



Between Self-care and Career-care: The Impact of Well-being and Managerial Impression Concerns on Work-life Balance Decisions

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Dissertation written under the supervision of Professor

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the
MSc in Business at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, September
2024.

ABSTRACT

Title: Between Self-care and Career-care: The Impact of Well-being and Managerial Impression Concerns on Work-life Balance Decisions

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In today's modern work environments, the well-being of employees is crucial for productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organisational success. This research explores the impact of well-being and managerial impressions concerns on work-life balance decisions. In an experimental study, manipulating concern with well-being (high/low) and concern with manager's impression (high/low) three dimensions were measured: compliance with working extra hours, the belief in meritocracy and the self-care intention. Through a survey conducted with 200 participants, we examine how employees choose to prioritise between their well-being and career advancement. The findings reveal that employees who prioritise well-being are less likely to engage in behaviours that compromise it, such as working excessive overtime. Conversely, those who prioritize impression management are more inclined to sacrifice their well-being for career gains. The study highlights the tension between self-care and career-care concerns, suggesting that organizations should support employees in maintaining a healthy work-life balance to enhance both individual and organisational performance, without placing additional burdens on employees. Practical implications include the need for managers to create environments that do not pressure employees to choose between their well-being and career success.

Keywords: Employee well-being concern, work-life balance, managerial impressions, career advancement, extra hours, meritocracy belief.

SUMÁRIO

Título: Entre o Cuidado Pessoal e o Cuidado com a Carreira: O Impacto das Preocupações com o Bem-estar e com as Impressões dos Gestores nas Decisões sobre o Equilíbrio entre Vida Pessoal e Profissional.

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Nos atuais ambientes de trabalho modernos, o bem-estar dos trabalhadores é crucial para a produtividade, a satisfação no trabalho e o sucesso geral da organização. Esta pesquisa explora o impacto das preocupações com o bem-estar e com as impressões causadas nos gestores nas decisões de equilíbrio entre a vida profissional e pessoal. Neste estudo experimental, manipulamos a preocupação com o bem-estar (alta/baixa) e a preocupação com as impressões do chefe (alta/baixa) medindo três dimensões: a conformidade em trabalhar horas extra, a crença na meritocracia e a intenção de cuidado pessoal. Através de um inquérito realizado a 200 participantes, examinamos como os trabalhadores escolhem dar prioridade ao seu bem-estar versus a progressão na carreira. Os resultados revelam que os colaboradores que priorizam o bem-estar são menos propensos a adotar comportamentos que o comprometem, como trabalhar horas extraordinárias em excesso. Por outro lado, aqueles que dão prioridade às impressões causadas no chefe estão mais inclinados a sacrificar o seu bem-estar para obter progressos na carreira. O estudo realça a tensão entre o cuidado pessoal e o cuidado com a carreira, sugerindo que as organizações devem apoiar os empregados na manutenção de um equilíbrio saudável entre a vida profissional e a vida pessoal para melhorar o desempenho individual e organizacional, sem colocar encargos adicionais sobre os empregados. As implicações práticas incluem a necessidade de os gestores criarem ambientes que não pressionem os trabalhadores a escolher entre o seu bem-estar ou sucesso na carreira.

Palavras-chave: Bem-estar dos trabalhadores, equilíbrio entre vida profissional e pessoal, impressões do chefe, progressão na carreira, horas extraordinárias, crença na meritocracia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey has been challenging but incredibly rewarding. When I enrolled in the Master's in Business, I had no idea that writing a thesis dissertation would be such an arduous and emotional process. I have learnt a lot about conducting good academic research, gathering useful information, and contributing to and developing my critical thinking, but I have also learnt a lot about myself.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Sofia Jacinto, for her guidance and availability to support and motivate me throughout this process. She always gave me relevant and essential insights that greatly enriched my research and helped me navigate the challenges I encountered.

I would like to thank my parents, Rosário and Paulo, for all their support and for always encouraging me to believe in myself. They have been my strongest supporters in this and all other phases of my life. I would also like to thank my family for all the support and encouragement they have given me.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to Afonso Tavares, who has always motivated me to write this thesis and helped me never to give up. The long hours spent in the Biblioteca Municipal de Oeiras and the mutual help were crucial in making both our paths less stressful.

I would also like to thank my dearest friends, Inês Araújo, Marta Rodrigues, and Carolina Martins, whom I met during the Master's degree, for all their support and help throughout this journey. Thank you to all of my closest friends, as well, for always believing in me.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who volunteered to take part in the survey for this study.

Thank you.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace burnout is a growing concern globally, and recent trends indicate that the situation is worsening. Several studies and reports highlight that burnout rates have been steadily increasing over the past few years, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing changes in the work environment, such as the shift to remote and hybrid working, high job demands, and an imbalance with the professional and personal life.

Burnout is a phenomenon characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment, which can have severe consequences for both employees and organisations (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2011). The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized burnout in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), defining it as an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed (Atroszko et al., 2020). This recognition underscores the importance of addressing burnout as a significant public health concern.

Burnout is increasingly linked to rising job dissatisfaction due to its profound impact on employees' emotional and psychological well-being.

As employees struggle to meet excessive job demands and maintain a healthy work-life balance, they often feel undervalued and overwhelmed, which exacerbates their dissatisfaction (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2011a). Therefore, organisations need to prioritise strategies to increase job satisfaction, by supporting employees in managing their work-life balance in order to mitigate the negative effects of burnout.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the implementation of employee wellness initiatives across organisations. These initiatives often encompass a range of activities aimed at enhancing employee well-being, including mental health support programs, yoga classes, and gym partnerships. The investment by companies in employee well-being programmes has become a focal point of interest as organisations increasingly recognize the importance of employee health and work-life balance. However, despite these efforts, a significant gap remains in understanding how employees perceive the concerns of work demands and personal well-being.

This study aims to address this gap by investigating the influence of employees' concerns about impressing their managers versus their concern for their well-being when these two priorities are in conflict. The objective of this study is to ascertain whether employees prioritise their job responsibilities over their personal time for well-being, or whether they are able to focus on their well-being routine when these two concerns conflict.

While there is extensive research on both employee well-being and impression management in the workplace, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific conflict between these two concerns experienced by employees. Existing studies have examined how workplace stressors, leadership styles, and organisational culture influence employee health and well-being (Wu et al., 2021; Gavin & Mason, 2004) as well as how impression management affects career advancement and job (Bolino et al., 2008). However, little research has directly explored the decision-making process employees go through when these two priorities – personal well-being and maintaining a positive impression with managers – come into direct conflict.

This dissertation is organised structurally in accordance with the typical format of empirical research articles. The introduction provides a comprehensive overview of the topic under investigation and identifies the gap in the existing literature. Subsequently, the literature review is presented, wherein the relevance of the research on employee well-being is elucidated, as well as the overall hypothesis. The methodology section is then subdivided into four sections: research design, participants, materials, and procedure. Furthermore, the results of all relevant data obtained from the survey are provided. The discussion section then presents a summary of the findings and various theoretical and practical recommendations, with a comparison of the results with the literature review. Finally, the limits of the study, suggestions for future research and conclusion are discussed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review reveals that some research has been done about modern well-being anxiety, the demands of the contemporary workplace, and the conflict between work and life balance. Nowadays, the population experiences feelings of anxiety and stress associated with the perceived inability to achieve and maintain the well-being standards expected by society while simultaneously striving for success in their professional careers. This research examines how individuals respond when confronted with a situation that requires them to prioritise between their concern for well-being and concern for professional commitments.

This literature review will cover several topics in the following order: Firstly, the relevance of research on employee wellbeing, then the context of the modern workplace, mental health and work-life balance, then the literature on compliance with working overtime, then the belief in meritocracy, then the intention to self-care and finally the summarised hypotheses.

2.1 The relevance of a research on employee well-being:

In contemporary societies there is a considerable emphasis placed on the importance of maintaining good health and well-being. A healthy lifestyle is characterised by positive attitudes and behaviours that are practised on a daily basis. As awareness of health and wellness grows, individuals are increasingly encouraged to adopt a lifestyle that includes good nutrition, adequate rest, regular exercise, adequate water intake, a positive environment, self-control, mental health and even positive interpersonal relationships (Tamanal & Kim, 2020). Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is crucial for both individual health and societal well-being.

While societal expectations promote this holistic approach to health, there are various factors that can hinder the adoption and maintenance of these good behaviours. Factors such as mental health status and external crises like the pandemic (Graham et al., 2013) and the demanding nature of work. Previous research indicates that work-related stressors, such as an excessive workload and time pressures, are associated with a reduction in the time dedicated to managing work-family conflict (Yildirim & Aycan, 2008).

The issue of work-family conflict, defined by Greenhaus & Beutell (1985), is a significant challenge for many individuals, particularly when the demands of their professional and family roles are incompatible. Consequently, individuals facing such stressors may find it challenging

to achieve optimal well-being, as they cannot allocate adequate time and energy to pursue and maintain their health routines effectively (Yavas et al., 2008). This can lead to stress and decreased well-being.

The increasing focus on well-being in modern society, coupled with the pressures of professional success, render this investigation particularly relevant in the present context, as it seeks to explore the anxiety and the choices that individuals make in response to the conflicting demands that arise from this intersection of concerns.

2.2. Work-life balance in the modern workplace

Employee well-being at work has become a focus for organisations, particularly in light of recent global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The concept of employee well-being encompasses several dimensions, including mental health, job satisfaction and workplace culture, all of which have a significant impact on productivity and organisational performance (De Vincenzi et al., 2022).

The relationship between workplace culture and employee mental health is critical. A supportive organisational culture can enhance employee well-being, leading to improved job satisfaction. Research has shown that employees who feel supported by their organizations in terms of mental health are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment, lower absenteeism, and reduced turnover intentions. (Grossmeier et al., 2020).

Work-life balance and employees' mental health are becoming increasingly important in modern workplaces, prompting organizations to adopt various strategies. These strategies include flexible working hours, remote or hybrid working models in order to employees being able to manage personal and professional time better and wellness initiatives such as yoga classes, mental health workshops, and gym memberships to reduce stress and improve employee health (Allen et al., 2013)

Moreover, leadership styles play a pivotal role in shaping employee well-being and their work-life balance. Positive leadership practices, such as transformational and supportive leadership, have been shown to promote a culture of psychological safety, reduce employee stress, and enhance overall mental health. Transformational leaders, who inspire and motivate employees through vision and support, are particularly effective in fostering an environment where well-being is prioritised (Wu et al., 2021). In contrast, leaders with a more authoritarian or

transactional style, focused solely on performance outcomes, may contribute to increased workplace stress by demanding compliance without addressing individual needs (Skakon et al., 2010).

When leaders demonstrate empathy, offer support, and provide flexibility, employees are more likely to feel that their well-being is valued, enabling them to manage both personal and professional responsibilities better (Gavin & Mason, 2004). However, in environments where leadership prioritises performance metrics over employee well-being, workers may feel compelled to sacrifice personal time or health in favour of meeting organisational expectations.

