

WORKING CONDITIONS AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between working conditions and employee well-being, based on the premise that the work experience is multidimensional and includes both organizational resources and stress factors. The research employs a quantitative approach based on the analysis of data from the European Social Survey, selecting respondents who are currently employed and have provided valid responses for the variables under analysis. By applying exploratory factor analysis using the Principal Components method with Varimax rotation, four main dimensions were identified: work–family conflict and occupational stress, subjective well-being, organizational support and professional integration, and professional autonomy. The results confirm the multidimensional nature of working conditions and support the hypotheses regarding the positive role of organizational support and autonomy, as well as the negative effect of work–life conflict on employee well-being. The study contributes to understanding how different dimensions of work shape the professional experience and offers practical implications for organizational policies aimed at improving quality of life in the workplace.

Keywords: working conditions, well-being, job satisfaction, organizational support, autonomy, work–life conflict, factor analysis.

1. Introducere

In the context of contemporary economic and organizational transformations, working conditions have become a central topic in the academic literature, as they are closely linked to employees' well-being. Beyond traditional economic dimensions, such as income or job stability, recent research highlights the importance of factors such as autonomy at work, organizational support, interpersonal relationships, and work-life balance. These factors contribute not only to individual and organizational performance but also to job satisfaction and the overall well-being of individuals.

The literature highlights that the work experience is multidimensional, being simultaneously influenced by positive factors, such as social support and autonomy, as well as negative factors, such as work-related stress and work–life conflict. In this regard, the conflict between professional demands and personal life is considered an important predictor of decreased well-being and job satisfaction, while managerial support and collaborative relationships can mitigate these negative effects (Misa & Aivaz, 2025). Furthermore, subjective well-being, reflected in life satisfaction, happiness, and perceived health, is increasingly analyzed in relation to workplace characteristics.

Despite these advances, an integrated approach remains necessary to identify the latent dimensions of work conditions and analyze how they correlate with individual well-being. In this context, the use of factor analysis offers the possibility of reducing data complexity and highlighting coherent conceptual structures that can contribute to a better understanding of the employee experience.

Based on these considerations, the main objective of this research is to identify the fundamental dimensions of job quality and to analyze their relationship with employee well-being. Specifically, the study aims to reveal the latent structure of variables associated with working conditions and to examine the extent to which these dimensions influence job satisfaction and overall well-being.

Based on the theoretical framework and the literature, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Working conditions are structured into distinct dimensions, which include organizational support, professional autonomy, work–life conflict, and subjective well-being.

H2: The dimension of organizational support and social integration at work is positively associated with job satisfaction and general well-being.

H3: The dimension of work–life conflict and occupational stress is negatively associated with job satisfaction and employee well-being.

H4: Autonomy at work is positively associated with job satisfaction, having an effect independent of the other dimensions of the work environment.

By testing these hypotheses, the study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between working conditions and individual well-being, while also offering relevant implications for human resource management and the development of organizational policies aimed at improving the quality of professional life.

2. Literature review

The relationship between working conditions and employee well-being is recognized in the literature as complex and multidimensional, involving interactions between organizational, individual, and social factors. Empirical studies show that employee well-being cannot be explained by a single variable but is the result of a combination of factors, such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, job security, and characteristics of the organizational environment (Lee et al., 2014; Marin-Garcia et al., 2020). This evidence supports the idea that the occupational experience has a complex structure, which conceptually underlies *Hypothesis H1*, according to which working conditions are organized into distinct dimensions.

Satisfaction with working conditions is one of the most important predictors of well-being. Employees who perceive the work environment as favorable report higher levels of well-being, both psychologically and physically (Lee et al., 2014). At the same time, flexible work schedules help reduce stress and increase job satisfaction, facilitating a better work-life balance. Job stability and secure employment conditions reduce uncertainty and anxiety, having a positive impact on overall well-being (Marin-Garcia et al., 2020). These findings highlight the importance of job characteristics in shaping well-being, providing theoretical support for *Hypothesis H4*, which emphasizes the role of autonomy and control over work.

In contrast, the literature consistently highlights the negative impact of stressful work environments on employee well-being. High workloads, long or atypical schedules, and communication breakdowns contribute to increased stress levels and reduced job satisfaction. In particular, the conflict between work demands and personal life is identified as a major risk factor, negatively affecting employees' mental health and social relationships. These results support *Hypothesis H3*, according to which work–life conflict and occupational stress are negatively associated with well-being.

