

Workplace Well-Being Through the Lens of Positive Psychology: Integrating Gratitude, Stress, Flow and Optimism for Advancing SDG 8

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ABSTRACT

Workplace well-being is a critical factor in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), which promotes decent work and economic growth. This integrative review synthesizes current evidence on four key positive psychology constructs—gratitude, stress resilience, flow, and optimism—and their collective impact on workplace well-being. Drawing on a structured literature review and critical appraisal of measurement frameworks, intervention strategies, and implementation challenges, the paper proposes a comprehensive, evidence-based framework for advancing workplace well-being aligned with SDG 8. Findings highlight that multi-level, co-designed interventions addressing both individual and organizational factors yield the most sustainable improvements. Barriers such as resource constraints, organizational culture, and the science-practice gap are discussed alongside facilitators including leadership support and continuous evaluation. The paper concludes with actionable recommendations for organizations, policymakers, and researchers, emphasizing culturally sensitive, context-specific approaches and the integration of rigorous measurement and evaluation. This work contributes to the growing discourse on positive workplace psychology and offers a roadmap for fostering healthy, productive, and inclusive work environments globally.

KEYWORDS: workplace well-being, gratitude, stress resilience, flow, optimism, sustainable development goal 8, positive psychology, organizational interventions

INTRODUCTION

Globally, businesses, legislators, and researchers are becoming increasingly concerned about workplace well-being. The quality of work environments and employees' psychological well-being are now acknowledged as crucial factors that determine organizational success, societal resilience, and sustainable development as the global economy grows more knowledge-driven (Diener et al., 2018; Helliwell et al., 2023; OECD, 2024). Poor mental health costs the world economy about \$1 trillion a year in lost productivity, absenteeism, and turnover, according to the World Health Organization (2022). Furthermore, pre-existing issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a rise in workplace stress, burnout, and disengagement in all sectors (ILO, 2024).

In addition to promoting environments that are safe, inclusive, and supportive of holistic well-being, the Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) of the UN emphasizes the significance of "decent work and economic growth" (United Nations, 2015). Global surveys show that, despite notable advancements in certain areas, there are still gaps in job quality, access to social protection, and workplace mental health, especially for younger workers, members of marginalized groups, and those in precarious employment (Great Place to Work, 2025; WebMD Health Services, 2025). Nowadays, the decline of decent work is viewed as a sign of more significant structural issues, such as growing inequality, technological disruption, and macroeconomic

volatility (ILO, 2024).

In light of this, positive psychology has become more well-known as a scientific method for comprehending and improving workplace well-being. Employee engagement, creativity, and retention have been found to be strongly predicted by constructs like gratitude, stress resilience, flow, and optimism (Seligman, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). However, a large portion of the literature currently in publication looks at these factors separately, paying little attention to how they interact dynamically or how they all affect workplace well-being in relation to global development goals.

This paper makes three primary contributions, first, it critically evaluates the roles that flow, optimism, stress, and gratitude play in promoting workplace well-being by synthesizing the most recent research on these topics. Secondly, it suggests an integrative framework that clarifies how these constructs interact and how that affects SDG 8. Third, it provides organizations, legislators, and academics looking to promote workplace well-being as a lever for sustainable development with practical suggestions and a research agenda.

A thorough literature review, an examination of measurement and intervention techniques, a critical discussion of obstacles and enablers, and a plan for further study and application are all included in the sections that follow. This paper seeks to inform organizational action and scholarly understanding in the pursuit of decent work and economic growth by fusing scientific rigor with practical relevance.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND SEARCH STRATEGY

Literature Search Strategy

The databases PsycINFO, PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar were used in a structured literature search to guarantee a thorough and exacting review. Boolean operators and keywords, such as "workplace well-being," "employee well-being," "gratitude," "stress," "flow," "optimism," "SDG 8," "positive psychology," "intervention," and "measurement," were used in the search strategy. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and reputable organizational reports released between 2010 and 2025 were included in the search. Research on measurement, intervention, or outcomes related to workplace well-being; (b) conceptual or empirical studies addressing at least one of the four target constructs in workplace settings; and (c) relevance to SDG 8 or related policy frameworks were the requirements for inclusion. The following were among the exclusion criteria: (a) studies with no empirical data; (b) articles that did not concentrate on organizational or workplace contexts; and (c) publications written in languages other than English. The review procedure included a full-text review, data extraction, and an initial screening of titles and abstracts in accordance with PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). Out of the 1,287 articles that were found, 213 underwent a thorough review, and 87 of them satisfied the requirements for synthesis. Out of this, the ones that most significantly contributed to the SDG 8 goal were chosen.

The Evolving Landscape of Workplace Well-Being

Over the past 20 years, there has been a significant shift in how workplace well-being is conceptualized. Metrics like absenteeism, injury rates, and productivity losses were prioritized in early models, which concentrated mostly on the absence of disease or dysfunction (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). But according to modern frameworks, well-being is becoming more widely acknowledged as a multifaceted concept that includes systemic, social, emotional, and psychological elements (OECD, 2024; De Neve, 2025).

One important outcome and predictor of organizational performance is subjective well-being, which includes life satisfaction, positive affect, and a sense of purpose (Diener et al., 2018; Helliwell et al., 2023). Strong well-being cultures outperform their peers on both financial and non-financial metrics, and meta-analyses show that employees with higher subjective well-being are more engaged, creative, and resilient (Helliwell et al., 2023; Workhuman & Gallup, 2022).

