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Employee Well-being in a Hybrid Working Environment: The Role of PERMA and Leadership Styles

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the extent to which the PERMA model (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment) and different leadership styles (transformational, servant, positive) can promote well-being in a post-pandemic hybrid working environment. The research hypotheses were tested with quantitative data collected through a survey instrument administered among 302 employees in Germany, from various industries, with hybrid work experience. Results from multiple regression analyses suggest that all five PERMA dimensions as well as servant leadership are positively associated with employee well-being in hybrid work environments. Through its examination of the combined influence of the PERMA model and leadership styles on employee well-being in a hybrid working environment, this study provides valuable insights for organizations aiming to enhance employee well-being and performance. By understanding how the PERMA model and specific leadership styles can promote well-being in hybrid work environments, organizations which have implemented or plan to implement such arrangements can provide better support for their employees and consequently improve productivity and performance.

Keywords: *PERMA model; transformational leadership; servant leadership; positive leadership; well-being; hybrid work.*

Introduction

Markets have increasingly become volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) which can be attributed to both globalization and digitalization. As a result, companies encounter a work environment that is fiercely competitive and rapidly evolving, necessitating their prompt and appropriate response and adaptation. Consequently, both companies and employees are under growing pressure, leading to a rise in mental health issues such as stress, depression, and anxiety [1].

One major event that reflects unpredictability was the COVID-19 pandemic, initiating a rethinking regarding work and employee well-being. Working remotely became more common, also made possible through improved technology [2]. Post pandemic there is a tendency to return to the office, but many employees, having experienced the advantages of increased flexibility, prefer at least a hybrid working environment characterised by a combination of on-site and remote work [3, 4].

However, new forms of work entail new concerns, amongst which are well-being and health [5]. Since employee well-being contributes positively to productivity, it has become a focus of Human Resources (HR) and strategic management [6], putting companies under increasing pressure to adapt by creating a post-pandemic work situation that meets current values and needs, reinforced by changes in expectations by new generations [7]. A great deal of the responsibility for employee well-being in a hybrid work system is placed on the respective leaders, as leadership has great impact on the success of organizations [8]. Consequently, the behaviour of leaders and the associated consequences for employee well-being in remote

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hybrid Work

Work used to be defined as the completion of tasks being tied to time and place [12]. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced people to work from home, both employers and employees had to adjust to a new situation at short notice. In its aftermath, employees demand greater flexibility, specifically being able to decide where and when they would like to work.

Companies react by increasingly introducing so-called hybrid work [13]. However, the pandemic was not the only factor driving companies to decentralise and hybrid working existed long before [14]. Additional factors are technology, societal values and the shift towards an information society, putting increasing pressure on companies to create new work models [15, 16].

Definition of hybrid work

Hybrid work can be defined as a system where some employees work on-site (in the office) while others work remotely (from home or any location other than the office), in many cases with shifting patterns and people doing both [17]. Unlike virtual work, where the entire team works remotely, hybrid teams combine face-to-face communication with computer-based interaction to bridge distances [18]. A hybrid work system makes it possible to respond to different individual needs by offering the possibility of working both on-site and remotely. This will, still, also have to respond to the employers' needs [19].

However, it is difficult to identify a clear and consistent definition of hybrid work: virtual collaborations are defined in various ways, using terms such as semi-virtual, telework,

distributed work, virtual work, telecommuting or remote work. Such terms may imply both a completely virtual and a hybrid way of working and thus lack a clear distinction [20]. Moreover, the degree of virtuality in a hybrid work system has found little consideration in the literature to date [2]. Traditionally, the main distinction between the different forms of work lies in the time spent working together on one hand and the level of technological support on the other [18], to which can be added varying levels of flexibility within organisations.

Implications for the Workplace

Hybrid work makes it possible to take advantage of the remote work setting while still offering employees the opportunity of an on-site workplace, primarily accommodating employees' desires for greater flexibility. This can lead to reduced office cost [18] and a positive effect on employee satisfaction, engagement and attitude which may lead to reduced turnover [21].

Introducing hybrid solutions may also be experienced as an element of appreciation by the employees, increasing positive feelings and attitudes [5]. Pitfalls are (data) security issues, also requiring sensitizing and educating employees [22], process and performance control and general communication [4], the latter including the risk of social isolation [18].

From an employee perspective, the general attitude to hybrid work is positive [23] and reduced commuting and added flexibility is valued and can add to well-being and a feeling of increased productivity [19]. On the other hand, this cannot be generally applied to all employees, and work-family conflicts can occur [12, 24], especially for women [25]. Thus, remote and hybrid work may be both a benefit and a burden differing on individual perceptions, and managing the work-life balance can be challenging [26].

Generational differences also play a role. Younger generations for instance embrace (or even demand) technology and the possibilities it offers more readily than older ones so that different solutions may have to be devised for different groups of people [27].

