

How negatively valenced actor engagement with transformative service exchanges affects well-being outcomes

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Abstract

Purpose – This conceptual paper addresses a key gap in transformative service research (TSR) by theorizing how negatively valenced actor engagement, specifically actor disengagement and negative engagement, affects well-being and ill-being outcomes. While prior work has explored resource misuse and value co-destruction, our study integrates TSR and actor engagement perspectives to explain how such behaviors hinder transformative value creation across individual and community levels.

Design/methodology/approach – Adopting Jaakkola’s (2020) model approach, our study develops a framework linking negatively valenced engagement, resource (mis)integration and actors’ resource–challenge equilibrium (RCE) to explain well-being and ill-being outcomes in transformative service exchanges.

Findings – Our work theorizes that resource-integrating mechanisms, including an imbalance in actors’ RCE, help to explain the effect of negatively valenced engagement on individual and community-level well-being and ill-being outcomes.

Research limitations/implications – The proposed framework provides a foundation for future empirical research on the mechanisms of disengagement and negative engagement in transformative services.

Practical implications – Practitioners can identify and address early signs of actor disengagement and negative engagement to mitigate ill-being and sustain well-being outcomes.

Social implications – Our framework provides timely insights for policymakers to enable the integration and application of various actor resource pools to address individual and community challenges.

Originality/value – Our study extends TSR and actor engagement literature by shifting focus from positive engagement to negatively valenced engagement, explaining how resource misuse and value co-destruction generate well-being and ill-being outcomes in transformative service exchanges.

Keywords Transformative service research (TSR), Disengagement and negative engagement, Well-being, Ill-being

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Transformative service exchanges aim to uplift actor well-being (Previte and Robertson, 2019; Blocker and Barrios, 2015), where well-being is the outcome of a “balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced” (Dodge *et al.*, 2012, p. 230). This

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equilibrium enables individuals to achieve life satisfaction, meaning and purpose (Anderson *et al.*, 2013; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020b; Hollebeek and Belk, 2021). However, not all actors participate positively in these exchanges, necessitating an exploration of well-being outcomes for those who disengage or negatively engage. For instance, a \$30 million Federal Government literacy program in remote Australian schools failed to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's literacy. Instead, it led to decreased student attendance among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, indicative of negative engagement and unintended well-being consequences (Guenther and Osborne, 2020). Such an example highlights the need to understand the effects of negatively valenced engagement on actor well-being to facilitate more effective transformative service exchanges. Our paper addresses this gap by investigating well-being outcomes resulting from focal actor disengagement and negative engagement, guided by the central research question: How does negatively valenced focal actor engagement impact well-being outcomes for the individual and community?

To address this question, we develop a novel conceptual framework using Jaakkola's (2020) model approach, which is a method used to build theoretical frameworks that predict relationships between concepts. This approach describes an event, object or process and explains how it works by disclosing antecedents, outcomes and contingencies related to the focal construct. It involves creating a nomological network around the focal concept, using formal analytical methods to detail causal linkages and mechanisms. The model approach adopted here provides a road map for understanding well-being outcomes by delineating negatively valenced actor engagement within transformative service exchanges, and the process via which this occurs. We explain relationships between negatively valenced actor engagement within transformative service exchanges and the ensuing well-being outcomes. Specifically, we attempt to elucidate actor well-being outcomes that result from negatively valenced focal actor engagement by drawing on both the Transformative Service Research (TSR) and actor engagement literature.

TSR is service research that centers on creating improvements in the well-being of consumer entities, including individuals and communities (Anderson *et al.*, 2011). Actor engagement, defined as "a dynamic and iterative process, reflecting actors' dispositions to invest resources in their interactions with other connected actors in a service system" (Brodie *et al.*, 2019, p. 183), contributes to actor well-being. For the focal actor to achieve well-being outcomes, resources need to be integrated through interactions with others within a service ecosystem (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Husain *et al.*, 2021). A service ecosystem is defined as "a relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system of resource-integrating actors connected by shared institutional arrangements and mutual value creation through service exchange" (Vargo and Lusch, 2016, p. 11). However, these actor interactions can be both positive or negative (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014).

Most prior service research centers on positively valenced actor engagement and associated (positive) well-being outcomes in various service contexts (see, for example, Anderson *et al.*, 2013; Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020b; Hepi *et al.*, 2017; Plé and Cáceres, 2010; Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2020). Nonetheless, several scholars have called for research into the negative well-being outcomes that result from negative forms of actor engagement (Naumann *et al.*, 2017a). Negatively valenced engagement can take two forms. The first is disengagement, which is an actor's temporary or permanent removal of voluntary resource contributions from a focal engagement object, which affects value processes and outcomes for the focal actor, as well as other actors within the service ecosystem (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). The second is negative engagement, which involves an actor's active, dedicated and unfavorable thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014) toward resource contributions with respect to a focal engagement object (Alexander *et al.*, 2018).

To explore the influence of focal actor disengagement and negative engagement on well-being outcomes in transformative service exchanges, we adopt the definition of well-being that suggests it arises when actors can balance the challenges they face with their available resources (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Dodge *et al.*, 2012; Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020b).

To conceptualize this balance, we consider both focal actor and community levels, i.e., actor resource–challenge equilibrium (ARCE) and community resource–challenge equilibrium (CRCE), to identify well-being outcomes for both actors and the broader community (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020b). We study well-being outcomes at micro- and meso-levels of the service system as these are the primary points of service exchange where the direct interactions between service providers and consumers occur (Polonsky *et al.*, 2024). Specifically, the micro level includes individual consumers and service employees directly involved in service exchanges, while the meso level encompasses the broader community (Polonsky *et al.*, 2024). By focusing on these two levels, our framework offers a deeper understanding of where well-being is experienced most tangibly (Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2019). This focus helps to identify specific needs, challenges, and resources essential for achieving a balanced resource–challenge equilibrium (RCE). We anticipate reduced well-being or alternatively ill-being outcomes related to value co-creation or value co-destruction, depending on the form that actor negative engagement takes.

Value co-creation, as defined by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), is the joint creation of value by the firm and customer. It involves collaborative interaction, enabling the customer to co-create the service to fit their context by participating in joint problem definition and solution (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). On the other hand, value co-destruction is an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the system's well-being, which can be individual or organizational (Lumivalo *et al.*, 2023, p. 3). Reduced well-being implies that an individual, or groups of individuals, do not fully utilize resources to address their challenges and hence well-being diminishes, resulting in a poorer ARCE. Ill-being rather results when individuals or groups of individuals use resources in a manner that is detrimental to the challenge(s) being addressed, thus causing harm and disrupting the ARCE. Table 1 provides a glossary of key terms used throughout this paper.

With this more holistic account of dynamic consumer–service provider relationships (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Naumann *et al.*, 2017b), our work makes several contributions to the service domain. First, we build on existing literature that has focused mostly on (positive) well-being (Chen *et al.*, 2021). We consider the influence of negatively valenced engagement types on actor well-being (Naumann *et al.*, 2017b), contributing to both actor engagement and TSR literature. Second, we study reduced value co-creation and value co-destruction as outcomes of negatively valenced actor engagement, detailing the process that leads to reduced well-being or ill-being. Building on the conceptual frameworks of Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser (2020a) and Chen *et al.* (2021), we propose a micro (individual) and meso (community) level framework elucidating reduced well-being and ill-being outcomes. This offers a novel contribution to the TSR literature, whereby negatively valenced well-being types have been largely overlooked. Moreover, we highlight how actor disengagement and negative engagement can disrupt value co-creation or lead to resource misuse through value co-destruction, underscoring the pivotal role of actor engagement in transformative service contexts. Finally, our conceptual framework offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners. Our framework aims to guide their approach to identifying challenges and devising innovative solutions within transformative service exchanges where fostering positive actor engagement can be challenging.