Gratitude in the Workplace

According to Emmons and McCullough (2003), gratitude is the dispositional or situational propensity to acknowledge and value the positive aspects of one's workplace, including the contributions of coworkers,

leaders, and the organization as a whole. According to empirical research, stress reduction, improved psychological well-being, and stronger social ties are all linked to gratitude interventions like appreciative inquiry, peer recognition programs, and gratitude journaling (Emmons & Mishra, 2011; Workhuman & Gallup, 2022). Dickens (2017) conducted a meta-analysis and discovered that workplace gratitude interventions, especially when ingrained in organizational culture and backed by leadership, significantly increase job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and retention. However, some academics warn that gratitude exercises might not work as well in toxic or highly hierarchical settings because they could be interpreted as manipulative or inauthentic (Grant & Gino, 2010). Validated measures like the Workplace Gratitude Scale (WGS) and the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) are commonly used to measure gratitude in the workplace. These measures evaluate both situational and dispositional gratitude (Watkins et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2020).

Stress: The Persistent Challenge

Stress at work is well known to be a major contributor to turnover, burnout, and absenteeism, with serious consequences for both individual and organizational health (APA, 2023; WHO, 2022). According to the transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), organizational context, as well as personal assessment and coping mechanisms, influence how stressful situations affect people. Workload management, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) are just a few of the interventions that have been shown in recent systematic reviews to be effective in lowering stress and enhancing wellbeing (Cunningham et al., 2024; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). However, alignment with organizational values, psychological safety, and supportive leadership are frequently necessary for these effects to last (NHS Employers, 2024). The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ), and the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) are frequently used tools for measuring workplace stress because they evaluate perceived stress as well as exposure to psychosocial hazards (Cohen et al., 1983; Kristensen et al., 2005).

Flow: Optimal Experience at Work

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi (2014), flow is defined as a state of profound immersion, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation encountered during difficult but manageable tasks. Clear objectives, independence, and fast feedback promote flow, which is linked to increased creativity, job satisfaction, and performance (Bakker, 2008). Employees who regularly experience flow report higher engagement, lower stress, and greater resilience, according to empirical studies using the Flow State Scale-2 (FSS-2) and the Work-related Flow Inventory (WOLF) (Bakker, 2008; Salanova et al., 2006). Job crafting, task alignment, and minimizing needless disruptions are organizational tactics that promote flow (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Optimism: A Buffer and Catalyst

According to Carver and Scheier (2014) and Seligman (2011), optimism is the broad belief that good things will happen despite hardship. Optimistic workers are less likely to suffer from burnout or disengagement and exhibit higher levels of engagement, flexibility, and persistence (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Cognitive reframing, solution-focused coaching, and strengths-based feedback are examples of interventions that foster optimism and have been associated with better organizational outcomes and psychological well-being (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). The Optimism-Pessimism Scale and the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) are two measurement instruments (Scheier et al., 1994).

SDG 8: Decent Work, Economic Growth, and Well-Being

The United Nations 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) is devoted to "promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all" (United Nations, 2015). Twelve distinct targets are used to operationalize this goal, which range from promoting development-oriented policies and increasing economic productivity (Target 8.2) to protecting labor rights (Target 8.8) and lowering youth unemployment (Target 8.6). The need for both quantitative (job creation, GDP growth) and qualitative (job quality, safety, and rights) improvements in global labor markets

is specifically acknowledged by the SDG 8 framework.

Global Progress and Persistent Challenges

Significant disparities have been observed in the world's progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024), despite quantifiable improvements in certain areas, the world is still far from meeting many of the goal's primary targets by 2030. The prevalence of informal and precarious employment—more than 60% of the global workforce works in the informal economy, often without access to social protection or labor rights—is one of the persistent issues that continue to impede progress (ILO, 2024). Since young people are three times more likely than adults to be unemployed, youth unemployment and underemployment continue to be serious issues, with the issue being particularly severe in low- and middle-income nations (ILO, 2024).

Progress is further hampered by gender inequality; women still encounter major obstacles to decent work, including ongoing wage gaps, occupational segregation, and a lack of leadership opportunities (United Nations, 2024). Additionally, vulnerable groups are more likely to be exploited and excluded, such as migrant workers, people with disabilities, and people living in areas affected by conflict. This emphasizes the need for inclusive labor market reforms and targeted policy interventions (ILO, 2024; United Nations, 2024). Many of these problems were made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, which revealed the vulnerability of social safety nets and resulted in historically high job losses. Many workers have experienced worsening working conditions, mental health issues, and increased job insecurity as a result of the uneven and slow recovery (ILO, 2024).

Decent Work: Beyond Economic Metrics

Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization both stress that "decent work" encompasses various aspects of employment quality and goes beyond job creation or economic output. Decent work includes respect for collective bargaining, freedom of association, and opportunities for worker participation in decision-making; social protection, which includes access to healthcare, unemployment insurance, and family-friendly policies; and dignity and human rights, which guarantee safe, healthy, and nondiscriminatory workplaces. Policies that encourage flexible work schedules, caregiving duties, and personal growth also acknowledge work-life balance. Furthermore, recent studies demonstrate that decent work is an important social determinant of health, intimately associated with social inclusion, physical and mental health outcomes, and general quality of life (Diener et al., 2018; Helliwell et al., 2023).