The perception of remote work and its benefits remains individual. Thus, the hybrid work model has the potential to offer many benefits for both employers and employees but requires careful planning and implementation to be successful [27, 28].

The Concept of Well-being

The understanding of well-being is ambiguous: various definitions, models and operationalizations of psychological well-being exist, leading to contradictory results [29, 30]. Nonetheless, one aspect on which there is agreement is that well-being is multidimensional and can be better described by several indicators rather than by a single factor alone [31]. Although well-being can refer to both the physical and psychological level, this paper will concentrate on the psychological aspect.

Two perspectives dominate: the hedonistic and the eudaimonic perspective of well-being [30]. The hedonistic perspective of well-being dates back to Greek philosopher Aristippus, who declared the experience of maximum pleasure to be the goal of life. Following the subsequent psychological definitions of Kubovy [32], the goal of hedonism is to optimize those states that trigger joy.

Here, the pursuit of satisfaction, positive emotions and happiness lay at the centre of the creation of well-being, whereas Aristotle's eudaimonic perspective sees true happiness and well-being as a result of the pursuit of value in life [30].

Current views rather see well-being stemming from a combination of the two approaches and thus models that combine these perspectives are favoured by researchers [33]. One model that meets these criteria is the PERMA model [11].

The PERMA Model

The PERMA Model is rooted in positive psychology, expanding a theory of "Authentic Happiness" and focusing on the well-being and "flourishing" of people [11].

There are alternatives to investigating well-being such as the bi-factor model [34], but PERMA is very well documented, widely used and was expanded over time. It revolves around promoting factors that make life worth living rather than on health, arguing that the absence of illness does not constitute happiness [35].

PERMA is an acronym for the five elements that make up well-being according to this model:

- Positive Emotions (P)
- Engagement (E)
- Relationships (R)
- Meaning (M)
- Accomplishment (A)

Each of the five elements contributes to well-being, and many people experience it for its own sake, not to achieve other states; while closely correlated, each element can be measured independently of the others [11]. The pursuit of all five elements from one's own motivation helps people to "flourish", which is defined "as a dynamic optimal state of psychological functioning that arises from functioning well across multiple psychosocial domains" [36, p.2].

Positive emotions are for example love, interest, and joy, subjectively defined by people experiencing them [11, 37]. Engagement, losing oneself in a task, can only be assessed in retrospect. Relationships as a factor is determined by social relationships and its absence would have negative consequences for the well-being.

They can be measured both subjectively, by feeling, or objectively [11, 30]. Meaning is subjectively attributed when something has a use and possesses a personal value, allowing the feeling to contribute to achievement for the respective person. Thus, certain activities that a person performs to pursue a higher goal can give the feeling of contributing something valuable [38]. This element can be measured both subjectively and objectively. The fifth element, accomplishment, focuses on subjectively perceived accomplishments in the sense of reaching a goal or successfully learning a skill [36]. While there is strong relationship between the PERMA domains, the model has proven valuable for researching well-being in various groups of people [39].

Evaluation and PERMA Lead

To date, studies have been conducted primarily to examine the relationship of individual PERMA elements with other variables rather than on the model as a whole. However, these studies were able to demonstrate a relationship with variables such as hope, school engagement, life satisfaction, gratitude and job-related factors such as commitment and satisfaction [40, 41]

For instance, positive emotions were found to be associated with physical and psychological health, life satisfaction and job satisfaction [13]. Additionally, employee engagement can be used as a facilitator to improve employee behaviour and motives, leading to improved performance [42].

The feeling of accomplishment was found to lead to higher resilience [43] and research has also been able to support the validity of the PERMA model for the measurement of well-being [44].
Because of its established validity, the model has been widely used and extended, as in the PERMA Lead Model [45]. PERMA Lead aligns leadership behaviour with the five PERMA dimensions, representing a positive leadership approach in which leadership elements are associated with supporting the individual PERMA dimensions, enhancing well-being and, as a result, performance.
Using this model, the present paper will investigate the following hypotheses:
H1: Positive emotions at work are positively associatedwith the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment.
H2: Employee engagement is positively associated with the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment. **H3:** Good relationships at work and feeling as a part of the team are positively associated with the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment.
H4: Experiencing a sense of meaning in one's work is positively associated with the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment.
H5: Seeing what has been achieved by one's own work is positively associated with the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment.