A key challenge in maintaining work-life balance arises when employees face conflicting priorities between their well-being and the need to create or maintain a positive impression with their managers. This tension between self-care and organisational expectations is particularly pronounced in high-pressure work environments, where employees may feel that prioritizing their well-being will be perceived as a lack of commitment or ambition at the job (Grant et al., 2007).

Although modern workplaces are increasingly recognising the importance of work-life balance and adopting strategies to support employees regarding mental health, this conflict continues to be particularly salient in organisational cultures where success is often equated with long hours, high productivity, and constant availability. Employees may fear that demonstrating a need for work-life balance, or prioritizing well-being concerns, could be interpreted as a lack of ambition or commitment to the organisation (Bolino et al., 2008).

2.3. Compliance with working extra hours

The practice of working extra hours has garnered significant attention in recent years, particularly as organizations learn to manage the complexities of modern work environments. For both companies and employees, the impact of longer working hours on overall job satisfaction, work-life balance and employee well-being are key areas of concern.

One of the main problems associated with working overtime is its negative impact on work-life balance. Research shows that longer working hours are often associated with increased stress and fatigue, which can lead to work-life conflict. (Fontinha et al., 2019). The imbalance created by excessive work hours can strain personal relationships and hinder employees' ability to fulfil family responsibilities, thereby exacerbating feelings of burnout and dissatisfaction (Ten

Brummelhuis et al., 2011). Associations have also been found between employees who engage in overtime work without corresponding improvements in productivity and an elevated risk of voluntary unpaid overtime work and reduced quality of life at home (Hsu et al., 2019).

Additionally, there is evidence that employees who do not devote the maximum amount of time to the organisation are often perceived as less productive and committed. Consequently, they tend to be valued less than those who work longer hours. This perspective is reflected in how many managers approach the promotion of employees who work reduced hours or non-standard schedules. (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Moreover, the cultural context of certain industries can exacerbate the tendency to work longer hours. In sectors like construction, for example, there is a prevailing culture that encourages employees to exceed their contractual hours, often at the expense of their mental health and personal lives (Holden & Sunindijo, 2018).

Contrary to this, employees who prioritise their well-being are less likely to engage in behaviours that may compromise it. Employees with a higher concern for their well-being tend to engage in self-regulatory behaviours aimed at preserving their health and mitigating stress (Howe et al., 2013). These individuals are more likely to set boundaries that protect their well-being. The decision to prioritise well-being over excessive work demands aligns with findings that suggest such employees are more likely to avoid unnecessary stressors that do not significantly contribute to their job performance or satisfaction (Hahn et al., 2011).

One reason why employees engage in working extra hours may be due to the concept of impression management. Formulated by Goffman (1959), the impression management concept, focuses on the process of how individuals attempt to control the perceptions others form about them. It is a prevalent behaviour in the workplace, where employees often engage in tactics to influence how they are perceived by others.

In the workplace, impression management becomes particularly important due to the hierarchical nature of most organisations and the significant impact a manager's perception can have on an employee's career. Employees often engage in impression management to be viewed favourably by their managers, as positive impressions may lead to promotions, raises, and other career benefits. This can drive them to take on additional tasks and work more than the scheduled hours. (Klotz et al., 2018). Employees who are highly concerned about their manager's perceptions are more likely to engage in extra demanding behaviours in an effort to stand out and be seen as committed or capable (Bolino & Turnley, 1999).

It is important to distinguish between the concepts of need and willingness. The term 'need to work extra hours' implies that working additional hours is a necessity, a task that must be completed regardless of the individual's desire or preference. In contrast, the term 'willingness to work extra hours' suggests that the person is open and ready to work additional hours. It reflects their attitude or choice, indicating that they are agreeable or even eager to do so.

Thus we hypothesise that employees who have higher concern with their well-being will have a lower need and lower willingness to comply with additional work demands than employees who are less concerned with their well-being.

Moreover, we hypothesise employees who have a higher concern with creating a good impression on their manager will have a higher need and higher willingness to comply with additional work demands than employees who are less concerned with what their manager thinks of them.

In competitive environments, workers may engage in strategic behaviours to improve their promotion chances, including underperforming on de-emphasized tasks and overperforming on emphasized ones (Devaro & Gürtler, 2016). For instance, Babcock et al.,(2017) found that women are more inclined to volunteer for tasks with lower promotability than men, which could potentially result in a slower rate of progress within organizations. Employees who are highly concerned with making a good impression on their managers often experience heightened sensitivity to the potential consequences of their actions on their career advancement (Diekmann et al., 2015).

Otherwise, employees who prioritize their well-being often adopt a mindset that values long-term health and work-life balance over short-term career gains. Employees who invest in well-being practices, such as mindfulness, are better equipped to handle work pressures without compromising their health. (Allen & Kiburz, 2012). This capacity to manage stress effectively may contribute to a lower perceived risk of losing work promotions.

Thus, we hypothesise that employees who have higher concern with their well-being will feel a lower perceived risk of losing work promotions than employees who are less concerned with their well-being.

Moreover, we hypothesise that employees who have a higher concern with creating a good impression on their manager will feel a higher perceived risk of losing work promotions than employees who are less concerned with what their manager thinks of them.

2.4. Belief in Meritocracy

Meritocracy is the belief that success, reward and recognition in an organisation or society are based on individual merit, such as talent, effort and achievement, rather than on external factors such as social background, connections or favouritism. In an organisational context, this belief underpins many practices and policies, including merit-based promotion, merit-based pay and reward systems designed to recognise and develop individuals who demonstrate high levels of performance and commitment (Castilla & Benard, 2010). Meritocracy is often viewed as an ideal model for fairness and equality in workplaces, where each employee is assessed and rewarded based on their contributions (Castilla & Ranganathan, 2020).

Research suggests that employees who are more concerned with their well-being may be more critical about the concept of meritocracy, particularly in environments where success is narrowly defined by work performance and recognition (Hadarics et al., 2021). Employees who experience high levels of stress or dissatisfaction may find meritocratic narratives unconvincing, particularly when their efforts do not translate into recognition or advancement. In workplaces where success is narrowly defined, employees may feel pressured to conform to meritocratic standards, leading to burnout and disengagement. This situation can prompt critical reflections on the meritocratic framework, as employees recognize that their well-being is not adequately supported by a system that prioritizes performance metrics over holistic employee well-being (Harter et al., 2010). When employees perceive that their health and happiness are valued within an organization, they may be less likely to accept meritocratic narratives that emphasize individual achievement at the expense of collective support and well-being (Wieneke et al., 2019).

On the other hand, employees who are highly concerned with creating a favourable impression on their managers are often deeply invested in maintaining an image of competence, diligence, and reliability (Johnson et al., 2016). This investment in their professional image can reinforce their belief in meritocracy, as they see the alignment of their efforts with the principles of reward and recognition as a pathway to career success. Research highlights that individuals who successfully project the image of the "ideal employee" are more likely to be recognized and rewarded by their managers, suggesting that impression management can have a significant impact on career progression and performance appraisals (Manno et al., 2024).

Thus, we hypothesise that employees who have higher concern with their well-being will have a lower belief in meritocracy (reward and recognition) than employees who are less concerned with their well-being.

Moreover, we hypothesise that employees who have a higher concern with creating a good impression on their manager will have a higher belief in meritocracy (reward and recognition) than employees who are less concerned with what their manager thinks of them.

Employees with a higher concern for their well-being may be particularly sensitive to requests that jeopardise their work-life balance or mental health. Research has shown that when employees prioritise their health and personal lives, they are more likely to resist excessive work demands and view them as unjust (Schaufeli et al., 2006). These employees often adopt a more critical stance toward workplace demands, perceiving such requests as a violation of their right to a balanced life.

In contrast, employees who are more focused on creating a favourable impression with their managers may be more inclined to accept additional work demands, regardless of their personal impact. These employees may perceive that complying with early report requests signals dedication, competence, and commitment to the team, making them more likely to accept such demands (Klotz et al., 2018).

Perceived control over one's time and tasks is another crucial factor influencing how employees respond to manager requests. Employees who feel they have more control over their time tend to report lower levels of stress and are less willing to tolerate long working hours. Conversely, employees who feel less autonomous may be more likely to comply, especially if they fear repercussions or believe that will reflect positively on them (Lammers et al., 2012).

Thus, we hypothesise that employees who have higher concern with their well-being will find it less acceptable to be asked to deliver a report earlier than employees who are less concerned about their well-being.

Moreover, we hypothesise that employees who have a higher concern with creating a good impression on their manager will find it more acceptable to be asked to deliver a report earlier than employees who are less concerned with what their manager thinks of them.

2.5. Self-care Intention

In recent years, organisations have increasingly acknowledged the influence of employee health on productivity and organisational success. Consequently, a growing number of companies have introduced a range of well-being and wellness programmes. Such initiatives typically encompass activities such as meditation classes, yoga sessions, mental health workshops, and other stress-relief practices (Gubler et al., 2018).

The adoption of these programs is driven by growing evidence that well-being initiatives can lead to better health outcomes for employees and reduced healthcare costs for employers (Baicker et al., 2010). For example, companies that implement comprehensive wellness programs often see a reduction in employee absenteeism and an increase in job satisfaction, engagement, and overall productivity (Sparks et al., 2001).

Employees who prioritise their well-being are more likely to engage in self-care behaviours, as they understand the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This proactive approach is linked to higher levels of satisfaction with work-life balance, as well as improved overall health outcomes (Allen & Kiburz, 2012). Employees who actively engage in self-care routines report higher levels of satisfaction with their work-life balance, as these practices help mitigate the stress and demands of work, contributing to a more harmonious integration of work and personal life (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

Nevertheless, the decision to engage in self-care may be influenced by a number of additional factors and is not solely contingent on personal well-being concerns. The social context, particularly the perceived expectations of authority figures such as managers, can have a significant impact on an employee's willingness to invest time in self-care. The findings of research studies indicate that individuals frequently prioritize the demands and expectations of those in positions of authority over their own needs, particularly in work environments where upward mobility and job security are perceived to be contingent on meeting these expectations (Fernet et al., 2012).

Additionally, employees who prioritise creating a favourable impression on their managers are more likely to experience work-life conflict, as they are more inclined to sacrifice personal time and self-care in favour of work commitments. This trade-off can result in a reduction in satisfaction with work-life balance and an increase in feelings of burnout (Michel et al., 2011).

Thus, we hypothesise that employees who have higher concern with their well-being will be more likely to sign up for well-being programs than employees who are less concerned about their well-being.

Moreover, we hypothesise that employees who have a higher concern with creating a good impression on their manager will be less likely to sign up for well-being programs than employees who are less concerned with what their manager thinks of them.

Thus, we hypothesise that employees who have higher concern with their well-being will be more satisfied with their work-life balance than employees who are less concerned about their well-being.