Integrating Constructs for SDG 8

The effects of gratitude, stress, flow, and optimism on workplace well-being have been thoroughly examined separately, but their interactions and synergy are becoming more widely acknowledged (Cunningham et al., 2024; De Neve, 2025). It has been demonstrated that multi-component interventions that target several psychological drivers at once result in larger and longer-lasting gains in performance, engagement, and well-being. This is especially true when the interventions are customized for the organizational setting and are implemented at various levels (individual, team, and organizational) (Cunningham et al., 2024; Nebbs et al., 2023). Economic and legal indicators have received a lot of attention in traditional approaches to SDG 8. However, the importance of psychosocial elements for genuinely "decent" work is becoming more widely acknowledged. These elements include autonomy, social support, workplace stress, and positive psychological resources (WHO, 2022; OECD, 2024). Subjective well-being, mental health, and psychosocial safety should all be incorporated into national and organizational monitoring systems, according to the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2023) and the OECD Well-being Framework (OECD, 2024). Table 1 explains the SDG 8 targets and their relevance to workplace well-being.

Table I
SDG 8 Targets and Their Relevance to Workplace Well-Being

SDG 8 Target	Description	Relevance to Well-Being
8.2	Higher economic productivity via diversification, innovation	Job security, meaningful work
8.3	Support productive activities, decent job creation	Entrepreneurship, fair employment
8.5	Achieve full and productive employment for all	Inclusion, equal opportunity
8.6	Reduce youth unemployment	Engagement, skill development
8.8	Protect labor rights, safe working environments	Psychological and physical safety

The rhetoric of decent work and the reality that workers face continue to diverge despite major policy advancements. Many national Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) reports still place a higher priority on macroeconomic metrics than on the lived experiences of workers, especially when it comes to subjective well-being, mental health, and psychosocial risks (ILO, 2024; United Nations, 2024). Few nations routinely gather or report data on stress, positive psychological resources, and workplace psychological well-being, despite the fact that measurement frameworks are slowly changing. There are several important gaps in current practice, such as the lack of disaggregated data that would shed light on the experiences of marginalized groups and informal workers, the limited integration of subjective well-being and mental health indicators into SDG monitoring, and the inadequate attention paid to workplace culture, leadership, and psychosocial safety.

Organizations and policymakers must adopt a comprehensive strategy that places psychosocial well-being as a primary objective and a major motivator of decent work in order to successfully achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8). This can be achieved by moving beyond a narrow focus on compliance and economic indicators. This change entails investing in workplace mental health programs, constructive interventions, and supportive leadership in addition to incorporating well-being considerations into labor laws, standards, and reporting procedures. Additionally, it is critical to create and apply social indicators that encompass the entire range of employee experiences, including elements like optimism, flow, stress, and thankfulness. SDG 8 can act as a true catalyst for social inclusion, sustainable development, and human flourishing by incorporating these components.

Measurement and Social Indicators of Workplace Well-Being

A multifaceted approach that incorporates psychological, relational, and systemic factors has replaced the previous narrow focus on absenteeism, turnover, and productivity in measuring workplace well-being (OECD, 2024; De Neve, 2025). This change is a reflection of the increasing agreement that in order to fully capture the complexity of employee experiences and organizational health, both objective and subjective indicators are required (Helliwell et al., 2023). The full spectrum of well-being, including positive psychological states, engagement, and meaning at work, was frequently overlooked by early workplace assessments that mainly relied on "negative" indicators, such as rates of illness, injury, or burnout (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). Modern frameworks, on the other hand, support the inclusion of both "deficit" and "asset-based" measures, acknowledging that having positive resources and experiences rather than just the absence of distress is necessary for thriving at work (Seligman, 2011; Helliwell et al., 2023).

Key Frameworks and Tools

Nowadays, workplace well-being is evaluated at the individual, organizational, and national levels using a

variety of frameworks and instruments. These consist of:

1. *The Framework for OECD Well-Being* : Leading models that evaluate well-being in a variety of areas include relational well-being (social connections, trust), quality of life (health, education, work-life balance), and material conditions (income, jobs, housing) (OECD, 2024). It highlights the significance of inequality and the long-term viability of well-being. It has impacted national and organizational measurement strategies worldwide, despite not being workplace-specific.

2. *The Strategic Framework for NHS Workplace Wellbeing* : In order to track progress and guide interventions, the NHS framework (UK) combines qualitative insights (such as focus groups and staff forums) with quantitative data (such as staff surveys, sick leave, and turnover) (University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust, 2020). It stands out for emphasizing staff involvement, local adaptation, and ongoing improvement.

3. *The Framework for Measuring Intelligence Dimensions* : Organizations can benchmark and customize interventions with this proprietary tool, which employs a 26-question survey to provide a comprehensive view of employee mental health and well-being trends (Intellect, 2025). It is a prime example of how digital platforms and real-time analytics are increasingly being used to measure well-being.

4. *Psychological Measures for Important Constructs* :

- Gratitude: Workplace Gratitude Scale (WGS), Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6)
- Stress: Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ), Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ), and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
- Flow: Work-related Flow Inventory (WOLF), Flow State Scale-2 (FSS-2)
- Optimism: Optimism-Pessimism Scale, Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R)

The dispositional and situational components of workplace well-being can be nuancedly assessed using these validated tools (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Cohen et al., 1983; Bakker, 2008).

