



PSYCHOLOGY IN BUSINESS WORLD

Daša Grajfoner
Editor



PSYCHOLOGY IN BUSINESS WORLD

Reviewed extended abstracts of the 12th International Scientific Conference of the DOBA Business School

Editor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daša Grajfoner

Free electronic edition URL

<https://www.fakulteta.doba.si/doba-znanja/raziskave/monografije>

Programme Board and Reviewers

Prof. Dr. Boris Cizelj, DOBA Business School Maribor, Slovenia (Programme Board Director)

Assist. Prof. Dr. Marko Divjak, DOBA Business School Maribor, Slovenia (Stream Lead Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daša Grajfoner, DOBA Business School Maribor, Slovenia (Conference Lead and Stream Lead Coaching psychology in business)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Živa Veingerl Čič, DOBA Business School Maribor, Slovenia (Stream Lead Leadership and development of leadership skills)

Prof. Dr. Anita Maček, University of Applied Sciences FH Joanneum, Graz, Austria & DOBA Business School Maribor, Slovenia (Stream Lead Financial psychology, behavioural economics and consumer behaviour)

Dr. Martina Plantak, DOBA Business School Maribor, Slovenia (Stream Lead Facilitating innovation and creativity in organisations)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marina Letonja, DOBA Business School Maribor, Slovenia (Stream Lead Facilitating innovation and creativity in organisations)

Programme Board External Members

Prof. Dr. Devi Jankowicz, Emeritus Professor, University of Bedfordshire, UK

Ass. Prof. Mag. Dr. Tarek El Sehity, Sigmund Freud University, Austria

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Guek Nee Ke, Heriot Watt University, Malaysia

Prof. Dr. Bob Garvey, York St John University and The Lio Partnership, UK

Published by

DOBA Business School, Prešernova ulica 1, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia

© DOBA Business School, 2025

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0
International (CC BY 4.0)



Katalogni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

[COBISS.SI](https://cobiss.si)-ID [227266563](https://cobiss.si)

ISBN 978-961-7061-14-7 (PDF)

PSYCHOLOGY IN BUSINESS WORLD

**Reviewed extended abstracts of the
12th International Scientific Conference of the
DOBA Business School**

**Edited by
Daša Grajfoner**

Maribor, 2025

Foreword

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daša Grajfoner, Editor

PEOPLE AT THE CORE: PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR LASTING BUSINESS SUCCESS

The intersection of psychology and the business world has become an essential area of inquiry, offering critical insights into leadership, decision-making, employee well-being and mental health and organizational success. The proceedings of the 12th International Scientific Conference of DOBA Business School, titled *Psychology in the Business World*, provide a comprehensive overview of cutting-edge research and practical applications that highlight the growing role of psychological principles in shaping modern business landscapes. The contributions within this volume address a diverse range of psychological domains, including positive psychology, leadership development, coaching psychology, innovations, behavioral economics, and consumer behavior, underscoring the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in contemporary business environments.

Advances in psychological research have demonstrated that employee engagement, decision-making processes, and leadership effectiveness are profoundly influenced by cognitive, emotional, and social factors (Dweck, 2006; Seligman, 2011). This body of knowledge has led to the integration of psychological insights into corporate training programs, leadership development initiatives, and employee well-being interventions, reflecting a paradigm shift in how businesses perceive and leverage human capital.

One of the key themes of this conference is positive psychology in business, education, and the social sector. Scholars and practitioners have increasingly recognized that fostering psychological well-being in the workplace enhances not only individual productivity but also organizational resilience and innovation (Fredrickson, 2001). Positive psychology interventions, such as mindfulness training and strengths-based development, have been linked to improved job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and enhanced organizational commitment (Luthans et al., 2007). The empirical studies presented in this volume explore how these interventions can be systematically applied across various business settings to optimize employee performance and overall workplace culture.

Coaching psychology has emerged as a vital component of business psychology, bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application. Executive coaching, underpinned by cognitive-behavioral and humanistic psychological frameworks, has been shown to enhance leadership adaptability, emotional intelligence, and resilience (Grant, 2014). Businesses increasingly recognize the value of coaching interventions in developing talent, improving performance, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth. The research presented in this volume delves into the effectiveness of coaching relationships, highlighting factors such as trust, goal-setting, and feedback in driving successful outcomes. Studies also explore the use of digital coaching platforms and artificial intelligence in coaching psychology, examining their impact on efficiency and scalability in the business world.

An emerging and fascinating area of business psychology is the role of animals in enhancing workplace well-being, leadership development, and coaching interventions. Research has shown that the presence of animals in work environments can reduce stress, increase social interactions, and improve employee morale (Beetz et al., 2012). Animal-assisted coaching, for example, leverages the therapeutic benefits of human-animal interactions to enhance self-awareness, communication skills, and emotional regulation among business professionals (Grajfoner, 2012). Equine-assisted leadership development, in particular, has gained traction as an innovative approach to developing essential leadership skills such as trust-building, non-verbal communication, and emotional intelligence. These programs, which involve working with horses to improve leadership capabilities, offer profound insights into personal and professional development. The contributions within this volume explore the growing intersection of animal-assisted interventions and business psychology, providing compelling evidence for their efficacy in fostering resilience and interpersonal effectiveness in corporate settings.

Leadership development has long been a focal point of business psychology research, and contemporary findings underscore the importance of psychological capital, a construct encompassing self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Effective leadership is no longer defined solely by technical expertise or strategic vision but also by the capacity to foster psychological safety, motivate teams, and navigate organizational change with emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). The contributions within this collection analyze the psychological dimensions of leadership, offering empirical evidence on how leaders can cultivate professional identity, enhance team dynamics, and drive sustainable organizational success (Grajfoner et al, 2023).

The integration of psychological insights into economic decision-making has revolutionized the understanding of consumer behavior and financial decision-making processes. The research presented in this volume examines the psychological factors shaping consumer choices, highlighting the implications of cognitive biases in financial markets, the role of social influence in purchasing behaviors, and the psychological drivers behind brand loyalty and product perception.

Innovation and creativity are the lifeblood of competitive business strategies, and psychological research has provided valuable insights into the cognitive and environmental factors that drive creative thinking. Organizational culture plays a critical role in fostering innovation, and studies have shown that psychological safety—the belief that one can take risks without fear of negative consequences—encourages idea generation and experimentation. The proceedings of this conference explore various psychological strategies for enhancing organizational creativity, including the role of positive reinforcement, intrinsic motivation, and team collaboration. In addition, the psychological resilience of employees and leaders has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly in the context of crisis management and workplace stress. Research findings presented in this collection emphasize the importance of adaptive coping mechanisms, emotional regulation, and supportive leadership in mitigating stress and enhancing workplace well-being.

As businesses continue to navigate the complexities of digital transformation, globalization, and evolving workforce dynamics, the role of psychology will only become more pronounced. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the workplace, for example, raises critical questions about human-AI collaboration, ethical decision-making, and the psychological impact of automation on

employees. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the necessity of psychological insights in addressing mental health challenges, remote work dynamics, and organizational resilience.

The research presented in this volume serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of psychology in the business world. By bridging the gap between academic scholarship and practical application, these studies contribute to a more holistic understanding of how psychological principles can be leveraged to drive business success, enhance employee well-being, and foster ethical leadership. As we move forward, continued interdisciplinary collaboration between psychologists, business leaders, and policymakers will be essential in shaping the future of work and organizational excellence.

The proceedings of the 12th International Scientific Conference of DOBA Business School offer a rich tapestry of insights into the evolving landscape of psychology in business. From leadership and coaching psychology to behavioral economics and organizational creativity, the research compiled in this volume underscores the profound impact of psychological principles on business success. It is our hope that these contributions will inspire further inquiry, inform evidence-based business practices, and foster a more human-centered approach to organizational management.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the researchers, practitioners, and thought leaders who have contributed to this collection. Their dedication to advancing the field of psychology in business is invaluable, and we look forward to the continued exploration of these critical themes in future academic and professional discourse.

References

- Beetz, A., Uvnäs-Moberg, K., Julius, H., & Kotrschal, K. (2012). Psychosocial and psychophysiological effects of human-animal interactions: The possible role of oxytocin. *Frontiers in Psychology, 3*, 234.
- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 218-226.
- Grajfoner, D., Bolton, L. & Ke Guek, N. (2023). Psychology of Leadership Across Cultures. In M. N. Craith, & K. Strani (Eds.). *Intercultural Issues in Business Management*.
- Grajfoner, D. (2012). The Introduction to Animal Assisted Coaching Psychology: Definition and Challenges. *Coaching Psychology International, 5* (1), 22-25.
- Grant, A. M. (2014). (2014) The Efficacy of Executive Coaching in Times of Organisational Change, *Journal of Change Management, 14*:2, 258-280, DO10.1080/14697017.2013.805159
- Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2007). *Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge*. Oxford University Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Atria Books.

Keynote speakers

Devi Jankowicz, *Prof. Dr., Emeritus Professor, University of Bedfordshire, UK*

HOW CAN PSYCHOLOGISTS CREATE KNOWLEDGE THAT'S TRUE TO MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE?

How are we to create knowledge in a way that is useful to managers? And if we wish to contribute to their personal growth and development, how should we communicate it?

As psychologists, as scientists, we know how to create knowledge. We use the hypothetico-deductive method to frame our investigations, and base it on a particular epistemology, or theory about how knowledge is created– the Comtean positivist approach.

But when we address our managers, we may find that as practitioners, they may not think in those terms, and the outcomes of our activity may be unhelpful. They don't inhabit a world of variables but of issues to be dealt with; and while they care about the evidence on which they make their decisions; they may be less concerned with absolute truths, simply searching for what works in achieving their objectives; being stakeholders in how best to make things happen, they are not dispassionate, since their reality is influenced by the views of others.

My suggestion is that the hypothetico-deductive method we use in our research is valuable but its Comtean premises are not, and for two reasons. First, they're based on assumptions that don't describe managerial experience; and second, they devalue the ways in which managers make sense of that experience.

We need a more helpful epistemology, but one which is as rigorous as the positivist one it replaces. The work of George Kelly offers what's needed: his Personal Construct Theory describes the way in which anyone– scientist or layperson– makes sense of their world. Indeed, it does away with the distinction between the two, by asserting that we are all engaged in the scientific endeavour.

My intention is to demonstrate that his theory is more than a theory of sensemaking, since it offers a distinct, Constructivist epistemology which can credibly replace the Positivist one, while being equally rigorous.

Moreover, it offers a more useful rationale for our efforts to understand, support, and develop managers, since it assumes an equality of agency between ourselves and the people we seek to assist. Indeed, the activity is seen as mutual, as we negotiate more effective ways of seeing the organisational world.

Ke Guek Nee, *Assoc. Prof. Dr., Heriot Watt University, Malaysia*

THE PERCE COACHING PSYCHOLOGY MODEL: TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS GROWTH AND SUCCESS THROUGH POSITIVE EMOTIONS, RESILIENCE, AND COPING EFFICACY

The global business landscape faces significant challenges due to various uncertainties, including economic mechanisms (such as labor markets, consumer behavior, and global supply chains), war, climate change, technological advancements (like AI), resource depletion, diseases (such as COVID-19), and more. These factors have not only impacted businesses adversely but have also affected the psychological and mental health of the global workforce.

Research worldwide has aimed to understand the current and future adverse impacts of these challenges. This keynote session presents empirical evidence emphasizing the need for a dedicated coaching model integrated into sustainable business plans to mitigate these impacts. Consequently, the *Positive Emotion-Resilience-Coping Efficacy (PERCE) Coaching Psychology Model* was developed. The PERCE Coaching Psychology Model (Ke & Dasha, 2024) for leaders and team is grounded in human virtues and character strengths. The model has four main objectives: 1) To stimulate reflection and conversation around compassionate leadership behaviors and practices. 2) To help teams explore, develop, and enhance positive emotions, ultimately contributing to their cohesion, effectiveness, and team success. 3) To build resilience, leading to better coping strategies, stronger teamwork, and greater overall success. 4) To enhance coping self-efficacy, leading to better stress management, enhance teamwork, and greater overall resilience.

Rasto Ovin, Prof. Dr., DOBA Business School Maribor, Slovenia

SHOULD WE BE SURPRISED ABOUT IRRATIONAL VOTERS' DECISIONS ON THE POLITICAL MARKET – WHAT TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT ALSO MEANS FOR THE PSYCHOLOGY OF VOTERS?

The rise of social media has significantly altered voters' psychology as it leads to profound changes in traditional liberal representative democracy, which caused the prevalence of Western social and economic model. As social media platforms have become central to political discourse, they have disrupted the mechanisms through which citizens engage with democratic processes, shifting the balance of power and altering democratic norms.

One of the key changes is the erosion of the traditional gatekeeping role played by the media and political institutions. Social media allows anyone to disseminate information and opinions, bypassing established channels. This democratization of information has empowered voters by providing direct access to a broader range of perspectives. However, it has also led to the spread of misinformation and disinformation, which can distort public perceptions and undermine informed decision-making .

The speed and immediacy of social media have also changed how voters engage with politics. The focus on real-time reactions and the prevalence of trending topics can lead to a more reactive and emotionally driven electorate. This shift can reduce the space for deliberation and thoughtful debate, which are essential components of a healthy representative democracy. Voters may form opinions based on incomplete or sensationalized information, which can influence electoral outcomes in ways that do not reflect deeply considered judgments .

Moreover, the personalized nature of social media algorithms contributes to the creation of echo chambers, where individuals are exposed mainly to viewpoints that reinforce their existing beliefs. This polarization undermines the consensus-building that is vital for liberal democracies, leading to a more fragmented and less cohesive electorate.

The present experience is that such structural changes on the political markets even in core democratic societies attracted political business people and merchants, who use to sail using most questionable emotions.

The presentation will aim at posing questions what such change of voters' psychology may bring to the democracy and business environment.

Velimir Srića, Prof. Dr., Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb, Croatia

LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The speech will deal with the main challenges and issues associated with leadership in times of global transition and technological as well as social and economic disruption. The speech will focus on development and implementation of the leadership skills that ignite and support change and innovation. The topics covered will include the following six key skills needed by contemporary managers and leaders: (1) Strategic Foresight and Adapting to Technology Acceleration; (2) Cultivating Emotional Intelligence and Positive Organizational Energy; (3) Collaboration and Creating Inclusivity (culture of belonging); (4) Creative Problem-Solving; (5) Skills for Change - Agility, Adaptability, Resilience and Decisiveness; and (6) Communication and Storytelling.

Janek Musek, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

25 YEARS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

In the quarter of a century since its formal existence, positive psychology has become established and firmly anchored in psychology and outside of it as well. It was created as a scientific and professional reaction to the mainstream psychology, which, since the beginnings of scientific psychology, paid a lot and perhaps too much attention to "negative" phenomena, especially psychological problems, difficulties and disorders. Dealing with these phenomena is certainly welcome and more than necessary, but if it is excessive or even exclusive, then it greatly distorts the psychological image of a human being. According to the protagonists of positive psychology, such a distorted image of man needs to be balanced and corrected by taking into account the optimal, positive aspects of human nature, with aspects of psychological well-being, happiness, rapture and others. In a relatively short time, positive psychology has gained a lot of ground.

However, it must be said that positive psychology itself is not without its predecessors. Let me just mention Abraham Maslow and humanistic psychology.

Something else important happened in the aforementioned short time. Positive psychology has established itself mainly in the scientific and professional sense. But this was also joined by the not so desirable and meaningful "flourishing" of scientifically problematic, if not charlatan, "positive psychology", a psychology that is more of a "flower power" movement than a serious, scientifically based psychological orientation. Therefore, one must be careful when encountering the very term positive psychology.

It is also very important that positive psychology is still developing and that new areas are always appearing in it. However, we must know that some critical views on positive psychology are also very relevant today, e.g. views that point to the appearance of illusory positivity, to the interplay of positive and negative in human life, and even to the possibility of unhealthy, "toxic" positivity. It is also true for positive psychology that it must maintain contact with reality, which is definitely not always and exclusively positive, but it is right that it is optimistic and that it promotes optimal aspects of human nature and human behavior.

Bob Garvey, Prof. Dr., York St John University and The Lio Partnership, UK

PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY IN BUSINESS COACHING

Over the past decade or more, coaching has established itself as a authentic approach for change through learning and human development (Hurlow 2022; Joullié, Gould, and Spillane 2021). With this growth, there has been a strong emphasis of psychology. Indeed, the world of psychology has, arguably at least, dominated the practice of coaching. Some (Bluckert, 2006; Lee 2003) have raised the issue of coach education and ask, “*Should a coach be trained in psychology?*” These writers have argued that being ‘psychologically minded’ (Lee, 2003) may be a way forward for coach education. Garvey & Stokes, (2022) argue that this approach will enable coaches to understand issues such as, internal beliefs, values and motivations as well as how relationships and interventions play in the coaching dyad through a psychological lens.

However, psychology is not the only knowledge that is necessary for a coach to have and a wider range of theories could be included in a coach’s learning. For example, more social and critical perspectives (Hurlow 2022; Shoukry 2017). There is a need for an attention to the dynamics of group or teams, organizations and broader social systems, issues of power in coaching (Louis and Fatien Diochon 2018; Shoukry and Cox 2018) and ethical considerations. Therefore, whilst a psychologically informed or ‘minded’ approach has clear benefits, a more balanced approach is necessary that includes sociological knowledge and philosophical reasoning.

David Clutterbuck, Prof. Dr., European Mentoring & Coaching Council

THE EXPANDING COMPLEXITY OF COACHING – ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Coaching only began to be formalised less than 30 years ago, at which time it was conceived as a relatively simple, linear process to support individual clients with issues such as performance, skills acquisition or career choices. Two major forces have driven change. One is the rapid increase in complexity of the environment and the decisions clients bring to coaching. The other is the growing understanding that coaching can deliver much greater value by addressing the systems, in which clients and their organisations are nested.

Violeta Bulc, Dr. Hc., Ecocivilisation movement

MASS INNOVATION: THE PATH TO SUSTAINABLE COEXISTENCE

Innovation is essential for any organization striving to navigate an ever-evolving landscape, build resilience, and reshape its culture to support sustainable development at every level. In today’s VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world, mass innovation is a crucial but often overlooked element for those seeking long-term success.

Mass innovation encourages widespread participation in the innovation process across the entire organization—and even beyond it. This approach enables organizations to tap into collective intelligence, fostering more robust, customer-centric solutions and quicker adaptation to change. Through open mass innovation, the process extends beyond internal boundaries to include customers, stakeholders, local communities, and other public entities.

Drawing on personal experience, I will illustrate how I have used mass innovation to create value in business, local communities, and politics. I will argue that participatory modeling not only democratizes the innovation process but also nurtures a culture where change is embraced as a norm. This shift helps organizations remain receptive to trends, new technologies, and breakthrough solutions. When participatory engagement drives mass innovation, it generates a high volume of ideas from diverse sources, contributing to a vibrant, constantly evolving innovation ecosystem that remains relevant and practical.

Encouraging innovation and creativity requires cultivating an environment that embraces risk-taking, promotes diverse perspectives, and supports continuous improvement. Hence, dynamic organizational structures are also a necessary element in innovative processes. I will outline which aspects of an organization need transformation to support sustainable innovation. By integrating these elements into modern organizational structures and leadership techniques, organizations can create fertile ground for creativity and innovation to thrive, ultimately leading to sustained growth and success.

In my lecture, I will present practical examples of mass innovation and introduce relevant models for developing an innovative culture.

Content

1 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN BUSINESS, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL SECTOR	16
Applied positive psychology in education: overview of six Croatian projects.....	17
Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić	
Flourishing futures: applying positive psychology from classrooms to communities for educational and social success	18
Silvija Ručević	
Work as a calling: a blessing or a curse?	20
Majda Rijavec	
The influence of parenting styles on self-schema complexity in early adulthood	21
Polona Aleksandra Hvala, Marko Divjak	
Positive psychology and reducing burnout in the workplace	23
Božica Mezga, Elma Polanec	
Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology model in the context of student's perception and usage of ChatGPT.....	24
Birgit Burböck, Lisa Maria Vötsch	
Psychological factors of flow state in online learning	26
Daša Jalen	
The role of work engagement in achieving organizational success: insights from Mauritius.....	28
Suzana Majcen Jerman	
Exploring the impact of distance learning on work-life balance, mental health and wellbeing of students.....	30
Živa Veingerl Čič, Marko Divjak, Daša Grajfoner	
Decoding lean culture in organisations: a systematic literature review	32
Tibor Tenji, Živa Veingerl Čič, Marko Divjak	
Integrating psychological wellbeing and economic analysis to combat professional burnout: a multidisciplinary perspective	34
Sofija Georgievska, Dimitar Kovacevski, Natasa Stanojkovska Trajkovska	
Students' intentions and their learning outcomes	36
Laura Fink, Bojan Cestnik	
Psychological capital and leadership skills.....	38
Nejka Mazi Šorn, Marko Divjak	
Employee attitudes towards positive psychology training in business.....	40
Andreja Lavrič	

Selection of positive psychology interventions for the be-well training program: systematic and evidence-based approach.....	42
Marko Divjak, Živa Veingerl Čič, Virginia Sanchez Jimenez, Silvija Ručević	
Measuring psychological well-being in the context of adult learning and work.....	44
Tanja Rupnik Vec	
2 COACHING PSYCHOLOGY IN BUSINESS.....	46
What role can humour play in coaching?.....	47
Silvia King	
Creating effective (health) coaching relationships	48
Melanie Oeben, Daša Grajfoner	
Mind the tone of your inner voice - a coaches application of simple yet powerful techniques that work like magic!	49
Meta Grošelj	
Coaching psychology in the age of artificial intelligence: the impact of digital coaching on efficiency in the business world	50
Manca Gruden	
Liberating the will through coaching (MA psychosynthesis coaching thesis summary)	52
Jasenska Gojšić	
Family dynamics and female entrepreneurship: the impact of motherhood, partnership, and family obligations in different life stages	54
Mateja Vadnjal, Brina Vadnjal, Jaka Vadnjal	
Psychological consequences of cyber attacks in the business world	56
Andreja Lavrič	
The role of coaching in enhancing employee well-being and resilience	58
Lejla Lerić Imamović, Cumhur Demiralp	
Coaching psychology: animal assisted coaching at workplace and education	60
Daša Grajfoner	
3 LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS.....	62
Lead fairly, lead effectively: the art of supervisory justice.....	63
Ana Belajdžić	
Evidence for the effectiveness of workplace and executive coaching: why we still don't know whether coaching works - and how we can find out.....	65
David Tee	
A successful psychopath: myth or fact?	66

Silvija Ručević, Živa Veingerl Čič, Nika Regušić	
Unlocking leadership success: the critical role of professional identity	68
Yekaterina Solomeyeva	
Strategies for leadership growth and skill development.....	70
Viktor Jovanović, Vida Jovanović	
Challenges of digital well-being in the workplace: a human resource management perspective	72
Ana Marija Gričnik, Simona Šarotaz Žižek, Branka Zolak Poljašević	
Leading to excellence - what you can learn from driving a horse-drawn carriage	74
Norbert Obermayr	
4 FINANCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR	75
Value networks as driving engines behind innovation and creativity generation	76
Liliya Terzieva, Esmee Messemaker	
Can online product reviews have an impact on herding behavior? An experiment	78
Birgit Burböck, Carmen Tamara Kern	
Psychological reactions and their impact on personal financial decision-making: a focus on investment behavior.....	80
Anita Maček	
Raising awareness of local foods: purchasing habits and environmental impact	82
Tina Vukasović	
Attitudes and children's food preferences: unveiling emojis and choices.....	84
David Skala, Ružica Brečić, Luca Panzone	
Exploring the concept of financial wellness and wellbeing among student population.....	86
Jerneja Lešnik Cotza, Mihaela Škrlić Brglez	
5 FACILITATING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY IN ORGANISATIONS.....	88
Pillars of success for start-up ventures: case of Slovenia	89
Zineta Vilman, Martina Plantak, Marina Letonja	
The intention to use telemedicine in Alzheimer's disease and perceived technical efficiency	91
Dragan Aksentijević, Valentina Prevolnik Rupel, Mirjana Peić-Bach, Eva Turk	
Competencies of students in the implementation of project tasks for companies	93
Gregor Jagodič	
The paradox of extraordinary minds: unveiling the untapped potential and unique challenges of gifted in the workplace	95
Katja Ujčič	

An innovative marketing model for the introduction of orphan drugs on the market.....	97
Nataša Jalen, Tina Vukasović, Daša Jalen	
Psychological aspects of Slovenian innovation ecosystem	99
Boris Cizelj	
A domain-independent review of explainable ai's role in facilitating innovation and creativity in organizations.....	101
Miha Lavrič	

1

Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

Applied positive psychology in education: overview of six Croatian projects

Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić¹

Keywords: *educational context, mental health and well-being of children, positive psychology in education, resilience, socio-emotional learning, teachers, scientific and professional projects*

Abstracts

Many years ago, Plato emphasised that an individual is happy and a society well organised when each individual performs the activities for which he is naturally gifted, and that the main aim of education is to discover these abilities and then develop them so that they can be put to good use. Unfortunately, history and the many educational reforms have shown that the education system and its representatives have failed to do this, even though it did not seem to be too difficult a task. One of the reasons to start the new branch of psychology, Positive Psychology, 26 years ago was related to the goal of making schools better places for children and teachers.

