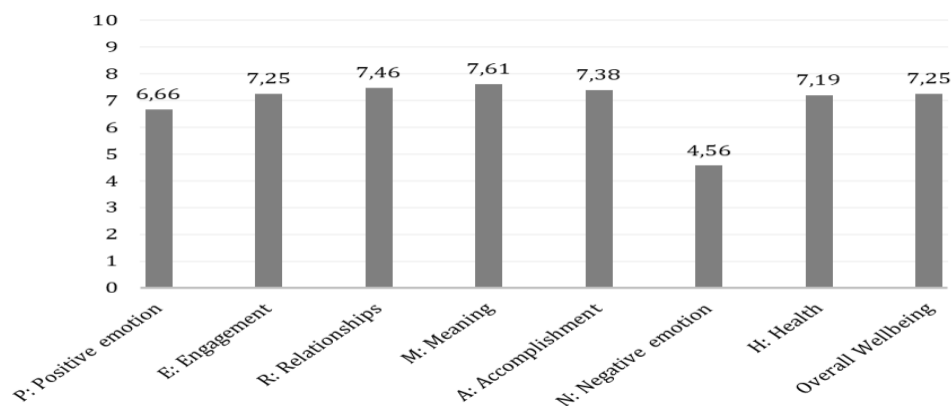


Figure 3. Workplace PERMA Profile of the organization

Source: Authors' own research, based on Workplace PERMA profile (Kern, 2016).

The results show that the employees have positive emotions related to their work. The highest ranked value of “Meaning” reflects that employees consider their work as purposeful, meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile, and it has a sense of direction. Examining the single scores, the highest result is for an “Accomplishment” related question (8.49), suggesting that employees can manage their work-related responsibilities. While the lowest (6.26) feedback for a “Positive emotions” related question reveals that employees feel moderate joy during work. Respondents’ feedback for “Negative emotions” related questions about feeling sad at work (3.76), and to question about “Loneliness” (3.5) signal that majority of employees is not feeling sad and has social relationship at work.

Data integration has been conducted in a way that results of two sections in the questionnaire – well-being-oriented tools and Workplace PERMA Profile – have been contrasted. Therefore, as a first step each respondent’s Workplace PERMA Profile has been created which resulted in an individual well-being indicator. As a second step, employees’ individual well-being indicators have been compared to the overall well-being indicator of the organization. Based on whether they are above or below that level, two groups have been formed. Group ‘A’ consists of 130 employees (58.6%) with well-being indicators above the overall indicator of the company. While group ‘B’ consists of 92 employees (41.4%) with well-being indicators below the company average. As a third step, Groups ‘A’ and ‘B’ have been contrasted with the questionnaire results about well-being-oriented tools. Table 10 presents the common and different approach of groups ‘A’ and ‘B’ regarding the perceived availability, utilization, and preferences of benefits, learning and development, health programs, and community events. Those tools that are existing at the examined organization are indicated with grey in Table 10. The codes in Table 10 are the same presented in Table 3. The codes are as follows: B: Benefits, LD: Learning & Development programs, H: Health development programs, C: Community events.

The comparison of groups ‘A’ and ‘B’ revealed similarities. Preferences are highly overlapping which shows that the organization covers diverse employee needs with a wide range of well-being tools – as reflected in the “I use it and it is useful” answer. Both groups categorized those items that are related to employees’ actual situation or life cycle, e.g., “schooling support” under the feedback of “Available, but I do not use it”. There is a high level of common perception that benefits related to health and recreation are missing. Under the category of “I do not know”, complex items such as long-term benefits – e.g., voluntary pension fund, relocation support – as well as individual situational issues – e.g., social support, study contract - are marked by both groups. The results highlight that community events could support – but not exclusively – employees’ needs for a good atmosphere. The missing physical and mental health-related benefits and development programs are leaving employees’ expectations unsatisfied.