5. *International and National Social Indicators* : The ILO's Decent Work Indicators, Gallup's State of the Global Workplace, and the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2023) are frequently used to compare job quality and well-being across nations and industries. In addition to conventional economic indicators, these tools increasingly include measures of mental health, psychological safety, and subjective well-being.

The following Table 2 explains the major measurement tools of the relevant constructs.

Table II
Comparative Table: Major Measurement Tools

Tool/Framework	Domains Covered	Strengths	Limitations
OECD Well-being Framework	Material, relational, psychological	Multidimensional, policy relevance	Not workplace-specific, may lack granularity
NHS Workplace Wellbeing Framework	Engagement, health, culture	Integrates data types, staff involvement	UK-centric, may not generalize globally
Intellect Dimensions Measurement	Mental health, well-being trends	Real-time, scalable, benchmarks	Proprietary, limited transparency
GQ-6, WGS (Gratitude)	Dispositional/situational gratitude	Brief, validated	May miss cultural/contextual nuance
PSS, JCQ, COPSOQ (Stress)	Perceived stress, psychosocial risk	Widely used, robust psychometrics	May not capture positive states

FSS-2, WOLF (Flow)	Flow, engagement	Validated, widely used	Adaptation needed for some sectors
LOT-R, Optimism- Pessimism Scale	Optimism, resilience	Reliable, predictive of outcomes	May not capture situational optimism

Note. Abbreviations: OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; NHS = National Health Service; GQ-6 = Gratitude Questionnaire–Six Item Form; WGS = Workplace Gratitude Scale; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; JCQ = Job Content Questionnaire; COPSOQ = Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire; FSS-2 = Flow State Scale–2; WOLF = Work-related Flow Inventory; LOT-R = Life Orientation Test–Revised.

Measurement techniques need to be modified for organizational, sectoral, and cultural contexts. Measures of stress and engagement, for instance, might need to take into consideration collectivist values, hierarchical structures, and the rapid advancement of technology in Indian IT companies, which is an area of your research interest. In these situations, the relevance and precision of well-being assessments can be improved by using locally validated scales and qualitative techniques (such as narrative interviews and participatory workshops).

There are still a number of important gaps in workplace well-being research and practice, despite notable advancements. With little incorporation of positive constructs like gratitude, optimism, and flow, many organizations still primarily concentrate on negative indicators like stress and burnout. The measurement landscape is still fragmented because it is difficult to make meaningful cross-study and cross-country comparisons due to the lack of standardized tools. Large-scale surveys frequently underrepresent marginalized groups, such as gig economy participants, informal workers, and people living in low-resource environments, which leaves us with an incomplete picture of workforce well-being. Furthermore, there is a persistent gap between data and action because measurement efforts are often separated from policy and intervention, which limits their usefulness.

To fully capture the range of employee experiences, the next generation of workplace well-being measurement must take a comprehensive approach that incorporates both positive and negative indicators. This includes applying mixed-methods techniques, which enhance data quality and contextual understanding by fusing quantitative surveys with qualitative insights. Additionally, it is crucial to make sure that measurement instruments are contextually and culturally appropriate, especially in fields that are diverse and changing quickly. In order to ensure that data collection results in significant action and long-lasting organizational change, effective measurement should be closely connected to real-time feedback, focused interventions, and continuous improvement procedures.

Organizations and policymakers can better monitor, benchmark, and improve workplace well-being by developing rigorous, comprehensive, and context-sensitive measurement, which will support SDG 8 and human flourishing.

Theoretical Integration: Gratitude, Stress, Flow, and Optimism as Drivers of Workplace Well-Being

A strengths-based approach that stresses the development of positive psychological resources has gradually replaced the deficit-focused model of workplace well-being research, which was primarily concerned with lowering stress and avoiding burnout (Seligman, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). According to this paradigm, flow, optimism, stress resilience, and thankfulness are acknowledged as dynamic, interactive processes that influence organizational results and work-life balance in addition to being personal characteristics.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is a fundamental framework for comprehending these dynamics

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The balance between job demands (such as workload, time pressure, and emotional labor) and job resources (such as autonomy, social support, and growth opportunities) is what determines employee well-being, according to the JD-R model. Positive psychological resources are personal resources that increase the positive impact of resources and mitigate the negative effects of demands. Examples of these resources include gratitude, optimism, and the ability to flow.

“Personal resources, such as optimism, self-efficacy, and gratitude, are linked to higher engagement, resilience, and the ability to cope with stress, thereby fostering both individual and organizational thriving.”
(Bakker & Demerouti, 2017)

Gratitude as a Social Glue and Psychological Buffer

Both a trait and a state, gratitude is thought to affect how workers perceive events at work and relate to coworkers. Gratitude expands cognitive and behavioral repertoires, creating long-lasting social and psychological resources, according to the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001). Gratitude has been associated with increased job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, and decreased turnover intentions in organizational settings. It also improves social cohesion, trust, and team functioning (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Emmons & Mishra, 2011).

Studies conducted empirically in Indian IT companies have demonstrated that gratitude-based interventions, like gratitude journaling and peer recognition platforms, can boost morale, lessen interpersonal conflict, and protect against the negative effects of high job demands. However, leadership authenticity and organizational culture moderate the effectiveness of such interventions.