There are many positive psychology programmes and curricula for better schools that are working well all over the world. However, they are all culturally specific, so it is important to develop evidence-based programmes that fit a particular education system and culture.

After this introduction on the importance of integrating Positive Psychology programmes into regular kindergarten/school programmes, an overview of six projects that have been implemented at the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Rijeka in Croatia (one is still being implemented) will be given. What they all have in common is the attempt to implement some basic principles of Positive Psychology in education, with the main aim of improving the quality of psychological well-being and mental health of children and teachers through a qualitative combination of science, theory and practise. Two-year scientific and professional project: How to go to kindergarten and primary school tear-free? aimed to support children's social-emotional well-being during transition and adjustment through direct collaboration between scientists and practitioners from kindergartens and primary schools.

The scientific, university-based project Children's Well-being in Transition Periods: Empirical Validation of the Ecological-Dynamic Model lasted five years and focused on testing the transition model, which is based on various intra- and interpersonal factors that are crucial for understanding the quality of transition and adjustment of early and preschool aged children. The third, infrastructural project Development of an online course at the University of Rijeka: Psychology of child well-being, lasted one and a half year and involved the development of a complete online course aimed at strengthening the psychological competencies of kindergarten and school teachers. The fourth Erasmus+ KA3 project PROMEHS: Promoting Mental Health in Schools aimed to develop a preventive and promotive curriculum for mental health in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, the PROMEHS curriculum. In order to ensure its sustainability, the one-year infrastructure project Development Education programme for the acquisition of micro-qualifications in educational work for the improvement of mental health and well-being implemented changes to the study programme and the creation of a lifelong learning programme called Mental health and well-being in education (consisting of three courses). Finally, the three-year international Erasmus+ KA2 project EduSkills + SEL: Encouraging social-emotional competencies in kindergartens is currently being implemented (2023-2026), which aims to create SEL guidelines for kindergarten teachers.

¹ PhD. Full Prof., Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka, Croatia, sanjatv@uniri.hr

Flourishing futures: applying positive psychology from classrooms to communities for educational and social success

Silvija Ručević²

Keywords: *positive psychology, education, flourishing, community development, well-being*

Abstracts

This lecture explores the application of positive psychology principles, emphasizing strengths, resilience, and well-being, within educational and community contexts to foster flourishing futures. While positive psychology has significantly impacted educational settings, this lecture argues for extending these principles beyond the classroom to support holistic community development. The goal is to demonstrate how positive psychology can bridge the gap between theory and practice, promoting educational and social success. The key question is: How can positive psychology principles be applied from classrooms to communities to promote flourishing at both individual and collective levels?

Positive psychology, pioneered by Martin Seligman's PERMA model, has been widely adopted in schools to improve students' mental health and academic achievement. Research by Waters (2011) and Dweck (2006) indicates that interventions like growth mindset development, gratitude exercises, and strengths-based learning significantly improve both student performance and emotional well-being. However, current research often focuses on individual outcomes in classrooms, with limited attention to how these benefits extend to communities. This lecture synthesizes evidence to propose that positive psychology in schools can spark broader community flourishing by addressing issues such as social isolation, civic disengagement, and mental health challenges.

The lecture reviews a wide range of studies, programs, and interventions that apply positive psychology in both classrooms and communities. The approach highlights how successful classroom interventions can be adapted for broader community impact, with evidence drawn from diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings to demonstrate the universal applicability of positive psychology. The literature shows that classroom-based positive psychology interventions not only foster academic success but also enhance social cohesion and resilience. For example, interventions like growth mindset and mindfulness improve prosocial behavior and emotional regulation, creating more harmonious school environments (Dweck, 2006; Flook et al., 2015). These effects extend beyond individual students to influence their peers and communities. Furthermore, programs like the Penn Resilience Program, which integrates positive psychology into schools, have had positive impacts on students' families and broader communities, illustrating a ripple effect of well-being practices (Seligman et al., 2009).

The lecture concludes that while positive psychology has proven effective in schools, its potential to transform communities is underexplored. Educational institutions can be incubators for broader social well-being, with classroom lessons addressing challenges like isolation and civic disengagement.

The scalability of classroom interventions to communities faces challenges due to differences in community structures, resources, and cultural norms. Future research should focus on adapting these successful practices to fit diverse community settings.

Integrating positive psychology into both educational and community contexts can lead to enhanced social cohesion, reduced mental health challenges, and increased civic participation. Policymakers,

² University of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, srucevic@ffos.hr

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

educators, and community leaders can use these insights to design sustainable programs that focus on well-being as a foundation for both educational and social success.

This lecture extends the application of positive psychology beyond classrooms, offering insights for educators, community leaders, and policymakers aiming to promote both academic achievement and community well-being. It contributes to the growing recognition of education as a tool for societal transformation.

Work as a calling: a blessing or a curse?

Majda Rijavec³

Keywords: *burn-out, calling at work, organizational support, workaholicism, exploitation*

Abstracts

People hold different attitudes towards their work (usually known as work orientations). Some are focused mainly on financial rewards and benefits (job orientation), others are career oriented aiming at advancement and achievement, and some see their work as a calling. They value the fulfilment the works give them and the contribution they make to their community or society as a whole.

The idea that work can be a calling has become increasingly popular, since individuals nowadays increasingly seek work that provides them with meaning and purpose behind financial rewards. Just seeing one's work as a calling is related to numerous positive outcomes such as higher well-being and job satisfaction, better job performance, higher work engagement and organizational commitment and less withdrawal intentions. Effects are stronger if a person has more opportunities to actually live a calling at work. So, it seems that seeing a work as a calling can make employees happier and more satisfied both in their work as well as in their personal life. Organizations could also benefit greatly considering aforementioned positive work outcomes.

However, this optimistic look on work as a calling has its challenges and downfalls. Unfortunately, not all the employees are able to live their work as calling due to various contextual and workplace factors. One of these factors is person-environment fit (P-E fit). Those who feel a calling usually over time enter into work environments that fit that calling. But what if it is not possible or at least not possible for a longer period of time? How individuals cope with a prolonged feeling of unanswered calling? The other question is organizational support. Some organizations provide the structure and support that is needed for employees to feel that their work environment is a match to their calling. Contrary to that, those who experience little or lack of support feel that the organization is a barrier, rather than a facilitator of live out their calling.

Even, for those employees who are able to live their calling there is a dark side to it. They invest extremely in their work, sacrifice their personal time, work long hours and sometimes end being workaholics and burned-out.

Finally, these individuals are also vulnerable to organizational exploitation. They are intrinsically motivated and eager to contribute to others and common good. That is why they are often asked to do demanding and unpleasant jobs, extra tasks and even lower pay. Their employers rarely provide them with extra rewards "because they will do it anyway".

Employees' calling orientation should be treated with dignity and fairness, without unreasonable or excessive requests. This would help create both healthy and productive workplace, with employees can do their best, thrive and flourish.

³ University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education, majda.rijavec@ufzg.hr

The influence of parenting styles on self-schema complexity in early adulthood

Polona Aleksandra Hvala⁴

Marko Divjak⁵

Keywords: *parenting styles, self-schema complexity, self-concept, early adulthood, psychological well-being*

Abstracts

The primary aim of this research was to examine the impact of various parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, on self-schema complexity in early adulthood. The study also sought to identify potential demographic influences, such as gender, age, and education level, on the complexity of self-schemas. The research addressed two main questions:

(1) How and to what extent did different parenting styles influence the complexity of self-schemas during early adulthood?

(2) Were there differences in self-schema complexity based on certain demographic factors?

Parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping an individual's self-concept and psychological development. Previous studies indicate that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and structured guidance, is associated with positive outcomes, including higher self-esteem and social competence (Baumrind, 1989). Conversely, authoritarian parenting, marked by strict control and low responsiveness, often leads to lower self-esteem and less adaptive social behaviour (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Permissive parenting, which allows for greater freedom but less structure, has mixed outcomes depending on the context (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). A cross-sectional research design was used, employing a quantitative approach to gather data from 228 participants aged 25 to 45. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) (Buri, 1991) was used to assess participants' perceptions of their parents' authority styles, while the Self-Complexity Inventory (SCI) (Linville, 1987; Czarnocki & Imbir, 2022) measured their self-schema complexity. Statistical analyses were conducted to evaluate the relationships between variables.

The results indicated that authoritative parenting was positively correlated with higher self-schema complexity, suggesting that a balanced approach of support and structure fosters more complex and adaptable self-concepts (Baumrind, 1966; Baumrind, 1989). In contrast, authoritarian parenting was negatively correlated with self-schema complexity, implying that strict, controlling parenting may hinder the development of a diverse and flexible self-concept (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg, 2001). Permissive parenting also showed a positive correlation with self-schema complexity, differing from some previous findings (Uji, Sakamoto, Adachi, & Kitamura, 2014). This discrepancy could be explained by individual differences or factors not directly related to parenting style, such as personal experiences, education, and social environment—particularly relevant given the age of the respondents.

The complexity of self-schemas differed by gender, with men in our sample showing higher complexity than women, though the small number of male participants may affect this finding. Additionally, the complexity of self-schemas neither increased with age—likely because our participants were beyond the age of significant self-concept development—nor was it associated with higher education levels, possibly because other factors like work experience, social environment, or personality traits play a significant role due to the age of the participants.

These findings underscore the importance of parenting styles in the psychological development of young adults. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by highlighting the nuanced effects of

⁴ Student, DOBA Business School, polona.hvala@gmail.com

⁵ Prof. dr., DOBA Business School, marko.divjak@doba.si

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

different parenting styles on self-schema complexity, particularly in relation to demographic factors. Future research should explore these relationships further, considering additional variables that may also influence the self-schema complexity.

The study's insights could inform parenting programs and interventions aimed at promoting healthy psychological development. Understanding the impact of parenting on differentiation and diversity of self-concept can help develop strategies to support parents in creating optimal environments for their child's development.

This research provided a new perspective by exploring the influence of parenting styles on self-schema complexity in young adults, highlighting the lasting impact of these styles beyond childhood and adolescence, which has been the primary focus of most previous studies. The findings are particularly relevant for professionals working in the fields of education, counselling, and family support.

Positive psychology and reducing burnout in the workplace

Božica Mezga⁶

Elma Polanec⁷

Keywords: *burnout, positive psychology, prevention, intervention, techniques*

Abstracts

This research explores how positive psychology principles can be utilized to reduce burnout in the workplace. Burnout, introduced by Freudenberg (1974), is characterized by a loss of motivation and commitment due to prolonged stress. It manifests through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982). Key stressors contributing to burnout include work overload, poor organization, low income, inadequate working conditions, and staff shortages, particularly in helping professions like psychology, nursing, teaching, and social work (Žužić et al., 2020; Mordini et al., 2013).

Preventing burnout requires timely action. Techniques from positive psychology, such as fostering optimism and emphasizing personal strengths, are promising tools for burnout reduction. Early interventions, awareness training, and resilience-building strategies are highlighted as effective measures (Maslach, 1982). A questionnaire was distributed to 60 employees across education and librarianship fields, including libraries, kindergartens, and schools.

The survey included validated burnout scales and questions about optimism, personal strengths, and stress management. A comparative method assessed differences in burnout levels across the different work environments. The study emphasizes improving communication, encouraging open dialogue between founders and teams, and fostering a positive workplace. Recommended interventions include team-building activities to enhance collaboration and offering stress relief treatments, such as relaxation sessions. Additionally, providing developmental education on communication skills and team organization can promote a cohesive team dynamic. Positive psychology techniques can reduce burnout, but the workplace environment heavily influences their effectiveness. Future research should investigate how cultural and organizational factors affect these interventions, aiming to develop tailored solutions for various settings. Limitations of the study include potential bias in self-reported data and a small sample size, which may not fully represent the broader population of educators and librarians.

Overall, this research contributes valuable insights into the stressors impacting burnout and the potential for positive psychology to foster healthier work environments in schools, libraries, and kindergartens.

⁶ MLS, Knjižnica i čitaonica Općine Šenkovec, knjiznicasenkovec@gmail.com

⁷ Mag. paed., Dječji vrtić Vrapčić, Šenkovec, epolanec@gmail.com

Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology model in the context of student's perception and usage of ChatGPT

Birgit Burböck⁸

Lisa Maria Vötsch⁹

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, academic environment, ChatGPT, students' perception, UTAUT Mode*

Abstracts

This study aims to evaluate the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) Model's ability to explain ChatGPT's acceptance among faculty and students for educational purposes. The research seeks to answer: *"How do Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions influence Behavioral Intention and User Behavior toward ChatGPT?"*

The UTAUT - Model identifies the key factors regarding the acceptance of new technologies. It assesses the likelihood of success for new technology introductions and underlines the drivers of acceptance. (Venkatesh et al., 2003) Since numerous factors are influencing the way of studying nowadays, new technologies, artificial intelligence and digital transformations are now an indispensable part of the classroom and emerged over the last decade even more. (Rodríguez et al., 2023) Text-based machine learning models like ChatGPT are only a few of the many existing tools which are used every day. Growing recognition and acceptance showed that the adoption is not anecdotal. (Magsamen-Conrad et al., 2022) But since ChatGPT has been released by OpenAI in November 2022 there has been a lot of discussion about its capabilities. The tool gained widespread attention, which included excitement but also concern. Next to basic applications like creating new content, audio, codes, images, text, or music it has also other positive impacts. Medical imaging analysis, high-resolution weather forecasts, virtual worlds, and practical applications for business processes like product design or process optimization are only a few examples which can be explained and developed by ChatGPT. Nevertheless, it also raised concerns about potential professional impacts in different fields. (Fütterer et al., 2023; Strzelecki, 2023).

As higher education institutions are struggling with the usage of ChatGPT, there have been varied reactions from educators all over the world to the introduction of the language model. On one hand the tool brings multiple opportunities to the lecture room, but on the other hand it makes cheating and copying texts in a course much easier for students, may lead to misinformation and affect learning opportunities. In response to the different opinions on the usage of ChatGPT it is important that students as well as educators understand how ChatGPT works, what challenges it brings and what ethical considerations need to be discussed as it becomes more and more relevant in education overall. Because nevertheless it is a valuable resource for students as it is for educators. (Abeysekera, 2024; 2023; Mogavi et al., 2024; Rodríguez et al., 2023)

Despite its widespread use and contribution to understanding technology acceptance and actual use, has faced various criticisms. This indicates that the model has lost its full capacity for adaptability. Furthermore, increased research into the model, its variables and elements showed that critics rose about the model's flexibility and relevance. (Bayaga & Du Plessis, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2011; Philippi et al., 2021).

The survey, based on six UTAUT dimensions, used 24 items on a 5-point Likert scale. Regression analysis tested how Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, and Social Influence affect Behavioral

⁸ FH JOANNEUM, birgit.burboeck@fh-joanneum.at

⁹FH JOANNEUM, lisa.voetsch@fh-joanneum.at

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

Intention and Use Behavior. A sample of 235 FH JOANNEUM students provided reliable results, with Cronbach's Alpha values between 0.697 and 0.932.

The results show controversial findings. While the "Performance Expectancy" does not positively influence on "Behavioural Intentions", the independent variables "Effort Expectancy" and "Social Influence" show with $p < 0.001$ as well as $\beta = 0.252$ and $\beta = 0.300$ respectively a significant positive influence on "Behavioural Intention". Also the "Facilitating Conditions" and "Behavioural Intentions" show a significantly positive influence on the dependent variable "Use Behavior".

The results underscore that the anticipated benefits to performance from utilizing ChatGPT might not be the key motivator for its integration into educational settings. Instead, elements like user-friendliness, social impact, and the presence of enabling conditions are pivotal in shaping the willingness to use and the actual utilization of ChatGPT. This understanding could control educational institutions to create a supportive backdrop for the effective adoption of AI technologies in learning environments.

Due to a smaller sample, generalizability may be limited. Rapid advancements in AI mean that findings are a snapshot, potentially outdated as technology and perceptions evolve. Continuous re-evaluation is recommended to capture changing behaviors over time. (Chao, 2019; Ghafouri, 2024; Mogavi et al., 2024)

This study highlights that ease of use, social influence, and institutional support are central to ChatGPT acceptance in education. These findings underscore the importance of supportive environments in fostering AI adoption in learning contexts.

Psychological factors of flow state in online learning

Daša Jalen¹⁰

Keywords: *e-learning, flow state, psychological factors, facilitation methods*

Abstracts

This systematic review aims to synthesize and summarize the existing literature on psychological variables associated with the flow state in an online educational setting and how the flow experience can be enhanced in the context of online learning. With technological advances over the last few decades, online learning has gained an important place in education (Kaufmann & Vallade, 2022) due to its potential to provide more flexible access to content and instruction at any time, from any location (Castro & Tumibay, 2019). Since the flow state is related to many positive academic outcomes (e.g. Buil et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2010; Zhang & Qi, 2023), it raises questions about how it manifests in an online learning environment, what facilitates it, and its relationship with various psychological factors (e.g., self-regulation, cognitive abilities, attention, etc.). The following research questions were asked:

- Which psychological factors are associated with the flow experience in online learning?
- What are the ways/methods that the flow state can be facilitated in online learning?

The research was focused on the population of adolescents and young adults (typically aged 12-25). The results of this systematic review may provide useful insights and a basis for further research on how to enhance the flow experience in online learning.

With the rise of digitalisation, education must adapt to take advantage of new technologies (OECD, 2019). Although often perceived as a relatively new concept, remote learning has existed for over a century, with roots in European correspondence courses (Sherry, 1995). E-learning offers numerous advantages, including flexibility, cost savings, reduced environmental impact, and the promotion of independence and individual satisfaction (Somayeh et al., 2016). Flow, a state of deep focus and absorption in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013), enhances e-learning by fostering positive emotions, improving academic performance, and contributing to students' persistence in online learning (Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2016).

The researcher conducted the online literature search in three electronic databases: PsycINFO, PubMed, and Scopus. To find articles, relevant to the review, the following Boolean search term combinations were used: (flow state OR flow experience OR flow theory) AND (online learning OR e-learning OR distance education OR virtual classroom OR remote learning). Inclusion criteria, adapted from a similar systematic review, were applied (Mehta & Vyas, 2022):

- The study must relate to both the flow state and online learning.
- The study must answer at least one of the two research questions.
- Published between 2004 and 2024.
- The study must be a peer-reviewed journal article.
- Results must be quantitative in nature.
- The study participants are adolescents or young adults.

The search yielded 72 results, which were initially screened by title. In the next step, the abstracts of the relevant studies were reviewed, and those that met the inclusion criteria were retained. The remaining 21 articles were thoroughly read to determine their eligibility for this review. Ultimately, 17 articles were selected, reread, and analyzed to provide a comprehensive synthesis and conclusion on the topic.

¹⁰ University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Psychology, dasa.jalen2@gmail.com

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

The findings of the literature review indicate that, in the context of e-learning, the flow state is associated with several psychological elements. In terms of antecedents, factors such as challenge, focused attention, positive mood, and interest promote it. The positive outcomes of the flow state include, but are not limited to, reduced anxiety, increased continuance intention, absorption, enhanced memory and cognitive abilities, and improved performance. Optimal platforms for facilitating the flow experience encourage active participation and collaboration among students, provide timely and constructive learning feedback (positive rather than punitive), include interactive visual tools, are entertaining, and consider the balance between skill and challenge (e.g., difficulty level). Professor competency, including sufficient training in the use of online learning platforms and a strong grasp of the content being taught, is another key factor. Teacher support is especially crucial for enhancing flow among low-performing e-learners.

Conducting this study alone may lead to bias, which can affect the objectivity of the results. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted and applied with caution. Future research should focus on older generations who might require different approaches and methods to experience effective and satisfying online learning. This is particularly important in the context of lifelong learning.

This paper is intended for e-learning platform developers, professionals working in the educational sector and others looking to integrate online learning into their practice. The value of this systematic review lies in its contribution to optimizing virtual classrooms and improving the methods currently employed to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

The role of work engagement in achieving organizational success: insights from Mauritius

Suzana Majcen Jerman¹¹

Keywords: *work engagement, Mauritius, gender differences, remote work, cultural diversity*

Abstracts

This research aims to explore work engagement among employees in Mauritius and how various factors such as gender, nationality, and the impact of remote work during COVID-19 influence engagement levels. The main research question was: What factors affect employee engagement in Mauritius, and how do these factors differ based on gender, nationality, and the recent shift to remote work?