Our paper is organized as follows. First, a literature review is provided, including relevant TSR and engagement work, which our ensuing conceptual framework integrates. The subsequent section presents our conceptual framework and accompanying propositions. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our framework, along with future research opportunities.

TSR and resource–challenge equilibrium well-being

TSR distinguishes itself from traditional service research by focusing on driving transformational changes at individual, group and system levels within a dynamic and

Table 1. Glossary of key concepts

Concept	Definition	Source
Transformative Service Research (TSR)	Service research that centers on creating uplifting changes in the well-being and reduction of suffering of consumers and employees, communities and the service ecosystem	Anderson et al. (2011) , Nasr and Fisk (2018)
Actor disengagement	Actors' temporary or permanent removal of resource contributions from a focal engagement object, affecting value processes and outcomes for both the focal actor and other actors within the service ecosystem	Alexander et al. (2018)
Actor's negative engagement	Actors' intense and active intention to cause harm to the service provider, perhaps in response to perceived threats to the self	Do et al. (2019)
Resource loss	Loss of resources occurs when expected resources are not gained or the loss of resources is greater than expected	Mengcheng and Tuure (2020) , Leo and Zainuddin (2017)
Resource mismatch	The unfit nature of available resources to mobilize and enable higher resource density and constructive interactions	Mengcheng and Tuure (2020)
Resource integration	A process consisting of activities to assemble, master and optimize resources, to plan and fine-tune usage events in real time, and to reflect on previous activities	Bruce et al. (2019)
Resource misintegration	When actors access, adapt, combine and/or apply resources in ways contrary to their intended use	Laud et al. (2019)
Value co-creation	Consumers' engagement in the process of defining and creating value	Prahalad and Ramawamy (2004)
Value co-destruction	An interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the system's well-being, which can be individual or organizational. This process can occur due to the misuse of resources, conflicting or incongruent resource integration practices, or the loss or lack of required resources. It is characterized by negative outcomes for at least one of the involved actors	Lumivalo et al. (2023)
Resource challenge equilibrium (RCE)	A balance point between an individual's available resource pool and the challenges faced	Dodge et al. (2012) , Chen et al. (2021) , Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser (2020a)
Actor resource-challenge equilibrium (ARCE)	A balance point is reached when actors reduce cognitive, psychological, physical and social challenges they face by integrating cognitive, psychological, physical and social resources	Chen et al. (2021)
Community resource-challenge equilibrium (CRCE)	A balance point is reached when the community reduces cognitive, psychological, physical and social challenges faced by integrating cognitive, psychological, physical and social resources	Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser (2020a)

(continued)

Table 1. Continued

Concept	Definition	Source
Subjective well-being (SWB)	An individual actor's evaluation of their own quality of life, such as their happiness and life satisfaction	Russell-Bennett <i>et al.</i> (2020), Dodge <i>et al.</i> (2012)
Subjective ill-being	When an individual actor integrates resources in a manner that is detrimental to the challenges faced, resulting in an imbalanced RCE	Sirgy (2017)

evolving service ecosystem where actors and resources continuously interact (Previte and Robertson, 2019). Whereas early service scholarship has been criticized for overlooking “real life” challenges and actor well-being (Blocker *et al.*, 2011), the past decade has seen a shift toward transformative paradigms in actor and service research that prioritize these concerns (Russell-Bennet *et al.*, 2019). For example, prior studies highlight that TSR advocates for using service to advance human well-being (Anderson *et al.*, 2013) and/or to reduce human suffering (Nasr and Fisk, 2018). Other studies argue that transformative service exchanges provide a pathway toward well-being outcomes at multiple market levels (see, for example, Anderson *et al.*, 2013; Feng *et al.*, 2019; Previte and Robertson, 2019).

Actor well-being, as a core concept in TSR, is conceptualized in different ways, including in terms of objective versus subjective well-being (SWB) (Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2020). Objective well-being indicators include quality of life, material resources (e.g. income, food and housing) and social attributes (e.g., education, social networks and health). SWB, as is our focus, rather reflects evaluations of the person's own life, such as their happiness and life satisfaction (Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2020). SWB tends to dominate TSR studies, arguably because of the difficulty in operationalizing objective well-being (Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2020). SWB can be classified as hedonic or eudaimonic (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Hedonic well-being relates to subjective happiness, pleasure and the absence of pain, while eudaimonic well-being reflects the pursuit of personal growth, a meaningful life and positive relationships (Dodge *et al.*, 2012).

Well-being can also refer to the state of a system in which vital features remain relatively stable or achieve equilibrium (Dodge *et al.*, 2012; Headey and Wooden, 2004; Reber, 1995) as suggested by dynamic equilibrium or set-point theory. Extended applications of these theories also link individual resources to challenging life events (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). According to this view, people develop relevant resources, e.g., knowledge and skills, to cope with the trials that they face in life, which define their fluctuating well-being state (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). The combination of a set point and the fluctuating balance between challenges and resources implies the existence of a potential RCE (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Well-being is achieved when this equilibrium is maintained, reflecting a balance between available resources and encountered challenges (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). Well-being fluctuates as the RCE shifts, such that people consistently seek to return to their set point, metaphorically like a seesaw between resources and challenges (see Figure 1). Building on previous work by Dodge *et al.* (2012), Chen *et al.* (2021) argue that a balanced RCE requires people to reduce their cognitive, psychological, physical and social challenges while integrating their cognitive, psychological, physical and social resources. This is the approach to well-being that we take to demonstrate the interlinkages between actor engagement, resources and challenges within and across the individual and community.

Cognitive resources refer to the individual's cognitive capacity, developed through experience, competence and task-relevant knowledge, such that they can engage in various tasks. Psychological resources include optimism, personal control, a sense of meaning,

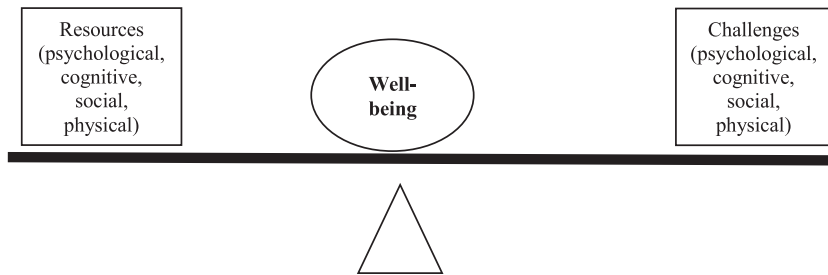


Figure 1. Resource–challenge equilibrium for well-being. Source: Adapted from [Chen et al. \(2021\)](#)

self-esteem and coping abilities. Physical resources refer to when the individual feels energized and can engage independently in functional and instrumental activities of daily living. Finally, social resources imply social networks that are available to an actor, such as family and friends, for contacts and liaisons, which may be assessed according to the frequency and quality of interactions ([Finsterwalder et al., 2020](#)).

Psychological challenges imply insufficient mental capabilities to deal with resource deficiencies. Physical challenges might involve efforts to stay physically safe and well. Social challenges entail components such as limited abilities to remain connected with networks, as might arise when the person is subject to domestic abuse, unemployment, lack of education or marginalization (e.g. refugees) ([Finsterwalder et al., 2017](#); [Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020b](#); [Hepi et al., 2017](#)). Finally, cognitive challenges reflect comprehension of the subject matter, such as understanding what transformative services are or their importance.