Challenge, Threat and Adaptation of Stress

Stress is still a major topic in workplace psychology, and long-term stress has been linked to a number of detrimental effects, including physical illness, burnout, and absenteeism (APA, 2023; WHO, 2022). Employees' perceptions and reactions to stressors determine their impact on their well-being, according to the transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which highlights the importance of appraisal and coping. According to recent studies, stress is not always harmful; when viewed as a challenge rather than a threat, it can foster resilience, learning, and personal development (Crum et al., 2013). In both Indian and Western organizational contexts, interventions that improve psychological safety, develop coping mechanisms, and reframe stress—like mindfulness training and supportive supervision—have proven effective.

The Optimal Experience and Engagement of Flow

When workers take on difficult but skill-appropriate tasks, they experience flow, which is defined as a state of profound absorption and intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Flow is facilitated by autonomy, clear goals, and instant feedback and is linked to increased creativity, satisfaction, and performance. According to Bakker's (2008) work-related flow model, flow mediates the connection between engagement and job resources. It has been demonstrated that flow-promoting work design—through task alignment, skill development, and job crafting—can reduce stress and improve individual and team performance in high-pressure settings like Indian IT companies.

Expectancy, Resilience and Growth of Optimism

A general expectation of favorable results is the definition of optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Seligman, 2011). Employees that are optimistic are more likely to take initiative to solve problems, adjust to change, and persevere in the face of setbacks. Higher engagement, less burnout, and improved mental and physical health have all been associated with optimism. Corporate well-being initiatives are increasingly utilizing interventions that promote optimism, such as positive reframing and solution-focused coaching. Optimism can also act as a protective factor against the adverse impacts of organizational change and uncertainty in culturally diverse workplaces.

Even though each construct has an impact on its own, it is becoming more widely acknowledged that their interactions are essential to workplace wellbeing. Gratitude, for example, has been demonstrated to improve optimism and mitigate the detrimental effects of stress, supporting workers' psychological well-being in general. Restoring psychological resources through flow experiences can increase a person's ability to withstand stressors and difficulties at work in the future. Additionally, by promoting approach-oriented coping and tenacious goal pursuit, optimism may help people experience flow. Developing comprehensive strategies that support employees' resilience and long-term well-being requires an understanding of these dynamic relationships. Even with strong evidence, these constructs are not consistently applied in practice. For example, the high performance standards and hierarchical culture in Indian IT companies can both encourage and stifle the expression of optimism and thankfulness. Therefore, leadership style, workforce diversity, and organizational context must all be taken into account when designing effective interventions. Furthermore, in order to ensure validity and relevance, the measurement of these constructs—despite their increasing sophistication—must take occupational, linguistic, and cultural differences into consideration.

In conclusion, it is best to think of flow, optimism, stress resilience, and thankfulness as interrelated factors that influence workplace well-being. To promote both individual flourishing and organizational effectiveness, they must be incorporated into theory, measurement, and intervention design. This is especially important in the pursuit of SDG 8 and in a variety of contexts, including the Indian IT industry.

Evidence-Based Interventions: What Works and Why

Evidence-based interventions to enhance workplace well-being have been extensively researched; systematic reviews and meta-analyses have shown that these interventions can reduce psychosocial stressors, burnout, and sick leave while also improving work ability, perceived general health, job satisfaction, and performance (Cunningham et al., 2024; Hesketh et al., 2020). However, when interventions only concentrate on individual-level techniques like mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive-behavioral therapy, or resilience workshops, the scope and sustainability of these benefits frequently remain limited and transient (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; Hesketh et al., 2020). Organizational-level interventions, such as job redesign, workload management, flexible work schedules, and greater job autonomy, have been shown to be more successful and long-lasting in addressing the underlying causes of workplace stress and promoting positive states like engagement, flow, and gratitude (Forum NZ, 2022; Deloitte, 2024).

The greatest potential for long-lasting improvements has been demonstrated by multi-component programs that integrate organizational, social, and individual strategies, such as leadership development, recognition programs, and participatory work design. These programs are especially promising when they are co-designed with employees and customized for the local context (Cunningham et al., 2024; Nebbs et al., 2023). Peer recognition and team-based interventions are especially successful in raising morale and engagement in collectivist cultures, like India (Workhuman & Gallup, 2022; Great Place to Work, 2024). However, obstacles like a lack of managerial support, a heavy workload, logistical difficulties, and insufficient staffing frequently restrict involvement and impact, highlighting the significance of strong leadership, contextual adaptation, and thorough evaluation (Paterson et al., 2024; Campmans et al., 2023). The most effective workplace well-being initiatives are ultimately those that are incorporated into organizational strategy, backed by leadership, and continuously improved in response to solid data and employee input (Yarker et al., 2022; Nebbs et al., 2023). Table 3 explains the workplace well-being interventions categorically.