Leadership
Early leadership models centred around materialistic rewards or their withholding, but since, various leadership models and approaches have emerged – with no universally accepted definition of leadership [46] for two main reasons. First, leadership is subject to constant change and second, leadership can be understood from different perspectives: leadership of organizations, of groups and of individuals [47]. This paper focuses on the leadership of employees, including individuals and groups.
Going beyond “management”, leadership can be defined as any establishing of a process leading to a common understanding of goals and influencing people to achieve them [47]. However, changes in societal values and the increasing importance of a flexible work environment lead to an increasing importance of the interplay of a leader's personality traits, competencies, behaviours and leadership style [48], with leadership style being defined as a "relatively consistent pattern of behaviour that characterizes a leader" [49, p.58].
Three leadership styles were considered the most influential ones for this paper and are examined below, focusing on their influence on well-being: transformational, servant and positive leadership.

Transformational Leadership
Transformational leadership recognizes the need for change and inspires by creating a vision and acting as a role model [50]. Transformational leaders encourage self- development and facilitate the development of intrinsic motivation, thus replacing material reward by creating a desire to achieve through enticing employees to recognize their own needs and pursuing them in their work.
Four aspects are of particular importance: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration [51].

- Idealized influence represents the emotional component of transformational leadership, the leader's ability to earn respect and admiration, developing loyalty and trust [52].
- Inspirational motivation describes the leader's ability to create appealing visions and to set challenging yet realistic goals, instilling confidence in employees' ability to achieve them [51, 53].
- Intellectual stimulation describes the leader's ability to promote an innovative and creative mindset and to consider different contexts and approaches. It emphasizes the importance of a productive team culture embracing new perceptions [50, 51]. Individual consideration refers to the leader's interest in the well-being of individual employees, among other things by creating a supportive atmosphere [53].

Hence, leaders who adopt a transformational leadership style promote change in the company and its environment, working together with their teams towards a common goal and actively involving all team members in the process. Both companies and employees can benefit from a transformational leadership style as it contributes to positive emotions, enhancing employee satisfaction, the perception of empowerment and to reducing (mental) health issues [54, 55]. Transformational leadership thus correlates positively with job satisfaction and empowerment, the latter two also strongly correlated [56]. There is also a strongly positive correlation with health and the overall well-being of the people led [54]. Consequently, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H6: A transformational leadership style is positively associated with to the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment.

Servant Leadership
Servant leadership, dating back to the 1970es, characterizes good leaders as servants to their employees, while still striving to lead [57]. A servant leader places special emphasis on the development and well-being of their employees, helping them to grow to their full potential and placing their needs above their own interests [58], developing employees effectively to ensure the efficiency of the organization.
Different servant leadership concepts have evolved; however, this paper focuses on the most recognized one by Liden, Wayne [59]. They describe servant leadership using seven characteristics:

- Emotional healing, the personal interest in the well-being of employees, considering their personal concerns
- Value on behalf of the community, engaging with an organization's environment and motivating employees to be involved as well
- Conceptual skills, an understanding of the organization's goals and applying consistent problem-solving approaches
- Empowering, encouraging employees to become independent and take responsibility
- Related to this, encouraging employees to reach their full potential
- Putting employees' interests above one's own
- And finally, ethical behaviour by acting honestly, fairly and loyally, especially toward one's employees

Servant leadership can lead to higher work motivation and decreased emotional exhaustion [60], resulting in an increased

overall well-being and thus being an important determinant of psychological health [61, 62]. Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H7: A servant leadership style is positively associated with the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment.

Positive Leadership and PERMA

Positive leadership is a resource and strength-based approach inspired by positive psychology [45]. The focus is on promoting and building on the resources and strengths of those being led, highlighting their development potential. Positive leadership enables the provision of exceptional service performance, focuses on the abilities and strength of theindividual and encourages virtuousness. Different approaches represent positive leadership as a personality model [1] as a model focusing on corporate culture [63] or relate it to employee well-being as does the PERMA model.

As described above, the PERMA Lead model aligns PERMA with positive leadership, adding the "Lead" dimension which refers to the focus on strengths in the context of leadership and thus puts employees' strengths and competencies in the foreground, making it a situational approach to leadership [45].

Positive leadership has been shown to lead to positive emotions in employees, to support cooperation in diverse teams and to positively impact well-being [64], resulting in the development of the following hypothesis:

H8: A positive leadership style is positively associated with the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment.

METHODOLOGY

Procedure

To investigate the influence of the five PERMA model dimensions and three leadership styles on the well-being of employees in a hybrid working environment, a quantitative study was carried out, consisting of a cross-sectional analysis of survey data. Data were gathered online, from individuals in Germany who had worked in a hybrid fashion for at least six months. Following development of the survey instrument, a pre-test was conducted to ensure questions asked were understandable and non-ambiguous. Subsequently, we recruited participants for the main data collection by distributing survey invitations via digital channels and through snowballing.

Measures

The survey consisted of a combination of existing and newly developed scales. Existing scales available in English only were translated into German.

