

# Impact of Employee Well-Being on Employer Branding: A Systematic Review

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## Impact of Employee Well-Being on Employer Branding: A Systematic Review

### Abstract:

Employee well-being and employer branding are structurally convergent concepts, yet no prior systematic review has, to our knowledge, examined how well-being dimensions, taken explicitly and in their plurality, influence employer brand strength as perceived by employees. This systematic review aims to examine the extent to which the dimensions of employee well-being shape and reinforce employer brand strength in medium-sized and large enterprises. Following the six-stage protocol of Xiao and Watson (2019) and PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a narrative systematic review was conducted across Web of Science, Scopus, and CAIRN. The search identified 1,017 resources; after deduplication, approximately 840 unique records proceeded to screening, 41 were retained for full-text assessment, and a final corpus of 28 studies was constituted. Foundational conceptual works were included without a fixed start date; empirical studies are bounded by 2023. The synthesis is interpreted through Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973), Person-Organization Fit Theory (Kristof, 1996), and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), a combination that remains underexplored in this field. Findings are organized across three thematic axes. All eleven studies on well-being foundations converge on its multidimensional nature, with autonomy, competence, and meaning identified as core dimensions across six of them. Six studies establish a positive association between well-being and engagement, commitment, and performance, though causal direction remains contested. Eleven studies on employer brand strength converge on the greater weight of symbolic over instrumental dimensions in shaping retention and identification; Benraiss-Noailles and Viot (2021, n=604) provide the only empirical test showing that positive well-being fully mediates the relationship between employer brand equity and intention to leave. From these findings, this review generates six theoretical contributions: well-being is identified as the necessary mediating condition between employer brand equity and retention; symbolic employer brand dimensions carry greater credibility than instrumental ones because they require genuine and sustained organizational investment; well-being dimensions constitute the values through which employees evaluate their person-organization fit; the four mobilized theories operate in sequence, as signaling communicates, fit filters, self-determination grounds the psychological mechanism, and exchange sustains; and three unresolved theoretical tensions regarding causal direction, the role of supervisor support, and the non-uniform effect of brand dimensions on loyalty are identified as priorities for future research; and well-being cannot be treated as a stable or universally transferable variable across organizational contexts. These contributions are formalized into five research propositions and a conceptual model connecting well-being dimensions to employer brand outcomes. For human resource management practitioners, they translate into five managerial levers: investing in relational quality, granting genuine autonomy, connecting work to broader purpose, making competence development visible, and ensuring stable structural workplace conditions.

**Keywords:** Employee well-being; Workplace well-being; Employer branding; Organizational attractiveness; Psychological well-being; Employer brand equity; Systematic literature review

**Classification JEL:** M12, M14, M31

**Paper type:** Systematic literature review

## 1. Introduction

Due to the increasingly rare critical skills and employees experiencing a growing loss of direction amidst feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, and discomfort, companies can no longer afford to treat the work environment as a secondary concern. The well-being at work has become both a strategic tool and a survival instrument for companies, particularly in the unstable professional landscape shaped by the aftermath of the recent health crisis and the ongoing fluctuations of the labor market. This new reality pushes organizations worldwide to engage, at multiple levels and to varying degrees, in the active preservation of their employees' physical and mental well-being. The scholarly literature has progressively shown that employer branding and employee well-being are not only adjacent concepts but structurally interlocking ones. Berthon et al. (2005) established that the employer brand is based on five core values whose psychological nature directly mirrors the constitutive dimensions of well-being at work: economic value, encompassing material and non-material compensation; social value, reflecting employees' need for a supportive and trustworthy environment; developmental value, materializing the need for recognition and professional growth; interest value, associated with intellectual stimulation and personal fulfillment; and application value, reflecting the desire to share expertise and the sense of social recognition it generates. The social and developmental values identified by Berthon et al. (2005) converge precisely with the key pillars of psychological well-being as defined by Dagenais-Desmarais et al. (2010): recognition, personal fulfillment, and interpersonal fit. Ryff (1995) additionally reinforces this alignment. Self-acceptance, positive social relations, and environmental mastery, which form the foundation of her well-being model, correspond directly to the implicit promise that a strong employer brand extends to its employees. At a deeper level, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) showed that the employer brand constitutes a psychological contract whose breach, when organizational promises diverge from lived experience, drives employee exit. This is precisely the mechanism Dagenais-Desmarais et al. (2010) describe on the well-being side: the erosion of recognition and interpersonal quality destabilizes psychological equilibrium and undermines organizational commitment. Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014) further define the employer brand as a unique employment promise built upon functional, economic, and psychological benefits. Its effects depend entirely on its fulfillment, which places well-being at the operational core of its logic. Davies (2008) confirmed this interdependent relationship by showing that a strong employer brand acts directly on loyalty, satisfaction, and affinity, three dimensions that Litchfield et al. (2016), Dagenais-Desmarais et al. (2010), and Ryff (1995) individually recognize as core expressions of well-being at work. Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021) provided the most direct empirical confirmation of this link, establishing a proportional relationship between employees' perception of the employer brand's social value, their well-being, and their loyalty. However, a closer look at this body of work reveals a structural limitation. The convergence documented above remains the product of isolated theoretical observations. It has never been assembled into a coherent and systematic research object. Berthon et al. (2005) map the psychological architecture of the employer brand without measuring its effects on well-being. Dagenais-Desmarais et al. (2010) define the pillars of psychological well-being but do not connect them to the signaling mechanisms of employer branding. Ryff (1995) establishes well-being dimensions that other authors implicitly mobilize when describing employer brand strength, but no study has formally tested this correspondence. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) and Dagenais-Desmarais et al. (2010) describe identical breach mechanisms on each side of the relationship, and nonetheless both bodies of work develop in parallel, without cross-referencing each other's findings. Davies (2008) identifies loyalty, satisfaction, and affinity as outcomes of a strong employer brand, the same three dimensions that Litchfield et al. (2016), Dagenais-Desmarais et al. (2010), and Ryff (1995) place at the core of workplace well-being, yet this structural

overlap is noted but never synthesized. In each case, the relationship is glimpsed, suggested, or implied. It has never been made the explicit and central object of a systematic review. This absence constitutes an important theoretical gap. The relationship between employee well-being and employer branding remains implicit, fragmented, and underexplored as a coherent research object; a gap the present study directly addresses. By synthesizing the available evidence through a structured and reproducible protocol, this systematic review aims to make this convergence explicit, theoretically grounded, and actionable for both researchers and practitioners. The main goal of this review is therefore to examine the extent to which employee well-being at work shapes and reinforces employer brand strength within organizations. Following the SPIDER framework (Cooke, Smith and Booth, 2012), the present systematic review is structured around the following research question: What are the perceived and documented impacts and influences (Evaluation) of well-being at work dimensions on employer brand strength (Phenomenon of Interest), among employees in medium-sized and large enterprises (Sample), as examined through quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research designs (Design) across empirical and conceptual studies in management sciences and human resource management (Research type)?

**Table 1. SPIDER Framework Decomposition of the Research Question.**

SPIDER Component	Specification
S — Sample	Employees in medium-sized and large enterprises
PI — Phenomenon of Interest	The impact and influence of well-being at work dimensions on employer brand strength
D — Design	Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method studies
E — Evaluation	Perceived influences of well-being dimensions on organizational attractiveness and employer brand components
R — Research type	Empirical and conceptual studies in management sciences and human resource management

*Source: authors.*

This systematic review is intentionally based on an interpretivist approach (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Rather than seeking to aggregate findings into a single objective truth, it aims to construct a theoretically grounded understanding of the relationship between well-being at work and employer brand strength by carefully analyzing and combining existing research. This choice is consistent with the subjective and context-dependent nature of the concepts of well-being at work and employer brand perception. The present systematic review could provide support for both researchers and practitioners, in order to elicit their interest in the potential influence of employee well-being at work on employer brand strength. It makes theoretical and methodological contributions on two fronts. For the scientific community, the review mobilizes four complementary theoretical frameworks whose combination remains underexplored in the existing literature. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) provides the foundation for understanding well-being as a reciprocal investment between employer and employee whose returns shape organizational commitment. Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973) explains how well-being practices function as signals of organizational quality, directly influencing employer brand perception among both current and potential employees. Person-Organization Fit Theory (Kristof, 1996) identifies the alignment between the values embedded in well-being practices and employees' personal values as a driver of organizational attractiveness. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) identifies the satisfaction of fundamental psychological needs as the mechanism through which well-being practices translate into durable organizational identification. While each of these theories has been applied independently in human resource management and organizational behavior research, no systematic review has examined how their convergence structures the relationship between well-being dimensions and employer brand strength. This review aims to fill that gap, extending and enriching the scientific literature

at the intersection of these four theoretical frameworks. For practitioners, the review offers concrete levers for aligning well-being investments with employer brand objectives, providing actionable guidance for strategic and operational decision-making.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. Defining the key concepts**

#### **2.1.1. Conceptual foundations and multidimensional nature of well-being at work**

The conceptualization of well-being has evolved considerably over the past four decades, moving from strictly emotional conceptions toward multidimensional frameworks that integrate both subjective experience and objective psychological functioning. Diener (1984) defines subjective well-being as the way individuals evaluate their own lives according to personal criteria, based on three factors: life satisfaction as a cognitive appraisal, and positive and negative emotions as two relatively independent dimensions. Warr (1990) proposes a more nuanced model, dividing emotional well-being into two axes, anxiety versus contentment and depression versus enthusiasm, within a space defined by pleasure and arousal. He expands this model beyond the emotional dimension by adding behavioral elements such as subjective competence and aspiration, anticipating the broader approaches that would follow. A more fundamental reorientation comes from Ryff (1989), who argues that reducing well-being to happiness or satisfaction captures only a surface-level dimension of human experience. Based on theories of positive functioning and lifespan development, she identifies six distinct dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Ryff and Keyes (1995) later developed this framework as a hierarchical model in which the six dimensions work together as parts of a single broader factor. Ryan and Deci (2000) take this reflection further by distinguishing two complementary orientations. The hedonic dimension refers to the subjective experience of pleasure and satisfaction. The eudaimonic dimension is grounded in the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, individuals do not merely feel good; they function well, engage authentically with their activities, and experience their behavior as self-determined. When these needs are frustrated, motivation weakens and ill-being emerges. Guillemin (2018) situates these developments within an organizational perspective by proposing a clear distinction between happiness and well-being at work. Well-being is organized around satisfaction, emotional experience, and flourishing factors such as meaning, autonomy, and competence. It occupies an intermediate position: more operational than happiness, yet richer and more comprehensive than job satisfaction alone. The transition from individual conceptualizations to workplace applications follows a clear trajectory. Adkins (1999) positioned well-being within the framework of occupational health psychology, defining it not as the absence of clinical disorder but as the positive expression of human potential within a health-promoting organizational environment. Its deterioration carries measurable organizational costs, including absenteeism, reduced productivity, and employee turnover. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) extend this view through the Job Demands-Resources model, articulating how well-being is structured across three interacting dimensions. On the physical plane, excessive job demands drain bodily resources and harm health. On the psychological plane, well-being is expressed through engagement and burnout, shaped by the balance between demands and available resources. On the social plane, the quality of interpersonal relationships plays a key role in either reducing adversity or strengthening motivation. These three dimensions do not operate in isolation; deficits in one area tend to amplify vulnerability in the others. Seligman (2011) contributes the PERMA model, identifying five core elements of flourishing: positive emotion, engagement, meaning,

positive relationships, and accomplishment. Each element is independently defined and pursued for its own sake, and no single dimension can be reduced to or substituted by the others. Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010), working more specifically within the organizational context, propose a model of psychological well-being at work structured around five connected elements: interpersonal fit at work, personal flourishing, perceived competence, recognition by others, and the desire for engagement. Their model emphasizes the fundamentally subjective, relational, and organizational nature of well-being. Litchfield et al. (2016) reinforce this by suggesting that genuine well-being at work requires both the prevention of psychological harm and the active promotion of positive working conditions, including attention to work design, managerial support, autonomy, and organizational fairness. Barel and Frémeaux (2016) add that well-being requires organizational conditions allowing individuals to exercise genuine autonomy and express their full potential, calling for deep organizational change grounded in subsidiarity and values-driven leadership. Across these perspectives, one trajectory stands out clearly: workplace well-being is understood today as a positive, multidimensional, and contextually situated state whose promotion requires simultaneous attention to the physical, psychological, social, and organizational dimensions of working life.