Table III
Typology of Interventions

Intervention Type	Target Constructs	Typical Activities	Evidence Strength	Contextual Notes
Individual-focused	Stress, Optimism	Mindfulness, CBT, resilience	Moderate	Often short-lived,

		training, self-care		overestimates individual control (Hesketh et al., 2020)
Work-focused/Organizational	Stress, Flow, Gratitude	Flexible work, job redesign, workload management	High	More sustainable, addresses root causes (Forum NZ, 2022)
Multi-component	All four	Recognition, feedback, leadership, culture change	Growing	Best results when co-designed (Cunningham et al., 2024)
Health promotion	Stress, General health	Physical activity, health checks, wellness programs	Moderate	Cost-saving, improves engagement (Great Place to Work, 2024)
Peer/social interventions	Gratitude, Engagement	Peer recognition, team-building, social support	Moderate	Boosts morale, especially in collectivist cultures (Workhuman & Gallup, 2022)

Note. Abbreviations : CBT = Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Barriers and facilitators to Implementation

Even though workplace well-being interventions are widely used, their effective implementation varies by sector and location. Several studies have identified a number of obstacles that prevent these interventions from being delivered effectively and sustainably (Campmans et al., 2023; Paterson et al., 2024; Yarker et al., 2022). Lack of staffing, conflicting priorities, and financial limitations usually lead to non-adoption or early discontinuation of complex interventions, which can be prohibitive for small and medium-sized businesses or organizations in low-resource settings due to their high time, cost, and specialized expertise requirements (Campmans et al., 2023; Paterson et al., 2024). The effectiveness and uptake of interventions can be further hampered by organizational obstacles like a lack of visible leadership commitment, inadequate managerial support, disjointed communication channels, a heavy workload, staff shortages, and continuous organizational change (NICE, 2022; Paterson et al., 2024). Interventions that are viewed as intrusive, top-down, or irrelevant also hinder employee engagement. Additionally, stigma around mental health, confidentiality concerns, and skepticism about organizational motives can lower participation rates, especially in cultures where talking about psychological well-being is still frowned upon (Great Place to Work, 2024; NICE, 2022; Paterson et al., 2024). Further limiting engagement are practical and logistical issues like scheduling outside of regular business hours, inaccessible locations, inadequate integration into daily routines, and the intricacies of shift-based or geographically dispersed organizations (Campmans et al., 2023; Paterson et al., 2024).

Furthermore, organizations frequently do not know whether interventions are effective or how to improve

them due to a lack of thorough, continuous evaluation and inconsistent measurement practices; underreporting of null or negative results impedes learning and scaling (Nebbs et al., 2023; Yarker et al., 2022). However, it has been demonstrated that a number of facilitators improve the effectiveness and long-term viability of workplace well-being programs. The most important facilitator is always found to be strong, visible, and continuous support from line managers and senior leaders, which communicates the strategic significance of well-being and promotes a culture of participation (Campmans et al., 2023; Paterson et al., 2024). Participatory strategies like workplace committees or ambassador programs help close communication gaps, and early and meaningful employee involvement in planning, design, and evaluation guarantees that interventions are pertinent, flexible, and owned by staff (Campmans et al., 2023; Nebbs et al., 2023). Particularly in multinational and diverse workplaces, interventions that are accessible, modified to fit particular job roles, and incorporated into daily routines have a higher chance of success (Great Place to Work, 2024; Paterson et al., 2024). Additionally, time, money, and training are essential enablers, and even small investments can result in significant gains in implementation outcomes (Campmans et al., 2023). The last point is that good communication can raise awareness, engagement, and responsiveness to employee needs through frequent updates, multi-channel tactics, and feedback loops like surveys and focus groups (NICE, 2022; Paterson et al., 2024).

There is still a persistent disconnect between scientific evidence and practical application, even with an expanding body of research and rising investments in workplace well-being (Yarker et al., 2022). Without addressing underlying systemic problems or assessing long-term effects, many organizations carry out discrete, short-term interventions (Nebbs et al., 2023). This is especially noticeable in under-researched industries, SMEs, and the unorganized sector, where resources and knowledge may be scarce (Paterson et al., 2024). A fragmented evidence base resulting from inconsistent outcome measures and a lack of standardized reporting is one of the main causes of the ongoing gap between science and practice in workplace well-being. This hinders the synthesis and scaling of effective interventions (Yarker et al., 2022). Furthermore, the sustainability of well-being initiatives is restricted by organizational short-termism, which is defined by an emphasis on "quick wins" as opposed to systemic change (Nebbs et al., 2023). Because siloed approaches hinder the sharing of best practices and collective learning, limited cross-sector collaboration makes the problem even worse (Campmans et al., 2023). Instead of limiting well-being to the wellness or human resources departments, it is advised that organizations incorporate it into their overall strategy and governance structures in order to close this gap (Nebbs et al., 2023).

It's also crucial to make investments in thorough analysis, open reporting, and the use of measurement instruments that have been proven to work (Yarker et al., 2022). Prioritizing co-design and participatory approaches guarantees that interventions remain relevant and sustainable over time, while cultivating cross-sector partnerships can support the sharing of resources, implementation expertise, and knowledge (Paterson et al., 2024). A complex interaction of organizational, personal, and contextual factors shapes the effective implementation of workplace well-being interventions. Translating research findings into significant, long-lasting change requires removing obstacles and utilizing enablers while bridging the science-practice divide (Nebbs et al., 2023).

Integrative Framework: Recommendations and Future Directions

A comprehensive, evidence-based framework that addresses both the underlying causes and the positive drivers of flourishing is necessary due to the complexity of workplace well-being, which spans psychological, organizational, and societal dimensions (Nebbs et al., 2023). Studies consistently demonstrate that workplace well-being strategies that incorporate harm prevention, positive resource promotion, and responsive support for mental health issues have the greatest impact (Deloitte, 2024; Nebbs et al., 2023).