On the other hand, organizational environments that provide support to employees can have a significant protective effect. Perceived organizational support, including relationships with supervisors and colleagues, access to resources, and fair organizational policies, contributes to increased job satisfaction and performance (Sachdeva, 2024; Wijayanti et al., 2025). Furthermore, work environments that promote personal development and mental health initiatives are associated with higher levels of well-being (Naveena & Murthy, 2025). This evidence supports *Hypothesis H2*, highlighting the positive role of organizational support and social integration in the workplace.

At the same time, recent research highlights that employee well-being is influenced by factors beyond the workplace itself, including broader economic, social, and institutional conditions (Jula et al., 2025; Teodorescu et al., 2025). Digital transformations and structural changes in the labor market also influence perceptions of work and well-being, highlighting the need for an integrated approach (Du et al., 2023; Aivaz et al., 2026). In this context, individual values and socio-cultural factors can influence how employees perceive working conditions and well-being (Petre, 2025; Petre & Aivaz, 2025).

Although the literature consistently confirms the relationship between working conditions and well-being, challenges persist regarding the diversity of occupational experiences and the dynamics of work environments. Precarious employment contracts, extended work hours, and new forms of work organization continue to pose risks to well-being, requiring tailored interventions and organizational policies aimed at supporting employees (Marin-Garcia et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2025). At the same time, the accurate analysis and reporting of these relationships remain essential for developing valid and applicable conclusions (Teodorescu et al., 2026).

Overall, the literature supports the idea that employee well-being is the result of the interaction between the resources provided by the work environment and the pressures it generates. This integrated perspective underpins the empirical approach of the present study and justifies the use of a factorial approach to identify the latent dimensions of the occupational experience.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach based on the analysis of data from the European Social Survey (ESS), a Europe-wide comparative study that examines the attitudes, values, and living conditions of the adult population.

The statistical population consists of the adult population (aged 18 and older) in the countries participating in the ESS. From this population, a subsample of economically active individuals was selected for the purposes of this study, as the analysis focuses exclusively on aspects of occupational experience and work-related well-being.

The sample was selected based on the following inclusion criteria: having a job at the time of data collection and providing valid responses for the variables analyzed. At the same time, exclusion criteria were applied, eliminating respondents who were not engaged in professional activities (inactive individuals, unemployed, retirees) or those with missing values for the variables included in the analysis. Following these filters and the application of the listwise deletion procedure, the final sample used in the factor analysis included over 13,000 valid observations.

The empirical analysis is based on a set of variables that capture the main dimensions of occupational experience and individual well-being (Table no. 1). These were grouped into three conceptual categories: job characteristics, work–life conflict, and subjective well-being.

Job characteristics include autonomy in organizing work (DCSFWRKA), managerial support (MANSUPP), peer support (COLHLP), and sense of team belonging (TEAMFEEL). The work–life conflict dimension is reflected by work interference with family life (JBPRTFP), perceived family pressure (PFMFDJBA), and fatigue level, operationalized through an inverted indicator of post-work energy (TRDAWRK_INV). Subjective well-being is measured by job satisfaction (STFMJOB), general life satisfaction (STFLIFE), level of happiness (HAPPY), and self-rated health (HEALTH).

All variables are measured on ordinal scales and treated as approximations of interval variables in statistical analyses, in accordance with standard practices in social research.

Table no.1 Variables used

Cod Variable	Dimension	Description
COLHLP	Characteristics of the work	The likelihood of receiving help from colleagues
DCSFWRKA	Characteristics of the work	Degree of autonomy in setting the work schedule
MANSUPP	Characteristics of the work	The level of management support for work-life balance
TEAMFEEL	Characteristics of the work	A feeling of belonging to the team
JBPRTFP	Work-life conflict	The extent to which work affects time spent with family
PFMFDJBA	Work-life conflict	The pressure felt by the family due to work
TRDAWRK_INV	Work-life conflict	Energy level after work (an inverse measure of fatigue)
STFMJOB	well-being	Job satisfaction
STFLIFE	well-being	Overall life satisfaction

HAPPY	well-being	Self-reported level of happiness
HEALTH	well-being	Starea de sănătate percepută

To identify the latent structure of the analyzed variables, exploratory factor analysis using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method was employed. This method allows for the reduction of data dimensionality and the identification of synthetic factors that reflect distinct conceptual dimensions of the phenomenon under study.

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index and Bartlett's sphericity test. Factor extraction was performed based on the criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser's criterion), and interpretation was facilitated by Varimax orthogonal rotation, which maximizes the separation between components and the clarity of factor loadings. Standardized factor scores were generated for each extracted component and subsequently used in complementary statistical analyses.