Work engagement is crucial for organizations aiming to achieve their goals and stay competitive. A motivated and committed workforce boosts productivity, reduces employee turnover, and enhances the organization's reputation. Previous studies emphasize the importance of both personal and organizational factors in shaping engagement levels. However, there is limited research on how these factors function in varying cultural and socio-economic contexts, such as in Mauritius, where a mix of First and Third World workforces creates diverse work habits and attitudes. This study expands on existing literature by exploring the multicultural environment in Mauritius and examining the influence of gender, nationality, and the shift to remote work during COVID-19 on employee engagement.

Organizations aim to foster high performance while minimizing absenteeism and turnover, with organizational commitment being a critical factor in achieving this. Psychological aspects also play a role, as noted by (Herrera et al., 2021) Furthermore, the Dalai Lama and Cutler suggest that the worker's attitude influences happiness at work. They argue that true happiness, which stems from a positive mental state rather than external circumstances, can be cultivated through deliberate changes in mindset and attitudes (Lama, 2013).

A survey questionnaire was employed as the primary research instrument, administered through the 1KA | Spletne Ankete tool. This method of data collection is among the most widely used in research. The questionnaire utilized was a well-established instrument in literature for measuring employee engagement, specifically the Employee Survey – Individual Work Performance. A 5-point Likert scale was applied to all substantive questions, where a score of 1 indicated complete disagreement with the statement, and a score of 5 indicated complete agreement. Additionally, respondents could select "Other" for certain questions, offering more flexibility.

The questionnaire comprised three main sections, the first section focused on work engagement, the second section addressed the current Covid-19 situation, the third section gathered demographic information.

The research targeted companies across various sectors registered in Mauritius. To analyse and present the results, several tools were utilized, including 1KA, Microsoft Word, Excel, and IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as standard deviations and mean values, were calculated for individual variables. Various statistical tests were then applied to further explore the data.

For analysing differences between two independent sample means when the numerical variable was not normally distributed, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed. This non-parametric test compares differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous but does not follow a normal distribution. By using this test, we could assess how attitudes

¹¹ DOBA Business School, suzana.majcen@gmail.com

differed based on gender. During the test, numerical values are converted into ranks, which are then assigned accordingly e.g., rank 1, rank 2 Statistics (2018b).

To explore other potential statistical characteristics, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. This non-parametric test assesses whether statistically significant differences exist between two or more groups on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable. It serves as an alternative to one-way ANOVA and is an extension of the Mann-Whitney U test, allowing for comparisons across multiple independent groups (Statistics, 2018a).

The survey was conducted from November 2020 to January 2021, with participation from Mauritian companies and their employees. The 1KA survey link was distributed to over 100 companies via email after prior coordination.

The study revealed several key findings. First, women in Mauritius displayed higher levels of work engagement compared to men. Second, there were no significant differences in engagement between employees based on the length of their employment. Third, nationality played a role in influencing engagement, with differences observed among employees from various cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote work had varying impacts: women were more positive about remote work and adapted better than men, who expressed more difficulties with the transition. These findings underscore the importance of considering gender and cultural factors when developing strategies to enhance employee engagement.

One limitation of the study is its focus on a specific country, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other regions. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which can introduce biases. Future research could expand the sample size, include more countries for comparison, and explore how engagement evolves in the long term, especially as remote work becomes more prevalent.

The findings have several practical implications. Organizations in Mauritius—and potentially in other multicultural environments—should tailor their employee engagement strategies to account for gender and cultural differences. Companies can boost productivity and reduce turnover by fostering a supportive work environment that acknowledges these factors. On a societal level, this research highlights the importance of inclusivity in workplace policies, particularly in remote work, which can significantly influence work-life balance and employee well-being.

This study provides new insights into employee engagement in a multicultural, developing country setting, with a specific focus on Mauritius. It is particularly valuable for HR professionals, managers, and policymakers who are looking to improve employee engagement in diverse environments. The research is timely given the ongoing global shifts towards remote work and offers practical recommendations for enhancing engagement in similar socio-economic contexts.

Exploring the impact of distance learning on work-life balance, mental health and wellbeing of students

Živa Veingerl Čič¹²

Marko Divjak¹³

Daša Grajfoner¹⁴

Keywords: *distance learning, work-life balance, mental health, student, wellbeing, role conflict*

Abstracts

The research aim is to explore how students studying online experience work-life balance, mental health, and well-being when balancing different roles and other influencing factors that impact students' resilience and academic performance. The research will provide insights into how these experiences shape students' well-being, mental health and resilience in order to identify areas for improvement.

Prior to the pandemic, research primarily highlighted social interactions within student groups and the challenges of campus living as key stressors for students (Davis et al., 2021). However, recent studies reveal that distance learning students report psychological challenges more frequently than students studying face to face. It is therefore essential to explore those challenges and the factors affecting mental health and well-being of online students.. Research so far has primarily focused on the academic outcomes and pedagogical considerations of distance learning (Wetcho et al., 2023; Carter, 2020). However, there is a gap in understanding the broader implications of distance learning on student wellbeing, mental health, role conflict and work-life balance.

Research indicates that student mental health and well-being are in focus among higher education institutions. Poor mental health can affect students' academic performance which is related to the changes students experience when transitioning from high school to university or from home to college (Grajfoner et al., 2017). Studies (Barr, 2014; Coughlan et al., 2021; Coughlan and Lister, 2022; Lister et al., 2023) show that distance learning students are more likely are experiencing mental health problems, need more support and their needs and challenges are less visible to the higher education institutions where they are studying. However, work-life balance has also been shown to have a positive impact on students' self-efficacy, which in turn improves their motivation and academic performance (Owens, & Cassarino, 2022; Fournier, 2023).

Role conflict was often identified as a major factor in student wellbeing, however, it has not yet been researched, in particular triangulation work-study-family/having carrying responsibilities which is the focus and added value of our research.

This research starts with a systematic literature review, followed by a survey. The literature review aims to synthesize current research on the psychosocial impacts of distance learning, with a particular emphasis on how it affects students' ability to balance their academic responsibilities with other facets of their lives, such as employment, family obligations, and self-care.

The review includes peer-reviewed articles, books and conference papers in various databases, exploring the intersections of work-life balance, mental health and wellbeing and among distance learning university students. Studies examining role conflicts related to work-study and work-study-family dynamics were prioritized.

¹² Associate Professor,, DOBA Business School ziva.veingerl-cic@doba.si

¹³ Associate Professor, DOBA Business School, marko.divjak@doba.si

¹⁴Associate Professor, DOBA Business School, dasa.grajfoner@doba.si

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

Literature review indicates that distance learning students experience higher role conflicts, particularly in balancing work and study. However, family-related role conflicts are less frequently addressed in the literature, representing an area requiring further research. Additionally, maintaining a healthy work-life balance was shown to positively impact students' self-efficacy, enhancing both their motivation and academic performance (Owens & Cassarino, 2022; Fournier, 2023).

The results of this research will have significant implications for the development of strategies and interventions aimed at improving the mental health, reconciliation of private and business life and well-being of distance learning students with their academic commitments. It will also contribute to the theoretical understanding of the dynamics between mental health, well-being and work-life balance and distance education, and help shape future directions for research and practice in this area. While the review highlights the importance of work-life balance and role conflict, empirical research is needed to explore these dynamics in greater depth, particularly concerning family-related responsibilities. Future research should consider longitudinal studies and diverse cultural contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how distance learning affects work-life balance, mental health and student wellbeing.

The findings of this research underscore the need for higher education institutions to develop targeted support systems for distance learners. Higher institutions should consider implementing flexible learning structures and mental health and wellbeing interventions that address the unique challenges of balancing academic, work and family responsibilities. These interventions can help improve students' self-efficacy, resilience, reduce stress, and enhance academic outcomes. Additionally, the universities should promote more inclusive policies and practices, supporting both academic success and student wellbeing.

This study contributes to the existing literature by focusing on the area of role conflict in distance learning, particularly in relation to family responsibilities. While prior research has extensively covered work-study balance, our systematic review highlights the need for greater focus on the intersection of work, study and family life. The findings provide valuable insights for educational institutions, policymakers, and researchers interested in enhancing the academic and personal experiences of distance learners, particularly in the post-pandemic era of online education.

Decoding lean culture in organisations: a systematic literature review

Tibor Tenji¹⁵

Živa Veingerl Čič¹⁶

Marko Divjak¹⁷

Keywords: *lean culture, organisation, systematic literature review*

Abstracts

This study aims to decrease the high pragmatic ambiguity of the concept of Lean Culture (LC) in the current academic literature by answering the following two research questions: (Rq1) What synthesis of findings can we do from the existing themes and definitions derived from the scholarly literature to enhance the understanding of LC, particularly its organisational psychology aspect? (Rq2) What relationships of LC with other relevant organisational concepts are reported in the academic literature that justify the relevance of LC?

Lean Culture has been noted to be an underdeveloped concept (Dorval & Jobin, 2020). The definition of LC is not straightforward; instead, it appears to be used freely by all for all, resulting in diverse definitions and interpretations of the concept in the relevant literature also reported in recent research (Osman et al., 2021). Additionally, the importance of LC is questioned, leading to a high level of pragmatic ambiguity that characterises LC currently in the scholarly literature (Dorval et al., 2019). This study aims to decode LC and comply with Dorval's (2019) call for future research to decrease LC's high pragmatic ambiguity.

This study used Templier and Paré's (2015) cumulative type of systematic literature review (SLR) to compile evidence methodically, identify patterns, and generate new knowledge. The SLR was conducted with the guidance of the review protocol, which includes formulating research questions and systematic searching based on identification, screening, eligibility, quality appraisal, data exclusion, and analysis. The SLR of peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings identified 510 articles, in total, published from 2014 to 2024 and were collected from four databases, namely Emerald Online, EBSCO, OpenAIRE, and Google Scholar. Databases are iteratively searched using search strings made of "Lean Culture" keywords combined with the Boolean "AND" connectors with each of the following keywords separately: "organisation", "psychology", "continuous improvement", and "respect for people". Further screening and application of inclusion/exclusion criteria resulted in 57 articles eligible for complete analysis. The qualitative data were classified into meaningful themes and then grouped into broad categories for further analysis, supported by the MAXQDA Analytics Pro software (Release 24.2.0).

In answering Rq1, this study demonstrates that recent academic literature identifies engagement, involvement, empowerment, teamwork, and mutual trust as the most prevalent organisational psychology concepts associated with the LC. Visualising the pattern of interdependence in these qualitative data enhances the understanding of the LC concept, especially in relation to organisational psychology aspects. With a synthesis of findings, an original evidence-based definition of LC is proposed. In answering Rq2, results indicate the existence of several relationships LC keeps with other relevant organisational concepts reported in the academic literature. Although, unsurprisingly, numerous research studies have confirmed a relationship between LC and Lean manufacturing (LM), the study also revealed the ability of LC to positively moderate and mediate the relationship between

¹⁵ PhD student, DOBA Business School, tibor.tenji@net.doba.si

¹⁶ Assistant Professor, DOBA Business School, ziva.veingerl-cic@doba.si

¹⁷ Assistant Professor, DOBA Business School, marko.divjak@doba.si

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

other organisational concepts like Lean Practice, Organisational Performance, and Operational Excellence. The latter proves the relevance of LC in organisations.

This systematic literature review (SLR) is limited in scope due to the restriction of searching only four databases. The SLR was also performed only in high-quality journals, which may have limited the findings. Furthermore, the literature review is restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers addressing LC. Future literature reviews may be conducted in light of these constraints.

For practitioners, particularly those who specialise in organisational psychology, this research has two practical implications: first, it provides insights into the psychological aspects of LC; second, it demonstrates how and on which organisational concepts LC may have a positive impact once it is correctly implemented in the workplace.

This study contributes to the subject area body of knowledge by applying the recent findings of relevant literature to assess LC and its relevance in organisations. Though a few recent SLR articles dealt with the LC definition, none involved the organisational psychology aspect. Therefore, this work is not only the first to contribute to understanding LC from that perspective but also the first to analyse its relevance through its relationships with other organisational concepts.

Integrating psychological wellbeing and economic analysis to combat professional burnout: a multidisciplinary perspective

Sofija Georgievska¹⁸

Dimitar Kovacevski¹⁹

Natasa Stanojkovska Trajkovska²⁰

Keywords: *burnout prevention, psychological wellbeing, cost-benefit analysis, organizational productivity*

Abstract

In the rapidly evolving business landscape of North Macedonia, professional burnout has emerged as a significant challenge, affecting both individual employees and overall organizational performance. Recent studies indicate that over 40% of employees in Macedonia experience high levels of stress and burnout, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, education, and IT (State Statistical Office of Macedonia, 2023). This study explores the integration of psychological wellbeing and economic analysis as a comprehensive strategy to address burnout in the workplace, guided by the question: How can organizations in Macedonia and beyond effectively combine psychological support with economic strategies to prevent burnout and enhance employee wellbeing?

Building on the foundational work of Maslach and Leiter (1997), who have extensively documented the dimensions and consequences of burnout, this study introduces a multidisciplinary approach. We combine insights from mental health psychology, special education and rehabilitation, and economics to offer a holistic understanding of burnout and its prevention.

To measure burnout levels among employees, the study utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a widely recognized and validated instrument. The MBI assesses three key dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The survey sample included 250 employees from various sectors in North Macedonia, all of whom had either experienced or were at risk of burnout. In addition to the MBI, a job satisfaction survey and productivity metrics were collected to provide a comprehensive overview of the workplace environment.

The results of the study revealed significant correlations between burnout levels and various organizational factors. Pearson's correlation analysis showed a strong negative correlation between burnout and job satisfaction ($r = -0.65$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of burnout are associated with lower job satisfaction. Additionally, there was a positive correlation between burnout and absenteeism ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that as burnout levels increase, so does the frequency of absenteeism.

Psychological interventions, such as counseling and stress management programs, led to a 30% reduction in reported burnout levels, with emotional exhaustion scores dropping from an average of 4.2 to 2.9 on a 7-point scale. Job satisfaction increased by 20%, as measured by a standardized job satisfaction survey, while productivity metrics improved by 15%. Economically, the cost-benefit analysis demonstrated that for every euro invested in these wellbeing programs, organizations could expect a return of three euros through reduced turnover and absenteeism, alongside increased productivity. These findings align with studies by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), which emphasize the importance of organizational resources in mitigating burnout.

¹⁸ PhD, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, sofija.arnaudova@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

¹⁹ Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, dimitar.kovachevski@gmail.com

²⁰ PhD, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, natasa.stanojkovska@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

While the study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The relatively small sample size and the focus on specific sectors in Macedonia may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand this approach to a broader range of industries and larger samples, potentially incorporating longitudinal data to examine the long-term effects of these interventions.

The implications of this research are significant for both practice and society. Organizations in Macedonia that invest in comprehensive wellbeing programs not only improve employee health and satisfaction but also achieve measurable economic benefits. On a societal level, this research contributes to ongoing efforts to prioritize mental health in the workplace, promoting a culture that values psychological wellbeing alongside organizational performance.

This paper offers a novel contribution to the field by integrating psychological and economic perspectives on burnout, with a specific focus on the context of North Macedonia. The multidisciplinary approach, coupled with a focus on cost-benefit analysis and supported by robust statistical data, provides both researchers and practitioners with actionable insights that can lead to healthier, more productive workplaces.

Students' intentions and their learning outcomes

Laura Fink²¹

Bojan Cestnik²²

Keywords: *intentions, motivation, learning outcomes, ICT skills, digital literacy*

Abstracts

This study focuses on students' intentions to continue engaging in learning activities after completing the undergraduate business informatics' course. Our research is based on the following main hypothesis: students' intentions to further engage with the course content outside of class after course completion are positively and reciprocally associated with their learning outcomes.

Our research expands upon previous studies on capabilities (Murphy and Thomas, 2008), motivation (Heckhausen, 1991), behavior (Hagger and Chatzisarantis, 2012), and intentions (Henri et al., 2018). It bridges the gap in the existing literature by delving deeper into the concept of intentions and the relationships between intentions and outcomes.

We used the correlation matrix, ordinary least squares, and logit multinomial regression analyses in this conceptual pilot study to analyze how the students' intentions matched up with the results they obtained on the practical and theoretical exams. Two cohorts of students (academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24) who visited the first year's undergraduate IT course participated in this study. The IT course consists of theoretical and practical lessons that aim to develop digital literacy skills. At the course completion, the students expressed their intentions to either further develop or not further develop the selected ICT skills. They expressed their intentions on a dichotomous "yes" and "no" scale. Overall, we collected responses from 117 students for each skill analyzed. The preliminary sample comprised a total of 241 students. We reached the response rate close to 49%. The majority of students expressed an interest in utilizing the advanced features of Microsoft PowerPoint (77 interested versus 40 not interested), using Microsoft Project for project management (74 interested versus 43 not interested), and exploring more Word functionalities (71 interested versus 46 not interested). Fewer students expressed their intention to learn programming skills (55 interested versus 62 not interested) and perform more demanding Excel analyses (45 interested versus 72 not interested).

Comparing the students' answers with their assessments of the practical and theoretical exams, we obtained surprising results. The correlation matrix revealed that the students who had the intent to further develop their ICT skills after course completion were less likely to pass the practical and theoretical exams and less likely to achieve one of the top three final grades. Additionally, compared to students who intended to further develop their practical ICT skills, a larger proportion of students who do not intend to further develop ICT skills achieved either the best, second best, or third best possible grade, and fewer students failed the course.

The ordinary least squares and logit multinomial regression analyses failed to produce statistically significant coefficients or sufficient exploratory power for the model. This was likely primarily due to the multicollinearity of the independent variables, as well as partially due to the sample characteristics and sample size. The overrepresentation of students who did not intend to further develop their ICT skills might cause additional bias in the sample, which likely contributes to the quasi-separation issues in our logit model. Any additional logit analysis would require balancing the frequency of sample outcomes.

Although our preliminary pilot models seek improvements, we would like to point out the potential reasons for the negative relationships observed in the correlation matrix. Specifically, the correlation

²¹ Assistant Professor, GEA College, Faculty of entrepreneurship, laura.fink@gea-college.si

²² Full Professor, GEA College, Faculty of entrepreneurship, bojan.cestnik@gea-college.si

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

coefficients show that intentions that we measured are negatively associated with the final outcome, and vice versa. These unexpected findings may stem from students feeling overwhelmed by their current academic obligations. Additionally, they may be goal-driven and looking for the easiest way to fulfill their study obligations. They believe they learned enough to pass the course and need no more. Perhaps they thought that we would add the additional ICT skills to the course syllabus in the future. If they confirmed their intention, they might expect more complex coursework and obligations in the coming years. Obviously, students would like to fulfill the conditions for completing the course but may have too little time to find out what really drives them. Furthermore, the students who felt they had too little knowledge to pass the exam expressed the need for more practice in the skills that they perceived they lacked.

Future research needs to address the issues identified in our preliminary analysis. To improve the exploratory power, reliability, validity, and predictability of the statistical models, we need to improve the preliminary analysis. We can achieve this by balancing the sample, increasing its size, and primarily applying different statistical methods, such as structural equation modeling or network analysis. We acknowledge that our results contradict motivational theories and assume that they may be context-driven. Further inquiry is needed.

Psychological capital and leadership skills

Nejka Mazi Šorn²³

Marko Divjak²⁴

Keywords: *psychological capital, leadership competencies, managers' self-reflection, middle/top management, positive organizational behaviour*

Abstracts

By predicting the competitive edge of psychological capital (PC), we can identify the potential for growth and development through leadership opportunities, in our case - competencies and psychological capital. We therefore ask what is the link between the PC and self-perception of leadership competences among leaders in middle and top management despite the sector.

By developing psychological capital leaders can enhance their competencies and create a more sustainable and resilient organization in the long run. Dimensions of PC (HERO): hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism offer important interventions for fostering mindset growth on an individual level and beyond. The interventions mentioned above reflect positive outcomes (improved performance, well-being at work) at both personal and organizational levels (Abbas, Raja 2015; Ardichvili, 2011; Dello Russo, Stoykova, 2015; Lupsa, Virga, Maricutoiu, Rusu, 2020; Luthans, Avey, Avolio, 2010).

Managers with more PC experience have more positive emotions (Avey, Wernsing, Luthans, 2008; Luthans, Youssef, Avolio, 2015). The evidence based on research shows that this leads to more desirable behaviours (less absenteeism, a wider range of actions on work challenges, more engagement, positive business outcomes, etc.). However, it has also been shown that leaders with less PC exhibit more undesirable behaviours (lower motivation, counterproductivity, presence of negative emotions, cynicism, etc.), which might affect their leadership competencies (Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu, Hirst, 2014). Most of the empirical research in the field of positive organisational behaviour has found a positive correlation between PC and positive workplace outcomes. Data collection for the above constructs was carried out using a single method, namely self-report questionnaires (Donaldson¹, Donaldson², Chan in Wan Kang, 2021; Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu, Hirst, 2014).

The present study employed a non-experimental, correlational design. Data has been collected over two months via social media platforms using a link or a QR code that displayed a survey on the online 1KA platform.

The survey is still ongoing. The goal is to collect data from 150 top and middle managers regardless of the sector and the size of the company in which they work in. The article refers to partial results from a sample of 37 managers.

The quantitative strategy employs primary data obtained through two standardized questionnaires: the PCQ-24 (Luthans, Youssef, Avolio, 2007) and the Leadership Framework: self-assessment tool (NHS Leadership Academy, 2012). The two structured questionnaires were adapted to align with the objectives of the research. They are accompanied by questions regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. The participants rated the statements on a 6-point Likert validity.

The partial results of the study indicate a statistically significant correlation between the dimensions (HERO) of PC and leadership competences among top and middle managers (personal qualities, teamwork, managing and improving processes and others), with a level of significance of $p=0.01$. All

²³ Student, DOBA Business School, nejka.mazi-sorn@net.doba.si

²⁴ Assistant Professor, DOBA Business School, marko.divjak@doba.si

correlations are positive and of medium strength (i.e., Pearson's coefficient value between 0.4 and 0.7).

There are specific segments within the dimensions of HERO that show ineffective coping with stress among leaders and provide optimism when a situation escalates that indicate a slightly lower resilience and optimism. However, middle management leaders excel in personal qualities and teamwork, which are crucial for managing and improving processes. Addressing stress management and maintaining optimism are critical areas for improvement to ensure leaders can effectively handle crises and maintain a positive outlook.

The desired sample size is 150 managers, however, the current results show the analysis of 37 respondents. The results could not be generalised to the entire population, as there was no random selection of respondents. Another limitation is the response bias, or the subjective judgement of managers regarding leadership competencies, as we used self-report questionnaires. Managers' self-perception did not necessarily correspond to actual results, competencies, or performance in the organization. Another issue is that the questionnaires have predefined statements, which limits our understanding of the detailed impact of PC on leadership competencies.