The Three-Domain Model

A three-domain model is suggested for organizations seeking to promote sustainable well-being and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), building on recent research (Nebbs et al., 2023). According to Hesketh et al. (2020), the first domain, "prevent harm," emphasizes a tiered approach. Primary prevention

entails redesigning work to reduce psychosocial risks like excessive workload, unclear roles, and lack of psychological safety. Secondary prevention focuses on early identification and management of emerging stress and burnout through supportive supervision and regular monitoring (Paterson et al., 2024). Tertiary prevention guarantees efficient return-to-work and accommodation processes for employees who are experiencing mental health issues (Cunningham et al., 2024). Through recognition programs, skill development, autonomy, and growth opportunities, the second domain, "promote the positive," challenges organizations to cultivate gratitude, flow, optimism, and meaning at work (Workhuman & Gallup, 2022; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Additionally, it encourages peer support, team-based interventions, and leadership behaviors that model and reinforce positive psychological resources (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Building mental health literacy, lowering stigma, and making help more accessible through training, employee assistance programs, and clear referral pathways are all part of the third domain, "respond to problems" (WHO, 2022). It also aims to create an environment of psychological safety and openness where staff members feel free to ask for help without worrying about retaliation (NICE, 2022).

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

For Organizations and Leaders

Organizations should prioritize well-being at the board level and incorporate it into organizational values, key performance indicators, and leadership development programs in order to promote sustainable workplace well-being (Deloitte, 2024). To ensure relevance and promote buy-in, interventions should be co-designed with staff members through participatory methods like feedback forums and healthy workplace committees (Campmans et al., 2023). In high-pressure industries like Indian IT, it is especially crucial to redesign work to foster autonomy, flexibility, and meaning through job crafting, flexible work policies, and skill-development opportunities (Bakker, 2008).

For Policymakers and Sector Leaders

For national and sectoral policies to acknowledge both the objective and subjective aspects of decent work, psychosocial well-being must be incorporated into labor standards and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) monitoring (ILO, 2024). In order to achieve this integration, employment and occupational safety and health laws must be revised to specifically address mental health in addition to physical health, address psychosocial risks like workload, harassment, and discrimination, and safeguard employees' rights to take part in identifying and reducing these risks (ILO, 2022; WHO & ILO, 2022). Additionally, encouraging cross-sector collaborations between government, business, and academia is essential to boosting innovation and expanding successful workplace well-being initiatives. This kind of cooperation encourages information exchange, resource sharing, and the creation of all-encompassing plans that tackle various work environments and new problems (Nebbs et al., 2023). When taken as a whole, these initiatives help to build more inclusive, safe, and healthy workplaces that support sustainable development and decent work.

For Researchers

Tools that capture both positive and negative aspects of workplace well-being must be developed and validated, with modifications made for various organizational and cultural contexts, in order to advance integrated measurement science (Iles & Sheppard, 2025). To evaluate the long-term effects of interventions and find contextual moderators, especially in understudied sectors and regions, longitudinal, multi-site studies are crucial (Cunningham et al., 2024). Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the dynamics of workplace well-being will result from investigating the mechanisms and interactions among important psychological constructs, such as gratitude, stress, flow, and optimism, and how these are impacted by organizational culture, leadership, and work design (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Lastly, investigating digital and AI-enabled interventions presents encouraging opportunities for scalable solutions, individualized support, and real-time measurement that can improve the efficacy and scope of well-being programs (Intellect, 2025).

Practice Implications and Directions

In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) and build companies where workers can flourish,

a comprehensive, integrative approach to workplace well-being is crucial. This strategy calls for integrating well-being deeply into organizational strategy, culture, and day-to-day operations, going beyond simple compliance and "tick-box" tactics. It also entails acknowledging the critical role that psychological resources—such as optimism, flow, stress resilience, and gratitude—play in promoting employee engagement, creativity, and retention. Furthermore, to make sure that well-being interventions continue to be applicable, successful, and long-lasting, it is imperative to make investments in leadership development, participatory design, and ongoing learning.

Workplace well-being programs must be scaled globally by modifying and putting into practice integrative frameworks in a variety of cultural and economic contexts, paying special attention to small and medium-sized businesses, the unorganized sector, and emerging nations. Technology integration can improve measurement, feedback, and intervention delivery. Examples of this include digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and real-time analytics. In order to change national and international agendas to emphasize psychosocial well-being as a key component of decent work and sustainable development, policy advocacy is also crucial. Organizations, policymakers, and researchers can fully realize the potential of workplace well-being as a driver of human flourishing and Sustainable Development Goal 8 by adopting a science-based, co-created, and context-sensitive approach.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A number of limitations must be noted, even though this integrative review and framework provide a thorough synthesis of the most recent research on workplace well-being via the lenses of flow, optimism, stress, and gratitude. Most of the reviewed studies come from Western, high-income contexts, especially North America and Europe (Cunningham et al., 2024; Helliwell et al., 2023). There is still a lack of thorough research in a variety of cultural, economic, and sectoral contexts, such as SMEs and informal work sectors, despite the growing body of emerging evidence from India and other low- and middle-income nations. This restricts the findings' generalizability and the interventions' suitability for use in workplaces around the world (Paterson et al., 2024; Great Place to Work, 2024).