To examine the relationships between the identified dimensions and the level of professional well-being, linear regression models were used, in which job satisfaction was considered the dependent variable, and the extracted factors were included as predictors. This approach allows for the assessment of the relative contribution of each dimension to job satisfaction, while controlling for the effects of the other variables included in the model.

4. Results

Exploratory factor analysis, conducted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation, was used to identify the latent structure of the variables describing working conditions and individual well-being. The adequacy of the data for applying this method was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO = 0.757) indicator, which indicates a good level of sample adequacy, as well as by Bartlett's sphericity test, which was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 30603.663$, $p < 0.001$), which highlights the existence of sufficient correlations among the variables included in the analysis (Table no. 2). These results validate the use of factor analysis and support the premise of the existence of latent dimensions, providing empirical support for *Hypothesis H1*, according to which working conditions are structured into distinct dimensions.

Table no. 2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.757
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	30603.663
	df	55
	Sig.	.000

The analysis identified four components with eigenvalues greater than 1, which collectively explain approximately 62.8% of the total variation in the data (Table no. 3). The first component explains 28.65% of the variation, followed by the second (14.10%), the third (10.88%), and the fourth (9.17%). This distribution indicates a relatively balanced structure of factors, without excessive dominance of a single dimension, suggesting the multidimensional nature of the occupational experience.

Table no. 3 Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.152	28.655	28.655	3.152	28.655	28.655	2.038	18.526	18.526
2	1.552	14.109	42.763	1.552	14.109	42.763	1.923	17.486	36.012
3	1.197	10.881	53.645	1.197	10.881	53.645	1.843	16.752	52.764

4	1.009	9.173	62.818	1.009	9.173	62.818	1.106	10.054	62.818
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

The components were interpreted based on the rotated factor matrix (Table no. 4), using relevant thresholds for the factor loadings. The first component is defined by variables associated with work–life conflict, namely work interference with family life (0.848), perceived pressure from family (0.788), and fatigue level (reflected by the negative loading of the post-work energy variable, -0.764). This component can be interpreted as a dimension of “work–family conflict and occupational stress,” confirming the central role of these factors in shaping negative workplace experiences. The result supports Hypothesis H3, which posits a negative relationship between occupational stress and employee well-being.

The second component is characterized by high loadings for overall life satisfaction (0.837) and level of happiness (0.842), as well as a negative loading for health status (-0.559). This structure outlines a distinct dimension of “subjective well-being,” suggesting that overall assessments of life and health form a coherent construct, relatively independent of specific work conditions. This finding is consistent with the literature and partially confirms *Hypothesis H1*, highlighting the existence of a separate dimension of well-being.

The third component brings together variables related to the social and organizational work environment, including a sense of team belonging (0.774), managerial support (0.611), and job satisfaction (0.535). This component is interpreted as “organizational support and professional integration,” suggesting that interpersonal relationships and the support provided by the organization contribute significantly to a positive perception of work. This dimension provides empirical support for *Hypothesis H2*, indicating a positive association between organizational support and professional well-being.

Table no. 4 Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Colleagues give work-related help, how likely	.027	-.035	-.707	.128
Current job: can decide time start/finish work	-.003	.041	.027	.920
Line manager supports employees in balancing work, how much	-.181	.048	.611	.316
Feel like part of your team, how much	-.030	.167	.774	-.036
Job prevents you from giving time to partner/family, how often	.848	-.065	-.100	-.034
Partner/family fed up with pressure of your job, how often	.788	-.034	-.136	.089
How satisfied are you in your main job	-.236	.354	.535	.236
How satisfied with life as a whole	-.070	.837	.157	.163
How happy are you	-.054	.842	.169	.113
Subjective general health	.128	-.559	-.028	.165
trdawrk_inv	-.764	.193	.036	.105
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

The fourth component is dominated by the variable related to autonomy in organizing work (0.920), highlighting a distinct dimension of “professional autonomy.” The fact that these variable forms a separate factor suggests that autonomy is an independent determinant of the occupational experience, without being directly integrated with social support or stress levels. This finding supports *Hypothesis H4*, according to which autonomy at work plays a specific and distinct role in explaining job satisfaction.