### **2.1.2. Employer Brand: key definitions and concepts**

Employer branding emerged as a way of applying marketing logic to the relationship between organizations and their employees. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) offer one of the most widely cited definitions: employer branding is the process through which an organization builds a clear and distinctive identity as an employer, one that sets it apart from competitors in the labor market. Their framework rests on three connected ideas. Internal branding refers to the effort to bring the organization's values and promises to life within the workplace itself, shaping the culture and reinforcing desired behaviors. Employer brand equity designates the reputational capital a company accumulates over time through its branding efforts, explaining why some candidates are drawn to certain employers even before knowing the details of a specific role. Organizational attractiveness is the image that results from both practical considerations, such as salary and working conditions, and more intangible ones, such as perceived prestige or innovative spirit. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) place greater emphasis on the perspective of the potential employee. Extending the work of Ambler and Barrow (1996), they understand the employer brand as a set of functional, economic, and psychological benefits that employment in a given organization provides. Their main contribution is the concept of employer attractiveness: the set of benefits a job seeker imagines they would gain by working for a specific company. To measure this concept systematically, they developed the EmpAt scale. Edwards (2010) defines employer branding as the application of marketing principles to how a company presents itself to current and prospective employees, further distinguishing between the transactional, relational, and ideological dimensions of the employment relationship based on psychological contract theory. Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014) define the employer brand as a unique employment proposition addressed to both current and potential employees, built on the functional, economic, and psychological benefits associated with working at a given organization. Their definition integrates two dimensions simultaneously: identity, meaning how the organization wishes to present itself, and image, meaning how that presentation is actually received by its audiences. They also distinguish the employer brand from both internal marketing and the corporate brand, as each serves distinct purposes and addresses different audiences.

## **2.2. Theoretical grounding and the mobilized frameworks**

### **2.2.1. Social Exchange Theory: reciprocity as the foundation of the well-being and employer brand relationship**

Social Exchange Theory, as developed by Blau (1964), is based on the premise that social life is fundamentally organized around processes of reciprocity. The distinction between social exchange and strictly economic exchange lies in the nature of the obligations it generates. Economic exchange is governed by explicit contracts and formally specified returns. Social exchange generates unspecified obligations: when one party provides benefits to another, the recipient is not bound by a fixed repayment schedule but is expected to respond in kind through trust, commitment, and continued engagement. This open-ended structure of mutual obligation is what makes Social Exchange Theory particularly relevant to the relationship between well-being and employer brand strength. Investing in the conditions that support employee well-being, including the quality of working conditions, the provision of psychological resources, the recognition of individual contributions, and the promotion of meaningful work, initiates a cycle of reciprocal obligation. Employees who perceive that their employer fulfills this implicit social contract tend to respond with attitudes and behaviors that exceed formal expectations: stronger identification with the employer brand, greater willingness to advocate for the organization, and deeper motivational engagement. In Blau's terms, the well-being investment functions as a social benefaction that creates an imbalance the employee is motivated to resolve through loyalty and commitment. As Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) established, the quality of the internal exchange relationship, grounded in genuine investment in employee well-being, produces the authentic identification from which external attractiveness derives its credibility. Social Exchange Theory does, however, operate primarily at the level of the direct employment relationship. It offers limited insight into how the quality of that relationship is perceived by audiences beyond the organization, and it does not account for the informational processes through which internal realities become visible to external candidates. These limitations point to the need for a complementary theoretical lens.

### **2.2.2. Signaling Theory: the employer brand as an informational signal in the labor market**

Signaling Theory, as developed by Spence (1973), is founded on the observation that job markets are characterized by informational asymmetry. At the moment of hiring, the employer cannot directly observe what a candidate is truly capable of, just as a candidate cannot fully assess the quality of the work environment being offered. Both parties act under uncertainty, and it is precisely this uncertainty that creates the conditions under which signals become necessary. In Spence's framework, a signal is an observable and modifiable characteristic deliberately transmitted by one party to reduce informational uncertainty. The critical property of an effective signal is credibility: it must carry a cost that makes it difficult to imitate, so that the information it conveys remains reliably associated with the underlying reality it represents. When applied to employer branding, Signaling Theory shifts the analytical focus from the internal dynamics of the employment relationship to its external communication dimension. When an organization communicates its values, its working conditions, and the experience it offers, it conveys information about an internal reality that candidates cannot directly observe prior to joining. The perceived quality of workplace well-being, the reputation for managerial fairness, and the visibility of organizational practices related to recognition and development all function as informational signals that shape candidate expectations and influence their decision to apply or to accept an offer. As Spence (1973) argues, the credibility of a signal depends on the cost it imposes on the sender. Organizations that publicly commit to employee well-being without substantive internal practices risk producing signals that are eventually disconfirmed by the lived experience of employees. In contrast, organizations that invest authentically in well-being possess a signaling advantage because their external communications are anchored in verifiable internal realities. Signaling Theory complements Social Exchange Theory: exchange explains the relational dynamics that sustain well-being and

commitment internally, while signaling addresses the communicational processes through which that internal quality becomes apparent to external audiences. However, Signaling Theory does not account for how individuals differentially interpret the same signals according to their personal values and expectations.

### **2.2.3. Person-Organization Fit Theory: value alignment as the bridge between well-being and organizational attractiveness**

Person-Organization Fit Theory, as developed by Kristof (1996), provides the perceptual complement to the exchange and signaling mechanisms described above. She defines person-organization fit as the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs, when they share similar fundamental characteristics, or both simultaneously. The most theoretically central pathway is supplementary fit, which emerges when an individual and an organization possess similar values, goals, and norms. An organization that integrates well-being into its culture communicates a set of priorities that resonate with individuals who share similar personal commitments to autonomy, meaning, and balance. This dynamic is directly relevant to employer branding. Well-being values communicated through employer brand signals function as indicators of anticipated fit. Job seekers are more likely to be attracted to an organization if its employer brand conveys that psychological safety, relational quality, and meaningful work are genuine organizational priorities. This anticipation shapes attraction before any formal employment relationship begins. Kristof (1996) further distinguishes between actual fit and perceived fit. Perceived fit refers to an individual's subjective sense of belonging in a workplace, which does not necessarily reflect actual value alignment. Kristof's evidence indicates that perceived fit tends to be more influential than actual fit during the early stages of organizational entry and selection, because individuals and organizations have limited time and information through which to assess genuine compatibility. This distinction is significant for employer branding, as organizational attractiveness is substantially a perceptual phenomenon. What matters at the preliminary stage is not the organization's actual well-being culture but the perception of that culture by potential employees. Person-Organization Fit Theory thus explains why the same employer brand signals produce differential attraction across individuals. However, it does not identify the specific psychological mechanisms through which fit, once perceived, translates into durable identification and sustained well-being. This points to the need for a fourth theoretical lens.

### **2.2.4. Self-Determination Theory: fundamental psychological needs as dimensions of well-being influencing organizational identification**

Self-Determination Theory, as developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), identifies the fundamental psychological conditions under which identification with the employer brand becomes durable and self-sustaining. The foundation of this theoretical framework is the premise that human beings have three fundamental psychological needs: the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for relatedness. Their satisfaction is necessary for psychological growth, effective functioning, and sustained well-being. When these needs are met, individuals engage with their activities more fully, experience greater vitality, and develop a stronger sense of identification with the social environments in which they operate. When these needs are frustrated, motivation declines and well-being deteriorates. Ryan and Deci (2000) define autonomy as the feeling that one's actions reflect one's own values and choices rather than external pressure. Competence refers to the need to feel effective and capable in professional activities. Relatedness designates feelings of connection with others and a sense of shared purpose within the workplace. Together, these three needs constitute the psychological conditions under which individuals can function well, rather than merely performing tasks adequately but flourishing and finding purpose in their professional endeavors. The relevance

of Self-Determination Theory to the present research question is direct. When an organization's employer brand communicates that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are genuinely supported through its culture, management practices, and work design, it does more than signal favorable working conditions. It invites employees and job applicants to anticipate or experience a form of alignment between their own psychological needs and the values of the organization. Ryan and Deci (2000) distinguish between forms of motivation ranging from externally controlled behavior to fully internalized regulation. When the employer supports the three fundamental needs, employees are more likely to internalize the values and goals of the organization, grounding their commitment in personal endorsement rather than external obligation. Self-Determination Theory does, however, focus on individual psychological processes and offers limited guidance on how need satisfaction operates differently across organizational structures, sectors, or cultural contexts.

### **2.2.5. Mobilized frameworks and research questions**

The research question guiding this review, as formulated in the introduction through the SPIDER framework, asks how and to what extent the dimensions of well-being at work shape employer brand strength among employees in medium-sized and large enterprises. Addressing this question requires a layered conceptual architecture, as no single theoretical framework can account for the full range of mechanisms involved. The four theories mobilized in this review have been selected for their complementarity. Each addresses a distinct but connected dimension of this relationship, and each builds upon the foundations laid by the preceding one until the limits of explanation are reached. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) establishes the relational foundation through which well-being investment generates employer brand outcomes. However, it operates primarily at the level of the direct employment relationship. Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973) extends the analysis to the labor market by explaining how the internal quality of the employment relationship becomes visible to external audiences through credible informational signals. Person-Organization Fit Theory (Kristof, 1996) introduces the perceptual dimension by clarifying how signals are not received uniformly but interpreted differently across individuals according to their values and aspirations. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) goes deeper still, identifying the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness as the fundamental psychological conditions under which identification with the employer brand becomes durable and self-sustaining. Collectively, these four frameworks provide this systematic review with the conceptual coherence necessary to examine, across diverse empirical and methodological contexts, how and why the dimensions of employee well-being translate into measurable and perceived components of employer brand strength in medium-sized and large enterprises.

## **2.3. Mapping of the existing literature**

### **2.3.1. Established findings**

The theoretical frameworks developed in the preceding section provide a useful perspective on the empirical record. Social Exchange Theory, Signaling Theory, Person-Organization Fit Theory, and Self-Determination Theory each illuminate a distinct mechanism connecting well-being to employer brand strength. However, the empirical evidence from the relevant literature is more fragmented than the suggested frameworks might imply. Three bodies of evidence nonetheless stand out as reasonably well documented. The first one concerns the relationship between well-being and performance. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) demonstrated that when organizational resources adequately compensate for job demands, psychological well-being is preserved and engagement rises. Seligman (2011) arrives at a comparable conclusion through a different route: the elements of the PERMA model, particularly engagement and

accomplishment, independently encourage productive behavior. This suggests that well-being has a more complex impact on performance, involving multiple interconnected processes rather than a single mechanism. The second body of evidence focuses on well-being and retention. Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) indicated that when components of psychological well-being in the workplace are compromised, organizational commitment diminishes and employees' intentions to resign increase. Adkins (1999) situated this dynamic within an occupational health framework, noting that declining well-being can directly and measurably lead to attrition costs. The third concerns employer branding and organizational attractiveness. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) demonstrated using the EmpAt scale that attractiveness is based on a set of anticipated benefits whose psychological dimensions closely mirror the elements of well-being. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) built on this by showing that employer brand equity is influenced by both external attractiveness and internal loyalty, the latter being directly shaped by the quality of the employment experience. These three bodies of evidence are internally consistent. However, they have developed in parallel, and the link between them remains speculative rather than explored.