Using these various resources and challenges, we investigate individual RCEs by considering how focal actors balance diverse resources against diverse challenges, which they might pursue for the benefit of themselves and their community ([Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020a](#)). Given well-being is also contextually dependent ([Russell-Bennett et al., 2020](#)), different RCE states can result from different resource integration patterns. Greater well-being requires an environment in which service providers and consumers can integrate their resources in a positive and collaborative way ([Anderson et al., 2013](#)).

These environments contain macro-, meso- and micro-levels that might influence well-being ([Anderson et al., 2013](#)). The macro level, while not the focus of our work, includes public policy, cultural, technological and economic factors, as well as access to political freedoms, general peace and stability, equity and overall development opportunities ([Anderson et al., 2013](#)). The meso-level involves community or social hierarchy, while the micro-level reflects individual profiles; these two system levels are our focus here. However, the SWB outcomes that arise in these environments also might be due to value co-creation ([Chen et al., 2021](#)) through positive interactions, i.e. engagement of a focal actor with other human actors in the environment. The value co-creation process is vital to promoting individual and community well-being. This is because it can balance the RCE states of both individual actors and the community by pooling resources, such as knowledge, skills and support that can effectively address the challenges faced. Value co-destruction, on the other hand, emphasizes the potential negative outcomes from problematic interactions, which impact the availability of resources for addressing challenges. Therefore, we focus on the impact of negatively valenced actor engagement using the RCE framework, and value co-creation and value co-destruction concepts to explain both ARCE and CRCE outcomes.

Actor engagement, disengagement and negative engagement

Actor engagement. Actor engagement is a multi-dimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements ([Brodie et al., 2011](#); [Naumann et al., 2017a](#)).

As a social construct, it implies repeated interactions among parties in a service relationship over time (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Vivek *et al.*, 2012). Actor engagement thus provides a foundation for value co-creation (Storbacka *et al.*, 2016) in multi-stakeholder service systems (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). Both service-dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016) and social exchange theory (SET) (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976) explain how interactive experiences and value co-creation emerge in service relationships (Brodie *et al.*, 2011). Hence, actor engagement involves resource investment (such as cognitive, emotional and behavioral resources) that helps to facilitate resource integration and contributes to value co-creation.

Actor engagement is also motivationally driven and context dependent, taking various forms and resulting in different outcomes (Brodie *et al.*, 2019). Engagement can be positively or negatively valenced (Dolan *et al.*, 2016). Negative engagement, although still involving resource investment, includes detachment, misuse or misalignment and co-destruction (Dolan *et al.*, 2016). The forms of engagement differ in intensity and proactivity of negative cognitive, emotional and behavioral manifestations toward the service provider (Do *et al.*, 2019). For instance, detachment is considered low intensity, followed by misalignment or misuse, which is of mid-level intensity, and co-destruction is high intensity.

Based on this, we depict actor disengagement as an actor's temporary or permanent removal of resource contributions from a focal engagement object, affecting value processes and outcomes for both the focal actor and other actors within the service ecosystem (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). Disengaged actors might be detached, discontinued, unresponsive or emotionally distanced from the service provider or process to avoid unpleasant service ordeals or to minimize losses related to failed service exchanges (Dolan *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, we depict actor negative engagement as the intense, active intention by actors to cause harm to the service provider, perhaps in response to perceived threats to the self (Do *et al.*, 2019). As such, actors can negatively interact with the brand and other actors by displaying strong negative thoughts (e.g., negative bias and cynicism), feelings (e.g. hatred, anger, fear, resentment and shame) and behavioral inclinations (e.g., negative word of mouth, complaints and sabotage) toward a service provider. This may be related to their belief that the service has threatened their fundamental human needs for self-esteem, fairness, control and/or security (Do *et al.*, 2019; Dolan *et al.*, 2016). Such actions can also be aimed at influencing other actors' perceptions and preferences toward the focal firm, in the process destroying the brand's value.

To explore the outcomes of actor disengagement and negative engagement, we conducted a literature review using the following keywords and phrases: "negative customer/consumer brand engagement," "citizen engagement," "negative engagement" and "consumer/actor disengagement." The identified articles reveal varied outcomes of negatively valenced actor engagement, including unfavorable brand attitude and e-word of mouth (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014), negative effects on brand equity and reputation, switching behavior, disrupted bonds (Juric *et al.*, 2016), decreased actor-firm interactions, diminished value derived from the relationship (Bowden *et al.*, 2016), boycotting and efforts to convince other stakeholders to reject the service provider over time (Lievonen *et al.*, 2019). In addition, we argue that disengagement and negative engagement trigger different intentions to engage in a particular behavior. Accordingly, we present disengagement and negative engagement as discrete but related states, within the broader notion of actor engagement (Juric *et al.*, 2016; Naumann *et al.*, 2017b), which evoke distinct actor outcomes.

Effects of actor disengagement

As previously outlined, actor disengagement is a psychological process that can result in relationship termination, usually triggered by negative critical events. Termination can be a permanent state of detachment (Lievonen *et al.*, 2019) or temporary, allowing actors to return to the service provider in the future (Do *et al.*, 2019; Dolan *et al.*, 2016). In transformative service exchanges, as in traditional service exchanges, disengagement is multi-dimensional

(e.g., cognitive, affective or behavioral). Cognitive disengagement involves attempts to forget negative service experiences through denial and escape or avoidance techniques, or else express distrust in the service provider. Affective disengagement manifests as frustration and rejection, while behavioral disengagement results in actors adopting apathetic stances, such as neglecting the relationship (Naumann *et al.*, 2017a, b). Anderson *et al.* (2013) similarly observe that disengaged actors do not overtly react to a service provider, but rather separate themselves emotionally or physically from the service process.

In transformative service exchanges aimed at uplifting human well-being and/or reducing suffering, actors may emotionally disengage from value co-creation activities, reflecting their passive emotions about the service and/or its provider. Cognitively, they may exhibit distrust toward the transformative service, and they also may behaviorally disengage by reducing their participation in value co-creation activities. When actor neglect takes the form of ignoring the relevant challenge (Naumann *et al.*, 2017b), they may become invisible to service providers because they do not actively exit or express voice about the problematic service relationship. Such developments subsequently are detrimental to the ARCE, because detached actors not only reduce their investment in resources to be exchanged but also miss out on co-creation needed to address their challenges. For example, public services such as food assistance, subsidized housing, job training and education can be invasive and bureaucratic, causing confusion, stress and frustration for some actors (Anasori *et al.*, 2022; Naumann *et al.*, 2017b). If this frustration drives them to disengage, these actors may miss out on essential services that address their challenges, such as hunger, homelessness, unemployment or illiteracy. Their ARCE thus remains imbalanced, which represents a pressing concern for transformative service providers.

Effects of negative actor engagement

Negative actor engagement is also considered to be multi-dimensional, encompassing cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects (Naumann *et al.*, 2017a, b). The cognitive dimension reflects “the degree of interest and attention paid to negative information about a service brand” (Naumann *et al.*, 2020, p. 1473). The affective dimension reflects “feelings of anger and dislike actors hold towards a service relationship” (Naumann *et al.*, 2020, p. 1472), including cynicism and bias, often in response to unfulfilled service expectations. The behavioral dimension “manifests through collective complaint and anti-brand activism” (Naumann *et al.*, 2020, p. 1473), such as active complaining, public venting, boycotting and protests (Do *et al.*, 2019; Naumann *et al.*, 2017b). This behavioral aspect is often collective as actors seek support from others when expressing dissatisfaction with a service provider (Naumann *et al.*, 2020).