Moreover, we hypothesise that employees who have a higher concern with creating a good impression on their manager will be less satisfied with their work-life balance than employees who are less concerned with what their manager thinks of them.

Research shows that employees who believe they have more perceived control over their time are less prone to report high levels of stress or long working hours. (Hsu et al., 2019). This sense of control is often linked to proactive time management and prioritization of self-care routines. Employees who are highly concerned with their well-being tend to allocate more time to activities that promote health (Michel et al., 2011).

Conversely, employees who prioritise creating a good impression on their managers may be less inclined to invest time in well-being routines. The pressure to meet or exceed managerial expectations can lead to longer working hours and a tendency to sacrifice personal time in favour of work-related tasks (Fernet et al., 2012). As a result, employees may neglect self-care practices, viewing them as secondary to their career ambitions.

Thus we hypothesise that employees who have higher concern with their well-being will devote more time to well-being routines than employees who are less concerned about their well-being.

Moreover, we hypothesise that employees who have a higher concern with creating a good impression on their manager will devote less time to well-being routines than employees who are less concerned with what their manager thinks of them.

2.6. Hypothesis

Concerning the previous literature, the following summary of hypothesis was made:

H1: High concern with well-being leads to lower compliance with working extra hours, lower belief in meritocracy, and higher self-care intention than low concern with well-being.

H2: High concern with the manager's impression leads to a higher compliance with working extra hours, higher belief in meritocracy and lower self-care intention than low concern with the manager's impression.

H3: When concern with the managers' impression is low, high concern with well-being leads to lower compliance with working extra hours, lower belief in meritocracy, and higher self-care intention than low concern with well-being. However, when concern with manager's impression is high, concern with well-being does not play a role in the work-life balance judgments and intentions, this means that it does not lead to differences between high and low concerns with well-being.

To see the fully detailed hypotheses, please see Appendix 1.

3. METHODOLOGY

The following section describes the study's methodology, including the research design, participants, materials, and procedure. This chapter aims to provide other researchers with a thorough outline of the research approach that can be replicated.

This experimental survey helped us acquire information by allowing us to ask different questions about participants' decisions, actions, and opinions after they were exposed to various scenarios with varying mindset stimuli and leadership styles.

3.1. Research Design

The data used to test the previous hypotheses was collected through a meticulously designed quantitative online survey. The survey, created and published using the Qualtrics platform, was shared on the social media platform Instagram and via personal contacts through WhatsApp. The approximate time of completion was between 5 minutes and 10 minutes. The online survey was open to participation from 19/04/2024 until 27/04/2024.

The experiment had a 2 concern with well-being (high, low) x 2 concern with the manager's impression (high, low) between-subjects design. The four experimental conditions were randomly assigned to the participants. This research design allows us to compare the behaviour of the individuals in the different groups without creating any spill-over effects. See details of the experimental manipulations below.

1. High concern with well-being and high concern with the manager's impression.
2. High concern with well-being and low concern with the manager's impression.
3. Low concern with well-being and high concern with the manager's impression.
4. Low concern with well-being and low concern with the manager's impression.

3.2. Participants

The sample size was defined strictly according to the Central Limit Theorem (Moivre, 1968), which stipulates that the minimum statistical number of participants per experimental condition should be 30 to assess the research hypothesis.

The study's survey was distributed online, reaching 343 volunteers, mainly via social media and personal networks. After an initial data analysis, the total number of participants who completed the survey was reduced, and our final sample comprised $N = 200$. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the four experimental design conditions.

The mean age of the participants was 40 years old ($M = 39,5$, $SD = 15,5$), with the youngest respondent being 18 and the oldest participant being 90 (minimum = 18, maximum = 90).

The sample included 128 individuals of the female gender (64%), 68 individuals of the male gender (34%), 2 individuals of the non-binary gender (1%), and 2 individuals who preferred not to say their gender (1%).

42% of the participants had completed a Master's degree, 34% had completed a Bachelor's degree, and 16,5% had completed a High School degree. The remaining 7,5% of the sample either had completed a doctoral degree (4%), did not include a degree (1%) or completed other level of education (1%).

The majority of the participants answered they were employed at the moment (69,5%), 15% were students, 6,5% were working students, 4% were retired, 3% answered "other", and 2% were unemployed.

The first language of almost all the respondents was Portuguese (97%); 3 individuals answered "Dutch", 2 individuals answered "German", and only 1 individual answered "Russian". Conjointly, 93,5% of the participants responded they were living in Portugal at the moment, 3% live in the Netherlands, and the remaining participants live in Germany (1%), Switzerland (0,5%), Ireland (1%), Czech Republic (0,5%), and British Virgin Islands (0,5%).

The participants' average weekly working hours are 38 hours ($M = 37,6$; $SD = 12,3$), and the weekly average extra working hours are approximately 7 hours per week ($M = 6,8$; $SD = 5,2$).

3.3.Materials

Four different scenarios were created as stimuli for this study. These scenarios were designed to simulate real-life work situations where time is scarce and decisions must be made. A pre-test with four participants was performed to ensure the scenarios were developed correctly. Based on those outcomes, the final survey stimulus could be enhanced.

Random assignment was used to place participants in one of the four experimental design conditions. All four conditions contained the same text structure, only with varying levels of concern. At the high level of both concerns, participants were exposed to a text with many stimuli for concern for their well-being and concern to impress the manager. At the low levels of concern, a text was presented where participants could feel peaceful about their well-being and not feel pressured to impress their manager.

Throughout the four experimental conditions, respondents were asked to imagine themselves in a scenario where they arrived at work and were confronted with a dilemma. There was a report whose delivery date was next week, and after a while, the manager came into the office and asked them to deliver the report this week instead. With this dilemma in mind and the different stimuli regarding their well-being and manager, participants must choose when to deliver the report.

3.3.1. Independent Variables

Concern with the well-being:

This variable is divided into two levels: high concern and low concern. Participants were exposed to a text with several stimuli words regarding how they should feel about their well-being. The scenario included a fictitious statistical sentence that triggered either high concern for well-being or low concern for well-being.

Example of the scenario for high concern with well-being:

“You have arrived at the office where you work in the morning. At the end of the week starts the meditation class provided by your company. You don't know whether you will attend the class. You feel worried about your well-being.

You are concerned because you have read a study that states that "No matter how hard people try to follow the guidelines, 73% of people fail to stick to their well-being routine."

“Concerned as you are, you cannot avoid to think about all the times you've failed to stick to your well-being routine. When you couldn't sleep enough hours, when you couldn't have a healthy diet, or when you didn't have time to practice sports regularly.”

Concern with the manager's impression:

This variable is divided into two levels: high concern and low concern. Participants were exposed to a text with several stimuli words regarding their manager and his leadership style. The scenario states whether the manager's leadership style is flexible or inflexible, which may cause concern about impressing the manager or not.

Example of scenario for high concern with the manager's impression:

“With this concern for your well-being on your mind, you sit down on your chair ready to start writing a report for which the deadline is the next week.

After a while, your manager arrives at the office and asks you to deliver the report this week instead, if possible.

Knowing that your manager is not a flexible person, always puts a lot of pressure on the team, and does not understand last minute deliveries, you just want to do your job.”

3.3.2. Dependent Variables

After exposure to different stimulation scenarios, participants were asked to answer a group of questions using Likert scales to increase the strength of the variance effect of the following variables. These measures were adapted from previous studies on the subject under investigation.

Compliance with working extra hours

Delivery Decision: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their decision-making level regarding the delivery of the report (1 - Definitely this week to 8 - Definitely next week).

Need to work extra hours: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their level of need to work extra hours to finish the report on time (1 - No need at all to 7 - Totally need).

Willingness to work extra hours: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their level of willingness to work extra hours to finish the report on time (1 - Not willing at all to 7 - Totally willing).

Perceived risk of not complying with the extra hours: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their level of risk towards losing work opportunities if the report is not delivered when the manager asks (1 - Do not believe at all to 7 - Totally believe).

Belief in Meritocracy

Belief in Reward: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their perception of belief in reward when working extra hours to finish the report on time (1 - Do not believe at all to 7 - Totally believe).

Belief in Recognition: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their perception of belief in recognition when working extra hours to finish the report on time (1 - Do not believe at all to 7 - Totally believe).

Perceived morality: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate the level of morality toward the manager's request to deliver the report earlier (1 - Not acceptable at all to 7 - Totally acceptable).

Self-care Intention

Behavioural intention to start a meditation class: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their behavioural intention to start a meditation class provided by the company (1 - Do not want at all to 7 - Totally want).

Satisfaction with work-life balance: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction regarding their work-life balance (1- Not satisfied at all to 7 - Totally satisfied).

Intention of well-being routine: After reading the stimulus, participants were asked to rate their level of time management towards their well-being routine in that week (1 - No time at all to 7 - a lot of time).

3.3.3. Manipulation Checks

Two questions were designated as manipulation checks to determine the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations. This procedure ensures that participants correctly perceive and understand the manipulation of the independent variables and answer with the appropriate apprehension of the experiment.

Well-being mindset: To control for the independent variable concern with well-being, participants were asked to answer a multiple-choice question with four options about how they should feel regarding their well-being.

Manager identification: Moreover, to control for the independent variable concern with the manager's impression, participants were asked to answer a multiple-choice question to identify who was the individual who appeared in the scenario.

3.4. Procedure

Initially, a brief introduction and explanation of the study's context were presented, stating that it was about people's perception of task management at work, without revealing the study's primary purpose to the participants. In addition, participants were assured of the data's confidentiality and anonymity and were informed that participation was voluntary.

Before filling out the questionnaire, respondents were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of the study (high concern with well-being or low concern with well-being and high concern with the manager's impression or low concern with the manager's impression). Each condition was represented by a different scenario.

After this, they were told to read the scenario carefully and fill out the 7-point Likert scale questions. Participants were asked about their decision to deliver the report, their level of compliance with working extra hours (need to work extra hours, willingness to work extra hours and perceived risk of not complying with extra hours), their level of belief in meritocracy (belief in reward, belief in recognition and perceived morality of the request), and their level of self-care intention (behavioural intention to start a meditation class, satisfaction with work-life balance and intention of well-being routine).

Subsequently, respondents were asked to answer two manipulation questions about the condition they were exposed to. The first regards the well-being concern to control for high or low concern with well-being condition, and the second concerns the manager identification as a manipulation check for high or low concern with the manager's impression condition.

Lastly, demographics were collected, and a suggestion/comments box was added at the end of the survey.

4. RESULTS

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the impact of a potential conflict between concern with well-being and concern with the manager's impression (as two independent variables) on work-life balance judgements and decisions. To achieve this, three categories of dependent variables were identified: compliance with working extra hours, the belief in meritocracy, and the self-care intention. The subsequent chapter presents the results of our analysis, which was conducted using the robust two-way ANOVA at a 95% confidence level. When the results prompted further investigation of the data, independent sample t-tests were employed to substantiate any potential interaction trends.