Independent variables

PERMA dimensions

To operationalize the PERMA dimensions, we developed new scales (see Online Resource 1 in the supplementary materials at the end). Example aspects that we inquired about included “feeling positive emotions” and “contributing personal strength”. For each PERMA dimension and for each of these aspects, we assessed: i) their importance to participants (“how important are the following aspects for you to feel comfortable in your hybrid working environment?”; ii) their perceived association with participant well-being (“to what extent can the following aspects positively influence your well-being in the hybrid working environment?”); and iii) their presence in participants' current working environment (“when you think about your current (hybrid) working environment, to what extent do the following statements apply to you?”).

Participants were asked to rate two to four items per dimension and per aspect, using five-point and ten- point Likert anchors. Cronbach's alphas for the newly created scales ranged between .49 and .88.

Leadership behaviours

Since we sought to assess both the current, actual leadership behaviours shown by participants' line managers (based on their employees' perceptions) as well as leadership behaviours participants looked for in their line managers, we asked all leadership items twice (“please indicate the extent to which the following statements apply to your leader” versus “how important are the following leadership behaviours to you for your personal well-being?”).

Transformational leadership was assessed using the seven-item Global Transformational Leadership scale (GTL) [65]. Two example items were “my leader communicates a clear and positive vision for the future” and “my manager encourages me and gives me recognition” (five- point Likert anchors). Cronbach's alphas were .92 and .79 respectively, for actual versus desired transformational leadership behaviour (TLB).

Servant leadership was assessed using the seven-item short form (SL-7) of the 28-item servant leadership measure (SL-28) [58]. Two example items were “I would seek help from my manager if I had a personal problem” and “my manager puts my interest above their own” (seven-point Likert anchors). Cronbach's alphas were .94 and .85 respectively, for actual versus desired positive leadership behaviour (PLB).

Positive leadership was assessed using a modified, nine-item version of the Positive Leadership Assessment Scale (PLAS) [66]. Two example items were “it is important to me that the manager thanks me” and “it is important to me that the manager gives me more feedback on my strengths than on my weaknesses” (five-point Likert anchors).

Cronbach's alphas were .84 and .70 respectively, for actual versus desired servant leadership behaviour (SLB).

Dependent variable

Employee well-being

We assessed workplace well-being using a German version (Institute for Positive Psychology and Mental Coaching) of the Workplace PERMA Profiler [41], which is based on the PERMA model and consists of 23 items. Two example items were “at work, how often do you feel joyful?” and “to what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful?” (ten- point Likert anchors). Cronbach's alpha was .92.

Hybrid work and sociodemographic variables

To obtain details about participants' hybrid working environments, we asked about the extent to which they were free to decide when and from where they would work as well as about the number of days they worked in their employer's offices (on-site) versus from home or other (remote) locations. Finally, we inquired about whether their current employer had been pursuing a hybrid work system prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Demographic data were collected at the end of the questionnaire including gender, age, educational level, work experience in years, type of employment and company size (i.e., number of employees.

Participants

A power analysis using G*Power [67] was conducted to determine the required sample size for a multiple regression analysis. Assuming a small-to-medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.05$), an alpha level of .05, a desired power of.80, and five predictors Positive Emotions (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), Accomplishment (A),

the analysis indicated a minimum sample size of 158 participants was needed. We recruited 302 participants for the final sample after removing invalid cases.

65.6% of participants indicated their gender as female, 34.1% as male and 0.3% as diverse (see table 1 on the following page). The average age was 39.53 years. Most participants held a higher education degree (72.2%); 18.9% had completed an apprenticeship or other vocational training, 7.6% had a school leaving certificate and the remaining 1.3% reported having 'other' educational qualifications. Participants were mainly full-time employed (62.9%), 25.8% worked part-time and 11.3% worked in a student job or did an internship.

Most participants (82.5%) worked in large enterprises of 250 or more employees, 10.3% in medium-sized enterprises (50 to 249 employees) and 7.2% in small (10 to 49 employees) or micro enterprises (less than 10 employees). In terms of the model of hybrid work practiced, many participants indicated being free to decide when and from where they work (43.7%); 36.8% of participants coordinate with their colleagues regarding their time and place of work, 16.2% follow an individual schedule established ahead of time, while only few participants (3.6%) follow set office days across the entire organization. A comparatively small number of participants (26.8%) had worked in a hybrid fashion prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic already compared to those who only started doing so following the pandemic (73.2%). Many respondents worked either one day per week (34.4%) or less (22.8%) from their employer's office and three (25.5%) or four days (31.8%) from home or another location.

RESULTS

Analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 29.

Initial analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlations were obtained and analysed for all variables prior to hypothesis testing (Table 2). Descriptive statistics indicate that PERMA dimensions are generally present at the respondents' workplace and are perceived as both important for improving well-being and as having a positive influence on well-being. They further suggest a presence of all three leadership styles at respondents' workplace, and that all three leadership styles are perceived as desirable in the context of well-being at work; servant leadership in particular was deemed highly desirable.