A longitudinal study could be conducted to investigate the impact of PC on leadership competencies through PC interventions. By following participants over an extended period, changes in leadership competencies over time could be observed and the effectiveness of different interventions to enhance PC could be assessed. The findings in our research just show the correlation between the studied variables and not the cause and effect relationship between the variables. Additionally, it would be useful to recruit participants who fit specific criteria, such as top management in organisations, permanent versus temporary employees, and the employed who work directly with clients versus office employees who have less or no interaction or with those who are working 40 hours per week or have flexible schedule.

We examined which dimensions are more prevalent in leaders with higher PC than those with lower PC, and whether there are specific leadership competencies that are associated with certain dimensions of leaders' psychological capital. While correlation analysis between PC and leadership competences does not provide direct evidence of the influence of PC on leadership competences, the results remain valuable for leaders with the aim to enhance their potential strengths and psychological resources. It is reasonable to believe that leaders would improve their leadership competences and skills by strengthening their psychological capital.

The study offers insights into self-assessment in the context of the NHL Leadership Academy self-assessment questionnaire and in middle and top management. It is important for Slovenian business environment because of its insights into the PC and competences of Slovenian managers. Organizations can better select and develop managers who tend to contribute positively to the workplace environment and overall organizational success. Additionally, managers can better balance their areas of strengths. HR specialists, recruiters, talent hunters can make better selection among job applicants, develop training programs and interventions aimed at improving leadership competencies.

Employee attitudes towards positive psychology training in business

Andreja Lavrič²⁵

Keywords: *positive psychology, employee well-being, corporate training, organizational productivity*

Abstracts

The aim of this research is to explore the effectiveness and acceptance of positive psychology training programs in the corporate world. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how various factors such as openness to new concepts, perceived utility, leadership support, past experiences with similar programs, cultural and individual factors, feedback, and the impact on organizational productivity influence employees' attitudes toward these programs.

In the modern business environment, employees face increasing demands and pressures, which can negatively impact their well-being and productivity. Positive psychology has emerged as a crucial field in addressing these challenges, offering strategies to enhance employees' psychological resilience, job satisfaction, and overall performance. Existing literature highlights the benefits of interventions such as mindfulness training, resilience building, and the cultivation of a growth mindset in improving workplace outcomes. However, there is a gap in understanding how employees perceive these interventions and what factors contribute to their successful implementation and acceptance in the workplace. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between employee attitudes and the effectiveness of positive psychology training programs.

The research employed a qualitative methodology, using in-depth interviews to gather data from a sample of employees working in various corporate settings. The sample size consisted of 15 participants, selected to provide a diverse range of perspectives across different industries and organizational roles. The choice of qualitative interviews was driven by the need to capture detailed insights into the personal experiences and perceptions of employees regarding positive psychology programs. The interviews were structured around key themes, including openness to new concepts, perceived utility, leadership support, and past experiences with similar programs, to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the research question.

The findings reveal that the effectiveness and acceptance of positive psychology training programs are significantly influenced by employees' openness to new concepts, their perception of the program's utility in daily work, and the level of support from organizational leadership. Positive past experiences with similar programs also enhance acceptance, while cultural and individual factors play a crucial role in shaping attitudes. Additionally, feedback mechanisms and the perceived impact on organizational productivity were found to be important in determining the overall success of these programs.

The study's limitations include its qualitative nature, which, while providing deep insights, may not be generalizable to all corporate environments. Additionally, the sample size, although sufficient for qualitative analysis, limits the ability to apply the findings broadly. Future research could benefit from a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative measures to validate and expand on these findings across a larger population.

The research has practical implications for organizational leaders and HR professionals seeking to implement positive psychology programs effectively. By understanding the factors that influence employee acceptance and effectiveness, organizations can design and deliver interventions that are more likely to be embraced and have a lasting impact on well-being and productivity. Socially, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how positive psychology can be leveraged to enhance

²⁵ Assoc. Prof. Dr., DOBA Faculty, andreja.lavric@doba.si

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

workplace environments, ultimately influencing public attitudes towards mental health and well-being at work.

This paper offers original insights into the factors that influence the acceptance and effectiveness of positive psychology programs in the corporate sector. It provides valuable guidance for practitioners and researchers interested in the practical application of positive psychology in organizational settings, particularly in designing interventions that align with employee needs and organizational goals.

Selection of positive psychology interventions for the be-well training program: systematic and evidence-based approach

Marko Divjak²⁶

Živa Veingerl Čič²⁷

Virginia Sanchez Jimenez²⁸

Silvija Ručević²⁹

Keywords: *positive psychology interventions, well-being, adolescents, training program curriculum, literature review*

Abstracts

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how the Be-Well Training Program Curriculum was conceptualized on the basis of systematic literature review and identification of best-practice examples in the field of delivering positive psychology interventions (PPIs) to adolescents in a school setting.

Be-Well is the acronym of the ERASMUS+ project, which aims to educate and train high school teachers and counsellors in the use of PPIs, in order for them to be able to help students in strengthening their well-being. Hence, the main objective of the project is to design, implement and evaluate the Be-Well Training Program for high-school teachers and counsellors.

The Be-Well project was initiated for three primary reasons: 1) the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have, in recent years, greatly exacerbated psychosocial distress among adolescents, leading to a decline in their well-being and mental health (Chawla et al., 2021; Panchal et al., 2021); 2) high school curricula generally lack content and strategies to equip both students and teachers with the skills and competencies needed to effectively manage psychosocial distress and promote a happy, healthy life; and 3) PPIs, including kindness boosters, strength-building exercises, and resilience-focused programs, have been scientifically validated as effective in improving well-being and mental health (Kwok, Gu, and Tam, 2022).

Although limited in number, previous systematic reviews and meta-analyses have demonstrated the beneficial effects of school-based multicomponent PPIs on adolescent well-being. These studies reported small effect sizes for subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and depression symptoms, with lasting significance observed in the areas of psychological well-being and depression symptoms over time (Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2020).

The systematic literature review was implemented in accordance with the PICO(T) framework and PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). The eligible studies were further analysed in accordance with the RE-AIM approach (Belza et al., 2006), in order to identify the best-practice examples. These examples/studies were then used to identify the key positive psychology concepts (themes, topics) and related PPIs to be included in the Be-Well Training Program Curriculum.

The initial literature search yielded a total of 30 eligible studies which satisfied all the inclusion criteria. More than half of them demonstrated a positive outcome following PPI implementation. Further analysis and assessment of eligible studies revealed a total of 10 high-quality studies with RE-AIM scores above 80%, which can be considered as best-practice examples. After reviewing the best-practice examples, we identified 11 positive psychology concepts and included them in the Be-Well Training Program Curriculum. We further categorised them into 4 distinctive but related training modules.

²⁶ Assist. Prof., PhD, DOBA Business School, marko.divjak@doba.si

²⁷ Assoc. Prof., PhD, DOBA Business School, ziva.veingerl-cic@doba.si

²⁸ Full Prof., PhD, University of Seville, virsan@us.es

²⁹ Full Prof., PhD, University of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek, srucevic@ffos.hr

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

One limitation of the current literature review is the quality of analyzed studies. The majority of studies had either poor or fair quality, which may have affected the conclusions about the effectiveness of PPIs. Another limitation is the pool of analyzed studies. By adopting less stringent inclusion criteria (now, the focus was on multicomponent PPIs, for instance), the number of eligible studies for analysis could be further increased.

The study provides a backbone for the structure of the Be-Well Training Program Curriculum and offers further direction for the design of the PPIs, suitable for adolescents, to be included in the program.

The significance of this study lies in its identification of positive psychology concepts and their associated PPIs that have been empirically validated as effective in enhancing adolescent well-being within the school context. This increases the chances of the Be-Well Training Program to be properly tailored to the needs of adolescents and to be effective in terms of improving their well-being.

Measuring psychological well-being in the context of adult learning and work

Tanja Rupnik Vec³⁰

Keywords: *psychological well-being, (informal) adult learning, organizational learning*

Abstract

In the context of adult learning and the business sector, well-being is a crucial idea. Furthermore, both domains are related since adult (informal) learning happens in the workplace, whether it is planned or happens at random. Given that several areas of employee functioning are significantly impacted by well-being (Baptiste, 2008, Weziak-Bialowolska, Bialowolski, 2020), it is imperative to address how to best help employees cultivate their well-being. Is this feasible in the context of various informal workplace education programs? The prerequisite for studying well-being in business and adult (informal) education and learning is having a valid and reliable instrument for measuring it, so the main purpose of our study was to validate the instrument for measuring psychological well-being and (in further research) adapt it to Slovenian culture, if needed. The second goal of the study was to conduct a preliminary analysis of the sample data to obtain some understanding of potential relationships between variables, without the intention of drawing any firm conclusions at this point. The third goal was to offer some recommendations for incorporating well-being-promoting principles into non-formal educational initiatives for individuals with differing levels of workplace well-being.

Well-being refers to people's capacity to live a healthy, creative, and fulfilling life. Three conceptual approaches dominate well-being research: objective well-being approach (examines the objective components of a good life, for ex. Western and Tomaszewski, 2016), subjective well-being approach (examines people's subjective evaluations of their lives, for. ex. Deiner, 1984, Kahneman, Diener and Schwarz, 1999, Larsen and Eid, 2008) and psychological well-being approach (examines different aspects of human functioning needed for being able to cope with life; for ex. Ryff and Keyes, 1995). There are six distinct components of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989): self-acceptance (having a positive attitude towards oneself and one's past life), purpose in life (having goals and objectives that give life meaning), environmental mastery (being able to manage complex demands of daily life), personal growth (having a sense of continued development and self-realization), positive relation with others (possessing caring and trusting ties with others), and autonomy (being able to follow one's own convictions).

Numerous studies focused on searching for predictors of well-being (Lereya, Patalay, Deighton, 2022, Trescato, Roversi, 2022, Kokolakakis, Shoemaker, 2024, Macovei and Bumbuc, 2023, Lindholm, 2020) or effects of well-being on different aspects of human functioning (Whyne and Woo, 2023, Skevington and Boehnke, 2018, Baptista, 2008). Research indicates several positive effects of psychological well-being, therefore greater attention from employers should be invested in promoting employee psychological well-being, also through informal educational programs in the workplace.

134 adults, users of non-formal education programs, aged 18 to over 65, completed a shortened 18-item version of the Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) in addition to answering some demographic questions. Six aspects of above mentioned psychological well-being are measured by PWB Scale. Factor analysis was used to confirm the in-depth questionnaire structure, and Cronbach alpha coefficients were computed for each of the PWB subscales. On the scales having the acceptable Cronbach alpha, some sample analysis were conducted: ANOVA, and cluster analysis.

Factor analysis of data didn't confirm the presupposed in-depth structure of the questionnaire. Six factors were derived, explaining 65,64% of the variance. The number of factors correspond to the theory but some items were not loaded with the expected factor. Nevertheless, if correlations

³⁰ PhD., assistant prof., Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and Faculty of Health Sciences, Celje, tanja.rupnik.vec@acs.si

1 Positive psychology in business, education, and social sector

between items are considered, the rearranged sub-scales have acceptable Cronbach alphas. Further analysis of data on these subscales shows almost no differences between subgroups regarding gender, age, education, or marital status. Cluster analysis identifies three clusters that potentially need different approaches in non-formal education programs.

The sample structure doesn't represent the Slovenian working population but reflects the population of informal learners - users of informal educational programs.

The research confirms four of six subscales of the Psychological Well-being Scale as valuable instruments for employers to monitor the psychological well-being of employees. In the theoretical part, we suggested integrating some principles of adult learning that support different aspects of psychological well-being into educational programs in the workplace.

This paper builds on existing work on psychological well-being. It provides a framework for establishing the linkage between adult learning in the workplace and the psychological well-being of employees. Secondly, the research confirms four of six subscales of the Psychological Well-being Scale as valuable instruments for employers to monitor the psychological well-being of employees. Recommendations for integrating some well-being promotion principles into adult learning programs are original.

2

Coaching psychology in business

What role can humour play in coaching?

Silvia King³¹

Keywords: *positive psychology, humour, character strengths, coaching practice, coaching psychology*

Abstract

This 30-minute presentation aims to provide a brief overview of the character strength of humour from a positive psychology (PP) perspective and the integration of (positive) humour in PP Coaching (PPC). The focus of this presentation is to provide ideas for application and awareness for potential risks when working with humour in coaching relationships including manager-as-coach.

Humour is one of 24 recognised character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) that has the potential to foster wellbeing, social connection and creativity (e.g., Niemiec, 2018). In coaching contexts generally and PPC specifically (Biswas-Diener, 2020; Green & Palmer, 2019; Linley & Harrington, 2005), this versatile strength may be a helpful tool for building relationships, facilitate solution-finding and resilience (e.g., Gash, 2017; Turner & Norris, 2022; Wheeler, 2020). While often associated with “fun” aspects like jokes or laughter, humour has a serious side in maladaptive use (e.g., mockery, sneering or sarcasm; Ruch et al., 2018). In addition, humour may not translate easily into other languages, cultures and contexts (e.g., Joshanloo et al., 2014) and as with every character strength, there is the potential for over- or underuse too. Thus, humour requires a careful balance and situational approach in coaching contexts.

This presentation summarises current knowledge about humour and its applications, with a focus on PP, coaching psychology (CP) and coaching practice. It focuses on two aspects specifically:

- The link between coaching as a form of facilitated learning (e.g., Bachkirova et al., 2014) and the benefits of positive affect in learning (e.g., Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009)
- The link between coaching as a relational process (De Haan & Gannon, 2016) and the role of humour in relationship building.

PP and specifically character strengths can play an important role in coaching. A strong case for the link between PP and CP has been made, especially via their application of character strengths-linked approaches (Green & Palmer, 2019; Kauffman, 2006; Linley & Harrington, 2005; McQuaid et al., 2019). However, the question has been asked whether coaching may be a PP intervention in itself (Lomas, 2019) or how PPC may differ from “normal” coaching (Biswas-Diener, 2020).

The character strength of humour, consisting of humour, laughter and playfulness, has the potential to support the coaching process through several channels (Turner & Norris, 2022). Smiles and laughter can support communication and relationship building, while playfulness may help facilitate creativity and solution-finding. In combination, they may generate positive affect and support wellbeing which may benefit not only coaches but also leaders and organisations (Barsade & Gibson, 2007).

The field of humour and PP is vast while research of humour in coaching practice and CP is still developing. Thus, the presentation may omit some facets in the interest of brevity to accommodate the 30-minute time slot while suggesting areas for further research to strengthen the evidence base of this emerging field.

This presentation aims to provide an overview of the current state of research into the character strength of humour, especially in global contexts, suggest ways in which it could be applied in coaching contexts and aims to identify gaps where more research is needed.

³¹ MA/lic.oec.publ., MAPPCP, GMBPsS; Positivity International, silvia@positivity-international.com

Creating effective (health) coaching relationships

Melanie Oeben³²

Daša Grajfoner³³

Keywords: *coaching relationship, long-term unemployment, health coaching, personal construct psychology, repertory grid*

Abstracts

This study represents the first in-depth exploration of the elements that constitute effective (health) coaching relationships within the contexts of health coaching and employment services for long-term unemployed individuals with health restrictions. While evidence indicates that the coaching relationship is a crucial factor for coaching success, the specifics of what constitutes effective (health) relationships remain unclear (Whybrow & Palmer, 2019).

Thus, this research examined how health coaches, placement officers, and their clients perceive effective (health) coaching relationships. Data collection was conducted within the theoretical framework of Personal Construct Psychology using the Repertory Grid Technique (Kelly, 1991a, 1991b) and an open-ended question to capture both implicit and explicit constructs signifying effective (health) coaching relationships. The sample consisted of five health coaches, seven placement officers, and 30 long-term unemployed individuals. The qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis (Honey, 1979) and bootstrapping (Jankowicz, 2004) to identify constructs related to effective (health) coaching relationships and the similarities and differences between the different participant subgroups in this regard. Additionally, multidimensional scaling and multiple linear regression were employed to uncover any underlying structures in the data. This research contributes to the existing literature by addressing the gaps in knowledge regarding effective (health) coaching relationships. As there is currently no established theory of the coaching relationship (Henderson & Palmer, 2021), the findings of this study can serve as a foundational step toward developing such a theory.

Practically, fostering more effective (health) coaching relationships could enhance reintegration rates into the labor market, mitigate the adverse health effects of unemployment, and reduce costs for health and social systems. Moreover, understanding effective (health) coaching relationships is ethically significant, as coaching should aim to assist individuals rather than exacerbate existing issues or create additional burdens. This is particularly relevant for coaching long-term unemployed individuals with health challenges, as they are an inherently disadvantaged group.

The analysis identified 27 key themes that contribute to effective (health) coaching relationships, highlighting relational constructs such as trust, empathy, client readiness for change, and the highly individualized nature of related perceptions. The Repertory Grid Technique and Personal Construct Psychology proved to be effective tools for uncovering these cognitive frameworks. The study's findings offer important insights for enhancing coaching practice, particularly for vulnerable populations.

³² Dr., Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences, melanie.oeben@hs-niederrhein.de

³³ Assoc Prof Dr Daša Grajfoner

Affiliation of the second author: dasa.grajfoner@doba.si

Mind the tone of your inner voice - a coaches application of simple yet powerful techniques that work like magic!

Meta Grošelj³⁴

Keywords: *inner voice, self talk, reparenting, self-representation, self-orientation, empowerment*

Abstract

As a professional speaker coach, I have trained and coached hundreds of leaders on how to develop that external voice to be effective, persuasive, and influential. However much less is said or done about our internal dialogues. Negative intrusive thoughts and ruminations that lead to overwhelming outbursts of catastrophization have haunted my own life up until a point where I have placed only two rules on my inner voice persona. "She" was allowed to say anything she wanted as long as she used - the tonality of respect & feedback sandwich. Little did I know that these two rules allowed me to practically "reparent myself" and follow the 5:1 positive to negative self-talk as a proven method of optimism (Seligman, Charmine), without even knowing it.

As a coach, after analyzing this theoretically, I have helped many clients integrate these crucial elements into their self-talk with amazing results following this simple practice. A simple daily practice - monitoring the tone of voice and also the words we use - affect a person's self-representation hence enabling a renewed self-orientation that deliver amazing results through my coaching practice. It helps silence fears, courage to aim higher, deal with rejection differently, risk more, and achieve more - also in the aspects of work-life balance, inner peace, self-esteem, and self-worth.. In this lecture, I will explain my practice and a couple of theoretical principles that link directly to science.

³⁴ EMCC Slovenija / Slovensko Coaching Združenje, meta@metagroselj.com

Coaching psychology in the age of artificial intelligence: the impact of digital coaching on efficiency in the business world

Manca Gruden³⁵

Keywords: *coaching psychology, digital coaching, artificial intelligence, business efficiency, organizational development*

Abstracts

The aim of this research/paper is to comprehensively explore the impact of digital coaching on efficiency and performance in today's business world and to examine how the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can further enhance these effects. I aim to analyze how digital coaching contributes to employee development, increased productivity, and the achievement of business goals. I will investigate how AI within digital coaching can further improve these results.

The research questions are:

1. How does digital coaching influence the effectiveness of employee development and business results in organizations?

2. In what ways can the use of Artificial Intelligence in digital coaching further amplify these effects?

In the modern business world, where digitalization and technological innovations are crucial, organizations are increasingly turning to digital coaching as a means for employee development. Digital coaching offers flexibility, accessibility, and personalization, which traditional methods struggle to provide. Existing literature shows positive effects of digital coaching on employee development and the use of AI in enhancing various business processes. This research aims to fill the gap in understanding the impact of integrating AI into digital coaching on concrete business results by synthesizing existing sources and analyzing practical examples.

I will conduct a systematic literature review, encompassing peer-reviewed articles, industry reports, and case studies from the period 2015–2023/(2024). The analysis will be divided into two parts: the first will examine the impact of digital coaching on key performance indicators such as productivity, employee satisfaction, and the achievement of business goals; the second part will investigate how the integration of AI into digital coaching affects these indicators. By synthesizing these sources, we will identify main trends, challenges, and opportunities.

I anticipate that the research will show that digital coaching significantly contributes to improving employee efficiency and organizational results. Digital coaching allows for better adaptation to individual employee needs, promotes continuous learning, and facilitates adjustment to changes. Furthermore, the integration of AI into digital coaching can further enhance these effects by enabling advanced personalization, real-time responsiveness, and data-driven decision-making. The findings will highlight the importance of digital coaching as a strategic tool in the business world and the role of AI in further improving these processes.

The research is based on secondary sources and may not capture the latest few weeks/months practices in the rapidly evolving field of digital coaching and AI. Future research could include empirical studies with direct data collection from organizations actively using digital coaching and AI, which would allow for an in-depth understanding of the impact on long-term business results.

This research provides insights into how digital coaching can improve business results and contribute to employee development. In our part of the European Union, the use of digital coaching—especially with AI integration—is still relatively uncommon. Therefore, this research serves as an opportunity to raise awareness of the advantages of these approaches and encourage their adoption. Organizations can leverage these findings to enhance their talent development strategies, increase competitiveness,

³⁵ Doba Business School, manca.gruden01@gmail.com

and promote innovation. Socially, broader use of digital coaching can contribute to increasing digital literacy, reducing skill gaps, and promoting economic growth.

The paper combines an analysis of the impact of digital coaching on the business world with research on how Artificial Intelligence can further enhance these effects. In doing so, it fills an important gap in the existing literature and offers practical guidelines for organizations and professionals. The originality of the research lies in its comprehensive approach, linking the general impact of digital coaching with the specific benefits of AI integration, especially in the context of our region where these approaches are still in the early stages of development.

Liberating the will through coaching (MA psychosynthesis coaching thesis summary)

Jasenka Gojšić³⁶

Keywords: *psychosynthesis, free will, coaching, self, transpersonal psychology*

Abstracts

This paper is the summary of my MA Psychosynthesis Coaching Thesis. It explores the concept of Free Will in coaching, specifically focusing on Psychosynthesis. The aim is to understand how coaching can support the liberation of the Will, a concept deeply connected to the Self in Psychosynthesis theory. Roberto Assagioli's work on the Will, especially in *The Act of Will and Psychosynthesis*, serves as the foundational theory for this exploration. The Will is considered the first manifestation of the Self, and its liberation is seen as key to human flourishing.

This research situates itself in transpersonal psychology, integrating insights from Roberto Assagioli, Abraham Maslow, Viktor Frankl, and Carl Rogers. Assagioli's Psychosynthesis emphasises the centrality of the Will in self-realisation, aligning with Maslow's concept of self-actualisation and Rogers' notion of organismic self-direction. Both Maslow and Rogers advocate for personal growth and authenticity, while Frankl's logotherapy highlights the freedom of choice in finding meaning, resonating with the liberation of the Will. These perspectives inform how psychosynthesis coaching aids individuals in transcending limitations, aligning with their authentic selves, and realizing their highest potential. Fifteen coaches were interviewed; half were trained in psychosynthesis, and the other half were from various coaching backgrounds.