Research Findings

4.1. Compliance with working extra hours

Delivery decision:

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression did not reveal a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the delivery decision variable ($F(1, 199) = 0.026, p = 0.871$), suggesting that high concern with well-being does not lead to a lower need to deliver the report earlier than low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 2.50, SD_{high\ CWB} = 2.06; M_{low\ CWB} = 2.42, SD_{low\ CWB} = 1.81$).

We did not find a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.548, p = 0.460$), suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression does not lead to a higher need to deliver the report earlier than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 2.57, SD_{high\ CMI} = 2.00; M_{low\ CMI} = 2.37, SD_{low\ CMI} = 1.89$).

Furthermore, it was not found a significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 1.463, p = 0.228$).

Need to work extra hours:

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression revealed a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the need to work extra hours variable

($F(1, 199) = 5.878, p = 0.016$). We found that high concern with well-being leads to higher need to work extra hours than low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 4.02, SD_{high\ CWB} = 1.90$; $M_{low\ CWB} = 3.44, SD_{low\ CWB} = 1.61$). This result contradicts our initial hypothesis, so we should reject our hypothesis.

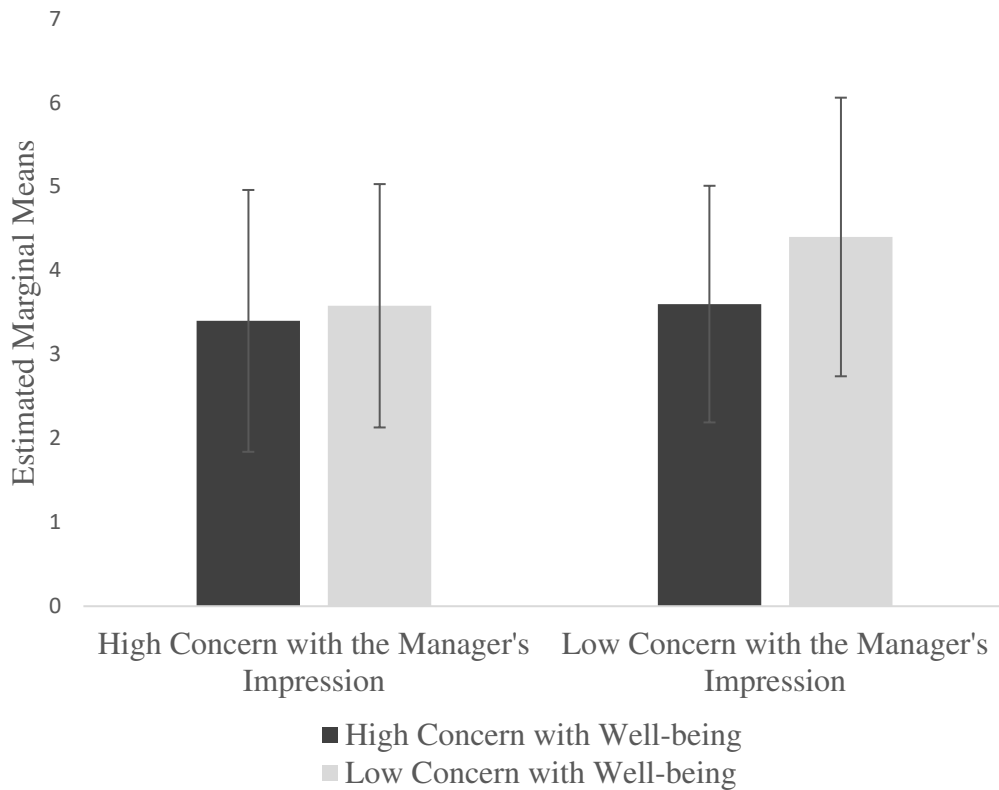
We did not find a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 2.600, p = 0.108$), suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression does not lead to a higher need to work extra hour than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 3.96, SD_{high\ CMI} = 1.71$; $M_{low\ CMI} = 3.56, SD_{low\ CMI} = 1.83$).

Furthermore, the interaction effect between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression is not significant ($F(1, 199) = 0.600, p = 0.439$).

An independent sample t-test found that the difference between high concern with well-being and low concern with well-being is significant for the high concern with the manager's impression condition ($t_{high\ CMI} (2) = 1.220, p = 0.013$). Yet, it is not significant for the low concern with the manager's impression condition ($t_{low\ CMI} (2) = 1.809, p = 0.120$). See Table 1. See Graphic 1.

	High Concern with Well-being		Low Concern with Well-being	
	M	SD	M	SD
High Concern with the Manager's Impression	4.36	1.79	3.56	1.55
Low Concern with the Manager's Impression	3.76	1.96	3.35	1.67

Table 1 - Need to work extra hours



Graphic 1 - Need to work extra hours for the concern with the manager's impression condition

Willingness to work extra hours:

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression did not reveal a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the willingness to work extra hours variable ($F(1, 199) = 0.019, p = 0.891$), suggesting that concern with well-being has no effect on the willingness to work extra hours ($M_{high\ CWB} = 3.96, SD_{high\ CWB} = 1.95; M_{low\ CWB} = 4.01, SD_{low\ CWB} = 1.90$).

We did not find a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 1.924, p = 0.167$), suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression does not lead to a higher willingness to work extra hours than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 3.78, SD_{high\ CMI} = 1.77; M_{low\ CMI} = 4.15, SD_{low\ CMI} = 2.07$).

Furthermore, there was also no significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.609, p = 0.436$).

Perceived risk of losing work promotions:

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression did not reveal a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the perceived risk variable ($F(1, 199) = 1.261, p = 0.263$), suggesting that high concern with well-being does not lead to a lower perceived risk of losing work promotions than a low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 4.32, SD_{high\ CWB} = 1.89; M_{low\ CWB} = 4.04, SD_{low\ CWB} = 1.98$).

We did not find a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.586, p = 0.445$), suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression does not lead to a higher perceived risk of losing work promotions than a low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 4.30, SD_{high\ CMI} = 2.03; M_{low\ CMI} = 4.09, SD_{low\ CMI} = 1.86$).

Furthermore, there was no significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.800, p = 0.372$).

4.2. Belief in meritocracy

Belief in meritocracy (reward dimension):

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression revealed a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the reward variable ($F(1, 199) = 5.655, p = 0.018$). We found that high concern with well-being leads to a higher belief in meritocracy (reward) than low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 5.06, SD_{high\ CWB} = 1.97; M_{low\ CWB} = 4.40, SD_{low\ CWB} = 2.13$). This result contradicts our initial hypothesis, so we should reject our hypothesis.

We did not find a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.937, p = 0.334$), suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression does not lead to a higher belief in meritocracy than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 4.89, SD_{high\ CMI} = 2.01; M_{low\ CMI} = 4.62, SD_{low\ CMI} = 2.11$).

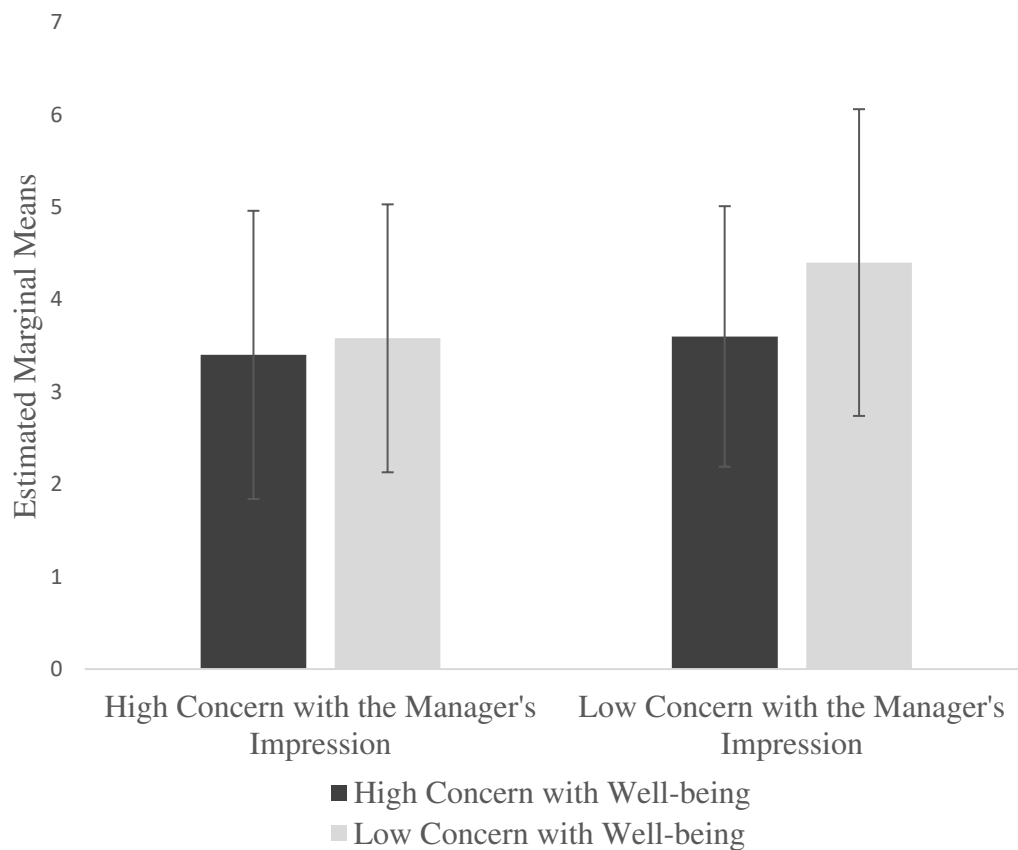
Furthermore, there was no significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.963, p = 0.328$).

Although the ANOVA did not show a significant interaction effect, an independent sample t-test found that the difference between high concern with well-being and low concern with well-being is significant for the high concern with the manager's impression condition ($t_{high\ CMI} (2)$

= 2.092, $p = 0.010$). Yet, it is not significant for the low concern with the manager's impression condition ($t_{low\ CMI} (2) = 0.491, p = 0.158$). See Table 2. See Graphic 2.

	High Concern with Well-being		Low Concern with Well-being	
	M	SD	M	SD
High Concern with the Manager's Impression	5.38	1.83	4.40	2.09
Low Concern with the Manager's Impression	4.81	2.05	4.40	2.18

Table 2 - Belief in meritocracy (reward dimension)



Graphic 2 - Belief in meritocracy (reward dimension) for the concern with the manager's impression condition

Belief in meritocracy (recognition dimension):

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression did not reveal a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the recognition variable ($F(1, 199) = 2.816, p = 0.095$), suggesting that high concern with well-being does not lead to a lower belief in meritocracy than low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 5.35, SD_{high\ CWB} = 1.82; M_{Low\ CWB} = 4.90, SD_{Low\ CWB} = 2.03$).