The definitions and measurements of the four main constructs—optimism, flow, stress, and gratitude—vary widely amongst studies. Direct comparisons, meta-analyses, and the synthesis of results are made more difficult by this heterogeneity. Furthermore, reliability and validity may be impacted by the fact that many measurement instruments are not culturally appropriate or validated for non-Western populations (Iles & Sheppard, 2025). Even though the number of intervention studies is increasing, many of them lack rigorous designs like longitudinal follow-up or randomized controlled trials. The strength of the evidence is further constrained by inconsistent outcome measures, small sample sizes, and reporting bias. Publication bias is also exacerbated by the paucity of studies that consistently report null or negative results (Yarker et al., 2022; Nebbs et al., 2023). Individual-focused interventions (such as mindfulness and resilience training) continue to receive an excessive amount of attention, which may exaggerate personal accountability while undervaluing organizational and systemic factors that influence well-being. Additional research on organizational, policy, and multi-level interventions is required (Forum NZ, 2022; Deloitte, 2024). The workplace is changing quickly as a result of demographic changes, remote work, and technological advancements. These changing dynamics may not be adequately captured by current research, especially the psychosocial effects of integrating AI and hybrid work models (Intellect, 2025; MIT Sloan Institute, 2023).

The following research priorities are suggested in order to overcome these constraints and progress workplace well-being science and practice. Extend empirical research to underrepresented areas, industries, and worker groups, such as gig workers, SMEs, and informal economy workers. Create and verify culturally appropriate interventions and assessment instruments that take into account regional norms, values, and working conditions (Great Place to Work, 2024; Iles & Sheppard, 2025). Develop and validate thorough tools that measure workplace well-being's positive (flow, optimism, gratitude) and negative (stress, burnout) aspects. Mixed-method approaches will improve depth and relevance by integrating qualitative insights with quantitative scales (Nebbs et al., 2023). To evaluate the long-term effects, mechanisms, and moderators of

integrated well-being interventions, conduct extensive, longitudinal studies spanning several organizations and sectors. Various outcome measures, such as productivity, mental health, engagement, and turnover, should be included in these kinds of studies (Cunningham et al., 2024). Examine how leadership, culture, and work design affect the dynamic relationships and causal pathways between flow, optimism, stress, and gratitude. Targeted interventions and mechanisms can be clarified through experimental and longitudinal designs (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Examine how regulatory frameworks, policy levers, and cross-sector partnerships can help scale successful workplace well-being initiatives. Research ought to assess how national well-being programs, social protection laws, and labor laws affect business operations and worker outcomes (ILO, 2024; United Nations, 2024).

Analyze digital platforms, AI-powered tailored interventions, and real-time well-being monitoring tools for effectiveness, accessibility, and ethical considerations. Particularly in diverse workforce populations, research should take user engagement, privacy, and equity factors into account (Intellect, 2025; MIT Sloan Institute, 2023). Examine successful methods for putting research into practice, such as capacity building, knowledge mobilization, and organizational change management. Research should evaluate the factors that promote and hinder the uptake, sustainability, and expansion of evidence-based interventions (Yarker et al., 2022; Nebbs et al., 2023). In summary, a coordinated, interdisciplinary effort that values complexity, cultural diversity, and technological innovation is needed to advance the science of workplace well-being. Scholars and practitioners can help create workplaces that are healthier, more resilient, and flourishing globally—aligned with the transformative vision of SDG 8—by addressing the limitations mentioned and pursuing the suggested research agenda.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, workplace well-being is not a side issue; rather, it is a strategic, moral, and social necessity that is essential to sustainable development and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8): Decent Work and Economic Growth for All (United Nations, 2015). This essay has shown that creating work environments where employees can flourish, innovate, and make significant contributions requires incorporating gratitude, stress resilience, flow, and optimism into organizational life. Unquestionably, companies that systematically develop positive psychological resources, rethink work to prevent harm, and integrate well-being into leadership and daily operations perform better than their counterparts in terms of engagement, retention, innovation, and long-term value creation (Deloitte, 2024; Helliwell et al., 2023). However, a lot of organizations continue to be mired in disjointed, transient interventions that overlook the structural and cultural factors that influence well-being, losing the chance to make work a source of resilience, meaning, and belonging.

Organizations need to go beyond rhetoric and small changes to end this cycle. They must pledge to pursue a comprehensive, scientifically grounded agenda that is jointly developed with staff members, thoroughly assessed, and improved over time. This entails incorporating flow and thankfulness into leadership development, tracking impact and ROI with HR analytics, and scaling what works across teams and industries. Well-being is a dynamic process rather than a fixed goal that calls for constant investment, brave leadership, and a readiness to question long-standing conventions. The stakes are very high. Organizations that prioritize the whole person—creating psychological safety and enabling people to bring their best selves to work every day—will prosper as work changes in the face of technological disruption, demographic shifts, and global uncertainty. In addition to being a social and moral obligation, advancing SDG 8 is also a business imperative, and the moment to take action is now.

Organizations can unleash the potential of their workforce, promote sustainable economic growth, and establish a new benchmark for what it means to work and prosper in the twenty-first century by adopting an integrated, evidence-based approach to workplace well-being that includes prevention, promotion, and response.

Data availability statement

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- As this is a theoretical/conceptual paper, all data analyzed are available online through the studies cited in the reference list, each with their respective DOI numbers and relevant links. No new data was generated or analyzed in this study.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

- The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.
- Ethical approval was not required as this study is a theoretical/conceptual paper and did not involve primary data collection or research with human participants.

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