In terms of relationships between the presence and influence of the PERMA dimensions, a small positive yet significant correlation was found for engagement (r = .20, p = .00), but not for any of the other four dimensions; this suggests that the presence of PERMA dimensions at the workplace is not related to their perceived influence on employee well-being. Regarding relationships between the presence and importance of PERMA dimensions for well-being at work, significant positive correlations were found for positive emotions (r = .22, p = .00), engagement (r = .35, p = .00), relationships (r = .16, p = .01) and meaning (r = .13, p = .03).

Moderate-to-strong, significant positive correlations were found between the PERMA dimensions' presence and well-being, ranging from .30 (p = .00) for achievement to .91 (p = .00) for meaning.

Table 1: Survey participant characteristics (N=302)

Variable	N (%)	M (SD)
Gender		
Female	198 (65.6)	
Male	103 (34.1)	
Diverse	1 (0.3)	
Age (years)		39 53 (12.92)
Formal education		
Higher education degree	218 (72.2)	
Apprenticeship/other vocational training	57 (18.9)	
School leaving certificate	23 (7.6)	
Other qualifications	4 (1.3)	
Employment		
Full-time employed	190 (62.9)	
Part-time employed	78 (25.8)	
Student job or internship	34 (11.3)	
Work experience (in years)		
Less than 1 year	17 (5.6)	
1-5 years	81 (26 8)	
6-10 years	34 (11.3)	
11-15 years	29 (9.6)	
16-20 years	25 (8.3)	
More than 20 years	116 (38.4)	
Company size		
Large enterprise (250+ employees)	249 (82.5)	
Medium-sized enterprise (50-249 employees)	31 (10 3)	
Small enterprise (10-49 employees)	11 (3.6)	
Micro enterprise (fewer than 10 employees)	11 (3.6)	
Hybrid work model		
Free choice when/where to work	132 (43.7)	
Set days within own team	111 (36.8)	
Individually established schedule	49 (16.2)	
Set days predetermined by company	10 (3.3)	
Hybrid work in relation to COVID-19		
Prior to COVID-19 outbreak	81 (26.8)	
Following COVID-19 outbreak	221 (73.2)	
Days working from the office		1.63 (1.30)
Less than one day/week	69 (22.8)	
One day/week	104 (34.4)	
Two days/week	62 (20.5)	
Three days/	32 (10.6)	
Four days/week	23 (7.6)	
Five days/week	12 (4.0)	
Days working from home or other location		3.25 (1.31)
Less than one day/week	14 (4.6)	
One day/week	21 (7.0)	
Two days/week	43 (14.2)	
Three days/week	77 (25.5)	
Four days/week	96 (31.8)	
Five days/week	51 (16.9)	