### **2.3.2. Divergences and theoretical gap**

The consistency visible within each of the three bodies of evidence described above does not extend across the literature as a whole. Three recurring sources of divergence must be considered. The first and most important is how well-being is defined and measured. Diener (1984) defines it through affective states and cognitive life satisfaction. Warr (1990) organizes it along emotional axes incorporating behavioral elements. Ryff (1989) and Ryff and Keyes (1995) argue that affective approaches capture only a surface dimension and propose six dimensions of psychological functioning. Ryan and Deci (2000) introduce a further distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being that cuts across all previous models. Litchfield et al. (2016) add a preventative and promotional dimension largely absent from earlier frameworks. When studies draw on different conceptual foundations, their findings cannot be directly compared; apparent contradictions frequently reflect measurement choices rather than genuine theoretical disagreement. The second source of divergence concerns the definition and measurement of employer branding. Ambler and Barrow (1996) conceptualized it as a package of benefits. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) operationalize attractiveness through five empirically distinct values. Edwards (2010) introduces transactional, relational, and ideological dimensions. Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014) propose a distinction between organizational identity and perceived image. The results of these different approaches often prove difficult to integrate. The third source of divergence is contextual and methodological: Schneider (1987) and Kristof (1996) demonstrated that findings on well-being and employer brand strength are sensitive to organizational, sectoral, and cultural conditions, making cross-context comparisons inherently challenging. Despite the extent of this evidence, the literature lacks a comprehensive systematic synthesis integrating the two fields. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) map the psychological architecture of employer attractiveness without connecting it to the dimensions of well-being. Ryff (1989) and Ryff and Keyes (1995) establish a model of psychological functioning whose dimensions are implicit in how Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) describe the internal dimension of employer brand equity, yet neither set of studies references the other. Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) provide pillars of psychological well-being at work that align directly with the values Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014) place at the core of the employer brand proposition, but this correspondence has never been formally examined. The theoretical gap does not stem from a lack of empirical work on either concept in isolation. It is the absence of any systematic inquiry into what happens at their intersection: how the dimensions of well-being at work, taken explicitly and in their plurality, influence employer brand strength as perceived by employees. This is the question the present review addresses.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research design and systematic review protocol

This study adopts a systematic literature review methodology. A systematic literature review is a synthesis of existing knowledge using an objective and rigorous method to search for and analyze articles on a given subject (Tranfield et al., 2003). Unlike a traditional literature review, it constitutes an autonomous research project that explores and answers a specific research question through a predefined protocol designed to minimize bias and errors (Petticrew, 2001). Following Denyer and Tranfield (2009), a rigorous systematic review must satisfy four foundational standards. The first is reproducibility: every methodological decision must be documented so that the review process can be replicated (Greenhalgh, 1997; Higgins and Green, 2006). The second is selectivity: the review must bring together the best available scientific information and evidence (Moher et al., 1995). The third is aggregation: the homogeneity of the data analyzed must be verified before combining findings across studies. The fourth is algorithmic structure: the review must follow a specific protocol based on the study population, the phenomenon under investigation, and the results. This systematic review is reported in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The present review was not registered in PROSPERO. PROSPERO is an international registry primarily designed for systematic reviews with at least one health-related outcome (Booth et al., 2012). As the present review is situated in management sciences and human resource management and does not include any direct health-related outcomes, registration falls outside its intended scope. In accordance with PRISMA 2020, this absence is explicitly declared here. A narrative systematic review design was retained for this study (Campbell et al., 2020). There are three reasons behind this decision. First, the review adopts an interpretivist epistemological stance (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Second, employee well-being and employer brand are both subjective and context-dependent concepts perceived differently across individuals, sectors, and cultural backgrounds. Third, the extant literature is methodologically diverse, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies, making statistical combination unsuitable. The review is structured around six sequential stages following Xiao and Watson (2019): formulation of the research question, definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria, identification and extraction of relevant sources, quality assessment, standardized summary of selected data, and presentation of results. The research question guiding this review was formulated according to the SPIDER framework (Cooke et al., 2012), as presented in Table 1 of the introduction. As Counsell (1997) stated, an inadequate question results in an unfavorable review; the research question must be clear, consistent, and precise enough to guide the selection and analysis of sources throughout the review process.

#### 3.2. Search strategy, databases, and Boolean equations

The search strategy was developed using keywords derived from the research question: employee well-being, workplace well-being, psychological well-being, employer branding, employer brand equity, and organizational attractiveness (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007). These keywords were grouped into thematic blocks and combined through Boolean operators to ensure both precision and coverage. Three complementary equations were designed for Web of Science and Scopus, and three additional queries were conducted in CAIRN to capture the French-language literature. The first equation targets the core relationship linking employer branding and employer brand equity to employee well-being and workplace well-being. The second focuses on organizational attractiveness in relation to well-being. The third addresses the psychological dimension, linking employer branding to psychological well-being. CAIRN queries replicate this logic in their French-language equivalents. In Web of Science, searches were conducted using the Combined Semantic and Boolean Search option. In Scopus, the

Advanced Search interface was used with results filtered to Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, and Psychology. Although PsycINFO and EBSCO Business Source Complete were considered, their inclusion was deemed non-essential given that Scopus and Web of Science already provide thorough coverage of the relevant literature (Gusenbauer and Haddaway, 2020). The raw results reported in Table 2 represent the total number of resources retrieved before screening and duplicate removal.

**Table 2. Search Strategy, Databases, and Boolean Equations.**

Equation	Search Query	Date	Raw Results
<b>Web of Science</b>			
Equation 1	("employer branding" OR "employer brand equity") AND ("employee well-being" OR "workplace well-being")	28 March 2026	105
Equation 2	("organizational attractiveness") AND ("employee well-being" OR "workplace well-being")	28 March 2026	101
Equation 3	("employer branding" OR "employer brand equity") AND ("psychological well-being")	28 March 2026	100
<b>Scopus</b>			
Equation 1	("employer branding" OR "employer brand equity") AND ("employee well-being" OR "workplace well-being")	28 March 2026	203
Equation 2	("organizational attractiveness") AND ("employee well-being" OR "workplace well-being")	28 March 2026	171
Equation 3	("employer branding" OR "employer brand equity") AND ("psychological well-being")	28 March 2026	106
<b>CAIRN</b>			
Equation 1	("marque employeur") AND ("bien-être au travail")	28 March 2026	173
Equation 2	("marque employeur") AND ("bien-être psychologique au travail")	28 March 2026	5
Equation 3	("marque employeur") AND ("bonheur au travail")	28 March 2026	53

*Source: authors.*

In order to identify duplicates, results were exported from both Web of Science and Scopus and systematically compared using the DOI as the primary identifier. The deduplication was executed in three successive stages, detailed in Table 3. The combined total before any removal was 786 articles (306 from Web of Science and 480 from Scopus). After internal deduplication within each database and cross-database duplicate removal, approximately 609 unique articles proceeded to title and abstract screening. CAIRN was not subjected to the same deduplication procedure; while it primarily indexes French-language literature largely absent from the two main databases, some overlap may exist, which is acknowledged as a minor limitation.

**Table 3. Deduplication Results by Database.**

Description	Web of Science	Scopus
Total articles retrieved (all three equations combined)	306	480
Combined total across both databases	786	
Internal duplicates removed	52	71
Articles with no DOI available	27	19
Unique articles after internal deduplication	227	390
Cross-database duplicates removed	8	8
Total unique articles after full deduplication	~609	

*Source: authors.*

### 3.3. Eligibility criteria

#### 3.3.1. Eligible documentary resources

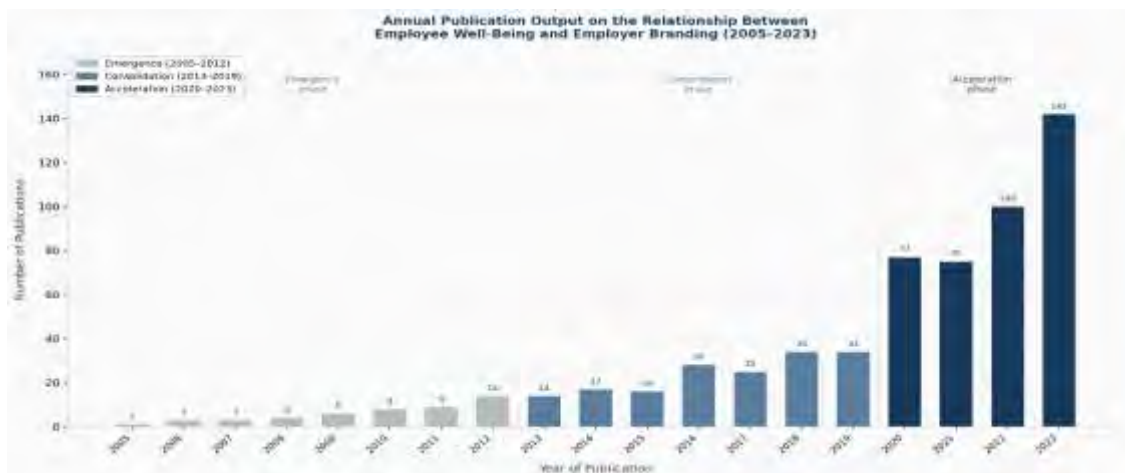
The documentary sources eligible for inclusion are selected according to a hierarchical order

informed by Tranfield et al. (2003). This framework is deliberately designed to prioritize eligibility over fixed inclusion. The objective is to maintain the reproducibility of the review process, while enabling future updates as the literature advances, an approach that the PRISMA 2020 guidelines explicitly encourage. Page et al. (2021). The most authoritative source is peer-reviewed journal articles published in indexed journals with explicitly described methodology, including details of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Studies that do not meet this minimum methodological transparency standard are excluded. The review also draws on books and reference works, systematic reviews published in indexed journals, chapters in edited books, literature published through official academic channels, and thematic dictionaries where they contribute to conceptual clarification. Grey literature, including doctoral dissertations, conference proceedings, and institutional reports, may provide valuable context but is not considered a primary source of evidence. Press articles, unpublished works, articles published in unindexed journals, and books produced by business consultants are excluded.

### 3.3.2. Temporal coverage

This review applies a differentiated approach to temporal coverage. Foundational theoretical and conceptual works are not subject to a fixed start date; their inclusion is determined by their theoretical relevance. Works such as Diener (1984), Ryff (1989), Warr (1990), and Ambler and Barrow (1996) constitute the theoretical pillars from which the research question is derived, and excluding them on temporal grounds would undermine the conceptual architecture of this review. Empirical studies are bounded by a closing date of 2023. This limit is grounded in a bibliometric analysis of the full pool of records retrieved across all six Boolean equations applied to Scopus and Web of Science. Following full deduplication by DOI, with article title as a secondary identifier, a total of 611 unique articles published up to and including 2023 were identified. This figure differs slightly from the 609 reported in Table 3, which relied exclusively on DOI; the two additional records correspond to articles carrying no DOI in either database, recovered through title-based matching. The distribution of these 611 records is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Annual Publication Output on the Relationship Between Employee Well-Being and Employer Branding (2005-2023).**



*Source: Authors*

The figure reveals three distinct phases. Between 2005 and 2012, output remained limited, with a maximum of fourteen publications per year, indicating an emergent and fragmented field. Between 2013 and 2019, a consolidation phase saw publications increase steadily from fourteen to thirty-four per year. From 2020 onwards, the literature entered a phase of marked acceleration, rising from seventy-seven publications in 2020 to one hundred and forty-two in

2023, consistent with the broader intensification of organizational research on well-being following the pandemic. Records published after 2023 fall outside the scope of this review. CAIRN was not included in this bibliometric computation, as it does not offer an export functionality equivalent to that of Scopus or Web of Science; this constitutes a minor limitation acknowledged in line with PRISMA 2020 transparency requirements. The temporal pattern revealed by Scopus and Web of Science is representative of the field, and the closing date of 2023 remains fully justified on this basis.

### 3.3.3. Language inclusion and linguistic bias

The present review includes studies published in English and French. English is the predominant language of publication in management sciences, human resource management, and organizational behavior, covering the vast majority of peer-reviewed empirical work on both employee well-being and employer branding. French is maintained as a second eligible language on the basis of a significant corpus of theoretical and empirical work produced in the French-language academic literature, particularly in journals indexed in CAIRN. The decision to limit inclusion to these two languages does introduce a linguistic bias that must be acknowledged: studies published in other languages are not captured by this review, which may lead to a partial underrepresentation of locally published empirical work from certain regions. This limitation is consistent with those reported in comparable systematic reviews in management sciences and is explicitly recognized here in accordance with PRISMA 2020 transparency requirements (Page et al., 2021).

### 3.3.4. Eligible study designs

The present review encompasses studies employing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research designs. Both studies with and without fieldwork are eligible, as each approach possesses distinct strengths and limitations, and neither is systematically favored over the other. Controlled factor experiments and quasi-experimental studies are also admissible where they address the research question directly. Studies based on dramatic uncontrolled experiments, as defined by Tranfield et al. (2003), are excluded, as the absence of any control condition makes it impossible to isolate the effects under investigation.

### 3.3.5. Eligible thematic scope

This review covers academic resources directly relevant to the research question, including workplace well-being, psychological and physical health at work, mental health, job satisfaction, psychosocial hazards, organizational desirability, organizational identity, employer branding, corporate image, and corporate reputation. Studies whose primary focus falls outside this thematic perimeter are excluded, particularly those situated in clinical psychology or medicine rather than management sciences and human resource management.