We did not find a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 1.048, p = 0.307$), suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression does not lead to a higher belief in meritocracy than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 5.28, SD_{high\ CMI} = 1.97; M_{low\ CMI} = 5.01, SD_{low\ CMI} = 1.90$).

Furthermore, there was no significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.000, p = 0.983$).

Perceived morality:

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression did not reveal a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the perceived morality variable ($F(1, 199) = 0.809, p = 0.370$), suggesting that high concern with well-being leads to a lower perceived morality than low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 3.48, SD_{high\ CWB} = 1.50; M_{low\ CWB} = 3.66, SD_{low\ CWB} = 1.67$).

The analysis revealed a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression on the perceived morality variable ($F(1, 199) = 11.660, p < 0.001$). We found that high concern with the manager's impression leads to a lower perceived morality than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 3.16, SD_{high\ CMI} = 1.42; M_{low\ CMI} = 3.90, SD_{low\ CMI} = 1.64$). This result contradicts our initial hypothesis, so we should reject our hypothesis.

Furthermore, there was no significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.086, p = 0.769$).

4.3. Self-care intention

Self-care intention behaviour (Meditation class enrolment):

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression did not reveal a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the self-care intention behaviour variable ($F(1, 199) = 0.160, p = 0.690$), suggesting that high concern with well-being does not lead to a higher self-care intention than low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 4.46, SD_{high\ CWB} = 2.06; M_{low\ CWB} = 4.32, SD_{low\ CWB} = 2.12$).

We did not find a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 2.641, p = 0.106$), suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression does not lead to a lower self-care intention than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 4.12, SD_{high\ CMI} = 2.18; M_{low\ CMI} = 4.61, SD_{low\ CMI} = 1.99$).

Furthermore, there was no significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.031, p = 0.861$).

Satisfaction with work-life balance:

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression revealed a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the satisfaction with work-life balance variable ($F(1, 199) = 17.345, p < 0.001$). We found that high concern with well-being leads to a lower satisfaction with work-life balance than low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 3.90, SD_{high\ CWB} = 1.65; M_{low\ CWB} = 4.87, SD_{low\ CWB} = 1.60$). This result contradicts our initial hypothesis, so we should reject our hypothesis.

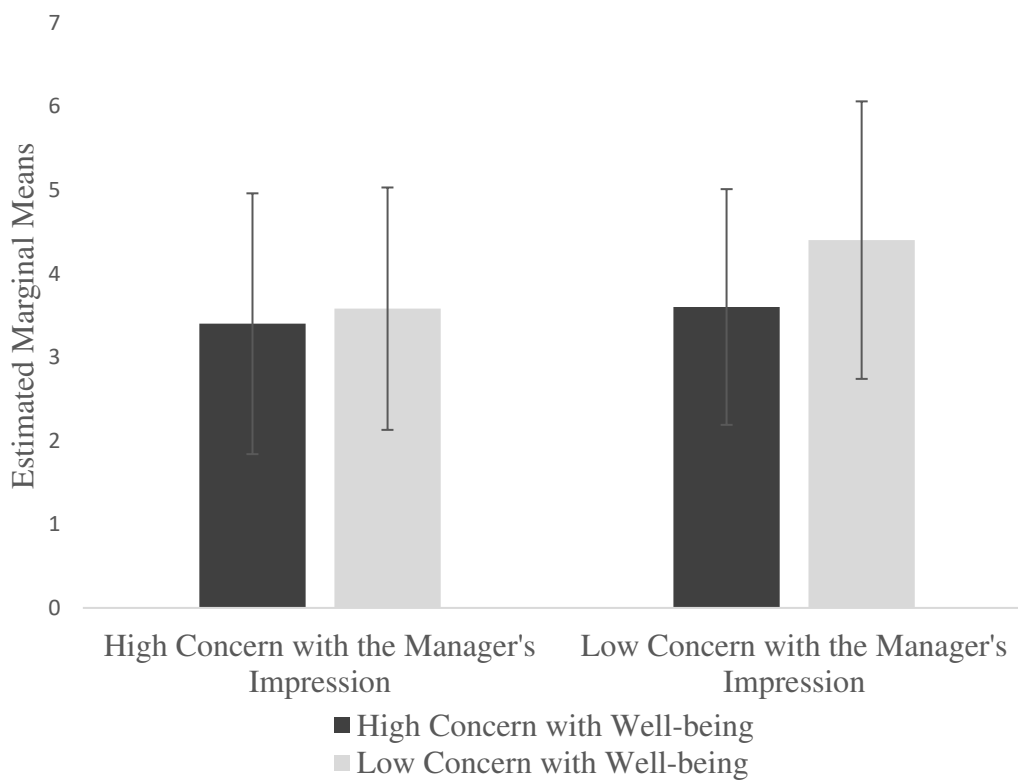
We did not find a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 2.693, p = 0.102$), suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression does not lead to a lower satisfaction with work-life balance than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 4.18, SD_{high\ CMI} = 1.67; M_{low\ CMI} = 4.53, SD_{low\ CMI} = 1.70$).

Furthermore, there was no significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 0.258, p = 0.612$).

Although the ANOVA did not show a significant interaction effect, an independent sample t-test found the difference between high concern with well-being and low concern with well-being is significant for the high concern with the manager's impression condition ($t_{high\ CMI}(2) = 0.022, p = 0.008$) as well as for the low concern with the manager's impression condition ($t_{low\ CMI}(2) = 0.000, p < 0.001$). Since the pattern is the same for the high and the low conditions of this group, there is no significant interaction effect. See Table 3. See Graphic 3.

	High Concern with Well-being		Low Concern with Well-being	
	M	SD	M	SD
High Concern with the Manager's Impression	3.76	1.65	4.60	1.60
Low Concern with the Manager's Impression	4.02	1.66	5.10	1.58

Table 3 - Satisfaction with work-life balance



Graphic 3 - Satisfaction with work-life balance for the concern with the manager's impression condition

Time management:

An ANOVA 2 concern with well-being x 2 concern with the manager's impression revealed a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the time management variable ($F(1, 199) = 5.103, p = 0.025$). We found that high concern with well-being leads to less time available for the well-being routine than low concern with well-being ($M_{high\ CWB} = 3.51, SD_{high\ CWB} = 1.47; M_{low\ CWB} = 4.02, SD_{low\ CWB} = 1.61$). This result contradicts our initial hypothesis, so we should reject our hypothesis.

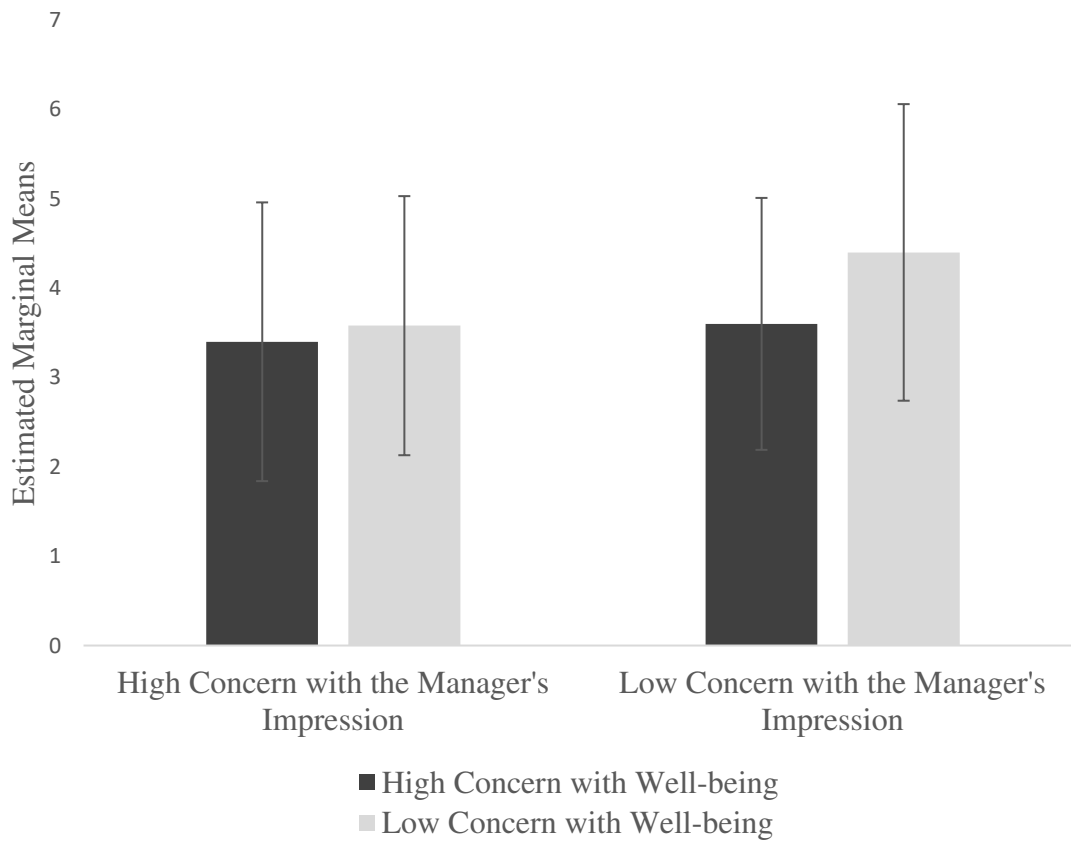
The analysis revealed a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression on the time management variable ($F(1, 199) = 5.653, p = 0.018$). We found that high concern with the manager's impression leads to less time available for the well-being routine than low concern with the manager's impression ($M_{high\ CMI} = 3.49, SD_{high\ CMI} = 1.50; M_{low\ CMI} = 3.98, SD_{low\ CMI} = 1.58$).

There was no significant interaction between the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression ($F(1, 199) = 2.067, p = 0.152$).

An independent sample t-test found that the difference between high concern with well-being and low concern with well-being is significant for the low concern with the manager's impression condition ($t_{low\ CMI} (2) = 1.336, p = 0.004$). Yet, it is not significant for the high concern with the manager's impression condition ($t_{high\ CMI} (2) = 0.394, p = 0.289$). See table 4. See Graphic 4.

	High Concern with Well-being		Low Concern with Well-being	
	M	SD	M	SD
High Concern with the Manager's Impression	3.40	1.56	3.58	1.45
Low Concern with the Manager's Impression	3.60	1.41	4.40	1.66

Table 4 - Time management



Graphic 4 - Time management for the concern with the manager's impression condition

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results in light of the literature and hypothesis previously presented in Chapters Two and Three. Based on the findings, we discuss the study's principal insights, and the theoretical and practical implications derived from our findings. The main aim of this study was to examine the effect of well-being concerns and manager impression concerns on work-life balance judgments when the two are in conflict. The three main dimensions analysed were compliance with working extra hours, belief in meritocracy, and self-care intention. We hypothesise that a heightened concern for well-being reduces compliance with working extra hours and the belief in meritocracy and increases self-care intentions, whereas a greater concern for the manager's impression has the opposite effect.