Further Results

Turning to relationships for the leadership variables, moderate positive, significant correlations were observed between actual TLB and desired TLB ($r = .21$, $p = .00$), desired PLB ($r = .13$, $p = .01$) and desired SLB ($r = .15$, $p = .03$). Actual PLB is positively and significantly correlated with desired TLB ($r = 20$, $p = .00$) and desired PLB ($r = .20$, $p = .00$). No significant relationship was found between actual PLB and desired SLB ($r = .10$, $p = .12$). Significant positive correlations were observed between actual SLB and all three desired leadership styles: actual SLB and desired TLB ($r = .32$, $p = 00$), actual SLB and desired PLB ($r = .25$, $p = .00$) and actual SLB and desired SLB ($r = .32$, $p = 00$). Moderate-to-strong, significant positive correlations were observed between the three actual leadership styles and well-being ($r = .43$, $p = .00$ for TLB and PLB alike; $r = .47$, $p = .00$ for SLB), although to an overall lesser magnitude compared to the relationships between the presence of PERMA dimensions and well-being.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlations for well-being, PERMA and leadership style variables (see also larger version in the supplementary materials at the end)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1	Wellbeing	—																					
2	P (Importance)	.21**	—																				
3	E (Importance)	.23**	.42**	—																			
4	R (Importance)	.15*	.37**	.19**	—																		
5	M (Importance)	.16**	.43**	.33**	.19**	—																	
6	A (Importance)	.15*	.19**	.47**	.30**	.33**	—																
7	P (Impact)	.14*	.39**	.35**	.21**	.17**	.28**	—															
8	E (Impact)	.11	.27**	.28**	.33**	.25**	.26**	.45**	—														
9	R (Impact)	.20**	.31**	.32**	.18**	.39**	.17**	.12*	.25**	—													
10	M (Impact)	.10	.17**	.38**	.12*	.50**	.21**	.11	.34**	.12*	—												
11	A (Impact)	.12*	.26**	.40**	.20**	.42**	.28**	.11	.34**	.34**	.52**	—											
12	P (Presence)	.05	.16**	.15**	.11	.20**	.10	.11	.26**	.11	.06	.09	—										
13	E (Presence)	.14*	.15**	.40**	.12*	.44**	.30**	.12*	.30**	.14*	.30**	.43**	.43**	—									
14	R (Presence)	.13*	.30**	.30**	.08	.32**	.26**	.14*	.31**	.29**	.17**	.32**	.13*	.31**	—								
15	M (Presence)	.14*	.33**	.33**	.08	.32**	.29**	.15**	.32**	.27**	.30**	.35**	.19**	.30**	.30**	—							
16	A (Presence)	.33**	.37**	.35**	.15**	.32**	.30**	.21**	.39**	.30**	.42**	.47**	.26**	.35**	.31**	.39**	—						
17	TLB (actual)	.20**	.47**	.29**	.27**	.30**	.26**	.32**	.30**	.14*	.27**	.35**	.15**	.19**	.15**	.19**	.23**	—					
18	PLB (actual)	.14*	.31**	.33**	.17**	.32**	.45**	.18**	.34**	.18**	.40**	.43**	.20**	.31**	.19**	.21**	.38**	.30**	—				
19	PLB (desired)	.19**	.33**	.40**	.18**	.37**	.47**	.22**	.44**	.30**	.41**	.47**	.18**	.34**	.25**	.26**	.43**	.30**	.52**	—			
20	SLB (actual)	.17**	.39**	.27**	.19**	.32**	.39**	.22**	.39**	.25**	.43**	.45**	.16**	.30**	.18**	.21**	.38**	.32**	.48**	.52**	—		
21	SLB (desired)	.14*	.36**	.32**	.21**	.34**	.41**	.20**	.38**	.28**	.42**	.43**	.17**	.33**	.20**	.22**	.40**	.30**	.50**	.54**	.59**	—	
22	SLB (desired)	.14*	.32**	.30**	.18**	.33**	.40**	.20**	.38**	.25**	.39**	.42**	.15**	.31**	.19**	.20**	.39**	.28**	.50**	.54**	.59**	.64**	—
	Mean	3.52	4.65	4.53	4.46	4.27	4.31	4.00	4.30	4.07	3.90	4.37	3.80	3.90	3.59	3.98	4.05	3.69	3.86	3.98	3.09	3.42	3.70
	Std. deviation	1.05	0.72	0.68	0.76	0.69	0.73	0.80	0.76	0.83	0.79	0.67	0.69	0.71	0.73	0.72	0.66	0.87	0.83	0.61	1.50	1.45	1.42
	Minimum	1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.33	3.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Maximum	9.75	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Hypothesis testing

Following initial exploration of variable relationships using Pearson correlations, all hypotheses were further tested using multiple regression analyses.

PERMA dimensions

All five PERMA dimensions together account significantly for 91% of the variation in well-being (R^2 = .91, *adjusted* R^2 =.91, F = 581.96, p = .00). Meaning (t = 18.38, p = .00), positive emotions (t = 14.77, p = .00) and relationships (t = 2.97, p = .00) are significant predictors of well-being, while engagement (t = .42, p = .81) and achievement (t =–.39, p = .70) do not significantly predict well-being.

The presence of meaning has the greatest influence (standardized β = .55), followed by positive emotions (β = .43) and relationships (β = .07). Consequently, if the meaning score increases by one unit, well-being rises by .77 (b = .77), and respectively, for positive emotions (well-being rises by .73 (b = .13)) and relationships (well-being rises by .11 (b =.11)). The presence of engagement (β = .01) and achievement (β = -.01) have no significant effect. Accordingly, H1, H3, and H4 can be confirmed while H2 and H5 must be rejected.

Leadership styles

All three leadership styles together account significantly for 22% of the variation in well-being (R^2 = .23, *adjusted* R^2=.22, F = 29.48, p = .00). The model demonstrates that SLB (t = 3.54, p = .00) is a significant predictor of well-being while TLB (t = .89, p = .38) and PLB (t = .76, p = .45) do not significantly predict well-being.

SLB has a standardized Beta of β = .32; if the SLB score increases by one unit, well-being rises by .31 (b = .31). TLB (standardized β = .10) and PLB (standardized β = .08) do not have a significant effect on well-being. Accordingly, H7 can be confirmed while H6 and H8 must be rejected.

DISCUSSION

Participants consistently viewed the implementation of the PERMA dimensions as important for their well-being in a hybrid working environment. All five PERMA dimensions were seen to have a positive impact on well-being, with positive emotions being particularly important, followed by relationships and meaning *[see also 31]*. Not only were positive emotions – and relationships and meaning – perceived to be highly relevant for well-being in a hybrid working environment, they were also found to contribute significantly to individuals' well-being.

These findings align with Cohn *et al. [37]*, who observed that positive emotions are positively associated with psychological health. Similarly, the impact of relationships and meaning on well-being has also been documented elsewhere *[13, 68]*.

