

Guest editorial: Well-being in communication industries

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299

Introduction

Maintaining work–life balance has been a continuously challenging issue in communications industries, with some authors raising this issue in the early 2000s (e.g. [Aldoory et al., 2008](#)). However, there are few studies analyzing this issue from a well-being perspective. Mental health issues are on the rise in the industry since the communication profession features 24/7 availability and flexibility. The number of professionals who have experienced exhaustion or burnout has spiked, from 37% in 2020 to 45% in 2021, according to Ragan Communications' Workplace Wellness report ([2021](#)). Therefore, the topic of well-being has been vital to the sustainability of the communication profession, but now more than ever. However, the issue of well-being is not just an issue of work–life balance but also an issue of mental health that can be affected by workloads and organizational culture, to mention two elements. In addition to that, happiness and joy at work also impact our well-being, satisfaction and self-confidence.

Managerial styles and the support we receive from superiors impact us too. These issues are also relevant for organizations because motivated and satisfied employees perform better, stay in the organization and act as organizational ambassadors ([Bashshur, 2015](#); [Ruck et al., 2017](#); [Topić, 2023](#)). Therefore, looking after employee well-being, creating a positive and supportive organizational culture, and imposing manageable workloads, are something that not only benefits employees but also the organizations themselves. Equal societies are better for everyone ([Djerf-Pierre, 2011](#)) and they are based on inclusivity and a situation where “everyone feels welcome, valued and respected, no matter who they are or where they come from” ([Ricee, 2022, n.p.](#)), and this should be extended to working hours and well-being.

The research emphasized above is just a part of the reason for this issue. The main idea for the issue comes because of the EUPRERA research network on Women in PR, which has researched well-being in several countries showing issues with practitioner wellbeing, but this gap was identified in a wider and more general study on women in PR focusing on lived experiences, office culture and leadership ([Topić, 2020](#)).

After these studies, a need for more focus on well-being was identified, particularly in the context of managerial styles and how managers, who tend to be men, impact employees, who are largely women ([Topić et al., 2020](#)). We did not want to just survey women but also see to what extent men report dissatisfaction with well-being, following [Aldoory et al.'s \(2008\)](#) study on work–life balance in PR industries ([Aldoory et al., 2008](#)). Results of EUPRERA surveys have shown, for example, in the UK, that practitioners spend too much time working, which impedes opportunities to visit friends and family and have time for themselves. Practitioners report feeling frazzled, emotionally drained and stressed out to do things they enjoy but express positive views towards their managers ([Topić and Chmiel, 2024](#)). In Portugal, the survey found that men reported greater pleasure at work than women and overall job satisfaction tended to be highest in mid-career and later working years. Men reported more free time and work schedule control but also worked more during free time. Age matters more than gender for overall work–life balance. People of all genders tend to feel more satisfied and in control, as they progress through life stages ([Cunha et al., 2024](#)). In Croatia, the majority of respondents reported facing challenges in balancing work and private life, and the majority of respondents are engaged in work activities in their free time ([Geiger Zeman et al., 2024](#)).

This opens several questions. How are managerial styles and organizational culture contributing to employee well-being? Is there such a thing as happiness and joy at work? This was the moment when we approached the *Journal of Communication Management* with the



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idea of this special issue, and we invited researchers to submit papers studying well-being from multiple perspectives to delve deeper into the well-being issue in communication industries. Whilst we encouraged EUPRERA network participants to submit to the issue, we also opened the call to a wider area of research; thus, the special issue features only two articles from the EUPRERA research network whilst other papers have answered the call for papers, widening the contribution and avoiding epistemological and methodological bias, which often happens when research is produced within a closed network group. With this, the issue offers a broader perspective on the issue of well-being both thematically and geographically.

Contribution of the special issue

This special issue, *Well-being in Communication Industries*, strives to address the above questions. We are pleased to offer our readers a collection of seven original research articles. This collection offers a variety of perspectives on the subjective well-being of communication professionals while addressing both the challenges and opportunities for organizations to recalibrate workplace health and employee mental health by prioritizing employee well-being programs and fostering a healthy and sustainable organizational culture. The organization of the seven original research reflects the complexity of the subject, well-being in communication industries.