*Table 4. Eligibility Criteria for Source Inclusion and Exclusion.*

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Documentary Resources	Peer-reviewed articles with explicit methodology; books and reference works; systematic reviews in indexed journals; edited book chapters; thematic dictionaries; grey literature (dissertations, conference papers, reports)	Press articles; unpublished works; articles in unindexed journals; books by business consultants
Temporal Coverage	Foundational works: no start date limit; empirical studies: up to and including 2023	Studies published after 2023
Languages	English; French	All other languages
Study Designs	Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method designs; with and without fieldwork; controlled and quasi-experimental studies	Dramatic uncontrolled experiments (Tranfield et al., 2003)

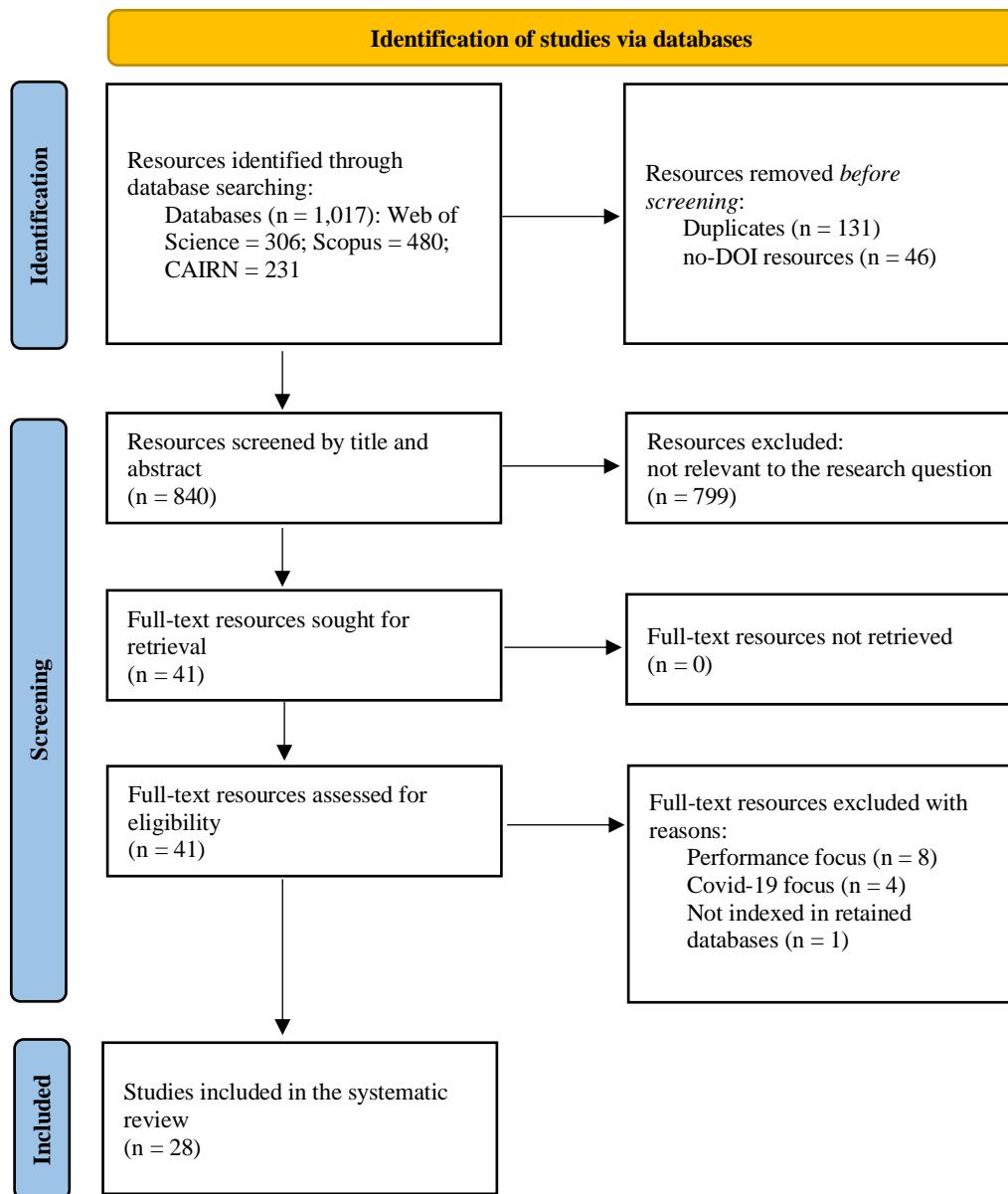
Thematic Scope	Workplace well-being; employee well-being; psychological well-being; employer branding; employer brand equity; organizational attractiveness; corporate image and reputation	Studies primarily in medicine or clinical psychology without relevance to management sciences
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*Source: authors.*

### 3.4. Screening and data extraction

The screening and data extraction process followed the structured protocol recommended by Xiao and Watson (2019) and was conducted in compliance with the PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The process followed four distinct phases, outlined in Figure 2: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. In the identification phase, the Boolean search equations detailed in section 3.2 were employed across the three selected databases. The initial search identified a total of 1,017 resources: 306 from Web of Science, 480 from Scopus, and 231 from CAIRN. The deduplication process, outlined in Table 3, led to the removal of 177 resources, and approximately 840 unique resources proceeded to the screening phase. In the screening phase, the 840 resources were evaluated based on their title and abstract. The primary criterion was the degree of alignment between the study and the central research question concerning the relationship between employee well-being dimensions and employer brand strength. Resources whose primary focus fell outside this thematic perimeter were excluded. This screening resulted in the exclusion of approximately 799 resources and the retention of 41 articles for full-text assessment. In the eligibility phase, the 41 retained articles were read in full and assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined in section 3.3. Beyond thematic relevance, each retained study was assessed for methodological transparency, including the clarity of its analytical procedures and the coherence between its theoretical framework and its empirical design (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006; Dixon-Woods et al., 2005). Following a thorough review, 13 articles were excluded for documented reasons. Eight articles were excluded because they primarily focused on employee performance rather than on the relationship between well-being and employer branding: Sajid Haider et al. (2018), Boivin (2019), Kundi et al. (2020), Daniels et al. (2000), Clausen et al. (2019), Tesi et al. (2019), Loon et al. (2018), and Gubler, Larkin and Pierce (2018). Four articles were excluded because their central concern was the Covid-19 crisis rather than the decontextualized relationship between well-being at work and employer brand: Rigotti et al. (2021), Lades (2020), Lovreglio et al. (2022), and Qin et al. (2023). One additional study, Mélineau et al. (2020), was excluded because it was not indexed in any of the three retained databases. Following the inclusion phase, the final corpus consists of 28 articles. Each study demonstrated a meaningful convergence with the research question, providing either empirical evidence, conceptual foundations, or theoretical mechanisms relevant to the relationship between workplace well-being and employer brand strength. This convergence constituted the primary and most decisive criterion throughout the entire selection process. It should be noted that the review was conducted by a single reviewer, which constitutes a methodological limitation that is explicitly acknowledged. Future extensions of this work would benefit from independent double coding with inter-rater reliability assessment. It is also important to note that this review is not intended to be a temporally fixed exercise. The corpus assembled here reflects the state of the available literature up to and including 2023, but the systematic framework and protocol developed for this study are designed to serve as a cumulative foundation. As new empirical and conceptual findings continue to emerge on workplace well-being, employer branding, or their intersection, the review can be updated and extended in order to guarantee the continuity and ongoing relevance of research on this topic.

Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram.



Source: Authors' elaboration, adapted from the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases only (Page et al., 2021).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Descriptive overview of the corpus

This section provides a structured descriptive portrait of the 28 retained studies. Table 5 presents the enriched profile of each study, including its objective, methodology, key findings, geographic and sectoral context, theoretical frameworks mobilized, and reported limitations. Figures 3, 4, and 5 present the bibliometric profile of the corpus through complementary visual analyses. Table 6 maps the frequency of key concepts across the corpus, grouped into thematic families. Table 7 organizes the findings into three thematic axes, distinguishing consensual results, contradictory results, and residual zones of uncertainty.

**Table 5. Enriched profiles of the systematic review (n=28 studies).**

Authors and Date	Objective	Methodology	Key Findings	Context	Theories Mobilized	Limits
<b>The Foundations of Well-Being in the Workplace (n=11)</b>						
Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010)	Developing and validating a measurement index of psychological well-being at work.	Mixed-method; qualitative (20 interviews) and quantitative (n=1,080).	Well-being at work comprises five components: interpersonal fit, flourishing, competence, recognition, and engagement desire.	Quebec, Canada. Cross-sectoral.	Positive psychology. Eudaimonic well-being (Ryff, 1995; Deci and Ryan, 2008).	Individual variability in well-being limits the effectiveness of universal organizational interventions.
Litchfield et al. (2016)	Examining the evolution of workplace well-being in the twenty-first century.	Theoretical analysis; editorial synthesis.	Well-being requires preventing harm and promoting positive conditions; higher well-being drives performance through cognitive and cooperative mechanisms.	United Kingdom. Cross-sectoral.	Job Characteristics Model. Five Ways to Wellbeing. Perceived Justice framework.	Editorial with no primary data; causal direction not established.
Ryff and Keyes (1995)	Proposing a six-dimensional framework for adult psychological well-being.	Quantitative; telephone survey (n=1,108), confirmatory factor analysis.	Well-being comprises six interrelated dimensions confirmed as a hierarchical model; traditional indicators capture only two of six.	United States. Nationally representative sample.	Eudaimonic well-being. Developmental psychology. Positive mental health (Jahoda, 1958).	Shortened scales (3 items per dimension) produced low to modest internal consistency coefficients. All data are based on self-report, which may include self-presentation biases. Cross-sectional design prevents distinguishing maturational changes from cohort differences in the observed age profiles.
Guillemin (2018)	Clarifying definitions and measurement of happiness and well-being at work.	Conceptual study; non-systematic literature overview.	Well-being is the measurable objective toward the vision of happiness, organized around satisfaction, emotions, and flourishing factors.	Switzerland. International perspective.	Salutogenesis. Positive psychology. Psychodynamics of work.	Non-systematic review; no empirical data; no measurement consensus.
Biétry et al. (2013)	Proposing a validated scale for measuring well-being at work.	Mixed-method; interviews (13) and quantitative (n=313 and n=865), confirmatory factor analysis.	Well-being comprises four relational dimensions (colleagues, management, time, environment); combined hedonic and	France. Cross-sectoral (industry, commerce, health, education).	Hedonic and eudaimonic traditions. Positive psychology. Ryff and Keyes (1995).	Statistical representativeness not guaranteed; limited control variables.

			eudaimonic measure validated.			
Barel and Frémeaux (2016)	Identifying conditions conducive to happiness at work.	Conceptual study; illustrative analysis.	Happiness requires subsidiarity, managerial accompaniment, and reinforced leadership; trust is the central enabling principle.	France and United States. Multiple cases (Zappos, Gore, FAVI).	Theory X and Y (McGregor). Liberated enterprise model.	Practitioner-oriented; no primary data; long-term sustainability not assessed.
Adkins (1999)	Promoting the concept and practice of occupational health psychology.	Case study with quantitative outcome monitoring.	Multilevel OHP intervention produced measurable outcomes: 12% decline in healthcare utilization, 41% decline in behavioral mortality.	United States. Military-industrial complex (14,000 employees).	Preventive stress management. NIOSH strategy. Systems theory.	Single-site case; no control group; causal attribution uncertain.
Diener et al. (2010)	Developing brief well-being measurement scales.	Quantitative; scale development across six university sites (n=689).	Flourishing Scale and SPANE validated with strong convergent validity with established measures including Ryff and SWLS.	United States and Singapore. Student samples.	Eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. Positive psychology. Social capital.	Findings are limited to student samples with no informant reports and behavioral measures, and temporal stability was assessed over a single one-month interval only.
Parker and Hyett (2011)	Developing a scale to measure workplace well-being.	Quantitative; three-phase scale development (n=150, n=30, n=1,206).	Four domains identified: work satisfaction, organizational respect, employer care, and work intrusion into private life.	Australia. Cross-sectoral.	Positive psychology. Hedonic and eudaimonic traditions. Health psychology.	Self-selection bias via mental health website; no sociodemographic data for initial sample.
Dose et al. (2018)	Examining how career success relates to psychological well-being at work.	Quantitative; cross-sectional survey (n=138), mediation analysis.	Subjective career success predicts well-being more strongly than objective success; basic need satisfaction mediates the relationship.	France. Public sector career counselors.	Self-Determination Theory. Psychological well-being at work (Dagenais-Desmarais).	Cross-sectional; predominantly female (80%); small sample.
Schneider et al. (2019)	Assessing the impact of schedule instability on worker well-being.	Quantitative; cross-sectional (n=27,792), logistic regression.	Schedule instability predicts distress more strongly than wages; effect operates through work-life conflict and economic insecurity.	United States. Retail and food service sector.	Precarious employment. Work-life conflict model. Risk shift theory.	Cross-sectional design limits causal inference; non-probability sampling may introduce selection bias; findings are specific to large retail chains and may not generalize to other sectors