Negatively engaged actors may increase resource investment, but this tends to be negatively valenced. They may express their negativity in various active ways (such as via destructive thinking, negative emotions and destructive behaviors) throughout the service experience (Bowden *et al.*, 2016; Dolan *et al.*, 2016), impacting other actors and the value derived from exchanges, leading to co-destruction of value (Ple, 2016). For example, actors might explicitly advise others against using the service provider based on unfavorable experiences or rather endorsing competitors (Azer and Alexander, 2020a). Value may also be indirectly destroyed when actors make negative comments, discredit or deride service providers without explicitly advising others not to transact (Azer and Alexander, 2020b), even expressing regret over their choice of service provider (Azer and Alexander, 2020a). Such actions harm the service provider’s reputation and perceived competence (Azer and Alexander, 2020b; Do *et al.*, 2019). Such value co-destruction is defined as “an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the systems’ well-being” (Plé and Cáceres, 2010, p. 431) in turn may impact both ARCE and CRCE.

Individual and community well-being outcomes

We reviewed the literature using key databases, including Science Direct, Scopus, JSTOR, Emerald Insight, along with Google Scholar, to locate prior research studies that focus on well-being by leveraging TSR, value co-creation and value co-destruction concepts. These databases were selected due to their broad coverage of peer-reviewed articles in service marketing and related disciplines. Our literature search was based on key terms and phrases, including “engagement,” “citizen engagement,” “value co-creation,” “value co-destruction,” “Transformative Service Research”, “transformative services,” “service outcomes,” “resource integration,” “well-being,” “well-being co-creation,” “diminished well-being,” “consumer well-being,” “well-being co-destruction,” “system well-being,” “community well-being,” “ill-being,” “transformative value co-creation/co-destruction,” “co-design” and “co-creation roles.” The search was restricted to articles published in English in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings and books between 2005 and 2023. This led to 341 results, which were screened based on titles and abstracts to determine their relevance to the research topic. Additionally, duplicate articles were removed and selected representative articles for inclusion resulted in a final set of 73 articles from service, marketing and consumer domains. Full text of potentially relevant articles was then reviewed.

Our search identified a relatively limited stream of studies focusing on well-being outcomes in a transformative service context. Examples include exploring co-created value as a well-being outcome in a healthcare context (Black and Gallan, 2015); transformative value resulting from the co-creation of transformative services aimed at alleviating poverty (Blocker and Barrios, 2015); actor involvement in service co-design to enhance transformative services (Dietrich *et al.*, 2017); and how vulnerable actor engagement and well-being can improve due to transformative value co-creation (Hepi *et al.*, 2017). Although these studies highlight various well-being outcomes from engagement and co-creation, they do not explore the nature of individual and community-level well-being outcomes from actor disengagement and negative engagement, which our study addresses.

Well-being is considered “a balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced,” i.e., the RCE (Dodge *et al.*, 2012, p. 230) through resource integration efforts by various service actors (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020b). Our literature search also identified that within the TSR literature, several studies adopt a co-creation perspective with respect to generating well-being (see, for example, Chen *et al.*, 2021) and consider how resource integration that leads to value co-creation and co-destruction impacts well-being (Black and Gallan, 2015; Hurley *et al.*, 2018; Sharma *et al.*, 2017; Torkzadeh *et al.*, 2020). While these studies effectively establish the co-creation process of well-being and its dynamics, they do not include the outcomes of this value co-creation to generate well-being, which our study addresses by adopting the RCE framework. This approach enables us to elucidate the dynamic nature of well-being and to better understand how specific well-being outcomes emerge.

Different challenges (e.g. employment and health) require different resources (e.g. skills and knowledge) if actors are to engage in effective value co-creation to generate well-being (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020a). Therefore, we argue that the RCE constantly shifts or seesaws at the individual level, and the resource pools and challenges will exert interactive effects (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). For example, to devote more effort to resource integration and value co-creation activities, actors need to draw more on their resource pools, which may leave fewer resources to address other challenges (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020a). Every time an actor encounters a challenge, the system enters a new state of imbalance, and in turn, the actor needs to adapt resources to meet that challenge (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). Stable actor well-being, therefore, requires sufficient psychological, cognitive, social, and physical resources to meet any given psychological, cognitive, social or physical challenges. Thus, if challenges exceed resources, the seesaw and actor well-being will dip.

When actors accumulate well-being with others, it enhances system well-being (Leo *et al.*, 2019), defined as “a system’s transformational capability to balance challenges and resources

within and across system levels to achieve system level-specific and overall service ecosystem equilibria and well-being via new actor and resource combinations, in order to adapt to system inherent or external critical incidents” (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020a, p. 9). This extension of ARCE to the service ecosystem, such that CRCE depends on the challenges faced and resources available to actors across a service system, implies that value co-creation among actors contributes to community well-being. Frow *et al.* (2019) focus on key factors that support or disrupt community well-being at a meso level, such as access to valuable resources and the presence of key actors that encourage value co-creation to generate well-being versus stressors, environmental jolts, major disturbances and internal co-destructive activities that discourage value co-creation to generate well-being. Although Frow *et al.*'s (2019) description of enablers and disruptors of community well-being thus differs from other frameworks (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Finsterwalder, 2020; Finsterwalder *et al.*, 2020), they still acknowledge the importance of resources and challenges. Studies have only fairly recently begun to focus on community well-being outcomes (Beirao *et al.*, 2017; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Finsterwalder, 2020; Finsterwalder *et al.*, 2020; Laud *et al.*, 2019; Palakshappa *et al.*, 2024), even though individual actors are invariably nested within different levels of a service system, influenced by each other's actions, behaviors and resources (Leo *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, we consider these concepts in social service contexts, which are transformative services by design, requiring co-creation of value through the exchange of resources among actors in pursuit of both individual and community RCE.

Previous TSR literature, and indeed much of the psychology literature, focuses on well-being from the perspective of enhancement of human life (see, for example, Black and Gallan, 2015; Sharma *et al.*, 2017). However, it is also important that in considering the effects of negative engagement on well-being, we consider the notion of ill-being (Headey *et al.*, 1984; Sirgy, 2017). Ill-being reflects the negative effects on one's life and is not deemed the opposite end of the continuum of well-being (Lee and Oguzoglu, 2007). The definition of ill-being is consistent with human suffering (Anderson, 2015) and reflects the perceived threat or damage to one's sense of self (i.e. physical) and the distress associated with this threat (i.e. psychological). Examples of ill-being at an individual level predominantly focus on negative states of basic human needs, such as health, safety and economic needs (e.g. depression, anxiety, physical harm and financial vulnerability), whereas (positive) well-being often considers higher order growth needs, such as social, esteem and actualization. Sirgy (2017) considered ill-being across several dimensions (e.g. social, leisure, work, culture, spiritual, financial, shopping, health, environmental and residential) and broadened the concept to encompass meta-levels of community and society ill-being.

To provide further clarification on the distinction between reduced well-being and ill-being at both an individual and community levels, Table 2 provides illustrative examples of well-being shifts and a definition of each, evaluated through the RCE lens.

In the discussion that follows, we present our conceptual framework and outline propositions that explain the associations between its focal constructs.

Conceptual framework and propositions

Using a resource integration perspective, we present our conceptual model (see Figure 2). Drawing on value co-creation (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004) and value co-destruction concepts (Plé and Cáceres, 2010), along with the RCE view on well-being (Dodge *et al.*, 2012; Chen *et al.*, 2021), we derive new insights into the effects of negatively valenced focal actor engagement in transformative service exchanges. While Finsterwalder *et al.* (2020) examined how actor engagement can enhance or reduce well-being, they do not explicitly elaborate on how disengagement affects well-being or the underlying mechanism. Additionally, they do not consider the effects of negative engagement, which we address in our study. Our theorization is based on an acknowledgement that each focal actor possesses an original combination of distinctive resources (e.g. core competences) and balances their resources in a unique way to achieve their own well-being and that of others (Taillard *et al.*, 2016).

