

Editorial Note: Sustainability And Well-Being in A Post-Pandemic World

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects on organizations, employees and communities worldwide. While it unleashed an unprecedented wave of difficulties upon them, there were also notable positive changes that emerged. The reduced activity during lockdowns led to clearer city skylines, fresher air and even signs of environmental repair. The pandemic also served as a catalyst for the emergence of sustainability and well-being as pivotal pillars for society.

Sustainability is the principle of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations General Assembly, 1987: p. 24). It encompasses three interconnected pillars of environmental, social and economic dimensions (Boyer et al., 2016; Purvis et al., 2019), which should be perfectly balanced with each other in an ideal world. On the other hand, well-being revolves around the physical, mental and emotional health of individuals, promoting a state of balance and contentment in their lives (Dodge et al., 2012). It encompasses not only health and disease-free living but also elements that contribute to overall life satisfaction such as happiness, fitness and aptitude to endure (Manchanda, 2017). The overall well-being of an individual is the state of being content in all aspects of one's social, psychological and physical existence, including one's family situation, friendships, consumption habits, leisure activities, daily routine activities, profession, health and life skills (Minton et al., 2022).

The interconnectedness of sustainability and well-being highlights the intricate relationship between the health of individuals and the health of the environment. The health and well-being of the earth and its inhabitants are interdependent; people and nature need to work in harmony for the benefit of each other. This dependency becomes paramount because access to green spaces and natural environments has been found to mitigate stress and foster better mental well-being (Beyer et al., 2014). As we pursue progress and prosperity, it is vital to acknowledge the importance of fostering not only individual welfare but also the well-being of various interconnected facets of our society. In this Editorial Note, we embark on a journey to explore four key dimensions of well-being: consumer well-being, elderly well-being, environmental well-being, and employee well-being.

CONSUMER WELL-BEING

A condition in which the purchase, preparation, consumption, ownership, maintenance and disposal of commodities result in happiness for the individual and society as a whole is referred to as consumer well-being. Consumer well-being is a measure for assessing how satisfied consumers are with their purchases throughout the entire consumption process. Both the acquisition and possession of a product together indicate the overall consumer satisfaction and measure the consumer well-being of the individual (Lee et al., 2002; Manchanda, 2017).

Consumer well-being is composed of three key elements: consumer satisfaction, positive emotions, and perceived quality of life. It refers to the emotional and cognitive reactions that consumers experience throughout their interactions with products and services. Various factors, including personal beliefs, social and cultural influences, brand considerations, product and service attributes and behavioral variables, can all impact a consumer's well-being. Moreover, consumer well-being plays a vital role in promoting customer loyalty,

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psychological and physical wellness, and word-of-mouth advertising (Zhao, 2019). Higher levels of consumer well-being correlate with an elevated quality of life. This significance has led to increasing attention from academics in consumer behavior, economics and psychology, recognizing its potential contribution to overall life satisfaction (Manchanda, 2017; Pancer and Handelman, 2012). As society becomes more interested in well-being practices such as meditation, life coaching, wellness tourism and work/life balance programs, the study of consumer well-being becomes even more crucial. Additionally, consumers are seeking sustainability-related qualities in products and services, further emphasizing the importance of well-being as a critical area for research (Minton et al., 2022).

Recently, social marketing literature has been linked to consumer well-being, offering insights into the operationalization of public well-being research (Johns, 2020). International marketing has also shown significant interest in social media, a product co-created by consumers and multinational corporations, influencing the consumer experience (Griffith et al., 2022). Further research is needed to better understand well-being service delivery, particularly in the context of for-profit orientation. Transformative service research, which focuses on creating uplifting changes in the well-being of individuals, families, social networks, communities and ecosystems, has gained attention in promoting consumer and societal well-being (Johns, 2020). This research emphasizes the collaborative role of service providers and clients in producing well-being.