The Effects of Well-Being on the Social Climate (n=6)						
Staw et al. (1994)	Testing the effects of positive emotion on employee outcomes.	Quantitative; longitudinal panel (n=272), 18-month follow-up.	Positive emotion predicts favorable supervisor evaluations and higher pay; effects operate through direct, interpersonal, and prosocial processes.	United States. Hospital and manufacturing.	Dispositional approach. Self-efficacy. Organizational citizenship behavior.	Intervening processes not directly measured; complete data for only 60 employees.
Piao et al. (2022)	Examining long-term effects of job demands on employee stress.	Quantitative; longitudinal panel (1,021,178 observations over 3 years).	Psychological demands have greatest long-term stress impact; boss support shows negative effect; improving demands could reduce high stress by 59%.	Japan. Multi-sector (390 companies).	Job Demand-Control Model. Effort-Reward Imbalance.	Missing socio-economic variables; Japan-specific; three-year window may be insufficient.
Warr (1990)	Structuring the measurement of affective well-being at work.	Quantitative; survey (n=1,686) with supplementary validation samples.	Well-being structured along two axes (anxiety-contentment, depression-enthusiasm); differential associations with job characteristics confirmed.	United Kingdom. Cross-sectoral, three occupational levels.	Circumplex model of affect. Competence and environmental mastery.	Cross-sectional self-report design limits causal inference; moderate reliability for some scales (.62-.78) and a non-representative UK employed sample constrain generalizability.
Ryan and Deci (2000)	Presenting Self-Determination Theory and its implications for well-being.	Theoretical review; narrative synthesis of experimental and field studies.	Three innate needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) when satisfied enhance motivation and well-being; when thwarted, diminish both.	United States. Cross-cultural (including Russia). Multiple domains.	Self-Determination Theory. Cognitive Evaluation Theory. Organismic Integration Theory.	Theoretical review with no new empirical data; lab-based evidence limits ecological validity in naturalistic settings, and causal directionality between need satisfaction and well-being outcomes requires further longitudinal confirmation.
Seligman (2011)	Redefining the topic of positive psychology from happiness to well-being.	Theoretical synthesis; book-length scholarly work.	Well-being comprises five independent PERMA elements; flourishing, not happiness, is the proper goal of positive psychology.	International perspective. Cross-national data (23 European nations).	Authentic Happiness Theory. Flourishing framework.	No primary data; popular science format; measurement asymmetry across PERMA elements.
Bakker and Demerouti (2007)	Presenting and testing the Job Demands-Resources model.	Theoretical review with empirical synthesis; multiple SEM studies.	Demands trigger health impairment (exhaustion); resources foster engagement; resources buffer demand effects on burnout.	Netherlands, Finland, Australia. Multi-sector.	Demand-Control Model. Conservation of Resources. Self-Determination Theory.	Mostly cross-sectional self-report data increases common method variance risk; interaction effects between demands and resources are statistically difficult to detect; and objective outcome measures remain largely absent.

Employer Branding and Well-Being (n=11)						
Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)	Proposing a conceptual framework for employer branding.	Conceptual study; narrative synthesis with thirteen propositions.	Employer branding creates two assets (brand associations and brand loyalty); accurate messaging reduces psychological contract breach.	United States and United Kingdom. Cross-sectoral.	Brand equity. Psychological contract. Person-Organization Fit. Social Identity Theory.	Purely conceptual; thirteen propositions untested; no empirical data.
Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005)	Developing and validating a scale of employer attractiveness.	Mixed-method; focus groups and quantitative (n=683), EFA and CFA.	Five-dimension EmpAt scale validated (interest, social, economic, development, application); 74% variance explained.	Australia. Student sample.	Internal marketing. Brand equity. Signaling Theory. Person-Organization Fit.	Student-only sample; single university; no cross-cultural validation.
Ewing et al. (2002)	Introducing the concept of employment brand equity.	Conceptual; literature review with qualitative typology of ads.	Employment brand equity defined; three advertising strategy types identified (Transnational, Mission to Mars, The Local).	International. Knowledge-intensive sectors.	Brand equity. Stakeholder theory. Internal marketing. Relationship marketing.	Purely conceptual with no primary empirical data; the proposed typology relies on unsystematic observation of print advertisements without formal coding, and its categories are not mutually exclusive; job market projections predate both the September 11 events and the subsequent economic downturn, limiting contemporary relevance.
Edwards (2010)	Applying marketing principles to employer branding.	Theoretical analysis; integrative literature review with fourteen propositions.	Corporate reputation predicts attractiveness more than job ads; symbolic attributes and ideological currency explain identification beyond economic rewards.	United Kingdom. Cross-disciplinary.	Social Identity Theory. Psychological contract. Brand equity. Social Exchange Theory.	Propositions untested; selective literature coverage; no primary data.
Davies (2008)	Examining how employer brand personality predicts employee outcomes.	Quantitative; survey (n=854), SEM across three sub-samples.	Agreeableness predicts satisfaction; enterprise and chic predict differentiation; no single dimension dominates all outcomes.	United Kingdom. Cross-sectoral (17 organizations).	Corporate brand personality. Social Identity Theory. Service-profit chain.	Managers only; loyalty measured by tenure only; cross-sectional.
Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014)	Conducting an integrative literature review on employer branding.	Narrative literature review; approximately 60 articles synthesized.	Employer brand defined as unique employment proposition; strong equity increases attractiveness	France. International perspective.	Brand equity. Social Identity Theory. Psychological contract. HR marketing.	Non-systematic review with no explicit search protocol; empirical evidence on the performance link remains limited to only three identified studies, and the proposed

			and reduces salary demands.			integrative model has not been empirically tested.
Davies et al. (2004)	Developing a scale to assess organizational reputation.	Mixed-method; interviews, focus groups, and survey (n=4,626), EFA and CFA.	Corporate Character Scale validated with seven dimensions; agreeableness and competence correlate most with satisfaction.	United Kingdom and Europe. Multi-sector (13 organizations).	Big Five personality. Brand personality. Organizational culture and identity.	Non-random negotiated sample; the personification metaphor risks oversimplification as organizations are not human beings; minor factors showed low reliability; and scale applicability beyond employees and customers remains untested.
Highhouse et al. (2003)	Measuring organizational attractiveness as a multidimensional construct.	Quantitative; experimental survey (n=305), CFA and SEM.	Attraction comprises attractiveness, intentions, and prestige; maps onto theory of reasoned action; unidimensional measures are insufficient.	United States. Student sample, five companies.	Theory of Reasoned Action. Organizational attraction research.	Student sample limits generalizability to active job seekers; cross-sectional design prevents causal ordering; and the competing direct-effects model fit the data equally well, leaving mediation by intentions inconclusive.
Lievens et al. (2007)	Examining instrumental and symbolic image dimensions in attraction.	Quantitative; two surveys (applicants n=258, employees n=179), CFA.	Symbolic attributes explain variance beyond instrumental ones; construed external image predicts identification more than perceived identity.	Belgium. Military sector (Belgian Army).	Social Identity Theory. Instrumental-symbolic framework. Brand personality.	Cross-sectional; common method variance risk; military context limits generalizability.
Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021)	Replicating the EmpAt scale and testing well-being as mediator.	Quantitative; survey (n=604), SEM with mediation analysis.	EBE has no direct effect on intention to leave; positive well-being fully mediates this relationship. Application, social, interest values drive mediation.	France (Nouvelle-Aquitaine). Cross-sectoral, predominantly private sector.	Employer Brand Equity (Berthon et al., 2005). Two-dimensional well-being (Warr, 1990).	Nine items removed from EmpAt; cross-sectional; single-region sample.
Ambler and Barrow (1996)	Introducing the concept of the Employer Brand.	Qualitative; semi-structured interviews with 27 UK companies.	Employer Brand defined as package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits; awareness and psychological benefits most consistently identified.	United Kingdom. Multi-sector (consultancy, finance, retail, pharma).	Relationship marketing. Brand equity. Internal marketing.	Exploratory qualitative design with a convenience sample drawn from a single consultancy limits statistical generalizability; no formal hypothesis testing was conducted, and individual respondents may not fully represent their organizations

*Source: authors.*

## 4.2. Thematic synthesis

This section presents the thematic synthesis of the 28 retained studies. Table 7 organizes the findings into three thematic axes, each addressing a distinct dimension of the relationship between well-being at work and employer brand strength.

*Table 7. Thematic synthesis of the systematic review.*

<b>Axis 1: Conceptual and Dimensional Foundations of Employee Well-Being</b>		
<b>Contributing Studies (n=11)</b>		Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010), Ryff and Keyes (1995), Guillemin (2018), Biétry et al. (2013), Barel and Frémeaux (2016), Adkins (1999), Litchfield et al. (2016), Diener et al. (2010), Parker and Hyett (2011), Ryan and Deci (2000), Seligman (2011)
<b>Consensual Results</b>		1. Well-being is a multidimensional concept that cannot be captured by a single indicator. All eleven studies converge on this point, proposing between two dimensions (Warr, 1990) and six dimensions (Ryff and Keyes, 1995), with Seligman (2011) identifying five independent PERMA elements. 2. Well-being extends beyond hedonic satisfaction toward eudaimonic and functional dimensions. Ryan and Deci (2000) formalize the distinction, Ryff and Keyes (1995) operationalize it through six factors, and Biétry et al. (2013) validate a combined hedonic-eudaimonic scale. 3. Autonomy, competence, and meaning are recurrently identified as core dimensions across six of the eleven studies. Ryan and Deci (2000) identify them as fundamental needs, Guillemin (2018) positions them as flourishing factors, and Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) include competence and engagement among their five components. 4. Well-being is subjective, relational, and contextually situated. Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) emphasize its organizational and interpersonal nature, while Litchfield et al. (2016) and Adkins (1999) demonstrate that it is shaped by the interaction between individual and structural conditions.
<b>Contradictory Results</b>		1. The dimensional architecture of well-being varies substantially across studies. Ryff and Keyes (1995) propose six dimensions, Biétry et al. (2013) identify four, Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) propose five, and Seligman (2011) identifies five PERMA elements with minimal overlap across models. 2. The focus of responsibility for well-being differs across studies. Barel and Frémeaux (2016) place primary responsibility on organizational leadership, while Adkins (1999) distributes it across both the organization and the individual, and Litchfield et al. (2016) emphasize work design as the critical structural lever.
<b>Residual Uncertainty</b>		1. Measurement consensus remains absent. Guillemin (2018) explicitly notes the lack of scientific consensus on measuring happiness at work, and no two studies in this axis use the same instrument. 2. Individual variability and external factors limit generalizability. Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) note that identical interventions may produce different effects across individuals, and external life events may alter well-being independently of workplace conditions.
<b>Axis 2: Organizational Outcomes of Well-Being (Engagement, Retention, Performance)</b>		
<b>Contributing Studies (n=6)</b>		Staw et al. (1994), Bakker and Demerouti (2007), Dose et al. (2018), Schneider et al. (2019), Piao et al. (2022), Warr (1990)
<b>Consensual Results</b>		1. Well-being is positively associated with engagement, commitment, and performance outcomes. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) demonstrate that job resources promote engagement and reduce demand effects on burnout, while Staw et al. (1994) confirm that positive emotion predicts favorable supervisor evaluations and higher pay over 18 months. 2. The well-being and performance relationship operates through multiple pathways rather than a single mechanism. Staw et al. (1994) identify direct, interpersonal, and prosocial channels, while Bakker and Demerouti (2007) distinguish a health impairment process from a motivational process. 3. Psychological need satisfaction mediates the relationship between work conditions and well-being outcomes. Dose et al. (2018) establish that autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction mediates the link between career success and well-being at work.
<b>Contradictory Results</b>		1. The causal direction between well-being and performance remains contested. Litchfield et al. (2016) acknowledge that the causal direction is not definitively established, and Bakker and Demerouti (2007) note limited longitudinal evidence for reciprocal causation. 2. The role of supervisor support is not uniform. Piao et al. (2022) find a counterintuitive negative effect of boss support on stress reduction, contradicting the positive resource effect documented by Bakker and Demerouti (2007).
<b>Residual Uncertainty</b>		1. Most findings rely on cross-sectional self-report designs. Only Staw et al. (1994) and Piao et al. (2022) use longitudinal data; the remaining studies cannot establish temporal ordering. 2. The transferability of findings across contexts is unclear. Schneider et al. (2019) focus on low-wage retail workers, while Dose et al. (2018) study public sector counselors, raising questions about whether the same mechanisms operate across occupational settings.
<b>Axis 3: Well-Being as a Driver of Employer Brand Strength</b>		

<b>Contributing Studies (n=11)</b>	Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005), Ambler and Barrow (1996), Edwards (2010), Ewing et al. (2002), Davies (2008), Davies et al. (2004), Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014), Highhouse et al. (2003), Lievens et al. (2007), Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021)
<b>Consensual Results</b>	1. Symbolic dimensions of the employer brand carry greater weight than instrumental ones in shaping retention and identification. Lievens et al. (2007) show that symbolic attributes explain incremental variance beyond instrumental ones, and Edwards (2010) argues that ideological currency explains identification beyond economic rewards. 2. Organizational attractiveness is a multidimensional perceptual phenomenon. Highhouse et al. (2003) distinguish attractiveness, intentions, and prestige as three related but distinct components, and Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) identify five employer attractiveness dimensions validated through confirmatory factor analysis. 3. Positive well-being fully mediates the relationship between employer brand equity and intention to leave. Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021, n=604) provide the only direct empirical test of this mediation, showing that employer brand equity has no direct effect on intention to leave without well-being as a mediator. 4. The employer brand integrates identity and image as two analytically distinct dimensions. Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014) formalize this distinction, while Davies et al. (2004) validate it empirically across employee and customer perspectives.
<b>Contradictory Results</b>	1. The dimensional structure of employer brand equity is not stable across contexts. Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021) removed nine of the original 25 EmpAt items in their French replication, and economic value showed weak integration into the second-order factor. 2. The effect of brand dimensions on loyalty is not uniform. Davies (2008) finds that enterprise (exciting, daring) predicts differentiation but is negatively associated with loyalty, suggesting that excitement attracts but does not retain.
<b>Residual Uncertainty</b>	1. Whether the mediating role of well-being between employer brand equity and retention generalizes beyond a single regional sample remains untested. Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021) is the only study to test this mediation, and it is limited to Nouvelle-Aquitaine, France. 2. The role of corporate social responsibility as a dimension of employer brand strength is acknowledged but not empirically incorporated in any study in this corpus.