Differences show that group ‘B’ is lacking health related benefits. In contrast, group ‘A’ responded for the availability of health benefits as “I do not know”, reflecting of having either no opinion, or not missing health development programs from their sense of well-being. The results also indicate that items or terminology may not be known and understood. Group ‘B’ also considers items as missing, which are available at the organization. The high number of uncertain responses – even in case of group ‘A’ – might show that employees’ understanding of the phenomenon of well-being and related tools might be incomplete. It might be due to the lack of defined well-being strategy and consciousness in related communication, however, might be subject of further study.

Table 10. Comparison of perceptions regarding well-being tools between employee profiles 'A' and 'B'

	"I use it and it is useful"	"Available, but I don't use it"	"Not available, but would be important"	"Not available and not needed"	"I don't know"
Different perceptions of Employee profile 'A'	H1: Covid related	H2: First aid	B11: Overhead cost support	LD8: Career planning	B13: Rest area
					B14: Health insurance
					B17: Private usage of phone
					B20: Glasses support
					B24: Healthfund
					B32: Cultural, sport tickets
					B33: Vaccination
					B35: Own product discount
					B37: Rental support
					B41: Financial counselling
					LD9: Soft skill development
					LD14: Trainings on mental health
					C12: Joint sports activity, event
					H3: Time management
Similar perceptions of employee profiles 'A' and 'B'	B1: Loyalty bonus	B8: Schooling support	B9: Medical checks	B43: Dog friendly office	B16: Social, funeral support
	B2: 13th month salary	B12: Child birth gift	B10: Variable benefit system		B22: Kinder garden support
	B3: Commuting support	B15: Company car usage, sharing, parking	B18: Recreational variable benefit system		B25: Voluntary pension fund
	B4: Performance bonus	B19: Company bus	B23: Specialists' Medical checks		B26: Stock option
	B5: Christmas, women's day gift	B21: Salary advancement	B27: Meal support, canteen		B28: Partner discounts
	B6: Performance based wage	LD3: Mentoring	B34: Vacation, recreation support		B29: Home office- overhead support
	B7: Occupational health service	LD5: Leadership development	B31: Fruit day		B30: Study contract
	LD1: Teambuilding training	C7: Santa's celebration	B36: Sport support		B38: Relocation support
	LD2: Professional	C9: Blood donation	B40: Company gym		B39: Workers hostel
	C1: Team building opportunities		B42: Dentist		LD4: Knowledge sharing
	C2: Christmas dinner, party		B44: Mental counselling		LD7: Coaching
	C3: Family day		B45: Massage		LD10: Study contract
	C4: Company trip		B46: Physiotherapy		LD11: Support to higher/secondary education
	C5: Employee anniversaries, retirement		B47: Legal counselling		C8: Events related to world days
Different perceptions of Employee profile 'B'	C6: Donations		LD6: IT, computer		C10: Employee classified / social ads
			LD12: Trainings on physical health		C11: Volunteering
			LD13: Language		
			H5: Healthy lifestyle, nutrition		
			H6: Stress management		
			B13: Rest area	B33: Vaccination	B11: Overhead cost support
			B14: Health insurance	LD9: Soft skill development	LD8: Career planning
			B17: Private usage of phone		
			B20: Glasses support	LD14: Trainings on mental health	
			B24: Healthfund		
			B32: Cultural, sport tickets	H1: Covid related	
			B35: Own product discount	H9: Quitting smoking	
			B37: Rental support		
			B41: Financial counselling		
			C12: Joint sports activity, event		
			H2: First aid		
			H3: Time management		
			H4: Self-awareness		
			H7: Sleep-health		
			H9: Quitting smoking		
			H8: Psychologically themed		

Source: Authors' own research.

Key research findings

In contrast to literature that emphasizes the operation of organizations along strategies (Wright et al., 2018), and considering employee well-being strategy as a competitive advantage in the changing labor market (Androniceanu et al., 2020), HRM expert interviews revealed that organizations do not have a defined employee well-being strategy, despite highlighting its importance.