Consumer well-being has emerged as an area of study among researchers in marketing. The core objectives of customer-oriented businesses have predominantly centered around satisfying consumers and promoting their happiness. This fulfilment resulting from the purchase, usage, and ownership of products is what constitutes consumer well-being. Over time, this concept has captured the attention of academics, managers and public policy experts, remaining a topic of enduring significance today. In light of this, there are several potential research avenues to explore in the realm of consumer well-being. Some of these avenues include:

- i. How does consumer well-being impact the overall quality of life, including factors such as happiness, fitness, and life satisfaction?
- ii. What are the key elements that contribute to consumer well-being during the entire consumption process, from acquisition to disposal of products?
- iii. How do personal beliefs, social and cultural factors, brand considerations, product and service attributes, and behavioral variables influence consumer well-being?
- iv. What is the relationship between consumer well-being and customer loyalty, psychological and physical wellness, as well as word-of-mouth advertising?
- v. How can transformative service research be applied to promote consumer and societal well-being through service delivery in a for-profit orientation, considering the joint role of service providers and clients in creating uplifting changes in individuals and communities?

ELDERLY WELL-BEING

Mínguez and Vírveda (2019) characterize elderly well-being as an expression of happiness across various facets of life, encompassing family bonding, health status, financial stability, level of autonomy, social connections and living conditions. This concept is closely tied to the seniors' state of mind, reflecting a positive outlook and contentment (Diener and Suh, 1997), as well as their satisfaction with their current life aspects in comparison to their ideal or desired quality of life (Susniene and Jurkauskas, 2009). Studies by Cutchin (2003) and Ng et al. (2021) show that a country's age-friendly infrastructure plays a critical role in assisting seniors who wish to age in place, particularly when they require higher levels of care and have limited independence. Both these findings suggest a notable connection between the age-friendliness of a city and the well-being of its elderly population.

Previous studies have yielded promising findings regarding the influence of age-friendly city indicators on elderly well-being. In a recent study conducted in Taipei, two domains of an age-friendly city—housing and community support, and health services—were found to be associated with reduced loneliness, while another domain—respect and social inclusion—was linked to decreased depression (Ng et al., 2022). Functional housing and a supportive community may contribute to enhanced socialization networks, thereby reducing loneliness, while social inclusion fosters a sense of fitting in and comfort during community interactions, leading to decreased depression. Numerous studies also support the idea that internet use improves mental health (Yuan, 2020) and the psychological well-being (Fang et al., 2018) among older individuals.

Based on the systematic review by Baldelli et al. (2021), physical activity positively predicts functional mobility, autonomy, anxiety level, balance, social interactions and life satisfaction. These suggest potential mediating roles between physical activity and life satisfaction, including functional mobility, autonomy, anxiety level, balance and social interactions. Thus, age-friendly cities should provide physical activity facilities tailored to the elderly capabilities, promoting their well-being and life satisfaction (Au et al., 2020). Flores et al. (2019) investigated age-friendly city indicators' relationship with life satisfaction in Castelló City, Spain. All eight age-friendly indicators predicted life satisfaction among individuals aged 60-74 and those living with others. For those aged 75 and older and those living alone, only three indicators each predicted life satisfaction—outdoor space and buildings, transportation, community support, and health services, and outdoor space and buildings, housing, community support, and health services. These findings underscore the potential differential impact of age-friendliness on different age cohorts and living conditions, necessitating research that considers contextual factors and the potential use of age cohorts as moderators.

Overall, the following research questions can be explored in relation to age-friendly cities and elderly well-being:

- i. How does age-cohort influence the relationship between age-friendly cities and elderly well-being?
- ii. How do different living conditions affect the perception of age-friendliness among the elderly population?
- iii. How does the sense of community within an age-friendly city act as a mechanism to maximize the benefits of age-friendliness for the well-being of the elderly?
- iv. How does participation in educational programs such as the University for the Third Age influence cognitive, emotional, and social well-being among the elderly?
- v. What are the specific digital resources or technologies that have the greatest positive impact on elderly well-being?

ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING

In recent years, the state of the environment has become a matter of great concern as we have witnessed the devastating consequences of climate change, pollution, and other environmental issues (Abbass et al., 2022). Environmental well-being, which refers to the health and sustainability of the natural world around us, is a critical aspect of overall well-being for individuals and society (Ronen and Kerret, 2020). The importance of environmental well-being extends beyond personal health to the health of economies, social structures, and the planet as a whole (Prescott and Logan, 2019). Therefore, prioritizing environmental well-being is a critical goal for individuals, communities, and societies worldwide.

Access to clean air, water, natural spaces, and biodiversity constitutes essential components of environmental well-being (Marselle et al., 2021). The detrimental effects of pollution on human health necessitate urgent measures to reduce emissions and improve air quality (WHO, 2021). Similarly, the increasing concerns about the quality and availability of freshwater resources demand immediate attention (UN Water, 2021). Furthermore, the loss of biodiversity and destruction of natural habitats can adversely impact human health (WHO, 2021), emphasizing the importance of preserving natural spaces and promoting biodiversity. Despite this urgency, there remains a scarcity of research on how environmental degradation and biodiversity loss influence social and economic systems, as well as the effectiveness of interventions aimed at conservation (Shin et al., 2022). Therefore, conducting further research is of utmost importance to fully grasp the effects of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss on economic and social systems. Additionally, it is crucial to identify sustainable strategies that take into account these intricate interdependencies.

Apart from the environmental aspects, the overall well-being in the context of sustainability is also influenced by access to nutritious food, secure livelihoods and social justice (Davis et al., 2022). Addressing these multifaceted issues requires a holistic approach that recognizes the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic systems and prioritizes the well-being of all members of society, along with the natural world that sustains us (Purvis et al., 2019). According to Humphreys (2022), the responsibility to protect and preserve the environment for the benefit of future generations lies with human beings. This calls for dedicated efforts towards sustainable practices, mitigating our environmental impact, promoting conservation, and facilitating the transition to a low-carbon economy, as advocated by Söderholm (2020). Additionally, it entails acknowledging the interconnectedness of our world and fostering collaboration to address the environmental

challenges we face (Purvis et al., 2019). Consequently, further research is necessary to identify effective ways of promoting sustainable practices and behaviors among individuals and communities.

Promoting environmental well-being holds also immense significance for individuals, communities and societies across the globe. This endeavour demands the recognition of the intricate connections among environmental, social, and economic systems and necessitates a comprehensive approach to sustainability. Further research is essential to develop and implement interventions that foster access to and utilization of natural spaces for diverse populations. Additionally, exploring the relationship between access to natural spaces and well-being among various socioeconomic groups is crucial. Furthermore, identifying strategies for promoting sustainability that consider the interdependencies of social, economic, and environmental systems is imperative. Therefore, future research are needed to answer the following questions:

- i. How does access to and utilization of natural spaces influence well-being among diverse socioeconomic groups, and what role do community-based interventions play in promoting equity and social justice in enhancing such access and benefits?
- ii. What are the most effective strategies to promote sustainable practices and behaviors among individuals and communities?
- iii. How can interventions be effectively designed and implemented to promote access to and use of natural spaces for diverse populations?
- iv. What is the relationship between access to natural spaces and well-being among different socioeconomic groups?
- v. What are the most effective strategies for promoting sustainability to different communities?

EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

The notion of well-being has been extensively explored across various disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology and healthcare. However, a consensus on defining and measuring well-being remains elusive due to the wide array of research contexts. Employee well-being can generally be divided into three aspects: psychological, physical and social well-being (Islam and Amin, 2022; Rudolph et al., 2020). Psychological well-being relates to an individual's "subjective experiences and functioning, physical well-being encompasses bodily health and functioning while and social well-being involves relational experiences and functioning" (Grant et al., 2007: p.53). Initially, the primary objective of focusing on employee well-being was to enhance employee performance for the benefit of the organisation, as well-being held little organisational value without performance (Cotton and Hart, 2003). More recently however, the perspective has shifted towards considering employee well-being as a valuable organisational asset, with enhanced performance as a secondary outcome (Guest, 2017; Islam and Amin, 2022).