*Source: authors.*

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Theoretical interpretation of the results

The findings of the thematic synthesis are interpreted through the three mobilized theories: Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973), and Person-Organization Fit Theory (Kristof, 1996). Each theory addresses a distinct dimension of the relationship between employee well-being and employer brand strength, and together they provide a layered reading of the results across the three thematic axes. Social Exchange Theory captures the relational dynamics through which well-being investment generates commitment and loyalty. Signaling Theory explains how internal well-being conditions become visible to external audiences and shape employer brand attractiveness. Person-Organization Fit Theory clarifies how the well-being values communicated through the employer brand are differentially interpreted by individuals according to their own values and aspirations. The discussion that follows examines the results of each axis through each of these theoretical lenses, identifies the collective contributions they produce, and flags the tensions that remain unresolved.

#### 5.1.1. Social Exchange Theory: well-being investment as the generator of reciprocal commitment

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) rests on a foundational premise: when one party provides benefits to another, the recipient develops an unspecified obligation to reciprocate. Unlike economic exchange, social exchange generates trust, commitment, and continued engagement precisely because the terms of return are never fully defined. When the results of the three thematic axes are read through this lens, a collective pattern emerges. The eleven studies of Axis 1 converge on the multidimensional nature of well-being. Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010), Ryff and Keyes (1995), and Ryan and Deci (2000) each identify dimensions, including autonomy, competence, interpersonal fit, and meaning, that function as forms of organizational investment in employee well-being. In exchange theory terms, each dimension constitutes a

distinct social benefaction that initiates reciprocal obligation. The six studies of Axis 2 document the returns generated by this investment. Staw et al. (1994) demonstrate that positive emotion predicts favorable supervisor evaluations and higher pay. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) show that job resources improve engagement and reduce the effects of demands on burnout. Dose et al. (2018) establish that psychological need satisfaction mediates the link between career success and well-being. In each case, the employee responds to the perceived organizational investment with behaviors that exceed formal expectations: engagement, commitment, and organizational citizenship. The eleven studies of Axis 3 extend this exchange dynamic to employer brand outcomes. Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021) provide the most direct evidence: positive well-being fully mediates the relationship between employer brand equity and intention to leave. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) established that the quality of the internal exchange relationship produces the authentic identification from which external attractiveness derives its credibility. However, exchange theory does not resolve all tensions in the corpus. The causal direction between well-being and performance remains contested: Litchfield et al. (2016) acknowledge that it is not definitively established. Piao et al. (2022) find a counterintuitive negative effect of supervisor support on stress reduction, contradicting the positive resource effect documented by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). These findings suggest that the exchange cycle is not uniformly operative across all relational channels.

### **5.1.2. Signaling Theory: well-being practices as informational signals in the job market**

Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973) addresses informational asymmetry in labor markets. Candidates cannot directly observe the internal reality of an organization before joining; they must rely on observable signals whose credibility depends on the cost they impose on the sender. When the results of Axis 3 are read through this framework, a clear interpretive pattern emerges. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) demonstrate that employer attractiveness is based on five anticipated benefit dimensions. From a signaling perspective, these dimensions function as informational signals transmitted to potential employees. Lievens et al. (2007) show that symbolic attributes, which are inherently costly to produce because they require genuine organizational investment in culture, values, and relational quality, explain incremental variance beyond instrumental ones in predicting attraction and identification. This is precisely what signaling theory predicts: costly signals carry more information than cheap ones. Edwards (2010) reinforces this reading by showing that corporate reputation and familiarity are stronger predictors of organizational attractiveness than promotional content attached to job postings. In signaling terms, reputation constitutes a cumulative signal built over time, while job advertisements are low-cost signals easily mimicked by any employer. Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021) provide further evidence: application, social, and interest values, all of which are symbolic rather than instrumental, are the employer brand equity dimensions that drive the mediation through well-being to retention. The signaling framework does, however, leave one tension unresolved. Davies (2008) finds that enterprise (exciting, daring) is negatively associated with loyalty, meaning that managers stay longer with employers they see as prestigious (chic) rather than exciting. This suggests that certain signals may attract candidates but fail to sustain commitment once the employment relationship begins, a signaling failure that exchange theory alone cannot fully explain.

### **5.1.3. Person-Organization Fit Theory: value alignment as the bridge between well-being and organizational attractiveness**

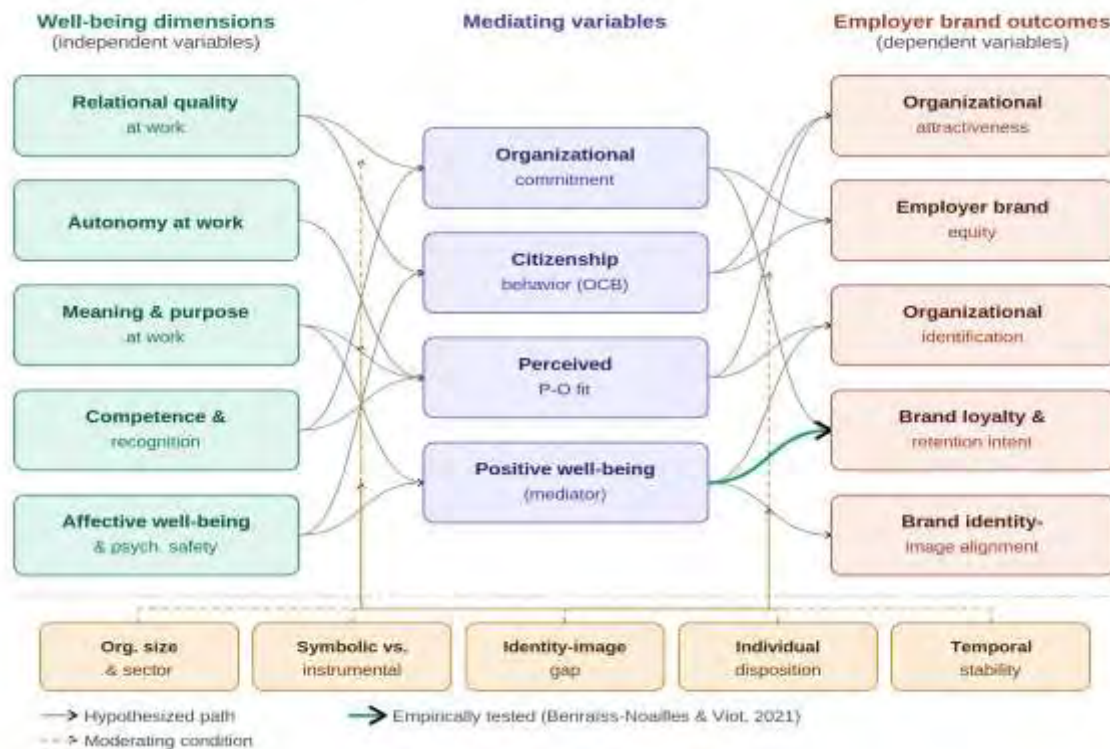
Person-Organization Fit Theory (Kristof, 1996) defines fit as the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs, when they share similar fundamental characteristics, or both simultaneously. When the results are interpreted through this framework, well-being dimensions emerge as the values through which employees evaluate their fit with the organization. The eleven studies of Axis 1 identify

autonomy, competence, meaning, interpersonal fit, and relational quality as the core dimensions of well-being. In fit theory terms, these dimensions constitute the organizational values against which individuals assess their own compatibility with the employer. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) operationalize this mechanism through the EmpAt scale: the five employer attractiveness dimensions they identify correspond to anticipated benefits that job seekers use to evaluate their alignment with the organization before any formal employment relationship begins. Kristof (1996) distinguishes between actual fit and perceived fit, noting that perceived fit tends to be more influential during the early stages of organizational entry. This distinction illuminates a central finding of Axis 3: Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021) show that positive well-being fully mediates the relationship between employer brand equity and intention to leave. In fit theory terms, the employer brand communicates the values of the organization, the employee evaluates the alignment between those values and their own well-being experience, and this perceived alignment determines whether they stay or leave. However, the fit framework does not resolve the instability of well-being measurement documented in Axis 1. Ryff and Keyes (1995) propose six dimensions, Biétry et al. (2013) identify four, Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) propose five. If the dimensional architecture of well-being varies across contexts, then the values against which fit is evaluated also vary, making cross-contextual comparisons of person-organization fit inherently uncertain.

## 5.2. Conceptual model and research propositions

The theoretical interpretation presented in section 5.1 identifies the mechanisms through which well-being dimensions influence employer brand strength. This section formalizes these mechanisms into a conceptual model and a set of testable research propositions. The conceptual model integrates four categories of variables derived from the thematic synthesis and the theoretical discussion. The dimensions of employee well-being identified across the corpus, including relational quality, autonomy, meaning, competence, and structural workplace conditions, function as independent variables. The components of employer brand strength, including organizational attractiveness, employer brand equity, and brand loyalty, function as dependent variables. Organizational commitment, engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior function as mediating variables through which well-being investment translates into brand outcomes. Organizational context, sector, supervisor quality, and the symbolic versus instrumental nature of brand dimensions function as moderating conditions. Figure 6 presents the integrated conceptual model connecting these four categories.

Figure 6. Conceptual model: well-being dimensions and employer brand strength



Source: authors.

Table 8. Research propositions: statements, theoretical justifications, and conditions of test.