Four key questions guided these conversations:

1. What is Free Will to you?
2. How do you hold the Self and reality simultaneously?
3. How do you sense your clients' Free Will and readiness for change?
4. How do you align small steps with clients' desired outcomes in a six-session coaching series?

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed, forming a reflective dialogue around key themes such as Free Will, trifocal vision, and the coaching process itself.

The study revealed diverse understandings of Free Will. Coaches with a background in Psychosynthesis tend to view Free Will as a manifestation of the Self, closely linked to personal growth and alignment with one's higher purpose. In contrast, coaches without this background see Will more as the capacity to make choices. Nonetheless, both groups recognize the importance of fostering a client's ability to choose and act from a place of authenticity and freedom.

Holding the "trifocal vision"—the ability to simultaneously see the client's Self, their current reality, and the steps needed for change—emerged as a key coaching skill. Coaches must balance this vision lightly, without imposing their own agenda, allowing the client's Will to emerge naturally.

The study focused primarily on the philosophical aspects of coaching, excluding operational elements and direct client experiences. Future research might explore coaching based on other transpersonal psychological frameworks to broaden the scope.

The study emphasises that coaching is not about imposing change but facilitating a space for the client's Free Will to emerge. Coaches must stay attuned to the client's Will and readiness for change, creating a space where the Self can manifest through small, aligned steps. The research also underscores the importance of resonance—establishing a connection where both coach and client are in tune with each other's inner worlds.

Liberating the Will through coaching involves fostering awareness of the client's inherent potential and aligning their actions with their deeper Self. This process brings about transformation and joy,

³⁶ *Isoropia, Zagreb, Croatia; DOBA Faculty Maribor, jasenka.gojsic@isoropia.hr*

suggesting that successful coaching is rooted in love, respect for the client's autonomy, and a deep connection with the Self. As the Will is liberated, joy naturally follows, reinforcing that the Will is the language of the Self.

Family dynamics and female entrepreneurship: the impact of motherhood, partnership, and family obligations in different life stages

Mateja Vadnjal³⁷

Brina Vadnjal³⁸

Jaka Vadnjal³⁹

Keywords: *motherhood, female entrepreneurship, womanpreneurship, life stages, motivation for entrepreneurship*

Abstracts

In this paper, we examine the role of motherhood, partnership, and family dynamics as critical factors influencing female entrepreneurship across different life stages. While female entrepreneurs have been widely recognized for their contributions to economic innovation and community development, the impact of family responsibilities and relationships on their entrepreneurial journeys remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by investigating how motherhood, partnerships, and family structures shape the motivations, opportunities, and challenges that women face in starting and managing businesses at various stages of their lives.

The research is based on quantitative data received by questionnaires responded by female entrepreneurs across multiple industries and age groups. The findings reveal that family roles and responsibilities, particularly motherhood, significantly influence women's entrepreneurial motivations, decisions, and strategies. For many women, motherhood serves as both a motivating force and a constraint; while the need for flexibility and autonomy often drives them toward entrepreneurship, the dual demands of parenting and business ownership frequently present considerable challenges.

Partnership dynamics also play a pivotal role in shaping entrepreneurial experiences. Supportive partnerships—where partners share household responsibilities and provide emotional and financial support—tend to enhance women's capacity to pursue and sustain entrepreneurial ventures. Conversely, partnerships characterized by unequal distribution of domestic labor or lack of support can limit women's business growth and increase stress. The study further identifies how partnership quality and roles evolve over time, impacting entrepreneurial engagement differently at various life stages, such as early career, mid-career, and later life. These dynamics highlight the importance of understanding the fluid and evolving nature of family and partnership roles in the entrepreneurial context.

Additionally, the research explores how extended family networks and caregiving roles beyond immediate motherhood influence women's entrepreneurial journeys. Many female entrepreneurs rely on extended family support, such as grandparents or siblings, for childcare or emotional support, which can significantly reduce the burden of balancing work and family life. However, caregiving responsibilities for aging parents or other family members can introduce new challenges, especially in later life stages. The paper underscores that family structures, such as single motherhood, blended families, or multigenerational households, present unique entrepreneurial challenges and opportunities, further complicating the narrative of female entrepreneurship.

The study also considers the broader socio-cultural and policy contexts that shape how family dynamics affect female entrepreneurship. It reveals that cultural norms regarding gender roles, the

³⁷ Alma Mater Europaea University, mateja.vadnjal@gmail.com

³⁸ vadnjal.brina@gmail.com

³⁹ GEA College of Entrepreneurship, jaka.vadnjal@gea-college.si

availability of family-friendly policies, and access to affordable childcare and flexible work arrangements significantly influence women's ability to balance entrepreneurship with family responsibilities. In particular, the paper finds that policy environments that support shared parenting and caregiving, provide robust social safety nets, and promote gender equity in both domestic and professional spheres are critical to fostering female entrepreneurship.

This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of female entrepreneurship by recognizing the diverse and evolving influences of motherhood, partnership, and family across different life stages. It calls for more inclusive entrepreneurial models that accommodate the realities of women's lives and advocates for policies and support systems that enable women to thrive as entrepreneurs while fulfilling their family roles. Future research should further investigate the intersectionality of these factors, considering variations across cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and business sectors, to develop a more comprehensive framework for understanding and supporting female entrepreneurship.

Psychological consequences of cyber attacks in the business world

Andreja Lavrič⁴⁰

Keywords: *cyber attacks, psychological consequences, education, psychological support*

Abstracts

The aim of this research is to explore the psychological impact of cyber attacks on employees and management within businesses. Specifically, it examines how these incidents affect organizational culture, employee well-being, and productivity, emphasizing the importance of psychological support and preventive measures, such as stress education, relaxation techniques, and debriefing sessions.

Cyber attacks have become a significant threat in the modern business environment, leading not only to financial and operational disruptions but also to profound psychological impacts on employees and management. Existing literature has primarily focused on the technical and financial aspects of cyber security, with less attention given to the human element. This research fills that gap by analyzing the psychological consequences of cyber incidents, placing these findings within the broader context of organizational behavior and mental health studies. Moreover, it highlights the critical role of preventive measures, such as stress management training, relaxation techniques, and regular debriefing sessions, in mitigating the negative psychological effects on employees.

This study employs a qualitative research method, specifically case study analysis, to explore the psychological consequences of cyber attacks. Three case studies of businesses that experienced significant cyber incidents were selected, with data gathered through interviews with affected employees and management. Additionally, the research examined the impact of preventive measures, such as stress education programs and relaxation techniques, on the well-being of employees. The rationale for using this method is to provide an in-depth understanding of the human impact of cyber attacks, which quantitative data alone cannot capture.

The analysis reveals that cyber attacks result in high levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout among employees, particularly those directly involved in incident response. The findings also indicate a significant erosion of trust in the company's ability to protect sensitive data, leading to decreased morale and increased employee turnover. Long-term psychological impacts, such as symptoms resembling PTSD, were observed in some cases, highlighting the need for specialized psychological support.

The primary limitation of this study is the focus on a small number of case studies, which may not be representative of all businesses. Future research could expand the sample size and explore the psychological impact of cyber attacks across different industries. Additionally, the study's qualitative nature limits the ability to generalize findings, suggesting the need for further quantitative research.

This research has practical implications for businesses, emphasizing the need for comprehensive cyber security strategies that include psychological support for employees. The findings also suggest that promoting a culture of transparency and open communication, combined with regular stress management training and relaxation techniques, can mitigate the negative psychological impact of cyber attacks, ultimately leading to better organizational resilience. Socially, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the human cost of cyber crime, encouraging more holistic approaches to cyber security.

This paper offers a novel perspective on cyber security by focusing on the often-overlooked psychological consequences of cyber attacks and the importance of preventive measures, such as stress education and relaxation techniques. It is particularly valuable for business leaders, HR

⁴⁰ Assoc. Prof. Dr., DOBA Faculty, andreja.lavric@doba.si

professionals, and mental health practitioners who are involved in developing and implementing cyber security and employee well-being strategies.

The role of coaching in enhancing employee well-being and resilience

Lejla Lerić Imamović⁴¹

Cumhur Demiralp⁴²

Keywords: *coaching, satisfaction, performance*

Abstracts

Given that formal forms of education cannot meet all the demands of the market, technology and employers, it is inevitable to include other forms of learning. Coaching represents a specific method of monitoring employees, mentoring them, and building a new, better version of the employee. It is a technique that is increasingly present in different companies around the world. The main goal is to examine the benefits of coaching for the employee, but also to try to examine the advantages of this method for companies. The main purpose of the paper is to point out the importance of coaching, and to give suggestions, based on the results of empirical research, on how to apply this method even better and more efficiently.

The topic of employee coaching is very current, and numerous authors have previously written about it. Nuryanti and colleagues (2018) talk about how the human factor is the most important in the organization and how coaching is a key factor in their personal success. The results of their research indicate that employees are much more effective if they are guided by the instructions of their mentors at work. In their research, Sidhu and Nizam (2020) believe that coaching is one of the important extrinsic factors to drive the success of workforce and organizational performance. In their research, Utrilla et al. (2015) tested their own standardized model with which they tested the impact of coaching on employee efficiency, and came to very important results, which indicate that employees under the influence of coaching achieve much better results. In the research of Pous and associates (2014) it is stated that coaching has been identified as a key managerial behavior that organizations must promote to develop employees. Wahome and Ogolla (2021) found that employee performance is important in determining a firm's capacity to confer sustainable competitive advantage and high performing employees are those who improve firm's performance. Carpio and Urbano (2021) stated that there is a relationship between employee job satisfaction and employee coaching. Authors Brzeziński and Jędrzejczyk talk about the importance of employee coaching in Poland, and the positive experience in this country.

The research was conducted on a sample of 50 respondents - employees who had a mentor at their job, and on a sample of 50 employees - people who did not have a mentor at their job. In the sample there will be employees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two items will be determined on the basis of the relevant scales: employee satisfaction at work as well as employee performance. Descriptive and inferential statistics methods will be used in the process of presenting research results.

It is expected that the results of the research will indicate that there is a connection, that is, a high degree of correlation between coaching and employee satisfaction at work, and coaching and the performance of respondents. It is expected to prove that people are more satisfied and do their work better when they have mentors at work.

Certain limitations may be related to the data collection process and the lack of trust on the part of the respondents towards the researcher. Recommendations for further research can be related to the research of variables such as: organizational culture, management style, company strategy and their connection with the coaching variable.

⁴¹ Master of psychology/PhD student, University Hercegovina, lejladrpd@gmail.com

⁴² PhD, Hakkari University, cumhurdemiralp@hakkari.edu.tr

It is expected that the importance of coaching for the entire business of the company will be pointed out, and a suggestion will be given to company managers to include coaching in their organizations as a key variable in the development of new employees.

This is the first survey of this type on employees in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is expected that the results of the research will improve business practices in this country.

Coaching psychology: animal assisted coaching at workplace and education

Daša Grajfoner⁴³

Keywords: *animal assisted coaching, coaching psychology, wellbeing, mental health*

Abstracts

This talk introduces and contextualizes Animal Assisted Coaching (AAC) as part of Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI). The benefits of these interventions often align with the core objectives of coaching psychology: enhancing life experiences, increasing well-being, and fostering self-awareness and personal development. The presentation aims to highlight key areas and benefits of AAC and presents a study on a dog-assisted university visitation program, exploring the effects of 20-minute interactions with therapy dogs on participants' well-being, depression, and anxiety.

Animal-assisted interventions can be categorized into Animal Assisted Psychological Therapy (AAT), Animal Assisted Physical Therapy (AAPT), Animal Assisted Learning or Education (AAL), Animal Assisted Activities (AAA), and, more recently, Animal Assisted Coaching (AAC) (Grajfoner, 2012). Other terms, such as Horse Assisted Personal Development and Equine Leadership Coaching, are also used. To define AAC practice, we will first present AAC areas supported by examples, program outcomes, and intervention evaluations. Practicing psychologists have integrated animals into interventions for various issues, enhancing life experiences and psychological well-being by increasing awareness of behavior, emotions, thinking, and social interactions. For example, AAC has been shown to improve communication and interaction skills, trust (Yorke et al., 2008), team building, leadership, empathy (Thompson & Gullone, 2008), self-esteem, and self-control. It also plays a motivational role by addressing antisocial behavior, fostering empathy, and improving social interactions (Ellingsen et al., 2010). These interventions have been reported to decrease loneliness (Banks & Banks, 2002) and increase positive social interactions (Breitenbach et al., 2009). Clients also reported feeling more self-supportive, living fully in the present, and focusing less on fears, regrets, and guilt (Klontza et al., 2007). Recently, college and university students, a non-clinical group, have received increased attention in the AAI literature. Student mental health, resilience, and well-being are critical concerns for universities as they influence academic performance and the ability to navigate personal transitions, such as moving away from home and adapting to new environments. These transitions can be significant stressors, potentially compromising mental health.

Dog-assisted interventions and visitation programs have shown a significant positive impact on student mental health, resilience, well-being, and performance. A series of studies exploring these outcomes was conducted in partnership with Canine Scotland, which regularly runs the dog-assisted activity and visitation program Therapet in collaboration with several Scottish universities.

A total of 132 university students were allocated to either an experimental condition or one of two control conditions. Each participant completed the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMBS), the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), and the UWIST Mood Adjective Checklist (UMACL) before and after the intervention. In the experimental condition, participants interacted with both the dogs and their handlers, while control groups interacted only with the dog or the handler alone. Analysis revealed significant differences across conditions for each measure. Conditions with a dog present led to notable increases in mood and well-being and significant reductions in anxiety. The presence of a handler alongside the dog appeared to have a slightly negative effect on participants' mood, with greater positive shifts observed when participants interacted with the dog alone compared to interactions with both dog and handler.

These findings demonstrate that even a short, 20-minute interaction with a therapy dog can effectively improve participants' well-being, anxiety, and mood. AAC should thus be considered an integrative

⁴³ Assoc.Prof. Dr., DOBA Business School, dasa.grajfoner@doba.si

component when planning and implementing effective intervention strategies in educational and workplace settings.

3

Leadership and development of leadership skills

Lead fairly, lead effectively: the art of supervisory justice

Ana Belajdžić⁴⁴

Keywords: *supervisory justice, practical strategies, challenges and barriers*

Abstracts

Supervisory justice plays a pivotal role in shaping workplace dynamics, employee satisfaction, and organizational success. The concept encompasses the fairness with which supervisors interact with and manage their teams, influencing not only individual performance but also collective morale and organizational culture. This lecture explores the multifaceted nature of supervisory justice, emphasizing its significance in fostering effective leadership and sustainable organizational growth.

The concept of supervisory justice encompasses three primary dimensions: distributive justice (fairness in outcomes like pay and promotions), procedural justice (fairness in the processes leading to decisions), and interactional justice (fairness in interpersonal treatment). Together, these dimensions form the foundation of supervisory justice, highlighting the need for fairness in both decision-making and communication.

In practice, leading fairly is not simply an ethical imperative but also a strategic advantage. Research consistently demonstrates that when employees perceive their supervisors as just, they exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment. Conversely, perceived injustice can lead to negative outcomes such as burnout, turnover intention, and even counterproductive work behaviors. Thus, understanding and implementing principles of supervisory justice is essential for leaders seeking to optimize both individual and organizational outcomes.

This lecture will delve into practical strategies for supervisors to enhance fairness in their leadership approach. First, ensuring transparency in decision-making is crucial. When employees understand how and why decisions are made, they are more likely to perceive those decisions as fair, even if the outcomes are not in their favor. Clear communication and consistent application of policies contribute to this sense of procedural justice. Second, engaging in active listening and providing constructive feedback fosters interactional justice. Supervisors who take the time to understand employees' perspectives, show respect, and offer meaningful support are more likely to build trust and loyalty within their teams.

Additionally, this presentation will address the challenges and barriers to achieving supervisory justice, such as implicit biases, power imbalances, and organizational constraints. Supervisors must navigate these complexities while maintaining a commitment to fairness. Practical solutions, including self-awareness training, inclusive decision-making practices, and fostering an open, feedback-rich environment, will be discussed. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of leadership development programs that equip supervisors with the skills necessary to lead justly and effectively.

Furthermore, the lecture will examine the broader implications of supervisory justice for organizational success. Fair leadership practices are linked to improved team cohesion, innovation, and resilience in the face of challenges. In an increasingly complex and competitive business environment, organizations that prioritize fairness at the supervisory level are better positioned to attract and retain top talent, enhance employee well-being, and sustain long-term growth.

In conclusion, the art of supervisory justice lies in the delicate balance between fairness, empathy, and strategic decision-making. By leading fairly and effectively, supervisors not only create a more positive work environment but also contribute to the overall success and sustainability of their organizations.

⁴⁴ Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University od Osijek, Croatia, abelajdzic@ffos.hr

3 Leadership and development of leadership skills

This lecture will provide actionable insights and evidence-based strategies for leaders to master the art of supervisory justice, ultimately empowering them to lead with integrity and impact.

Evidence for the effectiveness of workplace and executive coaching: why we still don't know whether coaching works - and how we can find out

David Tee⁴⁵

Keywords: *meta-analysis; workplace coaching, executive coaching, ROI coaching, coaching impact*

Abstracts

The primary objective of this meta-meta-analysis was to determine the effects of executive and workplace coaching on individuals and organisations. The secondary objective was to assess the quality and risk of bias of executive and workplace coaching meta-analyses and identify recommendations to increase the rigour of future coaching research.

Executive and workplace coaching have been widely adopted in organisations across the world for several decades, but calls for evidence of their effectiveness have persisted. The volume of individual coaching research studies now allows findings to have been aggregated into meta-analyses (MAs) in efforts by researchers to generate the most robust evidence. This study sought to analyse the findings from these MAs to produce the first ever coaching meta-meta-analysis (MMA) which, in theory, should produce the clearest evidence to date on coaching's effectiveness.

PRISMA guidelines were adhered to throughout. Peer-reviewed studies published in Chinese, English, French, German or Spanish and labelled as meta-analyses of coaching featuring individuals of working age engaging in workplace or executive coaching and presumed to be neurotypically functioning were within scope. Risk of bias was assessed using the ROBIS tool, quality was determined using the AMSTAR2 quality assessment tool and results were synthesised using a random effects model.

This MMA identified eight meta-analytic studies that investigated the effects of coaching, based upon 104 primary studies involving 8060 participants. Only three primary studies featured organisation-level dependent variables, prohibiting any meaningful statistical analysis. For individual-level outcomes, a mean Hedges' g of .65 was calculated. However, the AMSTAR 2 quality assessment tool produced a 'critically low' score for all eight source MAs, multiple risks of bias were identified and the GRADE tool indicated a very low level of confidence.

This MMA applied PRISMA meta-analysis protocols to scrutinise existing coaching MAs and detail issues around design, quality and bias which suggest any evidence-based claims as to coaching's effectiveness need to be made with extreme caution. Regarding the secondary objective, seven specific recommendations for researchers to enhance the rigour of future coaching synthesis studies have been determined.

This is the first meta-meta-analysis to be conducted using executive and workplace coaching research. In applying synthesis research norms, it identifies multiple opportunities to shape future coaching effectiveness research and, hopefully, generate data in the future that will more rigorously identify coaching's impact.

⁴⁵ Dr., University of Cambridge, dt578@cam.ac.uk

A successful psychopath: myth or fact?

Silvija Ručević⁴⁶

Živa Veingerl Čič⁴⁷

Nika Regušić⁴⁸

Keywords: *psychopathy, corporate, successful, leadership*

Abstracts

This research aims to explore the concept of psychopathy beyond common stereotypes, particularly the widespread perception of psychopaths as violent criminals or cold-blooded killers. The central research question seeks to understand how psychopathic traits manifest in "successful" psychopaths—individuals who excel in corporate and political environments. Additionally, the study aims to assess the broader societal and ethical implications of these findings, ultimately shifting the focus from extreme cases to a more nuanced understanding of psychopathy in everyday professional contexts.

Psychopathy is often misunderstood and sensationalized, particularly in media portrayals that focus on extreme criminal behaviors. Popular culture tends to depict psychopathic individuals as ruthless and morally bankrupt. However, foundational research by psychologists like Hervey Cleckley and Robert Hare offers a more comprehensive view. Cleckley described psychopaths as individuals who exhibit superficial charm coupled with a profound lack of empathy, traits often concealed behind what he termed a "mask of sanity." This emphasizes how individuals can appear normal and charismatic while harboring harmful tendencies. Robert Hare's Psychopathy Checklist (PCL) has become a key diagnostic tool for identifying psychopathy, highlighting traits such as impulsivity, manipulation, and superficial charm.

While many people equate psychopathy with criminality, research shows that certain individuals with psychopathic traits can thrive in corporate and political environments. This phenomenon has led to the emergence of the concept of "successful" psychopaths—individuals who utilize their traits to manipulate situations and climb social hierarchies. Literature reviews indicate that these successful psychopaths often possess attributes like charisma, risk-taking, and adept manipulation, allowing them to excel in high-stakes settings, such as corporate boardrooms or political arenas. They may lack empathy and remorse, yet their charm and confidence help them evade detection. This raises important questions about the role of psychopathy in professional contexts and suggests that while these traits can be harmful to others, they can also be adaptive for those who possess them.

A significant limitation in the current study of "successful" psychopaths is the reliance on public figures for psychopathy assessments. Such evaluations are based primarily on behavioral observations rather than clinical diagnoses, which can lead to inaccuracies. Future research should incorporate psychological assessments and broaden the sample size to include cross-cultural analyses of how psychopathy manifests across different societies.

Understanding "successful" psychopathy is crucial for developing strategies to mitigate their potentially harmful influence in professional settings. In the corporate world, recognizing manipulative behaviors can lead to healthier work environments and improved organizational culture. This research also calls for a broader societal understanding of psychopathy, encouraging a move away from the criminal stereotype to recognize its presence in more subtle, everyday forms.

By shifting the focus from criminal psychopaths to those who thrive in non-criminal domains, this research offers a unique perspective on psychopathy's role in shaping leadership and societal

⁴⁶ University of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek, srucevic@ffos.hr

⁴⁷ DOBA Business School, ziva.veingerl-cic@doba.si

⁴⁸ University of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek, nika.regusic@gmail.com

structures. The findings hold significant value for professionals in psychology, business, and politics as they navigate the complexities of human behavior and its impact on organizational and societal outcomes.