According to literature, employee well-being includes employees' subjective perceptions and feelings related to physical, psychological, and social well-being (Guest, 2017; Zheng et al., 2015). Therefore, in the quantitative section, employees' perceptions have been investigated with a self-developed online questionnaire. It can be concluded that employee well-being is a complex phenomenon for employees of the examined organization, including earning for living, work-life balance, adequate work environment, good atmosphere, physical and mental well-being. However, overall well-being means for employees that they would like to feel themselves well at the workplace. The first hypothesis based on research question of whether a family-friendly strategy of the organization makes employees feel that well-being is important has been rejected. It concludes into the thesis that despite the examined organization's family-friendly approach and attention to employee well-being, respondents interpreted employee well-being as more complex than a tool that help their work-life balance. Current findings support earlier studies (De Simone, 2014), as subjective well-being at work includes positive and negative feelings experienced at work. Since no distinctive factors have been found regarding employees' positive and negative feelings about work, the second hypothesis has been rejected. The second thesis has been formulated as employees' positive and negative feelings about work do not depend on specifics such as gender, age, education, or position in the given sample. Based on the results, the following theses have been formulated (Table 11).

Table 11. Hypothesis-Thesis table

Hypothesis	Acceptance / Rejection	Thesis
Employees consider that employee well-being is important for the organization, and it is identified with family-friendly strategy and tools.	Rejected	The given company pays attention to the well-being of its employees, but the respondents in the given sample interpret employee well-being as more complex than family-friendly tools that help to balance work and private life.
Within the organization, employees' positive and negative feelings about work depend on gender, age, education, and position.	Rejected	Within the organization, employees' positive and negative feelings about work do not depend on gender, age, education, and position.

Source: Authors' own contribution.

Although not as a defined strategy, but the importance of employee well-being has been recognized at the sample organization, in alignment with the growing emphasis on corporate responsibility towards the labor ecosystem (Agarwal et al., 2019; Stankevičiūtė and Wereda, 2020), and branding (Fehér and Reich, 2020). Despite lacking a conscious strategic approach, employees' positive perception is reflected in the overall Workplace PERMA Profile of the organization. Mapping employee preferences and sensed deficits of HRM practices highlighted that employee needs are satisfied with short-term monetary tools.

However, long-term health development programs are missing that could contribute to the renewal of human assets and could support employee engagement and organizational performance, as suggested by the literature (Shuck et al., 2017; Shuck and Reio, 2014; Sutton et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The aim of the research was to explore how organizations deal with employee well-being and support it through their strategy and tools. As little is known about how employee well-being appears in HRM strategies and practices of organizations, the novelty of the research is to examine the subject from the perspective of employees as stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2021). It indicates the novelty of the research that organizational well-being strategies and tools have been identified and contrasted with employee perception in the framework of a sequential exploratory mixed method (Creswell and Clark, 2018) research design.

The limitation of research arises from the exploratory mixed method as it encounters the challenges of an uncharted interdisciplinary field, which has been intended to minimize with triangulation (Creswell and Clark, 2018; Hussain et al., 2013). The single case study with a limited number of employees also represents a limitation of the study.

Future research is recommended in a larger sample reflecting the diverse characteristic of employee well-being. However, the theoretical value of the research findings is that they might expand the existing knowledge by directing the focus to the strategic nature of well-being (ENWHP, 2018). Integrating and contrasting the results of employee perceptions and Workplace PERMA Profile might also contribute to the theoretical value of the research and provide basis to further studies. Findings could support further examination of HRM practices in supporting employee well-being, and the involvement of employees as stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2021; Guest, 2002). As a practical implication, the results of employee perceptions on well-being might contribute to the development of complex employee well-being tools in contrast to incidentally separate practices (Guest, 2017; Karoliny, 2016). The economic, technological, environmental, and social changes draw the attention to employees' bio-psycho-social well-being, as a cornerstone of workforce sustainability and competitiveness at current and future labor market. In addition to the development of individual and social levels, the novel approach of interpreting well-being as a strategy might also contribute to economic competitiveness.

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