5.1. Summary of the results

5.1.1. Compliance with working extra hours:

Focusing on the delivery decision variable, the results indicate that neither concern with well-being nor concern with the manager's impression exert a significant main effect on the report's delivery decision. However, there is a slight tendency suggesting that high concern with well-being may lead to a lower need to deliver the report earlier, as we suggested. This means that the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression do not have an effect on the delivery decision of the report.

Regarding the need to work extra hours a main effect of concern with well-being was found, in which high concern with well-being leads to a higher need to work extra hours than low concern with well-being. This response pattern contradicts our initial hypothesis that high concern with well-being would reduce the need to work extra hours compared to low concern with well-being. Although no significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression was detected, there is a tendency suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression may lead to a greater need to work extra hours, consistent with our hypothesis. Additionally, a significant interaction effect between the independent variables was identified. When concern with the manager's impression is high, there are no differences in the need to work extra hours depending on the concern with well-being. However, when concern with the manager's impression is low, high concern with well-being leads to a higher need to work extra hours than low concern with well-being.

When examining willingness to work extra hours, findings show that neither concern with well-being nor concern with the manager's impression significantly influence the willingness to work extra hours. However, a slight tendency was observed, indicating that a high concern with well-being is associated with a lower willingness to work extra hours, as we previously suggested. Additionally, no interaction effect between these variables was found. This means that the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression do not have an effect on the willingness to work extra hours.

The findings regarding the perceived risk of losing work promotions show that neither concern with well-being nor concern with the manager's impressions significantly influence the perceived risk variable. However, a slight tendency was observed, indicating that high concern with the manager's impression is associated with a higher perceived risk of losing work promotions compared to a low concern with the manager's impression, as we suggested before. Furthermore, no interaction effect between these variables was found. This means that the concern with well-being and the concern with the manager's impression do not have an effect on the perceived risk of losing work promotions.

5.1.2. Belief in Meritocracy

When examining the meritocracy belief variable, we differentiated between two dimensions of this variable, the reward dimension and the recognition dimension.

The results revealed a significant main effect of concern with well-being on the reward dimension, in which high concern with well-being leads to a higher belief in meritocracy than low concern with well-being. This response pattern contradicts our initial hypothesis that high concern with well-being would reduce the belief in meritocracy compared to a low concern with well-being. Additionally, no significant main effect of concern with well-being was found on the recognition dimension. Although no significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression was detected on both the reward and recognition dimension, there is a tendency suggesting that high concern with the manager's impression may lead to a higher belief in meritocracy, consistent with our hypotheses. Finally, a significant interaction effect was identified in the reward dimension, for the high concern with the manager's impression. This interaction reveals that the effect of concern with well-being on the belief in meritocracy (reward dimension) is contingent upon the level of concern with the manager's impression.

Focusing on the perceived morality variable, no significant main effect of concern with well-being on the perceived morality variable was found. However, there is slight tendency suggesting that high concern with well-being may lead to a lower perceived morality, as we suggested. In contrast, findings show a significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression, in which high concern with the manager's impression leads to a lower perceived morality than low concern with the manager's impression. This response pattern contradicts our initial hypothesis that high concern with the manager's impression would lead to a higher perceived morality and acceptability of being asked to deliver a report earlier than expected compared to a lower concern. Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between these variables was found regarding the concern with the manager's impression condition.

5.1.3. Self-care Intention

When examining the self-care intention behaviour, findings show that neither concern with well-being nor concern with the manager's impression significantly influences the meditation class enrolment. However, a slight tendency was observed, indicating that a high concern with well-being is associated with a higher self-care intention, as we previously suggested. Similarly, a slight tendency indicates that high concern with the manager's impression is associated with a lower self-care intention, as we suggested. Additionally, no interaction effect between these variables was found.

Regarding the satisfaction with work-life balance variable, a main effect of concern with well-being was found, in which high concern with well-being leads to lower satisfaction with work-life balance than low concern with well-being. This response pattern contradicts our initial hypothesis that high concern with well-being would lead to a higher work-life balance satisfaction than a low concern with well-being. Although no significant main effect of concern with the manager's impression was detected, there is a slight tendency that high concern with the manager's impression may lead to a lower satisfaction with work-life balance, consistent with our hypothesis. Moreover, a significant interaction effect between the two independent variables was not identified, either for the high concern with well-being and for the low concern with well-being.

Focusing on the time-management variable, a main effect of concern with well-being was found, in which high concern with well-being leads to a lower time available for the well-being routine than low concern with well-being. This response pattern contradicts our initial

hypothesis that a high concern with well-being would lead to more time allocated to well-being routines than a low concern with well-being. Additionally, a main effect of concern with the manager's impression on time management was found, in which high concern with the manager's impression leads to a lower time available for the well-being routine than low concern with the manager's impression. Furthermore, a significant interaction effect between the two variables was observed, showing that concern with well-being only impacts the time allocated to well-being routines when the concern for the manager's impression is low.

5.2.Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study offer several important theoretical implications, particularly in relation to existing models of work-life balance and well-being.

Contrary to our initial hypothesis, high concern with well-being leads to a higher need to work extra hours, suggesting that individuals who are more concerned with their well-being may paradoxically feel compelled to work more. This finding contrasts with prior research that suggests well-being concerns typically reduce the inclination to engage in additional work tasks (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). This may suggest or could mean that employees who prioritize their well-being may feel compelled to compensate for time spent on self-care by extending their working hours.

The findings suggest that impression management plays a significant role in shaping work behaviours, particularly in environments where working extra hours is culturally or organisationally valued. Although no significant main effect was identified with regard to the manager's impression, the interaction with concern with well-being suggests that this variable may be a pertinent factor in understanding employee attitudes and behaviours.

The study reveals that a high concern for well-being leads to stronger belief in meritocracy, particularly in the reward dimension, contrary to our initial expectations. This suggests that employees who prioritize well-being may still believe in the fairness of rewards, though this belief is moderated by their concern for managerial impressions. This finding challenges the assumption that individuals with greater concern for their well-being would be less likely to endorse meritocratic beliefs due to a perceived need to prioritize self-care over work-related rewards (Castilla & Benard, 2010).

This study highlights that high concern with the manager's impression is linked to a reduced amount of time allocated to well-being routines. This finding aligns with the existing literature, that in a workplace context, this behaviour can result in prioritising work activities and tasks that enhance one's professional image, potentially at the expense of personal well-being (Goffman, 1959).

Additionally, the results suggest a pattern whereby low concern for well-being and low concern for managerial impressions are associated with higher levels of several variables.

The findings suggest that when employees have a low concern for well-being, meaning they feel secure about their well-being and are not concerned about impressing their manager, they may be inclined to work additional hours, place greater value on rewards for timely task completion, experience enhanced satisfaction with their work-life balance and an increased availability of time for personal well-being activities. However, the outcomes associated with the necessity to work additional hours do not align with the availability of time to engage in self-care activities.

One possible explanation is that individuals with lower concerns in both domains may operate from a perspective of greater autonomy or self-efficacy, allowing them to engage more freely in work and self-care activities without the perceived constraints of managerial judgment or the burden of well-being considerations (Lunenburg, 2011).

The variables of compliance with working extra hours and self-care intention exhibit similar patterns, whereby low concern for well-being and low concern for managerial impressions are associated with higher engagement in these behaviours. This coherence suggests that these behaviours may not be as contradictory as was previously assumed. This challenges the prevailing view that work demands and self-care are mutually exclusive or competing priorities, as it is possible for an individual to experience a sense of well-being when engaged in work activities (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2022).

Finally, the discrepancy between results and hypothesis suggests that there may be more variables interacting and affecting the relationship between well-being concerns and manager's impression concerns. One variable that may be influencing these two is concern for performance. Concern for performance can affect an individual's life in both professional and personal ways. Individuals who prioritize well-being may also be concerned about the impression they create in the eyes of their superiors. Those who are invested in their overall performance may find themselves driven to work additional hours to meet deadlines as a means

of ensuring satisfactory results (Brough et al., 2020). Another variable could be overcommitment at the workplace, which refers to a psychological state where employees excessively invest their time, energy and emotional resources into their work, often at expense of their well-being (Shkempi et al., 2023).

5.3. Practical Implications

In addition to the theoretical implications, this research offers managerial implications with a view to emphasising the importance of considering how managerial expectations and perceived pressures contribute to decisions regarding work-life balance and how they might be mitigated in order to promote healthier work practices.

The counter-intuitive finding that employees spend more time working extra hours in order to compensate for the time spent on well-being routines highlights the need for organizations to ensure that well-being initiatives do not inadvertently contribute to increased work pressure. Human resources departments should establish clear policies that protect personal time and explicitly discourage the practice of extending working hours to compensate for time spent on well-being activities.

The findings also suggest the importance of creating work environments where employees feel safe to prioritise their well-being without fear of negative repercussions on their professional standing. Leaders should cultivate a culture of psychological safety, where employees are reassured, that prioritising well-being will not jeopardise their career prospects.

The significant interaction effects between well-being and managerial impressions on work-life balance satisfaction suggest a strong interdependence between these factors. Human resource departments could implement workshops and training sessions designed to equip employees with strategies for maintaining a healthy work-life balance without feeling pressured to overextend themselves to meet perceived managerial expectations.

To reinforce merit-based recognition, human resources teams and organisational leaders should ensure that performance appraisals are transparent, consistent, and take into account both professional contributions and personal well-being. Clear communication of evaluation criteria is essential to maintain employee confidence in the meritocratic- related processes.

Effective time management strategies are critical to enable employees to balance their work responsibilities with personal well-being without feeling overwhelmed. Companies could provide time management resources and training designed to help employees integrate well-being practices into their daily routines without compromising work performance.

These results highlight the importance of fostering a workplace culture that truly supports self-care without placing additional burdens on employees. Organisations should consider implementing even more self-care programmes that are integrated into the workday, allowing employees to engage in self-care without sacrificing personal time or work performance. Examples could include the introduction of flexible working hours, wellness days, or dedicated self-care time within the workday to effectively support employees' well-being. While many organisations are already implementing these benefits, there are still a many of companies that yet to do so.

Finally, managers should be mindful of the pressures they may inadvertently place on employees and create an environment where employees feel safe to prioritise their well-being without the fear of negative career implications. Team leaders should clearly communicate that working overtime is not an expected and should actively discourage this behaviour unless it is absolutely necessary. Regular check-ins with team members are recommended to ensure they feel supported in managing their work responsibilities and personal well-being, in order to reduce the concern with the manager's impression as well.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this section, the limitations of this study and future research will be discussed.

One relevant limitation of the study is lack of robust main effects in the expected direction, and the lack of interactions in the predicted direction as well. The lack of well-being effect may be due to a confound potentiated by the manipulation of concern with well-being. The scenarios used could have activated the reassurance of the well-being measures taken by participants when reminded of this concern. Therefore, higher concern with well-being would activate the certainty that well-being was met, facilitating the need to comply with extra working hours.