Table 2. Key well-being shifts and examples

Concept	Definition	RCE lens	Example
Individual reduced well-being	A reduction in the level of an individual actor's positive affect and degree of life satisfaction (Deci and Ryan, 2008)	An individual actor has fewer resources available for integration to solve challenges faced, resulting in an imbalanced RCE for the individual actor. The individual actor is not thriving but may still function adequately in day-to-day life	JobActive employment programs were aimed at moving unemployed people off welfare and into work in Australia. However, about 78% of welfare recipients in Australia who failed to meet their mutual obligations (e.g., missing job agency appointments) had their payments suspended by the government (Henriques-Gomes, 2019). One such program is the Disability Employment Service (DES), where providers are funded to help people with a disability, injury or health condition to find and maintain sustainable employment (Kelly, 2023). Job seekers were reported to be disconnected and dissatisfied with this employment service due to poor working hours, conditions and pay. The job seekers in the program expressed a decrease in aspects of their subjective well-being as a result. This decrease in subjective well-being manifested in a reduction in their sense of purpose, life satisfaction, a disconnection from their goals, demotivation, sadness and isolation (Kelly, 2023)
Community reduced well-being	A reduction in the aggregate collective well-being of actors in the community (Leo <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	Multiple actors within the community avoid contributing to the creation of new resources or modifying existing resources to solve their challenges, and in the process, create an imbalanced CRCE	In Australia, youth crime is a growing public concern, with common charges for theft, breaking and entering, drug offenses and the use of stolen vehicles (Queensland government report, 2024b). In Queensland, the Youth Co-Responder Teams (YCRT) program was implemented to support young people at-risk or those who had contact with the criminal justice system to reduce the number of repeat offenders (Queensland Government, 2024a). These teams take proactive steps, such as de-escalating risky situations, ensuring young people reach safe places, reconnecting them with their families and support services, and offering diversionary options. Despite these interventions, nearly 90% of young people re-offended after working with these teams (Smail, 2024). This was due to the offenders, their families and key stakeholders disengaging from the educational and employment opportunities offered by the program. This is particularly pronounced among First Nations communities whose youths account for 69% of serious repeat offenders in the state (Queensland Government, 2024b). Communities are reported to be experiencing diminishing confidence and a growing criticism against the YCRT, the police and the government

(continued)

Table 2. Continued

Concept	Definition	RCE lens	Example
Individual ill-being	When an individual actor integrates resources in a manner that is detrimental to the challenges faced, resulting in an imbalanced ARCE	Leaving meagre or no resources to address adverse challenges	When faced with a mental health challenge, the average wait time for a first therapy session at a government-funded youth mental health program is 25.5 days in some developed countries (Rimmer <i>et al.</i> , 2020). As a result, many young people feel it is challenging to access services, particularly during and post-COVID-19, with some reportedly “giving up” on seeking help. This has contributed to increased rates of depression, anxiety, psychosis, and suicide among young people (Rimmer <i>et al.</i> , 2020) due to their inability to access timely help. The rise in mental health disorders among 16- to 24-year-olds from 26% in 2007 to 39% in 2021 is significant within Australia (McIlroy, 2024)

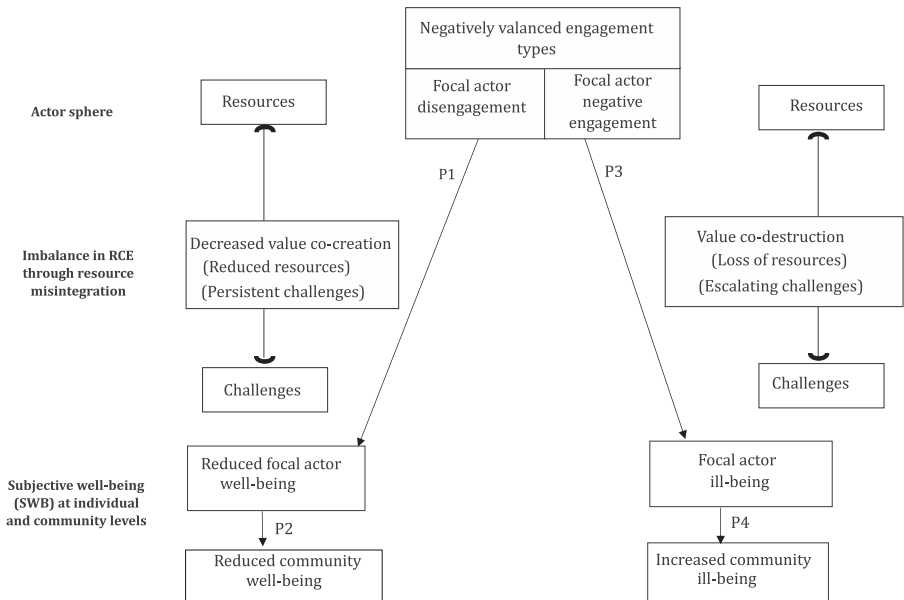


Figure 2. Conceptual framework: focal actor disengagement and negative engagement influences on well-ill-being outcomes in transformative service exchanges. Source: Adapted from Chen *et al.* (2021) and Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser (2020a)

Figure 2 depicts the resource integration dynamics of reduced value co-creation and value co-destruction to explain well-being outcomes resulting from actor disengagement and negative engagement. The framework consists of an actor sphere, i.e., the locus of SWB as an outcome of existing challenges versus resources. Depending on the focal actor’s form of negatively valenced engagement, reduced co-creation or co-destruction ensues. For example,

the focal actor may disengage, and challenges will slightly outweigh the resources available through reduced value co-creation, leading to reduced SWB (illustrated by P1 in Figure 2). Likewise, an aggregated decline in individual actor SWB results in reduced SWB at the community level (illustrated by P2 in Figure 2). Focal actor negative engagement drives value co-destruction, creating a severe imbalance in the RCE. Meagre or no resources to address escalating challenges suggest focal actor ill-being (as illustrated by P3, Figure 2). Value co-destructive tendencies in focal actor resource integration may disrupt the RCE balance of the community, diminishing community (positive) SWB (illustrated by P4 in Figure 2).

To better elucidate the proposed associations in our conceptual framework, we use examples to illustrate reduced well-being and ill-being outcomes arising from focal actor disengagement and negative engagement, respectively. These illustrative examples apply across different types of transformative service exchanges, such as healthcare, social and education services. The examples also illustrate varying degrees of well-being shifts for both focal actors and the community (see Table 2 for a summary of examples). The discussion that follows explains in detail each of the propositions included within our conceptual framework.

Actor disengagement and reduced value co-creation. Prior studies show that focal actors who fully engage in a service exchange participate in value co-creation willingly, integrating their resources with those of others (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Dodge *et al.*, 2012; Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020b; Ple, 2016). This resource integration provides opportunities for focal actors to interact and balance their resources with others, enhancing access to additional resources for their improved well-being (Carida *et al.*, 2019). However, actor disengagement can have a depressive effect on actor-to-actor interaction and resource balancing, which is necessary for the creation of new resources and improvement of existing ones (Mengcheng and Tuure, 2020), especially in transformative service exchanges where uplifting well-being is the goal.