Code	Proposition	Theoretical Justification	Key Concepts
P1	<i>The better employees experience relational quality and affective well-being at work, the stronger their organizational commitment; this commitment, in turn, positively influences employer brand equity and retention intent.</i>	Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). When the organization invests in positive relational conditions, employees perceive this as a form of care and feel an informal obligation to reciprocate. Commitment is the primary channel of this reciprocity. A committed employee stays longer, speaks positively about the organization, and reinforces its employer brand through visible and stable behavior over time.	Relational quality at work; Affective well-being; Organizational commitment; Employer brand equity
P2	<i>Employees who feel psychologically safe and experience positive emotional well-being are more likely to engage in voluntary behaviors beyond their role; these behaviors, visible to internal and external audiences, strengthen organizational attractiveness and brand authenticity.</i>	Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973). Under Social Exchange Theory, well-treated employees reciprocate through voluntary effort. Under Signaling Theory, voluntary employee behaviors function as observable, hard-to-fabricate signals about the organization's internal culture. Because these signals are not mandated, they carry high credibility in the eyes of potential recruits and the broader labor market.	Citizenship behavior; Organizational attractiveness; Brand identity-image alignment; Signal credibility
P3	<i>When employees experience autonomy and meaning in their work, they develop a stronger sense that the organization's values match their own; this perceived fit deepens organizational identification and enhances employer brand attractiveness.</i>	Person-Organization Fit Theory (Kristof, 1996) and Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973). Autonomy and meaningful work are the primary experiential signals through which employees assess whether the organization reflects their own values and identity. When these signals are positive, they produce perceived person-organization fit, which in turn deepens identification: the employee begins to define part of their own identity through membership in the organization, making the employer brand more compelling from the inside out.	Autonomy at work; Meaning and purpose at work; Perceived person-organization fit; Organizational identification

<p><b>P4</b></p>	<p><i>The type of employer brand benefit, whether symbolic (prestige, values, meaning) or instrumental (salary, security, promotion), moderates and shapes how strongly well-being strengthens the employer brand: symbolic dimensions produce stronger and more lasting effects on identification and loyalty.</i></p>	<p>Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973). Symbolic employer brand dimensions are difficult to replicate and costly to maintain, which gives them high credibility as signals of genuine organizational quality. Instrumental dimensions, by contrast, can be matched by any competitor and therefore convey less distinctive information. When well-being is experienced through symbolic channels, the emotional bond with the employer brand is stronger and more resistant to competitive pressure.</p>	<p>Symbolic employer brand dimensions; Instrumental employer brand dimensions; Brand loyalty; Moderating effect</p>
<p><b>P5</b></p>	<p><i>When there is a significant gap between the employer brand image projected by the organization and the well-being conditions actually experienced by employees, the brand loses its power to retain employees, regardless of how strong that brand appears externally.</i></p>	<p>Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973) and Person-Organization Fit Theory (Kristof, 1996). A strong employer brand functions as a promise. When lived experience disconfirms that promise, signaling disequilibrium occurs: the brand's credibility collapses. Under Person-Organization Fit Theory, the gap between anticipated fit (before entry) and experienced fit (after sustained exposure) dissolves the identity-based attachment that would otherwise sustain retention. This disconfirmation carries a moral dimension: it is experienced as a breach of trust, not merely unmet expectations.</p>	<p>Identity-image gap; Retention intent; Psychological contract breach; Signal authenticity</p>

Source: authors.

### 5.3. Implications

#### 5.3.1. Theoretical implications

This systematic review generates several contributions to the theoretical understanding of the relationship between employee well-being and employer brand strength. These contributions do not emerge from any single study in the corpus but from the collective reading of twenty-eight studies across three thematic axes, interpreted through Social Exchange Theory, Signaling Theory, and Person-Organization Fit Theory. The first contribution concerns the identification of well-being as the necessary mediating condition between employer brand equity and employee retention. Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021, n=604) provide the only direct empirical test of this mediation, showing that employer brand equity has no direct effect on intention to leave without positive well-being as a mediator. This enriches Social Exchange Theory by specifying the mechanism through which the exchange cycle operates in the employer branding context. The second contribution addresses the cost asymmetry between symbolic and instrumental employer brand signals. Lievens et al. (2007) show that symbolic attributes explain variance beyond instrumental ones, and Edwards (2010) demonstrates that reputation outweighs promotional content. Through Signaling Theory, the review explains why: symbolic dimensions require genuine and sustained organizational investment in well-being, making them costly signals that carry more credible information than instrumental benefits which can be matched by any competitor. The third contribution identifies well-being dimensions as the values through which employees evaluate their person-organization fit. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) operationalize employer attractiveness through five dimensions that correspond to anticipated well-being benefits. Person-Organization Fit Theory clarifies why the same employer brand produces differential attraction: individuals interpret organizational signals according to their own values. The fourth contribution establishes that the three mobilized theories operate in sequence: Signaling Theory explains how internal well-being conditions become visible externally, Person-Organization Fit Theory explains how individuals differentially interpret those signals, and Social Exchange Theory explains how the resulting commitment is sustained over time through reciprocal obligation. The fifth contribution identifies three unresolved theoretical tensions as priorities for future research: the contested causal direction between well-being and performance, the counterintuitive role of supervisor

support documented by Piao et al. (2022), and the non-uniform effect of brand dimensions on loyalty revealed by Davies (2008). These tensions mark the boundaries of what the current corpus can establish and define the agenda for the next generation of empirical work. The sixth contribution concerns the fundamental absence of a uniform formula for well-being at work. The corpus demonstrates that well-being cannot be treated as a stable or universally transferable variable across contexts. No two models in the corpus share the same dimensional architecture: Ryff and Keyes (1995) propose six dimensions, Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) propose five, Biétry et al. (2013) propose four, and Warr (1990) structures well-being along two affective axes. The samples cover populations with very little overlap, from Australian students (Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005) to Belgian military personnel (Lievens et al., 2007) to Japanese workers (Piao et al., 2022), with no cross-sectoral or cross-cultural comparison within the corpus. The theoretical implication is direct: any attempt to transpose a well-being model from one context to another must account for this fundamental variability. The relationship between well-being and employer brand strength documented in this review is real, but its specific form is shaped by the context in which it is observed.

### **5.3.2. Managerial implications**

The findings of this systematic review carry direct consequences for human resource directors and strategic decision-makers in medium-sized and large enterprises. The conceptual model and the five research propositions identify five dimensions of employee well-being that shape employer brand strength through distinct but interconnected mechanisms, each calling for a specific type of organizational action. The first lever is investing in relational quality at work. Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) identify interpersonal fit as a foundational component of well-being, and Social Exchange Theory predicts that relational investment generates reciprocal commitment. The second lever is granting genuine autonomy. Ryan and Deci (2000), Ryff and Keyes (1995), and Guillemin (2018) converge on autonomy as a core dimension of well-being; organizations that support genuine autonomy rather than merely delegating tasks create the conditions for internalized motivation and durable identification. The third lever is connecting work to a broader purpose. Seligman (2011) identifies meaning as an independent element of flourishing, and Barel and Frémeaux (2016) demonstrate that organizations grounded in values-driven leadership generate deeper engagement. The fourth lever is making competence development and recognition visible. Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010) include competence and recognition among their five well-being components, and Signaling Theory predicts that visible investment in employee development functions as a credible signal of organizational quality. The fifth lever is ensuring stable structural conditions and work-life balance. Schneider et al. (2019) demonstrate that schedule instability predicts psychological distress more strongly than wages, and Bakker and Demerouti (2007) confirm that the physical and temporal dimensions of work interact with psychological resources to shape overall well-being.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1. Key findings and response to the research question**

The thematic synthesis provides a collective response to the SPIDER research question: to what extent do the dimensions of well-being at work influence employer brand strength among employees in medium-sized and large enterprises. The corpus of twenty-eight studies, interpreted through Social Exchange Theory, Signaling Theory, and Person-Organization Fit Theory, establishes that well-being dimensions do not merely correlate with employer brand strength but actively shape it through distinct and interconnected mechanisms. All eleven studies on well-being foundations agree that well-being is multidimensional, and six of them

identify autonomy, competence, and meaning as its core dimensions. The six studies on organizational outcomes confirm a positive association between well-being and engagement, commitment, and performance, although the direction of causality remains unresolved. The eleven studies on employer brand strength show that symbolic dimensions carry greater weight than instrumental ones in shaping retention and identification; Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021, n=604) provide the only empirical test showing that positive well-being fully mediates the relationship between employer brand equity and intention to leave. The answer to the research question is therefore affirmative but conditional: well-being dimensions do shape employer brand strength, but how strongly they do so, depends on which dimensions of well-being are considered, the organizational and sectoral context in which they operate, and whether the brand relies on symbolic or instrumental benefits.

## **6.2. Theoretical and managerial contributions**

This systematic review generates contributions that no single study in the corpus could produce individually. The first is the identification of well-being as the necessary mediator between employer brand equity and employee retention: the reciprocal exchange cycle is activated not by the brand signal itself but by the well-being experience it represents. The second is the demonstration that symbolic employer brand dimensions carry greater credibility than instrumental ones because they require genuine and sustained organizational investment. The third is the identification of well-being dimensions as the values through which employees evaluate their person-organization fit, explaining why the same employer brand produces differential attraction. The fourth is the establishment of a sequential theoretical architecture in which signaling communicates, fit filters, and exchange sustains. The fifth is the identification of three unresolved theoretical tensions as explicit priorities for future research. The sixth is the demonstration that well-being cannot be treated as a stable or universally transferable variable across contexts. For practitioners, these contributions translate into five actionable recommendations: investing in relational quality, granting genuine autonomy, connecting work to broader purpose, making competence development visible, and ensuring stable structural workplace conditions.

## **6.3. Limitations**

The search was restricted to English and French, which leads to a partial underrepresentation of research published in other languages. The review was not registered in PROSPERO because its scope falls within management sciences and human resource management rather than health-related research. The review was conducted by a single reviewer, which limits the consistency that a second independent reviewer would provide; future extensions would benefit from independent double coding. The narrative design, while appropriate for the interpretivist stance and the heterogeneity of the corpus, does not permit the statistical aggregation that a meta-analysis would provide. The corpus of twenty-eight studies covers diverse methodological traditions, geographic contexts, and disciplinary orientations, which enriches the scope of the synthesis but limits the comparability of findings across studies. The closing date of 2023 for empirical studies means that more recent contributions are not captured. Finally, the conceptual model and five research propositions formulated in this article remain untested and constitute theoretical contributions that require empirical validation in future work.

## **6.4. Future research directions**

The five research propositions formulated in this review open specific directions for future empirical work. Proposition 1 suggests that relational quality and affective well-being strengthen employer brand equity through commitment, and testing this requires longitudinal studies that track how this reciprocal dynamic unfolds over time. Proposition 2 proposes that

psychologically safe employees engage in voluntary behaviors that strengthen brand authenticity, which calls for research designs that combine employee self-reports with external observations of these behaviors. Proposition 3 argues that autonomy and meaning deepen perceived person-organization fit, and verifying this requires measuring perceived fit directly within medium-sized and large enterprises. Proposition 4 holds that symbolic brand dimensions produce stronger effects than instrumental ones, which needs to be tested through comparative studies across different sectors. Proposition 5 warns that retention collapses when the employer brand image diverges from what employees actually experience, and confirming this calls for studies that follow employees from before hiring through their first years of employment. Beyond these five propositions, three unresolved tensions also require dedicated investigation: the direction of causality between well-being and organizational outcomes, the ambiguous role of supervisor support, and the uneven effect of different brand dimensions on loyalty.

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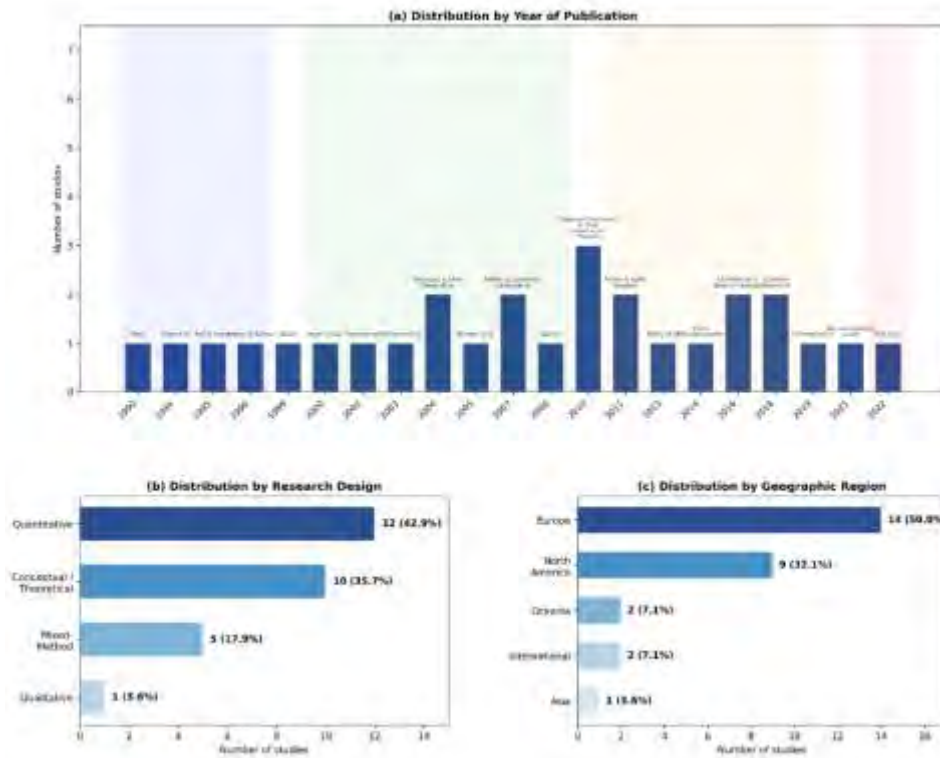
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## Appendix