5. Discussion

The results confirm the multidimensional nature of the occupational experience and validate the conceptual framework proposed in this study. Consistent with Hypothesis H1, the factor analysis highlights the existence of four distinct dimensions: work–family conflict and occupational stress, subjective well-being, organizational support and professional integration, and professional autonomy. This structure is consistent with the literature, which shows that employee well-being is simultaneously influenced by workplace characteristics, job satisfaction, occupational stability, and work-life balance (Lee et al., 2014; Marin-Garcia et al., 2020).

The work–family conflict dimension emerges as one of the most consistent dimensions resulting from the analysis, defined by work’s interference with family life, pressure felt by the family, and the level of fatigue. This result supports Hypothesis H3 and confirms the idea that occupational stress is not an isolated phenomenon but manifests itself through the accumulation of professional pressures that affect personal life and overall well-being.

This conclusion is consistent with studies highlighting the negative effects of high workloads, long hours, and stressful working conditions on employee health and satisfaction (Marin-Garcia et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2025).

The dimensions of organizational support and professional integration confirm Hypothesis H2, highlighting the role of relationships with managers, team membership, and social support in shaping a positive professional experience. This finding is supported by research showing that perceived organizational support, fair policies, and constructive relationships with supervisors and colleagues contribute to job satisfaction and performance (Sachdeva, 2024; Wijayanti et al., 2025). Similarly, organizational environments that promote personal development and mental health can foster higher levels of employee well-being (Naveena & Murthy, 2025).

Professional autonomy emerges as a separate dimension, supporting Hypothesis H4. The fact that autonomy constitutes a distinct factor indicates that employees’ ability to organize their work represents a specific resource, independent of managerial support or team integration. This finding is consistent with studies highlighting the importance of flexibility and control over work for reducing stress and improving job satisfaction (Lee et al., 2014; Marin-Garcia et al., 2020).

The dimension of subjective well-being, defined by general life satisfaction, happiness, and perceived health, shows that employee well-being extends beyond the strictly professional sphere. It is influenced not only by immediate working conditions but also by broader personal, social, and institutional factors. In this regard, the results align with approaches that emphasize the role of the economic and social context in shaping well-being and labor market integration (Jula et al., 2025; Teodorescu et al., 2025), as well as with research highlighting digital and organizational transformations as relevant factors for perceptions of work (Du et al., 2023; Aivaz et al., 2026).

6. Conclusions

The research results confirm that the relationship between working conditions and employee well-being is multidimensional. Factor analysis revealed four main dimensions of the occupational experience: work–family conflict and occupational stress, subjective well-being, organizational support and professional integration, and professional autonomy. These results support Hypothesis H1 and show that employee well-being cannot be explained by a single factor, but rather by the interaction between the resources and constraints of the work environment.

Hypothesis H2 is supported by the identification of a distinct component associated with organizational support, team membership, and job satisfaction. This dimension confirms the important role of interpersonal relationships and managerial support in shaping a positive work experience. Hypothesis H3 is supported by the work–family conflict component, which shows that work-life interference and fatigue are central elements of occupational stress. Furthermore,

Hypothesis H4 is confirmed by the identification of professional autonomy as a separate dimension, indicating the independent role of control over one's work in shaping job satisfaction.

Overall, the study contributes to the literature on working conditions and employee well-being by highlighting a clear factor structure that integrates both positive dimensions, such as support and autonomy, and negative dimensions, such as work-life conflict and fatigue. The results are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of working conditions, organizational support, and work-life balance for employee well-being (Lee et al., 2014; Marin-Garcia et al., 2020; Sachdeva, 2024; Xie et al., 2025).

From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that organizations should pay greater attention to policies that reduce work-life conflict. Excessively demanding schedules, constant pressure, and accumulated fatigue can diminish job satisfaction and employee well-being, which is why it is necessary to monitor workload and promote realistic practices for balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

Another important implication concerns strengthening managerial support and social integration in the workplace. Managers can significantly contribute to employee well-being through communication, support in task management, recognition, and facilitating teamwork. Investments in empathetic leadership, constructive feedback, and a positive organizational climate can have direct effects on job satisfaction.

The results also indicate the need to increase employee autonomy where the nature of the work allows it. The ability to influence work organization can foster empowerment, motivation, and job satisfaction. At the same time, autonomy should not be treated in isolation but integrated into an organizational framework that provides resources, support, and clarity regarding professional roles.

At the organizational policy level, the study suggests that employee well-being should be addressed through integrated interventions, not through isolated measures. An effective strategy must combine flexibility, managerial support, the reduction of occupational stress, and the promotion of physical and psychological health. This approach is all the more important in the context of recent labor market transformations, digitalization, and the diversification of forms of professional organization.

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