While we acknowledge the positive effect that focal actor disengagement may have in some traditional service contexts, such as gambling, our study context is transformative service exchanges. We argue that a disengaged actor becomes dormant or detached from critical value co-creation efforts (Lievonon *et al.*, 2019; Naumann *et al.*, 2017a, b). This disengagement leads to a reduced contribution of their resources, such as time, effort, emotional support and financial inputs to the exchange and diminished integration of their own and/or others' resources, resulting in unmet outcomes of value co-creation. Consequently, when value co-creation is absent, the focal actor struggles to interact, access and adapt resources. As a result, they may experience some improvement in their well-being, though to a lesser extent than in more favorable conditions, or they may fail to attain the intended value altogether. This breakdown in resource integration indicates that pre-existing challenges faced persist and may intensify, further destabilizing the focal actor's RCE. The imbalanced RCE also indicates a failure in achieving optimal value co-creation to generate improved well-being in transformative service exchanges. Therefore, the ARCE seesaw stays tilted away from the resource side due to fewer resources becoming available for integration to resolve new challenges or reduce existing challenges faced, which leads to reduced well-being.

For example, recently, the pandemic left many jobless worldwide, prompting governments to expand their unemployment assistance programs. In Australia, JobTrainer was introduced to support job seekers via free or low-cost job training (Hurley, 2020). However, some unemployed people who were the intended beneficiaries of the program disengaged due to various factors, including differing views on participation (Quiggin *et al.*, 2020), vaccination requirements (Moschion *et al.*, 2020) and dissatisfaction with government payouts (Azize, 2022). This disengagement inhibits the creation of new resources, such as via job skills training (e.g. using new technologies while working from home) or receiving support in identifying suitable employment. It also inhibits balancing one's resources with others or improvement of existing resources for the focal actor, such as gaining additional knowledge and industry-specific skills. Non-participation results in termination of interactions and an inability to balance one's resources with others, leaving focal actors with fewer resources to

tackle their challenges. Consequently, the focal actor's overall well-being is not improved, and job seekers fail to achieve a balanced RCE state (as illustrated by P1 in [Figure 2](#)). Due to their detachment from co-creation with governments or non-governmental institutions (NGOs), job seekers often remain trapped in low-paying, unfulfilling jobs with limited alternatives or face prolonged unemployment, lacking the physical, emotional, mental and social resources needed to improve their current predicament. Their inability to overcome joblessness not only hinders their chances of securing suitable employment but also impacts their ability to support their families and obtain stable housing. Ultimately, these individuals may afford basic needs but continue to experience financial stress that limits their ability to pursue personal aspirations. Others may struggle to meet their basic needs, further contributing to reduced well-being outcomes. Based on this, we advance the following proposition:

- P1. Within transformative service exchanges, focal actor disengagement reduces focal actor well-being through decreased value co-creation.

Interactions among actors are primarily motivated by individual well-being rather than community well-being ([Frow et al., 2019](#)). Individual ARCE may therefore precede balanced CRCE. Actors need to share worldviews about common well-being goals ([Echeverri, 2021](#); [Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020a](#)). In contrast, focal actor disengagement creates an imbalanced RCE by disregarding resource integration opportunities, leading to resource loss and disconnection in the community ([Frow et al., 2019](#); [Laud et al., 2019](#)), which reduces access to essential resources for value co-creation and well-being.

Resource contributions to service exchange reflect actors' ability to access, adapt, and integrate resources through routine practices ([Mengcheng and Tuure, 2020](#)). Disengaged focal actors disrupt these routines, creating resource inaccessibility essential for well-being. This restricted access forces other actors to conserve rather than contribute resources, hindering value co-creation. This resource struggle drives an RCE imbalance in the community ([Finsterwalder et al., 2020](#)), as shown by P2 in [Figure 2](#). Here, aggregation refers to the combined effect of many individuals experiencing reduced well-being. When these individual effects accumulate and reach a point where the community can no longer absorb the strain, the community's overall well-being starts to decline. This means that the relationship between individual and community well-being is not deterministic but depends on the extent and intensity of individual-level outcomes. This provides a "bottom-up" explanation, whereby individual actor experiences accumulate to influence broader community outcomes. In contrast, [Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser's \(2020 a, b\)](#) prior studies focused more on "top-down" effects, showing that the way service systems are designed, along with challenge and resource gaps, impact individuals and broader groups within a service system.

The Australian JobTrainer program example illustrates how jobseekers' disengagement leads to community skill decline ([Littleton and Campbell, 2022](#)). Unemployment creates skepticism about the value of education, discouraging investment in training for available jobs and causing providers to withdraw services due to low participation ([Moschion et al., 2020](#)). This disengagement results in prolonged income loss, reduced educational opportunities and community skill deficits. Studies link unemployment with decreased volunteerism and higher crime rates ([Nichols et al., 2013](#); [Piatak, 2016](#)). These challenges indicate declining community-level well-being with limited resources, leading to imbalanced CRCE. Our review of prior literature reveals relatively limited exploration of community-level well-being (see, for exception, [Chen et al., 2021](#); [Finsterwalder, 2020](#); [Finsterwalder et al., 2020](#); [Laud et al., 2019](#); [Palakshappa et al., 2024](#)), prompting us to propose the following:

- P2. Within transformative service exchanges, aggregated reduced focal actor well-being leads to reduced community well-being when these individual-level effects become widespread and exceed the community's capacity to maintain equilibrium.

Actor negative engagement and value co-destruction. Negative engagement involves distinct behaviors of varying intensity whereby actors make negative contributions and

participate in value co-destruction within the service relationship (Dolan *et al.*, 2016). Such behaviors (e.g. negative word of mouth) aim to negatively influence other actors' perceptions, preferences and/or knowledge regarding a service provider (Dolan *et al.*, 2016). Value co-destruction, an intense form of negative behavior, occurs when interactions collectively diminish value for all parties involved (Echeverri and Skålen, 2011). Through these behaviors, negatively engaged focal actors disrupt interactions and resource flows, diminishing value for both them and others.

Social services represent a transformative service context where value co-destruction can lead to ill-being. Ill-being arises when resource misuse or withdrawal depletes available resources and amplifies challenges faced by the focal actor, disrupting the balance of resource integration essential for well-being. Laud *et al.* (2019) describe actor resource misuse as a deliberate restriction or denial of resource access to others or the intentional withholding or withdrawal of resources from the exchange. This occurs through voluntary deprivation, defiance, protection or sabotage as a means for a focal actor to regain perceived control. Intentional resource misuse involves consciously and actively expressing negativity during the service interaction (Bowden *et al.*, 2016; Dolan *et al.*, 2016). For example, focal actors may discredit a service provider and advocate for a boycott to prevent others from exchanging resources or refuse to integrate their own resources with others, potentially creating scarcity and limiting resource access (Mengcheng and Tuure, 2020). This is more evident when actors terminate service usage (Leo and Zainuddin, 2017).

Furthermore, when a focal actor terminates the service relationship due to perceived insufficient resource gains to address their challenges, this leads to resource loss and mismatch, disrupting the balance needed for effective value creation (Mengcheng and Tuure, 2020). This imbalance in the ARCE illustrates the pathway linking negative engagement to ill-being, as shown in Figure 2. According to Mengcheng and Tuure (2020), resource loss occurs when expected benefits are not realized or when existing resources are depleted beyond expectations, while resource mismatch arises when available resources are unsuitable for generating higher resource density or supporting constructive interactions during value co-creation. Such imbalances manifest as ill-being, characterized by heightened challenges such as social exclusion, anxiety, anger, depression, poor nutrition, substance abuse and mental health problems (Ryff *et al.*, 2006). These states limit actors' ability to enhance their lives, for example, by finding employment, maintaining health or sustaining relationships, indicating an imbalanced RCE.