Unlocking leadership success: the critical role of professional identity

Yekaterina Solomeyeva⁴⁹

Keywords: *professional identity, leadership effectiveness, self-determination, personal development, ethical leadership*

Abstracts

This paper analyzes the relationship between professional identity and leadership success, examining its connections to individual and organizational outcomes such as team culture and employee satisfaction. The insights gained will help develop self-aware, authentic leaders who inspire their teams. This research seeks to expand the understanding of leadership by integrating personal dimensions of identity and self-determination, offering theoretical insights and practical recommendations to enhance leadership effectiveness in diverse organizational settings.

Professional identity has become a crucial focus, influencing leader-team interactions and shaping leadership outcomes. Understanding how professional identity impacts leadership emphasizes themes like professional self-awareness and self-determination.

Professional identity, shaped by values, experiences, and social contexts, enhances self-awareness, engagement, trust, and team cohesion. Studies indicate that leaders with a strong professional identity demonstrate resilience and adaptability, effectively overcoming challenges and fostering inclusive cultures. However, the intricate relationship between professional identity and organizational outcomes related to leadership development remains underexplored.

This paper employs a mixed-methods research approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data for a nuanced understanding of the relationship between professional identity and effective leadership practices. Methods include surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

The analysis reveals that leaders with a robust professional identity often adopt transformational leadership styles, demonstrating adaptability, resilience, and relational skills that foster trust and collaboration. This correlation highlights the significance of a well-defined professional identity in achieving organizational goals and enhancing team dynamics.

The research identifies key factors contributing to robust professional identity development among leaders, including personal experiences, mentor relationships, organizational culture, and continuous professional development. Reflective practices, such as self-assessment and feedback, are instrumental in refining professional identities. Leaders with clear professional identities navigate career advancement opportunities more effectively, aligning personal goals with organizational objectives.

Practically, the findings underscore the need for organizations to prioritize professional identity development in leadership training. By implementing mentorship initiatives, reflective practices, and professional development opportunities, organizations can cultivate self-aware leaders who foster collaboration and innovation. This contributes to improved leadership styles, enhanced team dynamics, and increased employee engagement and retention.

Socially, strong professional identities among leaders can influence the broader corporate landscape. An emphasis on developing these identities can shift public perceptions of leadership to value self-awareness, adaptability, and ethical consideration, encouraging higher standards in corporate governance. As effective leaders drive positive organizational change, a ripple effect may promote social responsibility and corporate accountability, fostering public trust in businesses.

⁴⁹ International Professional Development Expert, Business Detox d.o.o, katerina.s@detoxforbusiness.com

This research also challenges traditional leadership views, advocating for diversity and inclusivity in leadership roles. By recognizing the importance of different professional identities, organizations may become more receptive to diverse perspectives, leading to equitable representation in leadership. This can inspire younger generations to pursue leadership roles and shift public perceptions of effective leadership. Ultimately, focusing on professional identity development not only benefits individuals and organizations but also enhances societal norms around leadership and corporate responsibility, promoting resilient and ethically minded business practices.

This paper introduces a novel perspective by linking professional identity to leadership effectiveness, emphasizing self-awareness and personal values as crucial in shaping leadership styles. It targets organizational leaders, HR professionals, educators, and management trainers, providing actionable insights for enhancing leadership development programs. Its value lies in practical applications and societal implications, advocating for cultures that prioritize self-awareness and continuous growth, leading to more effective and inclusive leadership practices.

Strategies for leadership growth and skill development

Viktor Jovanović⁵⁰

Vida Jovanović⁵¹

Keywords: *leader, leadership qualities, leadership models, pathological traits of leaders*

Abstract

A leader is a person who surpasses their time and circumstances, shaping destinies and guiding collectives towards common goals. They inspire and motivate others, provide direction, and create visions that transcend everyday challenges. A leader is a catalyst for change and a driver of success.

Every leader uses a style appropriate to a given situation and, as such, demonstrates originality and effectiveness. The styles can be: visionary leader, instructive leader, affiliative leader, democratic leader, pace-setting leader, dominant leader.

Leaders face significant challenges during crises, requiring not only strategic thinking and quick decision-making but also high emotional intelligence. This skill helps them manage their own emotions and understand others' feelings, crucial for leadership success and organizational effectiveness. This paper explores how mastering emotional intelligence can be a key factor in navigating crises and achieving effective leadership.

Today, the two most commonly used models of emotional intelligence that we will cover in this lecture are the Mayer-Salovey model and the Bar-On model.

Leadership transcends technical skills, requiring deep insight into individuals' emotions and desires. Understanding these psychological factors is crucial for guiding teams effectively. From Freud's early psychoanalytic theories to Manfred Kets de Vries' modern research, the psychological dimension of leadership remains essential for success.

Special attention will be given to analyzing how pathological personality traits, such as hypomania, alexithymia, and narcissism, can contribute to dysfunction in leadership. We will also examine the difference between mature and immature narcissism and its impact on leadership. This analysis can help us better understand the complex dynamics that shape successful leadership and illuminate key personality aspects that can be critical to a leader's effectiveness.

Influence is the so-called sine qua non of leadership—without influence, leadership does not exist. Based on these traits, various leadership models have evolved over time. This text reviews leadership theories across three main categories.

Trait Models argue that leaders possess inherent traits like intelligence or charisma, with modern profiles including emotional intelligence.

Behavioral Models include the Authoritarian (leader makes all decisions), Democratic (leader involves team), and Laissez-faire (leader grants autonomy) approaches. Contingency Models suggest leadership effectiveness depends on aligning styles with situational factors. Key models include Fiedler's (matching style to situation), House-Mitchell (adapting to team needs), Stinson-Johnson (adapting to conditions), Vroom-Yetton (guidelines for style use), and Hersey-Blanchard (adjusting based on team readiness). Effective leadership often involves blending these approaches to meet specific challenges. This research aims to identify key traits of successful leaders and their effectiveness in managing crises and maintaining stability under pressure. It employs a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods:

1. Interviews: Conducted with leaders and their teams to understand important traits and their impact on team dynamics.

⁵⁰ Student, DOBA Business School, viktor.b.jovanovic@gmail.com

⁵¹ Business coach, Association, M-dina internacional, vida.stankovic.jovanovic@gmail.com

2. Case Studies: Analyzed exceptional leaders for detailed insights.

3. Questionnaires: Used standardized tools like the LPI, MBTI, and Emotional Intelligence assessments to gather data on leader traits and their effects.

The study involved interviews with 20 successful foreign leaders and surveys with 100 respondents, supplemented by relevant scientific literature for a thorough analysis.

In addition to our own research, we utilized available scientific studies and literature relevant to this topic.

This research paper identifies key traits essential for effective leadership, including expert knowledge, social skills, motivation, honesty, integrity, creativity, emotional intelligence, focus, crisis performance, vision, teamwork, and communication skills. Ruben and Gigliotti emphasize that influence is crucial to leadership, as it drives the interaction and communication within a team.

Research on key leadership traits can enhance professional practice and social structures by improving training, mentoring, evaluation, and feedback systems. These insights help organizations develop better leaders and shape future generations of leaders.

The value and originality of this work lie in the following aspects:

- It has thematic depth, addressing complex issues of leadership and emotional intelligence.
- The use of various research methods (interviews, case studies, questionnaires) allows for diverse insights.
- The analysis of personal traits, with a focus on pathological characteristics of leaders and their impact on leadership, introduces a new dimension, which may be less explored in traditional leadership theories. This offers a unique perspective on the challenges leaders face.
- Practical implications: Identifying key traits of successful leaders and their effects on team dynamics can help organizations in developing future leaders, thus improving professional practice.

Challenges of digital well-being in the workplace: a human resource management perspective

Ana Marija Gričnik⁵²

Simona Šarotar Žižek⁵³

Branka Zolak Poljašević⁵⁴

Keywords: *digital well-being, workplace well-being, human resource management*

Abstracts

The primary objective of this paper is to explore the challenges of digital well-being within the workplace from a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective. It seeks to analyze existing literature on digital well-being, assess practical interventions that organizations and HR professionals can implement, and identify critical gaps for future research. The paper addresses the following research question: *“How can HRM strategies help organizations and individuals to achieve and maintain digital well-being in an era of rapidly evolving digital technologies?”*

In today’s digital era, the integration of modern technologies into the workplace has revolutionized how organizations operate and how employees perform their tasks. Digital tools and platforms offer unparalleled access to information, resources, and colleagues, fostering increased autonomy and enhancing our social, work, and leisure lives (Vanden Abeele, 2021; Vanden Abeele & Nguyen, 2022). However, these benefits come with significant challenges, particularly concerning employee well-being. The pressure to stay constantly connected, manage digital overload, and maintain boundaries between work and personal life can lead to stress, burnout, and decreased overall satisfaction among employees (Derks & Bakker, 2014; Tarafdar, Cooper, & Stich, 2019). Digital well-being refers to the ability to achieve a healthy balance between the advantages of digital connectivity and the potential downsides (Vanden Abeele, 2021; Ayyagari, Grover, & Purvis, 2011). While it remains a fluid and evolving concept, digital well-being is increasingly recognized for its importance in sustaining employee productivity, engagement, and mental health in the workplace (Vanden Abeele & Nguyen, 2022; Büchi, 2021).

Given the pervasive nature of digital technologies in the workplace, HRM professionals are faced with the challenge of fostering environments that support digital well-being. This includes addressing issues related to digital overload, setting boundaries for after-hours communication, and implementing strategies that promote a balanced approach to technology use (Mazmanian et al., 2013; Tarafdar et al., 2019). This paper explores these challenges.

The research follows a qualitative approach, drawing on secondary data sources. By synthesizing and analyzing existing literature, the study identifies key themes, practical interventions, and research gaps related to digital well-being in organizational context.

The integration of modern technologies into the workplace offers significant advantages, including enhanced communication, efficiency, and access to information. However, these benefits come with challenges, particularly the pressure to stay constantly connected and the resulting digital overload. This can negatively impact both individual and organizational well-being. The findings of this review highlight the critical role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in addressing these challenges. Organizations must take proactive steps to implement HRM strategies that support digital well-being.

⁵²Student, University of Maribor, **Faculty of Economics and Business**, ana.gricnik@student.um.si

⁵³Full Professor, University of Maribor, **Faculty of Economics and Business**, simona.sarotar-zizek@um.si

⁵⁴Associate Professor, University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Economics, branka.zolak-poljasevic@ef.unibl.org

Achieving digital well-being is not merely an individual concern but a shared responsibility that involves a collaborative effort between HRM and employees.

This paper is based on a desk review of academic literature and does not include empirical research, which limits the ability to draw conclusions from direct observations or primary data. The analysis is restricted to secondary scientific sources obtained from various online databases, which may introduce a selection bias and limit the generalizability of the findings.

This paper enhances the understanding of the critical role that Human Resource Management (HRM) plays in promoting digital well-being in the workplace. It offers valuable insights for HR managers, health practitioners, and industry professionals on how to foster healthier digital habits and address the challenges posed by constant connectivity. Promoting digital well-being can help reduce societal issues such as burnout and mental health problems, while also lowering organizational costs related to healthcare, absenteeism, and decreased productivity.

This paper offers contribution by exploring the challenges of digital well-being within the specific context of Human Resource Management (HRM). While digital well-being has been discussed in broader terms, this study is distinct in its focus on the workplace and the pivotal role HRM plays in addressing these challenges.

Leading to excellence - what you can learn from driving a horse-drawn carriage

Norbert Obermayr⁵⁵

Keywords: *leadership & horse management, components of leadership, self-reflection as a prerequisite for trust*

Abstracts

Managing a company well is more a psychological than a technical-organizational and business management task. Managers who are the best specialists themselves, rarely succeed. Managers must show leadership and be in close contact with their employees, supporting them in the fulfilment of their tasks. The importance of good leadership becomes particularly visible in performance-oriented redevelopment. From my personal experience of several restructuring processes, the cause was a poor or lack of managing employees. The consequences were always disorientation and lack of motivation without initiatives. However, it always turns out that with an employee-oriented leadership, a top performance can be achieved.

Can you motivate employees? If so, how does it work? The leadership task "motivation" in the narrower sense does not exist. Motivation is related to enthusiasm and a sense of purpose, but above all also to trust. This results in leadership in the form of challenging, promoting, and guiding. Can you learn anything from the sport "Carriage driving"? – There are many management methods, but often enough methods that are not conducive are still used (management by champignons, management by helicopter). My management methods have always been Management by Open-Doors and Management by Wandering Around, and the positive results prove that I was right. To learn from a coachman, you have to watch his actions and behaviours: what does he do, how does he support his horses? Specific pictures make this type of leadership very clear. A successful team that is harmonious, motivated, customer-oriented, competent, independent and responsible? A team with a spirit that works in everyday life, but also in crises. There are some magic words that make a team a team: give orientation, inspire trust, challenge, support and guide if necessary. These are leadership approaches that can be taken from any good coachman. The results have always been not only a rapid improvement in operating performance but also had a lasting effect.

Leading is a question of what it means to be a human being. Just as the coachman needs a positive image of his horses, so every manager needs a positive image of his employees. Leadership must be authentic and come from within. Leadership is not based on the theoretical learning of leadership concepts but on their application. Best-practice examples are useful for this; be it from other leaders, or even from equestrian sports.

Leadership has a technical, personal and psycho-social component. As a leader, it is not always possible to cope with the many expectations and requirements, so a reflection of the person in the leadership function is very useful. Only when the coachman really knows himself and his horses well and if he actively guides them through the course a leading position in the competition can be reached.

⁵⁵ DR., KMU-Akademie, Middlesex University, office@obermayr-ec.com

4

**Financial psychology, behavioural economics
and consumer behaviour**

Value networks as driving engines behind innovation and creativity generation

Liliya Terzieva⁵⁶

Esmee Messemaker⁵⁷

Keywords: *value networks, creativity, human interaction, learning, innovation*

Abstract

In the contemporary business environment, innovation and creativity are widely recognized as critical drivers of competitive advantage, organizational success, and long-term sustainability. However, these processes do not emerge in isolation within organizations; they are often the result of interactions within broader ecosystems composed of interconnected players. Value networks, defined as the dynamic systems of relationships between individuals, organizations, and resources that co-create value, have emerged as pivotal enablers of innovation and creativity. By leveraging the collective knowledge, capabilities, and expertise of network participants, value networks enhance the potential for generating novel ideas and innovative solutions. This paper explores how value networks serve as driving engines behind innovation and creativity generation, drawing on theoretical insights, case studies, and empirical research to demonstrate the mechanisms through which these networks foster collaboration, knowledge exchange, and creative problem-solving.

At the core of value networks is the recognition that no organization or individual operates in isolation. Instead, they are part of larger systems of exchange where value is co-created through collaboration and interdependence. In contrast to traditional linear value chains, where value flows in a sequential manner from one stage to the next, value networks are multidirectional, fluid, and flexible, allowing for dynamic exchanges between participants. According to the theoretical framework of social network theory, these networks are characterized by nodes (actors) and ties (relationships), where the strength and structure of the ties influence the flow of information, resources, and ideas. Innovation and creativity thrive in such environments because they allow for cross-pollination of ideas, diversity of thought, and integration of different perspectives. The relational ties between actors in value networks facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge—intangible, experience-based knowledge that is critical for creative problem-solving but difficult to codify or transmit through formal channels.

There are five key mechanisms of innovation and creativity in value networks, namely:

- 1) Knowledge Sharing and Exchange – a primary function of value networks is to break down knowledge silos and promote knowledge sharing across boundaries. Participants bring a range of experiences and expertise, facilitating the exchange of ideas and best practices. This exchange fuels creative problem-solving and the development of innovative solutions that might not arise in isolation;
- 2) Diversity and Inclusion – value networks are inherently diverse, comprising participants from different industries, disciplines, and regions. The inclusion of diverse perspectives stimulates creative thinking and ideation, as individuals are exposed to different problem-solving approaches. This cross-pollination of ideas enhances the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex challenges;
- 3) Collaboration and Co-Creation – value networks enable participants to collaborate and co-create, promoting decentralized decision-making and peer-to-peer interactions. This

⁵⁶ Prof. Dr., *Designing Value Networks*, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, l.v.terzieva@hhs.nl

⁵⁷ Drs. *Systemic innovations beyond transition design*, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, e.a.n.messemaker@hhs.nl

collaboration fosters the pooling of resources, skills, and expertise, which are vital for complex innovation projects. By working together, network participants can combine their strengths and develop solutions more effectively than they could independently;

4) Agility and Flexibility – one of the defining features of value networks is their adaptability. Unlike rigid hierarchical structures, value networks are flexible and can rapidly reconfigure to respond to emerging opportunities or challenges. This flexibility is critical for innovation, allowing participants to experiment, iterate on ideas, and pivot quickly in response to feedback or market changes;

5) Resource Pooling and Leverage – innovation often requires access to diverse resources, including financial, technological, and human capital. Value networks enable participants to pool and leverage these resources, reducing costs and accelerating innovation. The shared access to external expertise, market intelligence, and cutting-edge technology enhances the potential for creative solutions and successful outcomes.

Empirical studies and real-world examples demonstrate the significant role value networks play in fostering innovation and creativity. In the technology sector, companies such as Google and Microsoft have leveraged their extensive value networks, comprising external developers, researchers, and suppliers, to drive rapid innovation in fields like artificial intelligence and cloud computing. Similarly, in the pharmaceutical industry, value networks that integrate academic researchers, startups, and regulatory bodies have expedited the development of new treatments and therapies.

Despite the clear benefits of value networks, several challenges must be addressed for them to function effectively. Managing the complexity of network interactions, aligning diverse participants' goals, and protecting intellectual property in a collaborative environment are common issues. Additionally, the success of value networks relies heavily on trust and reciprocity between participants, as well as effective communication and coordination. Organizations must invest in cultivating strong relationships and establishing governance structures that balance collaboration with conflict minimization.

Value networks represent powerful engines of innovation and creativity by facilitating knowledge exchange, promoting diversity, enabling collaboration, and leveraging resources. In an increasingly competitive global economy, businesses that successfully engage in value networks are better positioned to generate novel solutions, sustain long-term innovation, and maintain a competitive edge. By understanding the mechanisms that drive value networks and addressing the inherent challenges, organizations can unlock the full potential of these ecosystems and foster a culture of creativity and innovation.

Can online product reviews have an impact on herding behavior? An experiment

Birgit Burböck⁵⁸

Carmen Tamara Kern⁵⁹

Keywords: *online product reviews, review ratios, herding behavior, purchase intention, electronic word of mouth*

Abstracts

Online product reviews are a market phenomenon that plays an increasingly important role in consumer's purchase decisions. Product reviews are not only influenced by the content of the review itself, but also several other factors such as its style, length, display and the cognitive biases behind each of these elements, which ultimately have an impact on decision-making. With the overwhelming information about products now available online, people tend to follow the crowd by deciding to do what other consumers have decided or done before. The aim is to identify the effects of different ratios of positive to negative product reviews on purchase intention and their ability to elicit herding behavior in an experimental setting.

Herding, which can be described as the alignment of thoughts or behaviors of individuals in a group through local interaction and without centralized coordination. Online product reviews can be defined as a form of eWOM (electronic word of mouth) and a summary of attitudes, opinions and experiences expressed by past consumers (Cheung et al., 2014). Reviews are widely used by customers due to their ease of availability, their multiple perspectives all assembled in one location such as a website, their seemingly unbiased appearance and the lack of other credible sources (Eryarsoy & Piramuthu, 2014). Prior research has shown that reviews not only support purchase decisions and drive product sales (Tseng et al., 2022), but also influence product attitude, purchase intention and the actual purchase (Lee et al., 2007). Yet, many of the readers may be unaware that reviews are not only influenced by the content of the review itself, but also several other factors such as the style, length, display and the cognitive biases behind each of these elements, which ultimately have an impact on decision-making (Bauerová et al., 2022). Furthermore, with the overwhelming information about products now available online, people tend to follow the crowd when they deem their own private information as imperfect or asymmetric, since they believe that other consumers' decisions were the outcome of detailed research (Chen et al., 2019). This can cause consumers to decide or do what other consumers have decided or done before (Banerjee, 1992).

The experimental between-subject research design is a replication of the experiment of Huang & Chen (2006). Three treatment groups with $n = 55$ each, where split in total of six different surveys and distributed randomly via questionspro to each participant. A smartphone – purchase was used as a product. The post-hoc analysis for the power with the assumption of $\alpha = 0.05$, $d = 0.05$ and given sample size yielded a $p = 0.9537$. The data were analysed with a one-way ANOVA and paired sample t-tests between the treatment groups.

Due to the violation of the necessary conditions of the Levene's test ($F=43.0$; $df1=2$; $df2=287$; $p<.001$) the Welch's one-way ANOVA ($F=2.17$; $df1=2$; $df2=167$) with a significance of $p = 0.117$ was used. Group 1 has a mean of 3.35, a standard deviation (SD) of 1.95 and a standard error of the mean (SE) of 0.217. Group 2 has a mean = 3.16, a SD of 1.38 and a SE of 0.137. Group 3 has a mean of 2.91, a SD of 1.08 and a SE of 0.104 with $p = 0.055$, 0.039 and 0.103 respectively.

⁵⁸ FH JOANNEUM, birgit.burboeck@fh-joanneum.at

⁵⁹ FH JOANNEUM, carmen.kern@fh-joanneum

The results show no significant differences in the mean score of purchase intention between group 1 and group 2 as well as group 2 and group 3, but a significant difference in the mean scores of purchase intention between group 1 and group 3. Same results are found in the comparisons of survey 1 vs survey 2 and survey 5 and survey 6 with no significant differences in the mean scores of purchase intention, but a significant difference was found between survey 3 and survey 4.

Our findings are contradictory to the findings of Huang & Chen (2006). One reason might be the different product used in the experimental setting. Depending on the type of product, herding and framing have different effects. Herding has a more salient effect on experience products than on search products like a smart phone and purchase intention for hedonic products tends to be higher than for utilitarian products like a book under positively framed messages, while utilitarian products are more directly influenced by negative messages. The results infer that herding behavior takes place under certain conditions. It appears that herding behavior is more likely to occur when there is a clear predominance of either positive or negative reviews, which is also in line with prior scientific literature on this topic. Furthermore, the results indicate that the participants used the relative number of positive to negative product reviews to form their opinion on the product, and that a perceptual threshold needs to be crossed in order to notice a significant difference between the treatment groups. It became apparent that a clear pull in either a positive or negative direction within the set of reviews is necessary to achieve a persuasive effect that leads to herding behavior, which is in line with previous research on this topic.

The small sample size as well as the homogenous group are key limitations to the study. The statements in the questionnaire are simplified and would hardly appear in a realistic online environment. Other products may yield also to different results.