Regarding the PERMA dimensions engagement and accomplishment, our study's findings diverge from previous literature *[40, 42, 43]* in that we observed no significant relationships between these dimensions and employee well-being within a hybrid work environment. Despite this, employees rated both engagement and accomplishment as important and effective factors in such a setting. Given that all five dimensions of the PERMA model were valued highly and perceived as crucial for well-being, the PERMA model represents a valuable framework associated with well-being in a hybrid work environment.

The influence of leadership styles on employee well-being was found to vary. Notably, while none of the leadership styles examined had a negative effect on employee well-being, only servant leadership behaviour had a significant positive impact *[61, 62]*. Consequently, adopting a servant leadership style – and prioritizing such a style over transformational and positive leadership styles – appears to be associated with higher employee well-being in a hybrid work environment. However, it is important to acknowledge that the leadership styles investigated here accounted for only a small portion of employee well-being.

Further research could investigate additional factors contributing to employee well-being in a hybrid work environment, such as the extent to which a leader possesses digital competencies given the importance of using digital tools in hybrid work environments.

Moreover, findings pointed to a notable link between experiencing and desiring servant leadership, confirming, for instance, Wang et al. *[60]*. Participants who experienced servant leadership were satisfied and wanted their leaders to continue this behaviour. A similar, though smaller, relationship was seen with both transformational and positive leadership *[45, 52, 56]*. While these leadership styles may not significantly impact employee well-being in a hybrid work environment, they are still valued. Interestingly, we found no clear link between current leadership behaviour and preference for different styles, except that employees who experienced positive leadership were less likely to seek servant leadership.

In sum, our findings highlight the relevance of the five PERMA dimensions and several leadership styles in relation to employee well-being and, consequently, overall organizational success, in a post-pandemic world of work where hybrid working and home office arrangements are prevalent in many organizations. Our research contributes to the extant evidence base by linking the PERMA dimensions to well-being in a hybrid working context, thus supporting the importance of the PERMA model in evolving organizational settings on the one hand and extending its application to leadership practices in the hybrid workplace on the other hand.

Practical Implications

This study offers insights for organizations and leaders aiming to thrive in a hybrid working environment by empowering employees and prioritizing their well-being, ensuring employee well-being can foster long-term organizational improvements and enhance productivity, thus profitability *[see 19, 69]*.

Furthermore, leaders who focus on employee well-being can strengthen team cohesion, thereby increasing satisfaction and productive engagement *[as shown by 13, 42]*. To foster well-being in a hybrid work environment, efforts should be made for employees to feel positive about their work, specifically to be interested in it and experience joy.

Further, relationships between employees should be nurtu- red by creating an environment where employees can get to know each other beyond the work settings and strengthen team cohesion. Moreover, employees may feel a greater sense of meaning and purpose if they are provided 'the big picture' by their line managers *[18, 27]*.

In the post-COVID19 era where alternative work arrangements are increasingly prominent, and many organizations are transitioning to hybrid work and similar models, our study's findings are particularly relevant for recruitment, training and other HR management issues *[5, 20]*. They offer insights into identifying candidates suited for leadership roles and pinpointing the training needs of current leaders. This enables the development of targeted training programs to educate leaders on effective behaviours and practices that enhance employee well-being in a hybrid working environment, ultimately driving collective organizational success.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH AVENUES

Several limitations can be identified. Given the rise in hybrid working is still recent, and organizations face challenges in implementing suitable long-term strategies, both employees and employers have limited experience in this area. In our study we focused solely on the employee perspective. However, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the associated challenges and needs, we recommend taking account of multiple perspectives and developing joint approaches that consider the well-being of employees, employers, and leaders alike.

In the theoretical framework section, we noted that age influences the perception of PERMA dimensions as well as of workplace demands *[28]*. Consequently, future research could examine possible age-related differences in the perception of well-being, as well as the role of different leadership approaches in enhancing employee well-being in hybrid working environments that are age- diverse.

Further, a qualitative approach could complement our quantitative research by providing more in-depth insights into the matter being investigated. Our study also relied on a non-representative sample obtained through convenience sampling, which may introduce selection bias. The reliability of the scales used for data collection represents another limitation. Custom scales were created for the PERMA dimensions in the work context, and some scales contained only two items, resulting in limited reliability in some cases. Using more detailed and comprehensive scales is advisable to achieve higher reliability. Finally, scales were partly translated into German, which may have introduced translation-related distortions in the results.

Given that this study represents an initial exploration of employee well-being in a hybrid working environment, further research is recommended to validate and expand upon these findings. Future studies could examine additional leadership styles beyond the three considered here. Since different leadership styles have a varying influence on employee well-being, investigating the effects of styles such as transactional or laissez-faire leadership could provide valuable insights.