Recently, co-destruction in service exchanges has been conceptualized to arise from individual perceptions and behaviors (Lumivalo *et al.*, 2023). It is argued that individual actors' goals, intentions and previous experiences play a crucial role in shaping their behavior and perceptions of service exchanges (Smith, 2013). Moreover, prior experiences influence how actors interpret service exchanges, leading to varied perceptions ranging from dissatisfaction and frustration to deviations from anticipated positive outcomes or even neutral responses. This suggests that value co-destruction is not merely a structural or systemic failure but also a subjective and behavioral process emerging from lived experience with transformative service exchanges (Lumivalo *et al.*, 2023).

We thus conceptualize ill-being as an imbalanced state of RCE characterized by an increase in challenges faced due to the misuse of resources (Plé and Cáceres, 2010), conflicting or incongruent resource-integration practices (Echeverri and Skålen, 2011), loss of resources (Smith, 2013), lack of required resources (Robertson *et al.*, 2014), and/or individual actor perceptions and behaviors (Lumivalo *et al.*, 2023). For example, since the onset of COVID-19, vaccination programs were established globally to combat the spread of the virus, yet hesitancy (Lazarus *et al.*, 2023) and resistance emerged, driven by mistrust and misinformation (Edwards *et al.*, 2021). Lazarus *et al.* (2023) reported vaccination hesitancy to have increased in eight out of 23 countries surveyed during the period. Vaccination resistance contributed to misinformation, anti-vaccine demonstrations and campaigns witnessed globally (Butler, 2022), exemplifying negative contributions and value co-

destruction. Studies report deaths that could have been averted if individuals had been vaccinated (Jia *et al.*, 2023; Johnson *et al.*, 2023). As a result, many unvaccinated individuals lacked the resources (information and the vaccine) to address their challenges, COVID-19 infection and potential death, thus experiencing an imbalanced RCE and personal ill-being. This demonstrates how negative engagement depletes material, esteem, time, social and informational resources (Echeverri, 2021) and aligns with Sirgy's (2017) view of ill-being as a state of suffering and subsistence living. Accordingly, we raise the following proposition:

- P3. Within transformative service exchanges, focal actor negative engagement increases focal actor ill-being through value co-destruction.

Reduced community well-being, ill-being and value co-destruction

Value co-destruction has mostly been studied in dyadic exchanges (Leo and Zainuddin, 2017), but examining it in multi-actor transformative service exchanges is critical for understanding implications for community well-being. We continue this discussion using the previous example of negative actor engagement with COVID-19 vaccination programs (Edwards *et al.*, 2021) and related government health safety measures (e.g. social distancing and wearing masks).

Negative actor engagement contributes to an increase in resource misuse, undermining both the focal actor's and others' well-being (Plé and Cáceres, 2010). In the context of COVID-19 vaccination programs, there was an adverse impact on actors who were directly involved in service provision (e.g. hospital workers, general practitioners, emergency service workers and other healthcare workers) or indirectly concerned (e.g. other law-abiding citizens). Their quality of life was negatively impacted, such as by causing disruptions to work and social isolation from family and friends, thus having a major negative mental health impact (Kasar and Karaman, 2021).

Such reductions in well-being signal insufficient resources to address emerging challenges. Focal actors who fail to gain resources after investment may experience anger, anxiety, emotional exhaustion and unhappiness (Jarvi *et al.*, 2018; Leo and Zainuddin, 2017). When these experiences become widespread, an aggregated decline in well-being destabilizes other actors' RCEs, limiting opportunities for balanced resource integration. Jarvi *et al.* (2018) also observed that declines in well-being may discourage future collaboration. For example, COVID-19 lockdowns led many to relocate to areas with fewer restrictions (Stephens *et al.*, 2022), contributing to a loss of resources (e.g., workforce). Furthermore, resistance to vaccinations led to resource spoilage; for instance, some vaccination centers had to destroy vaccinations that became out of date because of low vaccination rates (Barneoud, 2022; Bamulanzeki, 2021; Al Jazeera, 2021). These vaccines could have been used to vaccinate other citizens elsewhere in the community to protect them from infection. These vaccines could have protected others elsewhere in the community, further limiting collective resource integration and diminishing community RCE balance (see Figure 2).

Value co-creation to generate well-being depends on shared world views and routinized practices among actors to enhance community well-being (Frow *et al.*, 2019). A shared worldview means that actors work toward a common goal, and their interactions become routinized (Frow *et al.*, 2019). In transformative service exchanges, the absence of this shared worldview may foster negative actor engagement, whereby resource integration efforts misalign with service objectives. Negatively engaged focal actors may misuse their own or others' resources to pursue conflicting goals (Frow *et al.*, 2019; Leo *et al.*, 2019), diverging from collective expectations (Plé and Cáceres, 2010). This hampers communication, collaboration, coordination and effective responses to community-level challenges. This disruption of routine interactions undermines value co-creation aimed at enhancing community well-being.

Co-destruction in transformative service exchanges has system-level consequences, as the misuse or withholding of resources prevents actors from leveraging resource integration opportunities that could help address their challenges (Jarvi *et al.*, 2018; Naumann *et al.*, 2017a). When a focal actor engages in value co-destruction, other actors lose access to resources that could improve their circumstances, compounding their difficulties (Jarvi *et al.*, 2018). The resulting interdependent losses create imbalanced RCEs across individual and collective spheres, producing ill-being for the focal actor and reduced well-being for others. As challenges accumulate, shared resource pools are strained (Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser, 2020a), and failure to maintain challenge–resource equilibrium across system levels leads to declining community well-being.

Building on the earlier COVID-19 example (Edwards *et al.*, 2021), co-destruction occurred when individuals spread misinformation, protested vaccination efforts (Butler, 2022), or disregarded preventive measures, thereby increasing infection and mortality rates (Jia *et al.*, 2023; Johnson *et al.*, 2023). This demonstrates how individual ill-being outcomes are aggregated into broader community effects. As community challenges escalated, travel restrictions, mental health issues and economic disruptions followed. Hospital systems were overwhelmed, leaving others unable to access medical care due to postponed treatments or fear of infection. Travel restrictions isolated communities and disrupted economic activity (World Tourism Organization, 2020), while businesses closed or reduced operations as workers were laid off (Bartik *et al.*, 2020). Healthcare systems faced staff shortages and treatment delays (Filip *et al.*, 2022); supply-chain interruptions limited essential goods (Vlachos, 2022); and justice-system delays impeded timely outcomes (British Academy, 2021).

These cascading effects reveal community-level disintegration and dysfunctionality, hallmarks of reduced community well-being. They illustrate that aggregated focal-actor ill-being and reduced well-being among others can collectively diminish system well-being within transformative service exchanges. This argument aligns with Sirgy's (2017) view that community well-being can be assessed through aggregated individual- and collective-level well-being. In transformative service exchanges, the aggregation of individual ill-being initially manifests as reduced community well-being. However, when such individual-level ill-being becomes widespread and surpasses the community's capacity to maintain equilibrium, the system is likely to transition into collective ill-being, reflecting community-level dysfunction. We, therefore, advance this proposition:

- P4. Within transformative service exchanges, aggregated focal actor ill-being leads to increased community ill-being when these individual-level effects become widespread and exceed the community's capacity to maintain equilibrium.

Implications and research agenda

Theoretical importance. This study's integration of negatively valenced engagement in the context of transformative service exchanges adds to the literature on well-being and ill-being outcomes, addressing a gap explicitly highlighted by Helkkula *et al.* (2018). We study the comprehensive effects of negatively valenced engagement on well-being and ill-being through value co-creation and value co-destruction. We build on frameworks by Chen *et al.*, 2021 and Finsterwalder and Kuppelwieser (2020a, b), which illustrate individual and community RCE perspectives largely focused on (positive) well-being. We rather study the impact of negatively valenced engagement types on focal actor resource integration in dealing with challenges associated with the generation of well-being. Based on this, it is important for actors to co-create value by integrating their own resources with others to achieve (positive) well-being outcomes. However, existing research indicates that negative service relationships are more commonplace than positive ones (Helkkula *et al.*, 2018; Naumann *et al.*, 2020), whereby actors may exhibit value co-destructive tendencies, such as withholding or failing to invest resources or misusing available resources. This is contradictory to transformative service

relationship objectives and expectations. From this perspective, we highlight how reduced value co-creation and co-destruction function in negatively valenced transformative service exchanges, drawing on both TSR and engagement literature. Thus, we begin to understand that in some transformative service exchanges, the effects of actor engagement on well-being are more nuanced and perhaps more detrimental than currently recognized in the literature.