The first article titled “Promoting employee well-being and commitment in communication industries,” contributed by [Eng et al. \(2025\)](#), provides a comprehensive overview of the diverse range and types of well-being initiatives and programs offered in the workplace via an online survey of full-time communication professionals in the United States. More importantly, the authors investigated the participation rate of communication professionals in available well-being programs, the channels through which they receive information about available well-being programs, and the factors preventing them from taking mental health leave. Grounded in organizational support theory, their research confirms that the availability of well-being programs in the workplace increases communication professionals’ attention to mental health. It further increases their perceptions of organizational support, which positively influences subjective well-being and organizational commitment.

In the second contribution, titled “Subjective well-being of public relations and communication professionals in the context of perceived organisational support” [Anton \(2025\)](#) examines several dimensions of subjective well-being in the communication industry in Romania, including employer and employee engagement, work culture, work–life balance, job satisfaction, well-being, and perceived gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Results collected from Romanian public relations professionals revealed a gap between perceived and practical organizational support: while emotional support of well-being is acknowledged, actionable support of achieving well-being is less present. The author argues it is urgent and important for organizations to develop well-being systems in the communication industries in Romania.

Similarly, the third article contributed by [Cunha et al. \(2025\)](#), titled “Subjective well-being perceptions of Portuguese Public Relations practitioners: a gender and stages of life analysis,” shares the perspectives on subjective well-being from public relations professionals in Portugal. The author used the mixed-methods research design to conduct a national survey, followed by semi-structured interviews with both men and women working in the public relations industry in Portugal. The author argues that gender and stages of life have a significant influence on subjective well-being. Therefore, the author calls for organizations to be more sensitive and inclusive when creating and promoting well-being programs in the workplace. The results also indicated the importance of developing various well-being programs to address the specific needs of men and women at different life stages.

In their unique contribution, titled “Understanding subjective well-being across a multi-generational workforce in public relations: a qualitative study,” [Candello and Mohammadpour \(2025\)](#) explore the topic of well-being through a qualitative approach by addressing the

generational gap in subjective well-being. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with public relations practitioners across the generational cohorts of Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z to gain their insights. The results show both generational similarities and differences. A key disparity revealed senior professionals (i.e. those in the boomer generation) struggled with work-life balance while junior practitioners (i.e. Gen Z professionals) are committed to setting boundaries between their professional career and personal life. The authors argue that there is a strong need for the communication industry to establish flexible workplace standards that enable professionals at different career stages to collaborate and support employee well-being.

Chmiel's (2025) research, titled "Loneliness, office space arrangement and mental well-being of Gen Z PR professionals. Falling into the trap of an agile office?", explores the construct of mental well-being by addressing both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of individual's mental health. More importantly, the author added the consideration of some tangible aspects of the workplace, such as office space arrangement, working from home and the use of video conferencing devices when investigating mental well-being. The results revealed lack of dedicated offices may lead to lower job satisfaction and lower psychological well-being indirectly. Some flexible work arrangements may have created a combined effect on the rising levels of loneliness and depression among Gen Z PR professionals. More face-to-face interactions may actively prevent loneliness and positively contribute to employees' well-being.

Effective leadership and appropriate use of motivational language can contribute to higher levels of employee satisfaction and psychological well-being, and this is demonstrated in practical detail in the article, titled "The influence of leaders' motivational language on employee well-being through relatedness in remote work environments," Lee *et al.* (2025) designed a survey study among full-time working professionals by considering frequencies of remote work arrangements. Grounded in motivational language theory and self-determination theory, their research confirms the use of direction-giving language from leaders can enhance employees' relatedness. It further improves employees' job satisfaction and psychological well-being even in remote work environments.

In the last contribution to this special issue, titled "Shaping the notion of #wellbeing in the therapy culture context: an analysis through Instagram narratives," Larrondo-Ureta *et al.* (2025) explored the content, messages and narratives of well-being on one of the most popular social networking platforms, Instagram. The results of the hashtag (#wellbeing) analysis and the visual analysis revealed that mental health and emotional well-being are often situated in the therapeutic culture context and positive psychology by addressing self-knowledge, spirituality and/or motivational phrases. In addition, their research identified a strong feminized digital conversation trend about well-being on Instagram.

Overall, the research articles collected in this special issue present a wide range of perspectives on understanding the current landscape of well-being, mental health and workplace strategies. The complex nature of employee well-being presents challenges and opportunities at multiple dimensions such as the generational, cultural, leadership and digital levels. It is our sincere hope that the articles in this special issue will serve as a springboard for further scholarship on this critical need to address health equity and life-centric in the workplace.

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