Moreover, future research could focus on specific industries where hybrid work is prevalent, such as technology, financial and professional services, or insurance, to better understand the unique challenges and benefits within these contexts.

Another important area for future research is cultural diversity, which has been increasing in recent years (Cherian et al., 2020). Since the sample consisted solely of employees from Germany, the findings may not be generalizable to other national contexts. Therefore, investigating potential intercultural differences in the needs and desires of employees in a hybrid working environment could provide valuable insights for improving the cooperation of international teams.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Larger Version of Table 2

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlations for wellbeing, PERMA and leadership style variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1	Wellbeing	-																					
2	P (Importance)	21**	-																				
3	E (Importance)	23**	42**	-																			
4	R (Importance)	.15*	31**	19**	-																		
5	M (Importance)	16**	.40**	.33**	.19**	-																	
6	A (Importance)	.14*	.33**	41**	.33**	33**	-																
7	P (Impact)	.12*	22**	18**	30**	21**	45**	-															
8	E (Impact)	19**	27**	38**	15**	24**	28**	33**	-														
9	R (Impact)	.11	20**	.07	45**	.05	21**	.53**	25**	-													
10	M (Impact)	.10	26**	21**	.09	30**	26**	.39**	50**	33**	-												
11	A (Impact)	125*	.06	.04	.04	-.01	.17**	28**	.34**	12*	34**	-											
12	P (Presence)	.88**	22**	18**	.11	.14*	.11	.10	12*	.11	.06	.09	-										
13	E (Presence)	.64**	28**	.35**	.10	21**	15**	.11	20**	.04	.11	.05	.62**	-									
14	R (Presence)	57**	.10	.15**	.16**	.07	.04	20**	16**	.20	.10	14*	.50**	43**	-								
15	M (Presence)	91**	16**	25**	12*	.13*	.15**	.09	15**	.08	.05	.06	.76**	.63**	.53**	-							
16	A (Presence)	30*	.03	.07	-.01	.07	.08	16**	.13*	12*	.08	.10	.25**	21**	33**	31**	-						
17	TLB (actual)	43**	.07	.07	13*	.07	.06	27**	.034	26**	-.02	.04	.44**	.33**	.64**	.39**	30**	-					
18	TLB (desired)	-17**	.36**	.38**	.36**	.39**	47**	.39**	27**	30**	.33**	.12*	.14*	21**	.17**	15*	.10	21**	-				
19	PLB (actual)	43**	.06	.07	.07	.04	.06	24**	.04	.26**	.02	.03	.42**	29**	.64**	40**	30**	.87**	20**	-			
20	PLB (desired)	.14*	28**	19**	32**	22**	.39**	47**	.11	.38**	26**	.10	.11*	.07	.13*	.13*	.02	.13*	63**	20**	-		
21	SLB (actual)	47**	.10	13*	.15*	12*	.08	29**	.07	28**	.04	.04	.43**	.33**	.60**	.44**	34**	80**	32**	.80**	25**	-	
22	SLB (desired)	15**	25**	31**	.14*	24**	29**	33**	16**	26**	31**	.12*	12*	.14*	.11	.17**	.08	.15**	58**	.10	61**	32**	-
	Mean	7.52	4.55	4.22	4.33	4.40	4.24	3.68	4.27	3.61	4.00	4.37	3.80	3.98	3.61	3.68	3.05	1.00	1.57	1.00	2.00	1.14	2.00
	Std. deviation	1.19	0.58	0.67	0.66	0.64	0.63	0.81	0.70	1.00	070	0.71	0.69	0.77	0.73	0.85	0.86	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	7.00	7.00

CONCLUSION

In summary, the post-pandemic world of work has ushered in a new era of hybrid work, and many organizations are still in a discovery phase as this type of work and its implementation remain largely unexplored. In our study, we investigated the extent to which the five dimensions of the PERMA model and transformational, positive and servant leadership styles positively influence employee well-being in a hybrid working environment.Our findings emphasize the importance of all five PERMA dimensions as well as servant leadership in enhancing employee well-being in the VUCA world. By combining insights on mental health and flexible working, we offer a comprehensive approach to fostering a thriving organizational culture that prioritizes employee well-being as a competitive advantage. Moreover, we provide practical guidelines for organizations currently implementing or planning to implement hybrid work arrangements. By integrating elements of the PERMA model and servant leadership into their practices, organizations can support employee well-being, potentially leading to improved job satisfaction and productivity.

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available as privacy assurances were made to participants given concerns that individual privacy could be compromised. The data can, however, be made available from the authors upon reasonable request.

Ethics approval

This study did not require ethics approval since CBS International Business School, where the research was conducted, does not ask its researchers to seek ethics approval for any studies undertaken.

All procedures performed in this study which involved human participants were in accordance with the American Psychological Association Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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Competing interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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