Also, the study focused primarily on well-being concerns and managerial impression concerns without considering other potentially influential variables. For instance, individual differences such as personality traits, resilience, or external stressors could significantly impact work-life balance judgments but were not accounted for in this research. The lack of robust interaction effects and the contradictory patterns observed may be due to the omission of these variables, which could have moderated or mediated the relationships under investigation. Future studies should explore the role of other variables, such as personality traits, job autonomy, external stressors, concern for performance, and overcommitment in moderating or mediating the relationship between well-being concerns and managerial impression concerns.

Additionally, the questions used could have compromised the measurement of the variables in question, by the lack of precision or lack of clarity. For example, the self-care intention variable, measured through meditation class enrolment, might not adequately capture the full range of self-care behaviours. Not all individuals are inclined towards meditation, which could have influenced the results. If alternative forms of self-care, such as physical exercise or creative activities, were included, different outcomes might have been observed.

The study's general experimental paradigm may not fully capture sector-specific nuances, which is a limitation of the study. For example, certain sectors, such as healthcare, may require longer working hours as a norm, which could alter how well-being concerns and managerial impressions influence work-life balance judgments. Future research should integrate more details in the scenarios to make them more immersive and consider sector-specific variables to understand better how these dynamics play out in different professional contexts.

Finally, other theoretical frameworks should account for the possibility that in certain contexts, work-life balance behaviours can coexist and even reinforce one another. A more holistic approach that emphasizes work-life integration, rather than a strict separation, could be more reflective of modern work environments where flexibility and adaptability are key to achieving balance (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018).

7. CONCLUSION

This study explored the intricate dynamics between well-being concerns, managerial impression concerns, and work-life balance judgments.

Although modern workplaces are increasingly recognising the importance of work-life balance in the recent years, there are still a lot of industries and organizations that still need to change mentalities and start addressing more work-life balance practises. This cultural shift towards work-life balance is essential for attracting and retaining talent, particularly as young employees prioritise work.life balance over traditional career goals.

It is of significant importance to continue promoting the implementation of wellness initiatives by companies, with the objective of reducing stress and the risk of burnout, improving employee health. This is because such initiatives reflect a broader understanding that supporting employees' personal lives can enhance productivity and organisational success. Without these significant changes in organizational strategies and workplace culture, burnout rates are likely to continue increasing.

The findings emphasise the importance of creating an employee-centred work environment where employees can prioritise their well-being without career fears. Organisations should protect personal time, integrate self-care into work routines, and ensure transparency in performance evaluations. Managers should foster a culture of psychological safety where well-being is valued.

Future research should address the limitations of this study by exploring additional variables, such as personality traits and sector-specific nuances, and examining a broader range of self-care behaviours. A more holistic approach to work-life integration could provide deeper insights into achieving balance in modern work environments. Overall, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the interplay between well-being concerns, managerial impressions concerns, and work-life balance, offering valuable implications for both theory and practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Hypothesis

The following main effect hypothesis were formulated:

- H1.1 High concern with well-being leads to a lower need to deliver the report earlier than low concern with well-being.
- H1.2 High concern with the manager's impression leads to a higher need to deliver the report earlier than low concern with the manager's impression.
- H2.1 High concern with well-being leads to lower need to work extra hours than low concern with well-being.
- H2.2 High concern with the manager's impression leads to a higher need to work extra hours than low concern with the manager's impression.
- H3.1 High concern with well-being leads to lower willingness to work extra hours than low concern with well-being.
- H3.2 High concern with MI leads to a higher willingness to work extra hours than low concern MI.
- H4.1 High concern with well-being leads to a lower perceived risk of losing work promotions than a low concern with well-being.
- H4.2 High concern with the manager's impression leads to a higher perceived risk of losing work promotions than a low concern with the manager's impression.
- H5.1 High concern with well-being leads to lower belief in meritocracy (reward) than low concern with well-being.
- H5.2 High concern with the manager's impression leads to a higher belief in meritocracy (reward) than low concern with the manager's impression.
- H5.3 High concern with well-being leads to lower belief in meritocracy (recognition) than low concern with well-being.

- H5.4 High concern with the manager's impression leads to a higher belief in meritocracy (recognition) than low concern with the manager's impression.
- H6.1 High concern with well-being leads to lower perceived morality than low concern with well-being.
- H6.2 High concern with the manager's impression leads to a higher perceived morality than low concern with the manager's impression.
- H7.1 High concern with well-being leads to a higher self-care intention than low concern with well-being.
- H7.2 High concern with the manager's impression leads to a lower self-care intention than low concern with the manager's impression.
- H8.1 High concern with well-being leads to higher satisfaction with work-life balance than low concern with well-being.
- H8.2 High concern with the manager's impression leads to a lower satisfaction with work-life balance than low concern with the manager's impression.
- H9.1 High concern with well-being leads to more time available for the well-being routine than low concern with well-being.
- H9.2 High concern with the manager's impression leads to less time available for the well-being routine than low concern with the manager's impression.

The following interaction effect hypothesis were formulated:

- H1.3 The effect of concern with well-being on the delivery decision is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.
- H2.3 The effect of concern with well-being on the need to work extra hours is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.
- H3.3. The effect of concern with well-being on the willingness to work extra hours is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.

- H4.3. The effect of concern with well-being on the perceived risk of losing job promotions is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.
- H5.5. The effect of concern with well-being on the meritocracy belief (reward dimension) is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.
- H5.6. The effect of concern with well-being on the meritocracy belief (recognition dimension) is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.
- H6.3. The effect of concern with well-being on the perceived morality is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.
- H7.3. The effect of concern with well-being on the decision to start a meditation class is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.
- H8.3. The effect of concern with well-being on the satisfaction with work-life balance is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.
- H9.3. The effect of concern with well-being on time management regarding well-being routines is larger when the concern with the manager's impression is low than when the concern with the manager's impression is high.

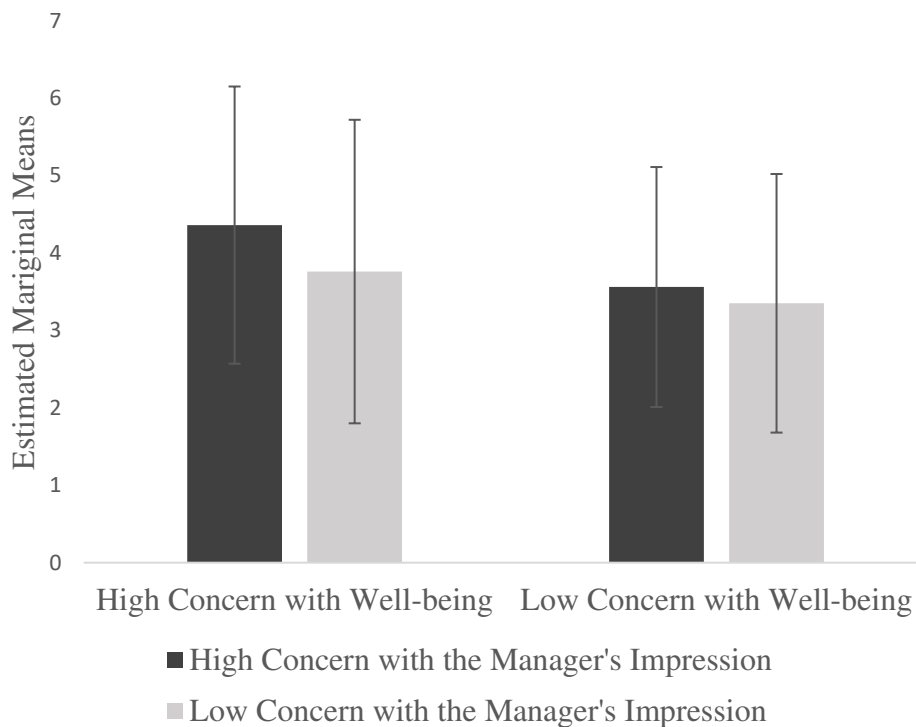
Appendix 2 - Results

In this Appendix, we can see other analyses for the variables need to work extra hours, perceived morality, and time management.

Need to work extra hours

Although the ANOVA did not show a significant interaction effect, an independent sample t-test found that the difference between high concern with the manager's impression and low concern with the manager's impression is significant for the high concern with well-being condition ($t_{high\ CWB}(2) = 0.392, p = 0.057$). Yet, it is not significant for the low concern with well-being condition ($t_{low\ CWB}(2) = 0.165, p = 0.263$). See Table 1. See Graphic 1.

Graphic 1 – *Need to work extra hours for the concern with well-being condition*



Graphic 5 - *Need to work extra hours for the concern with well-being condition*

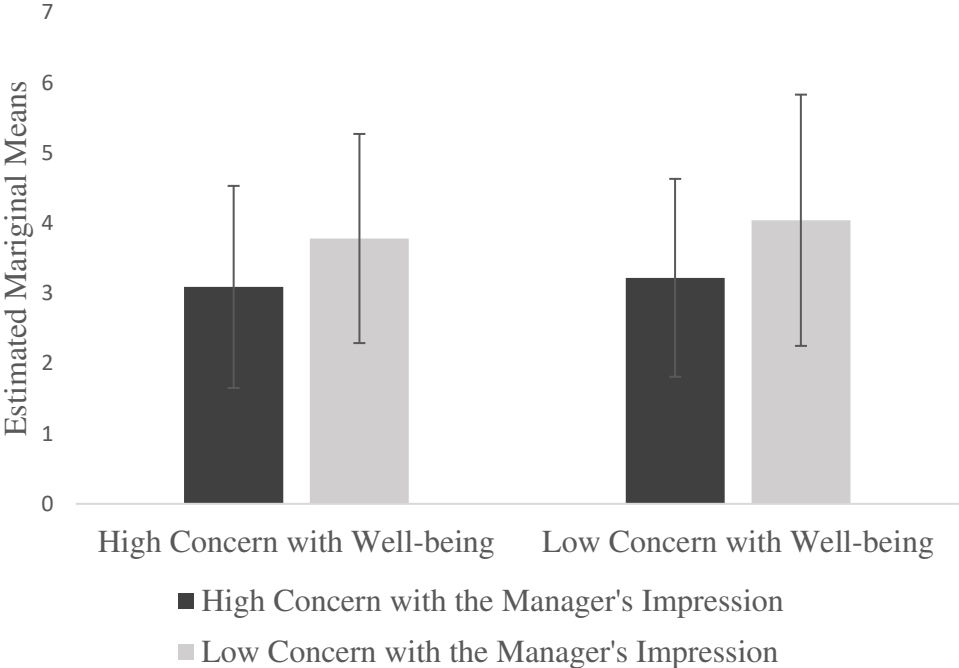
Perceived morality

Although the ANOVA did not show a significant interaction effect, an independent sample t-test found that the difference between high concern with the manager's impression and low

concern with the manager’s impression is significant for the high concern with well-being condition ($t_{high\ CWB}(2) = 0.185, p = 0.010$) as well as for the low concern with well-being condition ($t_{low\ CWB}(2) = 2.060, p = 0.008$). See Table 3. See Graphic 4.