The bulk of employee well-being research has centred on the psychological dimension (Inceoglu et al., 2018). Psychological well-being can be subdivided into affective (feeling) and cognitive (thinking) components, as well as positive and negative aspects. The existing literature has predominantly highlighted positive psychological well-being, including hedonic (affective) and eudaimonic (cognitive) well-being. Hedonic well-being involves satisfaction, comfort, and pleasure, whereas eudaimonic well-being emphasizes personal growth, work engagement, and the concept of thriving. Within positive well-being, although eudaimonic well-being has recently gained research attention (e.g., Gillet et al., 2013; Choi et al., 2016), most studies have examined the hedonic form of well-being through a single variable (typically job satisfaction) (Loon et al., 2019). This fact calls for additional research to further clarify eudaimonic dimensions and negative well-being aspects [e.g., exhaustion (Baer et al., 2015), stress (Harms et al., 2017), and burnout (Montano et al., 2017)]. It also reveals a clear gap in the literature regarding physical well-being (Inceoglu et al., 2018). As a result, future studies should expand the well-being criteria by emphasising negative and physical well-being. In fact, Diener et al. (2009) have stressed that an individual can concurrently experience multiple dimensions of well-being, such as positive and negative emotions, life satisfaction, and aspirations for personal growth. These distinct dimensions of well-being can function differently; for instance, an employee might simultaneously experience job engagement (eudaimonic) and exhaustion (negative) while addressing a challenging task (Warr, 2012). The potential range of well-being dimensions can be further broadened with the widespread use of wearable devices, as objective physiological data collected by these devices, such as heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration rate, could introduce new dimensions and supplement self-reported well-being assessments.

The methodology for studying employee well-being also requires continuous enhancement. The majority of employee well-being literature has relied on cross-sectional methods, while longitudinal and experimental designs have been underrepresented (Inceoglu et al., 2018). However, self-reported employee well-being perceptions exhibit several limitations. For example, employees might inaccurately report their positive well-being due to peer or supervisor pressure; context-sensitive well-being requires more accurate and scientifically rigorous experimental designs to control contextual or situational factors; and certain well-being dimensions inherently suggest causal relationships that need confirmation through time intervals. Thus, future research should conduct experiments (flexible working hours vs flexible working days, vs working for five days) or longitudinal studies that are grounded in robust theoretical foundations to yield more rigorous findings and establish causal relationships related to employee well-being.

In conclusion, recent literature has increasingly recognised the importance of employee well-being as a primary goal, rather than merely a tool for enhancing organisational performance from an organisation-oriented perspective (Guest, 2017; Islam and Amin, 2022). This employee-centric trend highlights the sustainable connection between employee well-being and organisational success, and calls for a more comprehensive exploration of employee well-being through a broader range of well-being aspects, as well as the application of more robust research approaches and methodologies. Possible topics include:

- i. How can the scope and criteria of the well-being concept be broadened in empirical studies to encompass diverse dimensions, such as negative, social, physical, and physiological well-being?
- ii. How might the concept of negative well-being be enhanced to include not only negative psychological well-being but also the aspects of negative physical well-being?
- iii. How can the analysis of physical well-being be enhanced through a comprehensive examination that combines physiological well-being and the use of wearable technology?
- iv. What factors contribute to well-being as a context-sensitive construct, and how can the underlying processes within frequently observed contexts be elucidated?
- v. How can the usage of longitudinal and experimental research designs offer a more robust type of study that grounded understanding of causal relationships pertaining to employee well-being outcomes?

CONCLUSION

As we navigate an ever-changing world, our commitment to fostering well-being and preserving the environment must remain steadfast. By advocating for consumer well-being, respecting our elderly, protecting the environment and nurturing the workforce, we can create a society that values and uplifts all its members. This Editorial Note serves as a call to action to embrace a comprehensive and interconnected approach to well-being—a path that leads us towards a future where prosperity is shared and the environment thrives.

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