**Figure 3. Bibliometric profile of the retained corpus (n=28 studies).**

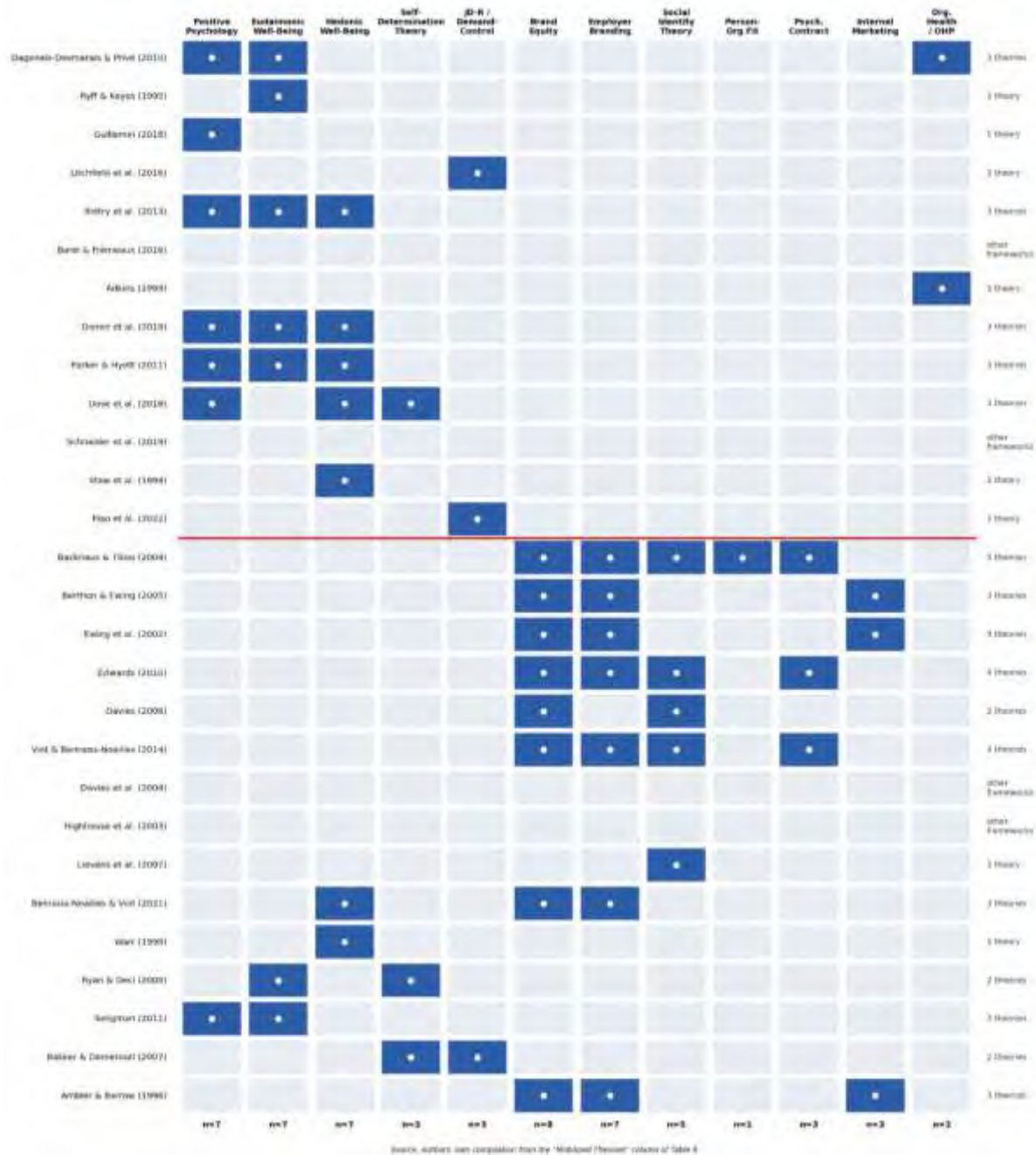
**Figure 2. Bibliometric Profile of the Retained Corpus (n = 28 studies)**



Source: Authors' own compilation based on the 28 studies included in the search of the database (Google Scholar)

Source: authors.

Figure 4. Cross-Mapping of mobilized theoretical frameworks across the retained corpus (n=28 studies).



Source: authors.

**Figure 5. Number of publications per journal.**

Journal type and name	N° articles
<b>Psychology Journals</b>	<b>7 (25%)</b>
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	1
American Psychologist	1
Journal of Occupational Health Psychology	1
Journal of Occupational Psychology	1
The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease	1
Educational and Psychological Measurement	1
Psychologie du Travail et des Organisations	1
<b>Management and HRM Journals</b>	<b>9 (32%)</b>
Gestion	2
Organization Science	1
Journal of Managerial Psychology	1
Career Development International	1
Personnel Review	1
British Journal of Management	1
Revue de Gestion des Ressources Humaines	1
Management International	1
<b>Marketing Journals</b>	<b>6 (21%)</b>
International Journal of Advertising	2
Journal of Business Research	1
European Journal of Marketing	1
Journal of Brand Management	1
Corporate Reputation Review	1
<b>Sociology and Social Science Journals</b>	<b>3 (11%)</b>
American Sociological Review	1
Social Indicators Research	1
Social Science & Medicine	1
<b>Health and Environment Journals</b>	<b>2 (7%)</b>
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	1
Environnement, Risques & Santé	1
<b>Books</b>	<b>1 (4%)</b>
Free Press (Seligman, 2011)	1
<b>Total articles</b>	<b>28 (100%)</b>

Source(s): Created by authors

Source: authors.

**Table 6. Frequency of key concepts across the retained corpus (n=28 studies).**

Thematic Family	Concept	Frequency	% Corpus	Authors Citing the Concept
<b>Well-Being Conceptualization (12/28)</b>	Psychological well-being at work	4	14.3%	Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010); Ryff and Keyes (1995); Dose et al. (2018); Biétry et al. (2013)
	Well-being at work	3	10.7%	Guillemin (2018); Litchfield et al. (2016); Biétry et al. (2013)
	Subjective well-being	3	10.7%	Diener et al. (2010); Parker and Hyett (2011); Warr (1990)
	Happiness at work	2	7.1%	Guillemin (2018); Barel and Frémeaux (2016)
	Flourishing	2	7.1%	Diener et al. (2010); Seligman (2011)
	Workplace well-being / Affective well-being	2	7.1%	Warr (1990); Litchfield et al. (2016)
<b>Hedonic and Eudaimonic Traditions (7/28)</b>	Eudaimonic well-being	7	25.0%	Ryff and Keyes (1995); Biétry et al. (2013); Diener et al. (2010); Parker and Hyett (2011); Dose et al. (2018); Ryan and Deci (2000); Seligman (2011)
	Hedonic well-being	5	17.9%	Biétry et al. (2013); Diener et al. (2010); Parker and Hyett (2011); Warr (1990); Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021)
<b>Positive Psychology and PERMA (10/28)</b>	Positive psychology	7	25.0%	Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010); Guillemin (2018); Biétry et al. (2013); Diener et al. (2010); Parker and Hyett (2011); Seligman (2011); Staw et al. (1994)

	Engagement	3	10.7%	Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010); Seligman (2011); Bakker and Demerouti (2007)
	Positive emotion	2	7.1%	Staw et al. (1994); Seligman (2011)
	Meaning	2	7.1%	Guillemin (2018); Seligman (2011)
	Accomplishment / Personal growth	2	7.1%	Seligman (2011); Ryff and Keyes (1995)
<b>Self-Determination Theory and Basic Needs (8/28)</b>	Autonomy	6	21.4%	Ryan and Deci (2000); Ryff and Keyes (1995); Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010); Guillemin (2018); Barel and Frémeaux (2016); Dose et al. (2018)
	Competence	5	17.9%	Ryan and Deci (2000); Ryff and Keyes (1995); Guillemin (2018); Warr (1990); Dose et al. (2018)
	Self-Determination Theory	3	10.7%	Ryan and Deci (2000); Dose et al. (2018); Bakker and Demerouti (2007)
	Relatedness	2	7.1%	Ryan and Deci (2000); Dose et al. (2018)
<b>Job Demands-Resources and Occupational Stress (5/28)</b>	Job demands / Job resources	3	10.7%	Bakker and Demerouti (2007); Piao et al. (2022); Litchfield et al. (2016)
	JD-R / Demand-Control / Effort-Reward Imbalance	3	10.7%	Bakker and Demerouti (2007); Piao et al. (2022); Dose et al. (2018)
	Occupational health psychology	2	7.1%	Adkins (1999); Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010)
	Burnout / Exhaustion	2	7.1%	Bakker and Demerouti (2007); Piao et al. (2022)
	Occupational stress / Psychological distress	2	7.1%	Adkins (1999); Schneider et al. (2019)
<b>Employer Branding and Brand Equity (10/28)</b>	Brand equity	8	28.6%	Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Berthon and Ewing (2005); Ewing et al. (2002); Davies (2008); Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014); Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021); Davies et al. (2004); Ambler and Barrow (1996)
	Employer branding	7	25.0%	Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Berthon and Ewing (2005); Ewing et al. (2002); Edwards (2010); Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014); Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021); Ambler and Barrow (1996)
	Internal marketing	5	17.9%	Ambler and Barrow (1996); Berthon and Ewing (2005); Ewing et al. (2002); Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014); Edwards (2010)
	Employer brand equity	3	10.7%	Ewing et al. (2002); Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021); Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)
	Brand personality / Corporate brand personality	3	10.7%	Davies (2008); Davies et al. (2004); Ambler and Barrow (1996)
	Employer attractiveness / Employer image	2	7.1%	Berthon and Ewing (2005); Lievens et al. (2007)
	Corporate image / Corporate reputation	2	7.1%	Ewing et al. (2002); Davies et al. (2004)
<b>Organizational Attractiveness and Identity (8/28)</b>	Organizational attractiveness	5	17.9%	Highhouse et al. (2003); Berthon and Ewing (2005); Lievens et al. (2007); Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Edwards (2010)
	Social Identity Theory	4	14.3%	Edwards (2010); Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014); Davies (2008); Lievens et al. (2007)
	Organizational identification	3	10.7%	Edwards (2010); Davies (2008); Lievens et al. (2007)
	Organizational identity / Organizational culture	3	10.7%	Edwards (2010); Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014); Davies et al. (2004)

	Person-Organization Fit	2	7.1%	Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014)
	Symbolic / Instrumental attributes	2	7.1%	Lievens et al. (2007); Berthon and Ewing (2005)
<b>Psychological Contract and Exchange (6/28)</b>	Psychological contract	3	10.7%	Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Edwards (2010); Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014)
	Functional / Economic / Psychological benefits	3	10.7%	Ambler and Barrow (1996); Viot and Benraïss-Noailles (2014); Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)
	Trust	2	7.1%	Barel and Frémeaux (2016); Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)
	Relationship marketing / Stakeholder theory	2	7.1%	Ambler and Barrow (1996); Ewing et al. (2002)
<b>Employee Outcomes (13/28)</b>	Performance / Employee productivity	4	14.3%	Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010); Litchfield et al. (2016); Staw et al. (1994); Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)
	Job satisfaction / Employee satisfaction	4	14.3%	Davies (2008); Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021); Biétry et al. (2013); Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)
	Employee retention / Intention to leave	3	10.7%	Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021); Edwards (2010)
	Organizational commitment	3	10.7%	Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Edwards (2010); Benraïss-Noailles and Viot (2021)
	Organizational citizenship behavior	2	7.1%	Dagenais-Desmarais and Privé (2010); Staw et al. (1994)
	Employee loyalty / Employee affinity	2	7.1%	Davies (2008); Ambler and Barrow (1996)
<b>Workplace Conditions and Design (7/28)</b>	Work design / Skill utilization	2	7.1%	Litchfield et al. (2016); Bakker and Demerouti (2007)
	Managerial support / Social support	2	7.1%	Litchfield et al. (2016); Piao et al. (2022)
	Work-life conflict / Schedule instability	2	7.1%	Schneider et al. (2019); Guillemin (2018)
	Leadership / Subsidiarity	2	7.1%	Barel and Frémeaux (2016); Litchfield et al. (2016)
<b>Additional Concepts (single occurrence) (n/a)</b>	Positive / Negative well-being	1	3.6%	Warr (1990)
	Life satisfaction	1	3.6%	Diener et al. (2010)
	PERMA model	1	3.6%	Seligman (2011)
	Positive relationships	1	3.6%	Seligman (2011)
	Intrinsic / Extrinsic motivation	1	3.6%	Ryan and Deci (2000)
	Coping strategies	1	3.6%	Adkins (1999)
	Employee identification	1	3.6%	Edwards (2010)
	Organizational fairness	1	3.6%	Litchfield et al. (2016)
	Career success	1	3.6%	Dose et al. (2018)

Source: authors.