	High Concern with Well-being		Low Concern with Well-being	
	M	SD	M	SD
High Concern with the Manager’s Impression	3.09	1.44	3.22	1.41
Low Concern with the Manager’s Impression	3.78	1.49	4.04	1.79

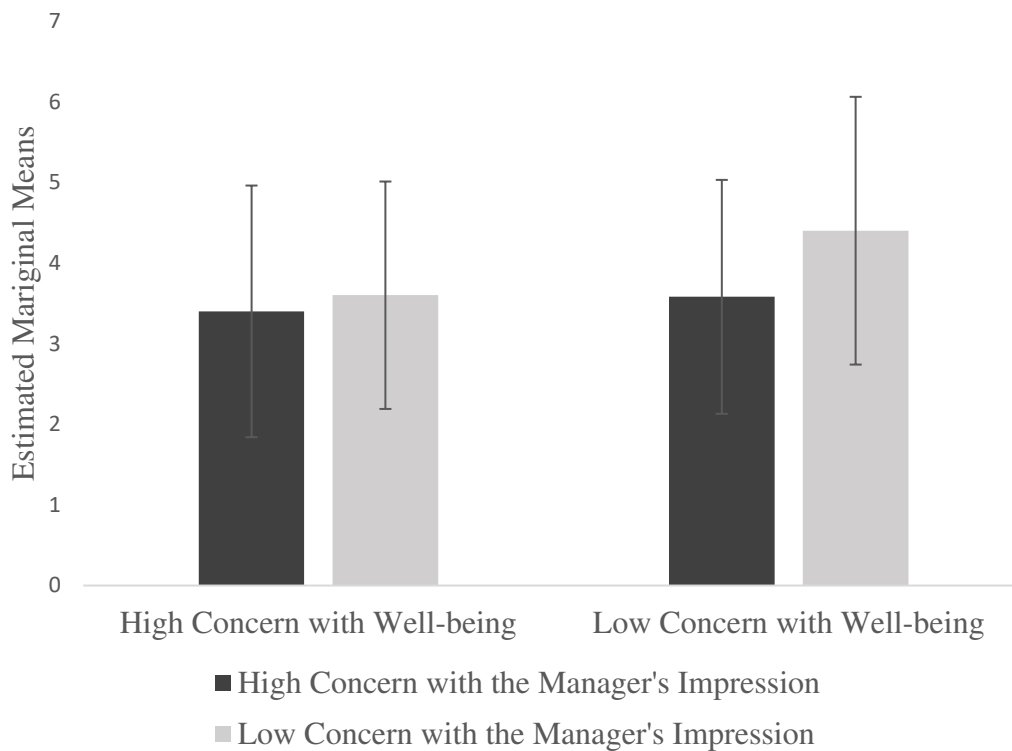
Table 5 - Perceived morality



Graphic 6 - Perceived morality for the concern with well-being condition

Time Management

Although the ANOVA did not show a significant interaction effect, an independent sample t-test found that the difference between high concern with the manager's impression and low concern with the manager's impression is significant for the low concern with well-being condition ($t_{low\ CWB}(2) = 0.794, p = 0.006$). Yet, it is not significant for the high concern with well-being condition ($t_{high\ CWB}(2) = 0.752, p = 0.245$). See Table 5. See Graphic 7.



Graphic 7 - Time management for the concern with well-being condition

Appendix 3 - Survey

This is a between-subjects design. It was designed with four experimental conditions (scenarios), randomly assigned to the participants.

Welcome Page

Dear Participant,

Welcome and thank you for taking part in this study.

This research study is part of a master's thesis at Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics. The goal is to better understand people's perception about tasks management at work.

Your participation in this study will take approximately 5 minutes.

By moving forward on this survey, you are agreeing to voluntarily participate in this study.

The survey is anonymous and only aggregated results will be used. Please, respond honestly, so we can gather the data that best reflects your perceptions. The data will be used for academic research purposes only.

There are no right or wrong answers, we are interested in your opinion on this topic.

If you have any questions or comments do not hesitate to contact s-mapferro@ucp.pt.

Instructions Page

Now, you are going to read a scenario in a work setting.

I would like you to imagine it. When reading it, take a moment to put yourself in that situation. Try to relate to it as much as possible.

You don't need to read on a rush. You will be required to stay on the page for at least 30 seconds and then you can move forward. Please, take as much time as you need to visualize and think about the situation.

Scenario 1: High well-being concern & High manager's impression concern

Please, imagine the following scenario:

You have arrived at the office where you work in the morning. At the end of the week starts the meditation class provided by your company. You don't know whether you will attend the class. **You feel worried about your well-being.**

You are **concerned** because you have read a study that states that "**No matter how hard people try to follow the guidelines, 73% of people fail to stick to their well-being routine.**"

Concerned as you are, you cannot avoid to think about **all the times you've failed to stick to your well-being routine**. When you couldn't sleep enough hours, when you couldn't have a healthy diet, or when you didn't have time to practice sports regularly.

With this **concern for your well-being** on your mind, you sit down on your chair ready to start writing a report for which the **deadline is the next week**.

After a while, **your manager** arrives at the office and asks you to **deliver the report this week instead**, if possible.

Knowing that your manager is **not a flexible person, always puts a lot of pressure** on the team, and **does not understand last minute deliveries**, you just want to do your job.

Q1: When are you planning to deliver the report?

1- Definitely this week	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 – Definitely next week
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Q2: To what extent do you feel you need to work extra hours?

1 – No need at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Totally need
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Q3: How much are you willing to work extra hours to deliver the report on time?

1 – Not willing at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Totally willing
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Q4: How much do you believe you may lose work promotions if you do not deliver the report this week?

1 – Do not believe at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Totally believe
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Q5: To what extent do you believe you should be rewarded if you work extra hours to finish the report on time?

1 – Do not believe at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Totally believe
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Q6: To what extent do you believe you should be recognised if you work extra hours to finish the report on time?

1 – Do not believe at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Totally believe
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Q7: How much do you find it acceptable to be asked to deliver the report earlier?

1 – Not acceptable at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Totally acceptable
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Q8: How much do you intend to start a meditation class provided by your company?

1 – Do not want at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Totally want
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Q9: How satisfied are you with your work-life balance?

1 – Not satisfied at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Totally satisfied
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Q10: How much time do you think you will have to do your well-being routine this week?

1 – No time at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 – A lot of time
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Scenario 2: High well-being concern & Low manager’s impression concern

Please, imagine the following scenario:

You have arrived at the office where you work in the morning. At the end of the week starts the meditation class provided by your company. You don't know whether you will attend the class. **You feel worried about your well-being.**

You are **concerned** because you have read a study that states that "**No matter how hard people try to follow the guidelines, 73% of people fail to stick to their well-being routine.**"

Concerned as you are, you cannot avoid to think about **all the times you've failed to stick to your well-being routine.** When you couldn't sleep enough hours, when you couldn't have a healthy diet, or when you didn't have time to practice sports regularly.

With this **concern for your well-being** on your mind, you sit down on your chair ready to start writing a report for which the **deadline is the next week.**

After a while, **your manager** arrives at the office and asks you to **deliver the report this week instead**, if possible.

Knowing that your manager is **a flexible person, never puts a lot of pressure** on the team, **and understands last-minute deliveries**, you just want to do your job.

Note: Participants were asked to answer the same questions from Q1 to Q10.

Scenario 3: Low well-being concern & High manager’s impression concern

Please, imagine the following scenario:

You have arrived at the office where you work in the morning. At the end of the week starts the meditation class provided by your company. You don't know whether you will attend the class. **You feel secure about your well-being.**

You are **peaceful** because you have read a study that states: **"73% of people who implement their well-being guidelines, have been able to stick to their well-being routine."**

Peaceful as you are, you think about **all the times you've succeeded to stick to your well-being routine**. When you had a good deep sleep, when you maintained a healthy diet, or when you had time to practice sports regularly.

With this **peaceful thought for well-being** on your mind, you sit down on your chair ready to start writing a report for which the **deadline is the next week**.

After a while, **your manager** arrives at the office and asks you to **deliver the report this week instead**, if possible.

Knowing that your manager is **not a flexible person, always puts a lot of pressure** on the team, and **does not understand last minute deliveries**, you just want to do your job.

Note: Participants were asked to answer the same questions from Q1 to Q10.

Scenario 4: Low well-being concern & Low manager's impression concern

Please, imagine the following scenario:

You have arrived at the office where you work in the morning. At the end of the week starts the meditation class provided by your company. You don't know whether you will attend the class. **You feel secure about your well-being**.

You are **peaceful** because you have read a study that states: **"73% of people who implement their well-being guidelines, have been able to stick to their well-being routine."**

Peaceful as you are, you think about **all the times you've succeeded to stick to your well-being routine**. When you had a good deep sleep, when you maintained a healthy diet, or when you had time to practice sports regularly.

With this **peaceful thought for well-being** on your mind, you sit down on your chair, take a deep breath, and are ready to start writing a report for which the **deadline is next week**.

After a while, **your manager** arrives at the office and asks you to **deliver the report this week instead**, if possible.

Knowing that your manager is a **flexible person, never puts a lot of pressure** on the team, and **understands last-minute deliveries**, you just want to do your job.

Note: Participants were asked to answer the same questions from Q1 to Q10.

Manipulation Check Page

Now, answer the following two questions thinking about the previous scenario.

Q11: In the previous scenario, you were asked to imagine that:

- You were peaceful with your well-being
- You were peaceful about the summer trip you were planning
- You were concerned about your well-being
- You were concerned about the summer trip you were planning

Q12: In the previous scenario, who was the person who showed up at the office?

- Your flexible and good manager
- Your flexible and good colleague
- Your rigid and stressful manager
- Your rigid and stressful colleague

Demographics Page

Q13: What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

- Non-binary
- Transgender
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q14: What is your age?

Q15: What is your highest level of education completed?

- No degree
- High School or equivalent
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent
- Master's degree or equivalent
- Doctoral or PhD Degree
- Other

Q16: What is your current employment status?

- Unemployed
- Employed
- Retired
- Student
- Student and employed
- Other

Q17: What is your first language?

Q18: In which country are you currently living?

Q19: How many hours per week do you typically work? (Please estimate the average per week for the last 3 months; if you are not working at the moment, please put 0)

Q20: How many extra hours per week do you typically work? (Please estimate the average per week for the last 3 months; if you are not working at the moment, please put 0)

End of Survey

You finished the survey! Thank you very much for your time!

Your answers are very important to better understand our perceptions about satisfaction with work and personal life.

If you have comments you can use the box below or if you have questions you can email the researcher, s-mapferro@ucp.pt.

To submit your answers go to the next page, please.