A few recommendations can be derived for retailers and companies who enable online product reviews on their websites. Based on the fact that the relative number of positive to negative reviews seems to be able to influence the purchase intention of consumers, the website owners should make sure that the reviews are either balanced or predominantly positive, and not lean towards a negative sentiment. Although negative reviews cannot be prevented, businesses should manage them proactively to keep them within a certain range. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to encourage satisfied consumers to leave a positive review on the website, to assure that enough positive reviews are visible. Lastly, it would be advantageous to monitor the sales of a certain product in connection to the reviews that were posted, for example with the help of an analytics tool, to actively check if the product reviews have an impact on the product sales.

Psychological reactions and their impact on personal financial decision-making: a focus on investment behavior

Anita Maček⁶⁰

Keywords: *behavioral finance, investment decision-making, emotional influences, financial psychology*

Abstracts

This paper aims to explore the psychological reactions influencing personal financial decision-making, with a particular focus on investment behavior. The research seeks to understand how cognitive biases, emotional responses, and social influences shape investment decisions, challenging the traditional finance assumption of rational decision-making. The primary research question is: *How do psychological factors affect individual investment behavior?*

This study is situated within the broader field of behavioral finance, which integrates psychological theories into financial decision-making models. Existing literature highlights the prevalence of cognitive biases, such as overconfidence and loss aversion, as significant drivers of suboptimal investment choices (e.g. Riaz et al. 2012, Dervishaj 2021, Mohmood et al. 2024). Emotional factors like fear and greed, along with social influences, contribute to phenomena such as market bubbles and crashes (e.g. Chip et al. 1999; Sherin 2002; Baker and Noffsinger, 2010; Lubna et al. 2012; Baker and Ricciardi, 2014). By reviewing the literature, this paper places the current research within the context of these established findings, identifying gaps and areas for further exploration.

To achieve the research objectives, a systematic literature review was conducted, analyzing peer-reviewed articles, books, and case studies from the past two decades. The sample includes 27 key sources that provide insights into the psychological aspects of financial decision-making. The rationale for using this method lies in its ability to synthesize existing knowledge and identify trends, contradictions, and gaps in the research. This approach also allows for the identification of empirical studies that illustrate the practical implications of psychological factors on investment behavior.

The findings reveal that cognitive biases, such as anchoring and overconfidence, lead to significant deviations from rational investment behavior. Emotional reactions, particularly those related to fear and loss, often result in panic selling during market downturns. Social influences, including media and peer behavior, amplify these biases and emotions, contributing to market volatility. The study concludes that recognizing and addressing these psychological factors can lead to more informed and effective investment strategies. The results also suggest that financial education should incorporate behavioral finance principles to mitigate the impact of these biases.

The primary limitation of this study is its reliance on secondary data from existing literature, which may not fully capture the nuances of individual psychological responses. Future research could benefit from empirical studies involving direct observation or experiments to validate and extend these findings. Additionally, cultural and demographic factors that might influence psychological reactions to financial decision-making warrant further investigation.

The implications of this research are significant for financial practitioners, policymakers, and educators. Understanding the psychological factors that drive investment behavior can lead to the development of tools and strategies that help investors make more rational decisions. Additionally, this research has the potential to influence public attitudes towards investing, encouraging a more informed and less emotionally driven approach to financial decision-making. The insights gained from this study could also contribute to reducing market volatility by promoting more stable and rational investment behavior.

⁶⁰ Prof. dr., DOBA Business School, Slovenia, FH Joanneum, Austria, anita.macek@net.doba.si

This paper offers a comprehensive synthesis of the psychological factors influencing personal financial decision-making, particularly in the context of investments. It is valuable for researchers, financial advisors, and educators who seek to understand and mitigate the impact of cognitive and emotional biases on investment behavior. The originality of this paper lies in its focus on integrating psychological insights with practical financial strategies, offering a unique perspective on improving investment decision-making processes.

Raising awareness of local foods: purchasing habits and environmental impact

Tina Vukasovic⁶¹

Keywords: *consumer behavior, purchasing decision, organic foods, green marketing*

Abstracts

In recent years, the food retail sector has seen major changes and with them new challenges and opportunities. The food processing industry is facing complex challenges linked to changes in the global environment (at local, national, European and global level): changes in the volume and structure of demand (falling confidence and rationalisation of consumption), changes in the volume of food production, rising food prices, the need to provide quality and safe food, high consumer preference for locally sourced products. Consumers are becoming more informed about products and more prudent and sustainably conscious in their purchasing process. An important aspect of the food supply of the population is safe and quality food. Modern lifestyles and individual values emphasise the importance of nutrition; lifestyles and eating habits are changing and food and food products need to keep pace with consumer needs. Food needs to be safe and the supply of food must be uninterrupted, while the consumer is becoming more sensitive in his/her relationship with food. They are interested in the way in which food is produced and processed, changing their dietary patterns and emphasising healthy eating as an important factor in a healthy lifestyle.

This brings new challenges for both food production and food processing, which is striving for higher quality, entering into certified and continuously monitored schemes (Resolucija, b.d.). Traceability from production to the end user is becoming a constant. The labels of the various quality schemes include organic labels. The organic label serves as a signpost for consumers and can be important information when deciding whether to buy a garnish. At the same time, they encourage consumers to think about healthy eating, buying locally sourced products and their impact on the environment. Agricultural products and foodstuffs covered by quality schemes are produced according to strictly regulated procedures and their production is subject to additional controls by certification bodies (MKGP, b.d.).

The aim of the study is to identify the purchasing factor among the analysed purchasing factors that has the highest statistically significant impact on the consumer's decision to purchase food products with organic labels. We will be particularly interested in the impact of the 'ECO' label on consumers' purchasing decision.

In recent years, there has been a trend towards demand for locally produced organic food. A niche market is a group of consumers looking for a specific combination of benefits from a product or service that is not equally attractive to all competitors. Consumers have become more aware and educated and are aware of the importance of a healthy ecosystem (Resolucija, b.d.). Attitudes towards animals and the ethical aspect of food production are also increasingly important. Consumers are behaving more ethically or responsibly in the way they shop and think about the products they need, which is known as Socially and Environmentally Responsible Consumption (SREPC).

The range of labels to which the consumer is exposed influences the difficulty for the consumer to perceive, recognise and remember certain labels. Labels are becoming more complex, more numerous and difficult for consumers to understand. Research shows that Slovenian consumers place a high value on food quality, but find it difficult to choose between the many quality labels because they do not

⁶¹ *University of Primorska, Faculty of Management Koper; International School for Social and Business Studies Celje; DOBA Business School Maribor, tina.vukasovic@net.doba.si*

know them well enough. If we want to increase consumer confidence, it is necessary to create the conditions for better information and to make them aware of the meaning and importance of labelling products with quality scheme labels, and more specifically with organic labels.

The research problem is the insufficient knowledge of consumer purchasing behavior towards food products with organic labels. In the light of the described environmental trends witnessed in the food processing industry, we will examine/explore consumer awareness and purchasing behavior towards food products with organic labels.

We will conduct a quantitative survey using an online survey method. The independent variables will be: economic factor, social factor, personal factor and environmental factor, and the dependent variable will be: consumer purchase decision. Each of the variables will be measured by several different statements, manifest variables or indicators, which will be included in the survey questionnaire. The sample will include up to 200 consumers aged between 18 and 65 years. The sample will be random at the household level and the principle for selecting the items to be included in the questionnaire will be based on theoretical background from the literature of relevant authors in the field. The measurement instruments mentioned above will be adapted to our case study. The use of statements will be based on a five-point Likert scale. Univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses will be used to describe the research results. The analyses will be carried out using SPSS software. Finally, we will draw conclusions and provide guidelines for further research.

As consumers become more aware of the negative impacts of conventional production, the environmental friendliness of the product becomes increasingly important. Therefore, we will specifically compare the impact of the 'ECO' label/characteristic with the impact of the other factors studied on the consumer's purchase decision for food products with organic labels. If it turns out that the "ECO" label has at least as statistically significant an impact on the consumer purchase decision as the other influencing factors, the results of the project will contribute to making managers in companies more environmentally responsible and marketers more effective in managing the elements of the marketing web of environmentally friendly products. An additional challenge in the process of designing and implementing a marketing communication and consumer awareness strategy will be to make the importance of the purity or integrity of products more prominent in marketing communication, as the 'ECO' label as information enters the purchasing decision-making process at the stage of gathering information on ECO food products, and is considered by the consumer at the stage of evaluating alternatives and, based on this information, deciding on the final purchase of the product.

The limitations are mainly related to the methodology and the ability to generalise the findings. Quantitative research conducted by online survey involves a limited sample of up to 200 consumers, which may limit the generalisability of the results to a wider population. In addition, the sample is limited to a specific age group (18-65 years), which may also affect the representativeness of the results for other age groups. Another limitation is related to the use of survey data only, where respondents' answers are subjective and may be subject to socially desirable answers or imperfect honesty.

The main contribution of the research results will be the empirical analysis, which will reveal the possibility of transferring the theoretical and empirical findings into practice, namely in the food processing industry. The results of the project will be of use to farmers, companies in the food production chain and the line ministry.

The knowledge in this area will be complemented by the development of a generally acceptable model of consumer purchasing behavior to study and measure the links between selected factors and consumer purchasing decisions. This will contribute to the development of social knowledge and consumer awareness of organic food products.

Attitudes and children's food preferences: unveiling emojis and choices

David Skala⁶²

Ružica Brečić⁶³

Luca Panzone⁶⁴

Keywords: *implicit attitudes, explicit attitudes, IAT, emojis, food choice*

Abstracts

This research examines when children's implicit and explicit food attitudes appear and in which direction they develop when children start formal education. A special focus is placed on the use of emojis to label food and their influence on the choice of healthy food depending on the strength of the expressed attitudes.

Aware of the potential impact that presenting foods without explicit messages can have on children's eating habits, researchers have designed interventions aimed at encouraging healthier food choices among children. To address the issue of low health literacy in children aged 5 to 11, an innovative approach called emolabeling has been introduced. This method uses emojis to convey health information in a straightforward and easily understandable manner, yielding promising results. Emojis have already proven to be effective marketing tools, significantly influencing children's food preferences and consumption behaviors.

A total of 452 elementary school students aged 6 to 9 years took part in this study. The research assessed both implicit and explicit attitudes towards healthy and unhealthy foods using IAT. Additionally, the children participated in food choice task that was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of two different types of emoji use in shaping their food preferences.

To explore the relationship between attitudes and age, implicit and explicit attitudes were analyzed overall and by age groups. The results showed that due to children's cognitive development, both types of attitudes became more pronounced with age. Younger children showed no significant attitudes, while older children had positive implicit attitudes toward healthy food ($t(282) = 2.562, p = .005$) and negative explicit attitudes ($t(282) = -2.697, p = .004$), favoring unhealthy food. Furthermore, using green and green-red emojis to label foods, positively influences children's food choices. The group with the green emoji next to the healthy food had a significantly higher average score ($M = 27.30, SD = 5.17$) compared to the control group ($M = 25.43, SD = 5.21$), $t(297) = 3.117, p = .002$. Similarly, the group with the green-red emoji also showed a significantly higher average ($M = 27.78, SD = 4.71$) than the control group, $t(300) = 4.121, p < .001$. These results suggest that using emojis to label healthy foods is linked to making healthier food choices. Additionally, the relationships between different types of emojis, attitudes, and food choices were analyzed using independent-samples t-tests.

The results indicated that for children with weaker implicit and explicit attitudes, both green and green-red emojis led to healthier food choices compared to the control group. On the other hand, for children with stronger implicit attitudes, neither the green emojis [$p = .306$] nor the green-red emojis [$p = .086$] significantly influenced healthier food choices compared to the control group. However, among children with stronger explicit attitudes, only the green-red emojis led to healthier food

⁶²University of Zagreb, Faculty of Economics & Business, Zagreb, CROATIA, dskala@net.efzg.hr

⁶³University of Zagreb, Faculty of Economics & Business, Zagreb, CROATIA, rbutigan@net.efzg.hr

⁶⁴Newcastle University, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Newcastle upon Tyne, UNITED KINGDOM, Luca.Panzone@newcastle.ac.uk

choices. Overall, the findings suggest that emoji labeling encourages healthier choices, with its effectiveness depending on the strength of children's initial attitudes.

Green and green-red emojis are most effective for children with weaker attitudes, while green-red emojis also benefit those with stronger explicit attitudes. The study suggests that early interventions aimed at shaping children's positive food choices and attitudes toward healthy eating can be beneficial. Emojis are shown to be effective in promoting healthier food choices, especially among children with less pronounced attitudes. The studies only measured food choices at a single time point, using a limited selection of just two food items, and the data was collected from participants in only one country. Additionally, the food choice task was conducted in a school setting, with children aware that they were participating in scientific study, which could have influenced their choices.

The findings of this study suggest that marketers and caregivers should tailor their strategies to influence children's food preferences from an early age. To effectively shape children's preferences toward healthy foods, it is crucial to design interventions that can impact, in addition to the food choice, both implicit and explicit attitudes. Therefore, marketers should consider incorporating emolabeling into their strategies to guide children's food choices already at the age of 6.

The results indicate that certain emojis can influence children's decisions; green and green-red emojis are particularly effective for children with weaker implicit and explicit attitudes, while green-red emojis also have a positive impact on children with stronger explicit attitudes.

This is the first study that tests the effectiveness of emoji labeling in children divided into two age groups depending on the strength of their implicit and explicit attitudes and offers significant validation of the benefits of emolabeling strategy in encouraging healthier food choices. The results can determine at what age and which emoji's can improve children's food attitudes, choices and their consumer behavior simultaneously addressing the global public health challenge of childhood obesity.

Exploring the concept of financial wellness and wellbeing among student population

Jerneja Lešnik Cotza⁶⁵

Mihaela Škrlić Brglez⁶⁶

Keywords: *financial wellness and wellbeing, students wellbeing, financial literacy, kakeebo*

Abstracts

This paper explores the concept of financial wellness and well-being (cf. Brügger et al., 2017) among the youth (i.e. student) population. Recent studies and practice have indicated that students face high levels of stress and anxiety on the one hand (Broton et al., 2022; Coakley et al., 2022) and financial illiteracy on the other (Van Raaij, 2016). In this line of thought, the study explores the potential of financial insecurity to be a determinant of students' ill well-being (cf. Kumar et al., 2023) and vice versa (i.e. financial security to be a determinant of students' well-being). The sample of students of the College for Catering and Tourism Maribor, Slovenia, is studied. The results of the quantitative analysis indicate that students are aware of the importance of good financial well-being and cost management, and generally do not have any financial debts and finance-related issues. According to the study results, students are moderately well financially literate. Thus, students financial security is linked to their financial wellbeing, reflected in overall wellbeing. Finally, the paper presents the Japanese concept of kakeebo promoting mindful spending and saving (cf. Fumiko, 2017) as a potential way and modern lifestyle linked to the financial stability and literacy of students.

Understanding the concept of financial well-being is crucial as it helps individuals understand personal finance better and develop a more favorable financial attitude, potentially linked to overall life satisfaction and well-being. The concept of financial wellness is presented as a state of having a healthy relationship with one's finances, characterized by the ability to manage day-to-day financial matters, achieve financial goals, and handle unexpected financial challenges with confidence and peace of mind (cf. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2015; Brügger et al., 2017; Philippas and Avdoulas, 2021). Here, the concept of financial illiteracy among students (i.e. struggle with basic financial concepts) is linked to their financial stress. Factors such as lack of formal education on personal finance, socioeconomic background, and access to financial resources significantly influence students' financial wellness. Financial wellbeing is presented as a broader term, that integrates financial wellness with overall life satisfaction and emotional health. It implies a comprehensive state where an individual not only meets their financial obligations and goals but also experiences a sense of security and contentment regarding their financial situation. Finally, the concept of financial wellness and wellbeing is linked to the Japanese concept of kakeebo. Originating in the early 20th century, kakeibo emphasizes tracking expenses by hand, reflecting on spending habits, and setting savings goals. This practice fosters a deeper awareness of one's financial behaviors, promoting disciplined and intentional money management (Fumiko, 2017). Kakeebo is discussed as a potential way and lifestyle linked to the financial stability and higher financial literacy of students.

This study employs a quantitative research design, utilizing a structured questionnaire to collect data on students' financial wellness and their capability to manage personal finances. The survey was administered to a sample of 40 second year wellness and wellbeing students to capture a range of financial behaviors and attitudes. Statistical methods such as descriptive analysis and correlation were

⁶⁵ PhD, College for Hospitality and Tourism Maribor, Slovenia, jerneja.lesnik@vsgt.si

⁶⁶ College for Hospitality and Tourism Maribor, Slovenia, mihaela.skrlic-brglez@vsgt.si

used to examine the relationships between financial knowledge, financial behaviors, and overall understanding of the concept of financial wellness. The methodological approach aims to provide insights into the financial challenges faced by students and the effectiveness of financial education programs in enhancing their financial management skills.

62.5% of students in the sample indicated that they face stress because of their financial situation and 66.7% argue that their financial situation impacts their life goals. Nevertheless, they do not have any debts, student loans, or bank credit (95.6%) and generally have a good level of financial literacy. There was a positive correlation between the state of their financial wellness, rated as fairly good (8 out of 10) and their overall wellness and wellbeing (8 out of 10). They understand financial wellness as 'taking care of own finances and responsibly handling them' or 'taking care of money flow'. Overall, it seems that they perceive financial wellness as an important component of their overall well-being, but at the same time do not face any actual existential issues since parents are providing all the necessities.

To our best knowledge, this is one of the first studies on financial literacy in a sample of Slovenian students. Since the particular situation of publically available education in Slovenia, further studies should explore international comparisons linked to different education systems in Europe and worldwide. Equally, the sample size is limited and should be expanded.

The findings of this study have significant practical and social implications. Practically, the insights gained can inform the development of targeted financial education programs and resources aimed at improving students' financial literacy and management skills. Socially, enhanced financial wellness among students can lead to reduced financial stress, which is linked to better academic performance and overall well-being.

Firstly, the value of the study lies in its potential to bridge gaps in current financial education practices and policies in Slovenia and within VET education in the EU. By highlighting the correlation between financial literacy and financial wellness, the research provides empirical evidence that can guide the development of more effective financial education programs tailored to student needs. Secondly, the study explores the concept of kakeibo promoting mindful spending and saving as a potential way and improved lifestyle linked to the financial stability and literacy of students. Thirdly, the study addresses healthy lifestyle promotion among student population that became one of the core promotion activities at Universities in Slovenia and worldwide.

5

Facilitating innovation and creativity in organisations

Pillars of success for start-up ventures: case of Slovenia

Zineta Vilman⁶⁷

Martina Plantak⁶⁸

Marina Letonja⁶⁹

Keywords: *start-up success, innovation, venture capital, socio-cultural factors, entrepreneurship*

Abstracts

With a 90% mortality rate for technology start-ups and a 50% probability that small companies will not survive the first 5 years, it is very important to identify the fundamental success factors that allow start-ups to survive in the long run. The main objective of this paper is to investigate the fundamental factors that contribute to the long-term success of start-ups. The research question is: "What are the key pillars of success that enable start-ups to thrive in highly competitive, technologically advanced and volatile markets?" The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of start-up success by integrating theoretical frameworks and empirical data. It focuses on 5 start-ups in Slovenia, which have been studied within the international Ecosys4You project (Horizon), examining factors such as innovation, funding, socio-political and cultural influences. In addition, within the same survey, the success factors for start-ups as perceived by supporting institutions such as entrepreneurial funds and incubators, development agencies, chambers of commerce and other professional associations are analysed. While this paper focuses on the key pillars of success, it is important to recognise that failure is an inherent part of the start-up ecosystem and, interestingly, can also contribute to long-term success. This paper builds on existing research by synthesising all the above factors into a coherent model of start-up success.

Entrepreneurial success is influenced by various variables such as innovation, access to capital and socio-cultural factors (Aminova & Marchi, 2021; Bocken, 2015). The development of a supportive environment for entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education and an entrepreneurial mindset are also important contributing factors. The role of innovation has been highlighted as a critical success or failure factor, as it drives differentiation and adaptability in the market (Aminova & Marchi, 2021). Furthermore, venture capital, especially sustainable funding models, plays a crucial role in enabling the scalability and long-term viability of start-ups (Bocken, 2015). In addition, the socio-cultural environment and intellectual capital have a significant impact on entrepreneurial performance (Hopp & Stephan, 2012; Peña, 2002).

Many ventures face significant challenges and success is never guaranteed. A large percentage of start-ups fail within the first few years due to various factors such as mismanagement, lack of market fit or insufficient funding (Aminova & Marchi, 2021). Interestingly, failure can also contribute to long-term success. For example, Silicon Valley culture embraces failure as part of the innovation process, with the mantra 'fail fast, fail forward' often cited in entrepreneurial circles (Angerer et al., 2017).

A mixed-methods approach was used, combining a qualitative research strategy by conducting interviews with successful start-up founders and representatives of supporting institutions, and a quantitative research strategy by analysing secondary data from global start-up ecosystems. During the interviews, the interviewees were offered guiding questions in order to develop the structure required by the Ecosys4You project. The sample includes a total of 5 Slovenian start-ups from different industry sectors that have achieved sustainable growth over a five-year period, as well as 5

⁶⁷ DOBA Business School, zineta.vilman@net.doba.si

⁶⁸ DOBA Business School, martina.plantak@doba.si

⁶⁹ DOBA Business School, marina.letonja@doba.si

entrepreneurial support institutions from Slovenia. Equity, finance and venture capital data were also analysed to identify the financial strategies that contributed to the success of the start-ups (Angerer et al., 2017; Bocken, 2015). The study also incorporates socio-cultural factors to assess the influence of community culture and entrepreneurial motivation. The interviews were conducted between 1 July 2023 and 28 February 2024.

The research identified five key pillars essential to start-up success: innovation, adaptability, access to capital, strategic leadership and market timing. Start-ups with strong innovation capabilities were more likely to achieve market differentiation and longevity (Aminova & Marchi, 2021). Sustainable funding was another important success factor, especially for scaling operations (Bocken, 2015; Angerer et al., 2017). In addition, the socio-cultural environment and the intellectual capital of the founders were found to have a direct impact on entrepreneurial success (Hopp & Stephan, 2012; Peña, 2002). Failure can also be seen as a hidden pillar of success: by learning from setbacks and being resilient, entrepreneurs are better positioned to face future challenges.

The study is limited by its focus on long-term successful ventures, which may introduce survivorship bias. A more comprehensive analysis of failed start-ups could further refine the pillars of success model. In addition, geographical differences in start-up ecosystems, particularly in emerging markets, warrant further investigation (Oyeyemi et al., 2024).

This research has practical implications for entrepreneurs, investors and policy makers who want to foster successful start-up ecosystems. By focusing on the identified pillars, stakeholders can better allocate resources and design support systems for start-ups. The findings also have broader societal implications, including job creation, innovation diffusion, and economic development (Chen et al., 2023).