Accordingly, we provide new insights on well-being by examining RCE at both the individual (i.e. focal actor) (ARCE) and community (CRCE) levels, focusing on well-being as experienced personally and by the community (Sirgy, 2017). This is because previous research highlights the absence of a comprehensive overview of co-creation to generate well-being across multiple service system levels, attributed to variations in application context, level of aggregation, theoretical foundation and methodological approach (Landry and Furrer, 2023). Moreover, existing studies indicate that structural and actor-related forces at the meso level combine to drive change within the whole ecosystem (Palakshappa *et al.*, 2024), unlike analyzing well-being at the societal level (i.e. macro level). This reflects changes at both higher (community) and lower (individual) levels of aggregation (Palakshappa *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, we extend the TSR literature by giving consideration not only to the declining positive effects of well-being but also to the negative effects through the concept of ill-being. Little has been written about ill-being in the TSR literature. As an exception, some authors have recognized that suffering and negative quality of life have much in common (Sirgy, 2017) through understanding individual experiences. Individual suffering has been framed to include physical, mental and social suffering, with these indicators reflecting individual experiences. Using this approach, suffering is recognized as one of the key indicators of individual ill-being (Anderson, 2015; Sirgy, 2017).

This broader approach to well-being also represents a more realistic and balanced view of transformative service relationships. We conceptualize and explain how negatively valenced engagement can lead to both reduced well-being and ill-being by considering the different negatively valenced engagement types. This approach aligns with Anderson *et al.* (2013), whose work emphasized the need for research that explores diverse dimensions of customer engagement, including its negative side. We, therefore, recognize the importance of understanding well-being outcomes at the different points on the continuum, and we propose different individual and community-level outcomes that result from actor detachment, negative contribution and co-destruction in transformative service exchanges. We argue that reduced well-being results from actor detachment from resource integration activities for a balanced RCE state. This inhibits new resource creation and/or improvement to existing resources or creates a struggle for actors or a community to effectively utilize resources in the face of challenges for a balanced RCE state (i.e. well-being). Ill-being, on the other hand, results from value co-destruction where resources integrated are misused, imbalanced and withheld from realization of benefit.

Practical implications. Our study provides a means of understanding the influence of varying intensities of negatively valenced actor engagement within transformative service exchanges, and how they affect well-being and ill-being outcomes. Practitioners can use these insights to monitor and address negative behavioral manifestations in service relationships before they escalate, thus protecting individual and community well-being. This aligns with Gronroos and Voima's (2013) emphasis on the critical role of managing customer experiences for value creation. Managers therefore need to keep track of both direct service interactions with actors and actors' external interactions, such as with members of their community. If left unaddressed, actors' negative engagement can harm beneficiaries, the reputation of the organization, and other service actors, which would diminish well-being and escalate ill-being.

Resource pools, such as time, emotional support, social connections and financial capital, play a vital role in mitigating the negative consequences of disengagement. For instance, in social services, resource pools could include community volunteers, mental health professionals and government grants. Managers could integrate these resources to address the challenges of disengaged actors, such as by connecting a disengaged individual to

vocational training or counselling services, which would enhance balanced RCEs for individuals and the community in the long run and mitigate ill-being.

In crises such as pandemics and disasters, policymakers, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations can apply our framework to identify areas where negatively valenced engagement is prevalent, such as in overwhelmed health systems or refugee camps. By integrating resource pools like emergency relief teams, funding international donors and local community volunteers, they can create coordinated responses that foster well-being.

While this study's framework is limited to well-being outcomes from negatively valenced engagement in transformative service exchanges, it can be extended to traditional service contexts, such as hospitality and retail. For instance, in such context managers can leverage insights from negative engagement patterns, such as customer complaints, to implement targeted and proactive service recovery strategies. By utilizing staff expertise and loyalty programs as resource pools, organizations can mitigate negative experiences, enhance customer satisfaction and ultimately improve customer outcomes. This highlights the importance of proactive engagement management in service industries, ensuring that negative interactions are addressed constructively to foster value co-creation rather than co-destruction.

Research agenda. We propose a research agenda to advance TSR and our understanding of well-being outcomes associated with negatively valenced engagement. The research agenda presented in Table 3 aligns with our conceptual framework and aligned propositions.

Research on actor well-being outcomes requires further development (Frow *et al.*, 2019), especially across integration levels and in different service contexts. Negatively valenced engagement may have positive effects in some traditional service contexts, such as actor disengagement from gambling, social media use, among others. However, our study was set in

Table 3. Research agenda: negatively valenced engagement and actor well-being outcomes

Proposition key concepts	Potential areas of enquiry
P1: Focal actor disengagement and reduced well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does disengagement by other actors in a service system decrease focal actor well-being? To what extent does an increase in cognitive, psychological, social and/or physical challenges reduce focal actor well-being?
P2: Aggregated decline in focal actor well-being and reduced community well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the disengagement of other actors in a transformative service system reduce individual and system well-being? And, if so, how? Which other actors are most affected by a focal actor's disengagement in a service system, and how are they impacted?
P3: Focal actor negative engagement and ill-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do different forms of negative engagement, such as negative word of mouth, contribute to value co-destruction and individual ill-being? How can an individual actor recover from ill-being? To what extent does an increase in cognitive, psychological, social or physical challenges result in ill-being?
P4: Aggregated focal actor ill-being and increased community ill-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does inactive (versus active) negative focal actor engagement in service relationships affect other actors' well-/ill-being? How do negatively valenced engagement practices emerge in a service system, such as in financial, transport and hospitality services, which have multiple actors? Which actors are most affected by consumer negative engagement in a service system? How?

the transformative service context, and more empirical research is encouraged in related contexts, including waste management, health, insurance and financial (welfare) services, to understand the effects of negatively valenced actor engagement. Studying well-being outcomes in various contexts may provide new insights into how the context influences the RCE.

Future research may also explore RCE in developing country contexts that experience widespread poverty and inadequate actor and community resources, to identify unique well-being outcomes. We also call for studies into the degree to which resources and challenges at different system levels affect one another. Some resources might exert a stronger influence than others in terms of establishing RCE, especially among vulnerable actors. Gathering such insights could also help reveal which resources can be substituted to achieve RCE in transformative service contexts.

Future research may extend insights into the differences in shared worldviews or efforts for community betterment. For example, in vulnerable communities, customers may be eager to improve their well-being, but service employees might not have the same desire. Distinct worldviews and their implications for well-being are not solely the responsibility of the individual actor but also involve various other actors in the transformative service exchange.

This study thus provides promising directions for future research into the transformation of lives, according to the proposed conceptual framework that combines disengagement, negative engagement and well-being. Actor engagement is a context-dependent construct (Brodie *et al.*, 2011), and hence actors will be more likely to engage, disengage and negatively engage in varying contexts. The investment of resources in interactions with other actors is volitional (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2019), and hence it would be interesting for future research to understand the different transformative services in which disengagement and negative engagement are most common, and when these types of engagement lead to the most destructive well-being or ill-being outcomes.

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