This paper provides a novel, integrated framework that synthesises key factors contributing to start-up success. It contributes to the ongoing discourse on entrepreneurship by bridging theoretical perspectives with empirical evidence. The paper is particularly valuable for practitioners in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, such as founders and venture capitalists, who are looking for actionable insights.

The intention to use telemedicine in Alzheimer's disease and perceived technical efficiency

Dragan Aksentijević⁷⁰

Valentina Prevolnik Rupel⁷¹

Mirjana Peić-Bach⁷²

Eva Turk⁷³

Keywords: *telemedicine, Alzheimer's disease, intention to use, perceived technical effectiveness*

Abstracts

The research problem described in this paper concerns identifying and resolving the reasons for resistance and rejection of telemedicine (TM) among medical clinicians dealing with Alzheimer's disease (AD). The main research question aims to investigate whether it is possible to model the future usage of TM for evaluating AD using the extended technological acceptance model (TAM).

A scientific challenge is why and how to select and implement an optimal clinical system model, i.e., a TM solution for managing Alzheimer's disease that includes the digital availability of medical examinations and medical data with a visual exam. Implementing such a TM solution would improve clinical diagnostics in the outpatient setting, significantly impacting the entire healthcare system and contributing to its effectiveness and competitiveness.

TM projects are technically complex and require an advanced understanding of TM requirements, a structured approach, and modeling to ensure service acceptance.

The study was conducted in the Republic of Croatia, with a sample of general practitioners and neurologists treating Alzheimer's patients as the target population. The sample size was determined by including 10 cases for each manifest variable, resulting in a sample of 474 physicians (out of 2329). The response rate was 20.35%.

The questionnaire defines TM for AD. Seven latent variables were created using the TAM framework, and the manifest items were modified based on the proposed solution. This pioneering study is the first to investigate the use of TM solutions for monitoring AD in pandemic situations. Cronbach's alpha and confirmatory factor analysis were used to test the reliability and validity of the research instrument.

Data analysis was conducted in four phases: 1) analysis of the sample characteristics, such as age, gender, specialization, and professional experience 2) analysis of the research variables using descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation; 3) assessment of the validity of the research instrument using JASP software Ver 0.16. 4) Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted to test the hypothesis that allowed latent variables to be included in the research model and quantified using indicators. Cronbach's alpha coefficients determined the primary study model's reliability level.

The results show that the attitude towards using TM to assess AD positively influences the intention to use TM (ITU). The perceived usefulness (PU) of TM for AD assessment positively impacts attitude toward using TM (ATU). The perceived quality of service (PQ) of TM has a positive effect on the perceived ease of use of TM. TM's perceived ease of use (PEOU) for assessing AD correlates positively with the attitude towards TM use (ATU).

⁷⁰ M.D., Ph.D., nevrodragon@gmail.com

⁷¹ Doba Business School, valentina.prevolnik-rupel@net.doba.si

⁷² Prof. Ph.D., DOBA Business School, mirjana.peic-bach@net.doba.si

⁷³ Ph.D., MBA, Assistant Professor, Ministry of Health Slovenia, DOBA University Maribor, Slovenia, eva.turk@net.doba.si

TM's perceived technical efficiency (PTE) positively impacts the perceived safety and ease of use in assessing AD. PS positively impacts PEOU, and PTE showed a positive statistically significant relationship with PEOU. PTE over PEOU has a significant favorable influence on ATU and ITU.

Patients' views on TM were not considered, there was a lack of consistent circumstances across patients, and therapeutic support was variable.

The SEM's limitations include the lack of systemic data (national, global, and regional relevant data), final exact model specification (model verification), a cross-sectional approach, and the study of a single sample at a single time point.

Future recommendations relate to simplifying complex medical care in Alzheimer's disease (standardization). The TM is based on a well-defined Alzheimer's database. The impact of new technologies, especially AI in TM, on chronic disease management is fundamental. Qualitative, updated TM studies can provide insight, as can TM for monitoring the effectiveness of pharmacotherapy in Alzheimer's disease and TM in neurocognitive rehabilitation (economic impact). TM improves AD surveillance in terms of cost-effectiveness in treating and detecting diseases at a geographical distance. TM can also improve differential diagnosis in professional consultations and the implementation of new technologies. Advanced diagnostics can be provided based on stored databases. PTE has implications for PS safety protocols regarding standards on medical databases, and PTE has implications for PS safety protocols regarding standards.

It has been confirmed that optimizing perceived technical efficiency improves the usability of TM applications. The perceived quality of TM for AD positively affects perceived ease of use (originality in application). Perceived technical effectiveness accelerates the critical points of perceived safety, which impacts the lack of intention to use (original contribution). Research originality lies in the proposed extended TAM.

Competencies of students in the implementation of project tasks for companies

Gregor Jagodič⁷⁴

Keywords: *student competencies, project tasks, mentoring, practical experience, connections between companies and educational institutions*

Abstracts

The article investigates the role of students' competencies in implementing project tasks for companies, focusing on technical, social and organisational competencies.

We stated the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do technical, social and organisational competencies affect companies' successful implementation of project tasks?
- RQ2: What role do mentors and practical experience play in developing key competencies that enable the successful implementation of project tasks?

Competence research is essential from the student's point of view. Understanding which competencies are critical to the successful implementation of projects allows companies to direct their mentoring work better and contribute to developing students' competencies in a way that corresponds to their needs and expectations (Pegg et al., 2012). The article focuses on a theoretical overview of competencies, an analysis of the connection between competencies and project tasks, and a presentation of practical guidelines for improving student competencies (Tymon, 2013).

In today's fast-changing business environment, it is becoming increasingly apparent that students' competencies are crucial in determining their success in the labour market. The business environment increasingly recognises the value of cooperation between educational institutions and companies, especially in the implementation of project tasks. Cooperation between educational institutions and companies, especially in the context of project tasks, offers students a unique opportunity to apply the acquired theoretical knowledge in practice and, at the same time, gain valuable experience that they will need in their careers (Brennan, 2020; Claxton, Lucas, & Webster, 2012). Students' ability to apply competencies in real-world situations strongly impacts their employability and career success (Jackson, 2016). Research on the competencies that students develop during practical projects is vital to understanding how educational institutions can better prepare their students for the challenges of the modern work environment (Kolb, 2014).

Data were collected using qualitative (10 semi-structured interviews with five students and mentors from companies) and quantitative (a survey in which 50 students from different faculties participated) methods for a deeper understanding of learning processes and using competencies during project work. The qualitative part of the research focused on students' individual experiences and challenges, and the quantitative part on the quantitative assessment of the students' competencies (Kolb, 2014). Students' competencies are vital in successfully implementing projects and cooperating with companies. Our research found that technical, social and organisational competencies form the foundation that enables students to solve their challenges in a natural business environment effectively. We examined the role of mentors and practical experience in developing competencies. We have found that tutors provide vital support and guidance, enabling students to develop their skills and confidence. The practical knowledge and experiences gained during the projects allow students to identify their strengths and weaknesses and improve accordingly.

⁷⁴ Assoc. Prof. PhD., Doba Business School, Maribor, Slovenia, gregor.jagodich@doba.si

We represent a case study of company X, which analyses how students use their competencies to solve concrete challenges in the business environment. The research is based on collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data collected during the implementation of a project assignment in company X, where students from different disciplines participated.

We have provided suggestions and practical guidelines based on the research findings for educational institutions (can enhance the curriculum by integrating practical projects and mentoring programs), companies (can contribute with structured support and enable practical experiences), and students (they should actively seek opportunities to develop their competencies and reflect on their experiences for further personal and professional development).

In the future, adapting students' competence to rapid changes in the labour market and technological progress will be even more critical, so it makes sense to research further and improve approaches to the development of competencies that will enable students to successfully enter the labour market and contribute to innovation and growth in companies.

The case study focuses on a group of students who participated in a project assignment at Company X, a small technology company. The group comprised five students from various fields, including computer science, economics, engineering, and management. Their task was to develop a prototype of a new software solution that would improve the efficiency of the company's internal processes.

The research took place over three months and included several phases: planning, implementation, and project evaluation. During the implementation of the project, data was collected by conducting interviews and surveys with students and their mentors in the company. We wanted to discover how the students used their acquired competencies, what challenges they faced, and how they solved the problems that arose during the project.

The paradox of extraordinary minds: unveiling the untapped potential and unique challenges of gifted in the workplace

Katja Ujčič⁷⁵

Keywords: *gifted adults, workplace challenges, mental health, innovation, sustainable employability*

Abstracts

The presentation will explore the unique challenges and strengths of gifted adults in the workplace by synthesizing findings from multiple key studies. The research aims to address how giftedness influences workplace dynamics, professional satisfaction, and career sustainability. Through a systematic literature review, the study analyzes the psychological and occupational experiences of gifted individuals, drawing from key works, such as Catherine Chinnock's *A Systematic Literature Review of Gifted Adults in the Workplace* and Franc Corten, Noks Nauta, and Sieuwke Ronner's *Highly Intelligent and Gifted Employees: Key to Innovation?*

The study applies a mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative case studies and focus group data from research including Nauta and Corten's *Gifted Adults in Work* and Maggie Brown and Elizabeth Peterson's *We Are Not That! A Focus Group Study With Gifted Adults: Direction for Future Research*. It further examines well-being and sustainable employability through Patricia A.J. van Casteren and colleagues' study using a capability approach.

While gifted adults often contribute to innovation and bring unique skills to their workplaces, they also face significant challenges related to social integration, mental health, and job satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of tailored support systems, recognizing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of gifted employees to enhance workplace well-being and professional sustainability.

The paper will contribute to the understanding of how gifted adults can be better supported in their careers, offering practical recommendations for organizations to foster inclusive and thriving work environments for this population.

This research will highlight the need for tailored support systems that address the specific challenges faced by gifted employees, including social integration, mental health, and job satisfaction, especially in Slovenia, where there are no studies or papers on this topic. For society, the findings could influence public attitudes toward giftedness, encouraging more inclusive corporate behavior and policies that foster innovation by leveraging the unique strengths of gifted adults. By enhancing workplace well-being, organizations can reduce turnover and increase productivity, thereby benefiting both individuals and broader societal outcomes.

This paper will contribute new insights into the under-researched area of gifted adults in the workplace. In review of existing literature will present practical strategies for organizations to support this often overlooked, yet very important population. The findings will be valuable for HR professionals, organizational psychologists, corporate leaders, and policymakers interested in enhancing the well-being and productivity of gifted employees.

The presentation is based on several key studies that explore the unique challenges and strengths of gifted adults in the workplace. These sources include *A Systematic Literature Review of Gifted Adults in the Workplace* by Catherine Chinnock, and *Highly Intelligent and Gifted Employees: Key to Innovation?* by Franc Corten, Noks Nauta, and Sieuwke Ronner. Additionally, Maren Schlegler's *Systematic Literature Review: Professional Situation of Gifted Adults* will provide insights into the occupational realities faced by gifted individuals.

⁷⁵ MBA, student, DOBA Business School; GeniusX, Inštitut za raziskovanje in razvoj nadarjenosti, info@geniusx.si

Further case studies and research to be referenced include *Gifted Adults in Work* by Noks Nauta and Frans Corten, as well as *How Can Wellbeing at Work and Sustainable Employability of Gifted Workers Be Enhanced? A Qualitative Study from a Capability Approach Perspective* by Patricia A.J. van Casteren, Jan Meerman, Evelien P.M. Brouwers, Arno van Dam, and Jac J.L. van der Klink.

Additional sources will include *The Strengths, Needs, and Vulnerabilities of Gifted Employees* by Carla Vreys, Kathleen Venderickx, and Tessa Kieboom, and the qualitative case study *The Psychological World of Highly Gifted Young Adults: A Follow-Up Study* by W. L. Frumau van Pinxten, J. J. L. Derksen, and W. A. M. Peters. The focus group study *We Are Not That! A Focus Group Study With Gifted Adults: Direction for Future Research* by Maggie Brown and Elizabeth Peterson will also be considered, along with Rianne van de Ven's *Working With Intensity: The Relationship Between Giftedness and Sensitivity in Working Adults in Flanders and the Netherlands*.

An innovative marketing model for the introduction of orphan drugs on the market

Nataša Jalen⁷⁶

Tina Vukasović⁷⁷

Daša Jalen⁷⁸

Keywords: *marketing model, rare disease, medicine, orphan drug, grounded theory*

Abstracts

The objective of this study is to present an innovative marketing model for the introduction of orphan drugs, which are used to treat rare diseases, into the market. In contrast to drugs used to treat common diseases, the pharmaceutical industry has demonstrated a reduced capacity to develop orphan drugs, given the relatively limited number of patients with each rare disease. A rare disease is defined as a disease affecting less than five individuals per 10,000. Nevertheless, the estimated number of patients with rare diseases in the EU is between 27 and 36 million (EURODIS, 2020), representing between 6-8% of the population. In the treatment of rare diseases it is crucial to acknowledge the psychological and social aspects, as these are typically serious and life-threatening diseases that affect not only the patient but also their family and wider community.

The following research questions were sought to be answered in designing an innovative marketing model:

- What role does strategic marketing planning play in the introduction of orphan drugs to the market?
- How do participants in the research perceive the current marketing practices for introducing orphan drugs to the market?
- How is awareness of rare diseases ensured for patients and the professional public?

Marketing of medicinal products is a crucial strategic function of pharmaceutical companies (Anamul, 2011). Vukasović (2023) explains fundamental marketing strategies as methods to achieve basic marketing objectives using the organisation's available resources, with the target being the market, product-market combination, or the entire company's assortment.

Patients with rare diseases face unique challenges that impact their psychological and sociological well-being. These challenges are often exacerbated by diagnostic delays, lack of awareness, and insufficient support systems. Patients experiencing diagnostic delays report higher levels of psychological distress, including irritability, frustration, and difficulty concentrating on daily life (Benito-Lozano et al., 2023; Zurynski et al., 2017). Families and patients often face social isolation and marginalization due to the rarity and complexity of their conditions. In addition, the lack of peer support and inadequate psychological support at the time of diagnosis contribute to the emotional burden (Anderson et al., 2013; Zurynski et al., 2017; Volgina et al. 2019).

Eldabi et al. (2002) argue that a well-defined research methodology based on scientific principles is essential when conducting any type of research. To conduct this research, we used qualitative methodology, constructivist GT, in order to illustrate the challenge of introduction of orphan drugs on the market from an unexplored perspective. Using constructivist GT, we searched the guiding themes,

⁷⁶ mag., assist., lect. Univerza na Primorskem, Fakulteta za management, Koper; Salvea d.o.o., Ljubljana; DOBA Business School Maribor, natasa@jalen-sp.com

⁷⁷ prof. dr., University of Primorska, Faculty of Management Koper; International School for Social and Business Studies Celje; DOBA Business School Maribor; tina.vukasovic@net.doba.si

⁷⁸ student, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Psychology, dasa.jalen2@gmail.com

identified the key categories and recognised the connections between them. The primary data source were semi-structured individual and group interviews. To ensure the credibility or trustworthiness of the research, the resulting categories and themes are verified by analysing documentary sources. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who met the expected criteria for participation in the study, i.e. they should be professionally or personally involved in rare diseases and orphan drugs. The outcome of the GT study is a theoretical framework for developing a model of market entry for orphan medicines that can be used when a new medicine comes on the market, considering all the aspects that we have identified as relevant.

A proposal for a marketing model for orphan drug market entry has been developed using GT. It is based on the integration of all identified key categories into a comprehensive approach. This is designed to ensure the availability and effective commercialisation of an orphan drug after development and marketing authorisation. The principal categories that have been taken into account in the formulation of the marketing model are as follows:

- The development of a favourable marketing environment and regulatory framework.
- Ongoing awareness-raising and education of all stakeholders, including the general public.
- Ensuring the availability of financial resources to facilitate the expeditious distribution of orphan drugs.
- Enhancing inter-stakeholder collaboration.
- Developing tailored marketing strategies for the successful market entry of orphan medicines.

A more profound comprehension and unified approach to orphan drugs marketing has the potential to enhance health outcomes for patients with rare diseases, stimulate innovation and reinforce collaboration between diverse stakeholders. The proposed model permits flexibility and sustainability, which is pivotal to effectively addressing the challenges associated with rare diseases.

The main limitation of the GT method, as with other qualitative methods, is the subjective interpretation of the data by the researcher. This can introduce subjectivity and bias into the analysis and theory development. We have sought to ensure the credibility and reliability of the research through the continuous use of reflection and the verification of findings in a purposively selected literature review.

The innovative marketing model is considering the aspects that are usually in the background but have a major impact on the market entry of orphan drugs. We focused our research on following issues: identifying and raising awareness of rare diseases and early diagnosis, which has a significant impact on the psychological and sociological aspects of treatment on the one hand, and enables pharmaceutical companies to shorten the time from marketing authorisation to the market entry on the other.

The original contribution of the research is the development of an innovative marketing model for the introduction of orphan drugs, focusing on qualitative aspects (psychological, sociological, ethical) that influence their market accessibility, as opposed to the commonly used models based on quantitative categories (pharmacoeconomic studies, impact on public funds, etc.). The methodological contribution is the development of a tailored marketing model for the market entry of orphan drugs, with a well-developed action plan.

Psychological aspects of Slovenian innovation ecosystem

Boris Cizelj⁷⁹

Keywords: *innovation ecosystem, innovative psychology, creativity and entrepreneurship, competitiveness in knowledge economy*

Abstracts

What influences innovation in organizations and society in general: innovative culture, incentives for innovators, the influence and positive example of leaders, as well as the market and financial environment – in short, a good innovation ecosystem. Unfortunately, the ecosystem in Slovenia is not efficient enough, which is why we are also losing in the ranking of countries in terms of innovation: in the last 5 years, we have fallen from 29th to 33rd place out of 132 countries.

Most countries around the world, including Slovenia, have not yet consolidated the knowledge and awareness of the following basic facts:

- (1) Innovation contributes about 60% to GDP growth (as calculated by the Swedish professor Charles Edquist from the University of Ulm).
- (2) The nature of the innovation process has changed radically in recent decades, as it no longer follows the traditional linear model. Now, virtually all factors in society are actively involved in innovation activity – including government.
- (3) The difference between invention (a new idea) and innovation (a new product – adopted on the market) is still not fully recognized.
- (4) The country needs to create an effective innovation ecosystem, focussing on support for creativity and entrepreneurship.
- (5) Sufficient and properly organised financing of innovation is essential (the most successful countries allocate at least 3% of GDP from public and private sources, medium-performing countries about 2%, and the inefficient ones less than 1.5% of GDP). Slovenia is unfortunately in this third category.
- (6) A prerequisite for the innovation success of a country is a modern and high-quality education system (with an emphasis on competences and skills) that supports the values of a modern innovation and entrepreneurial culture.
- (7) A well-functioning market is very important for the innovation success of a country, as well as access to venture capital, which is crucial for the creation and development of companies. In terms of its share in GDP, we are among the last countries in the EU (5 times less than in Austria, and even 20 times less than in the USA).

It is not only about proper organization and an appropriate development strategy from companies to the state level, but also about a system of values and psychology that recognizes that knowledge and innovation are key pillars of successful development.

At the company level, this means that innovation is the first priority in achieving international competitiveness, but at the same time a prerequisite for successful business now and in the future – with highly productive and satisfied employees. This, in turn, imposes an obligation on the management to consistently emphasize the importance of innovativeness through communication with colleagues, to appropriately evaluate and reward innovative employees. Otherwise, countries cannot avoid a brain drain, which is also the case for Slovenia, having lost about 20,000 university-educated people in the last 30 years – unfortunately with little prospect of returning.

⁷⁹ Prof. dr., DOBA Business School, boris.cizelj@net.doba.si

In short, Slovenia cannot become a knowledge economy if innovation does not become the goal of every citizen, with effective systemic support and engagement of all actors in society, and an appropriate innovation and entrepreneurial psychological profile of citizens.

The psychological approach in modern entrepreneurship offers the following advantages:

- We identify, appreciate and stimulate our own and the potential of our colleagues and business partners;
- We take into account the psychological profile of the interlocutors (especially leaders of negotiation teams) and adjust the style of conversation/negotiation;
- We encourage people in our environment to openly express their expectations, interests and disagreements regarding the offers we negotiate;
- We encourage our colleagues and partners to be innovative and original – instead of limiting ourselves to routine and avoiding areas where we diverge. It is completely wrong to rule out in advance the possibility of reaching a mutually acceptable compromise.

A domain-independent review of explainable ai's role in facilitating innovation and creativity in organizations

Miha Lavrič⁸⁰

Keywords: *explainable AI, innovation, creativity, decision making, organizational behavior*

Abstracts

This review aims to explore the role of Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) in fostering innovation and creativity across organizations. The primary research question is: How does XAI enhance decision-making processes and collaborative efforts within diverse organizational contexts? As AI technologies become more prevalent, understanding how transparency and interpretability drive organizational growth is critical for leveraging these systems effectively.

AI has transformed decision-making in businesses, but traditional AI models' opacity leads to mistrust and reluctance from stakeholders. Existing literature highlights the importance of explainability in AI systems, yet the implications for innovation and creativity in diverse organizational contexts are not fully understood. This review situates XAI within organizational behavior, emphasizing its potential to bridge the gap between human intuition and machine intelligence, fostering greater collaboration and trust in AI systems across different domains.

This study employs a qualitative literature review methodology, synthesizing findings from academic sources and industry reports. By analyzing case studies and empirical research from various sectors, the review identifies common themes related to XAI's impact on decision-making, accountability, and collaboration. This method offers a broad, domain-independent perspective on how XAI can drive innovation in different organizational contexts.

The findings reveal that XAI can improve decision-making quality by offering interpretable insights, building stakeholder trust. XAI also promotes accountability by identifying biases in AI algorithms, fostering ethical business practices. Additionally, the literature shows that XAI facilitates collaboration between technical and non-technical teams, making AI-driven projects more accessible to diverse team members. This transparency leads to innovative solutions and potentially greater organizational creativity. Across functional domains, such as healthcare, manufacturing, agriculture, etc., XAI's explainability supports creative problem-solving and encourages broad stakeholder engagement.

This study is limited by its reliance on existing literature, which may not reflect emerging trends in XAI. Additionally, most studies focus on short-term impacts, and further longitudinal research is necessary to assess XAI's long-term effects on innovation and creativity across various industries.

The practical implications of this research are substantial. XAI enhances transparency and trust in AI systems, which fosters innovation across organizational functions. Socially, XAI promotes more inclusive practices, allowing stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to engage with AI technologies. This shift towards transparency in AI could influence public attitudes, encouraging broader acceptance and integration of AI in daily life.

This review offers novel insights into the domain-independent role of XAI in fostering innovation and creativity within organizations. It provides valuable information for academics, practitioners, and policymakers aiming to leverage AI technologies responsibly, with a focus on maximizing creative and innovative potential across various industries.

⁸⁰ PhD, DOBA Business School, miha.lavric@net.doba.si