Will High-Performance Work Systems Reduce Employee Well-Being? Evidence from a Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

Based on data from 55 independent studies across 53 publications, with a total sample size of 51,750, this study conducted a meta-analysis of the relationship between high-performance work systems and employee well-being, and examined the moderating effects of cultural and industry differences on this relationship. The results indicate that: (1) High-performance work systems exert significant positive effects on all dimensions of employee well-being, demonstrating a "consistent effect" rather than a "contradictory effect." (2) Cultural context moderates the relationship between high-performance work systems and employee well-being; in contexts characterized by high power distance and collectivism, the positive correlations between employee-perceived high-performance work systems and subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and health well-being are stronger. (3) Industry significantly moderates the relationship between high-performance work systems and employee well-being. Compared with productive services, employees in healthcare services perceive a stronger positive correlation between high-performance work systems and subjective well-being; however, the positive correlation between employee-perceived high-performance work systems and health well-being is weaker in healthcare services than in productive services. The findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between high-performance work systems and employee well-being, and inspire the academic community to re-examine and reassess the value of high-performance work systems.

Full Text

Do High-Performance Work Systems Impair Employee Well-Being? Evidence from a Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

Based on data from 55 independent studies drawn from 53 research papers with a total sample size of 51,750, this study conducts a meta-analysis of the relationship between high-performance work systems (HPWPs) and employee well-being, examining the moderating roles of cultural and industry differences. The results indicate that: (1) HPWPs have significant positive effects on all dimensions of employee well-being, demonstrating a "consistent effect" rather than a "contradictory effect." (2) Cultural context moderates the relationship between HPWPs and employee well-being. In high power distance and collectivist cultural contexts, the positive correlations between perceived HPWPs and subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and health well-being are stronger. (3) Industry type significantly moderates the relationship between HPWPs and employee well-being. Compared to the productive service sector, employees in healthcare services show a stronger positive correlation between perceived HPWPs and subjective well-being; however, the positive correlation between perceived HPWPs and health well-being is weaker in healthcare services than in productive services. These findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between HPWPs and employee well-being and suggest that scholars should re-examine the value of high-performance work systems.

Keywords: high-performance work systems, employee well-being, cultural context, industry differences, meta-analysis

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1. Problem Statement

Over the past two decades, with the rise of employee-centered human resource practices, the relationship between human resource management and employee well-being (EWB) has become a critical topic in HRM research (Guest, 2017; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Guerci et al., 2022). However, existing research reveals a "paradoxical effect" of HRM on employee well-being—while improving certain aspects of well-being, it may undermine others (Grant et al., 2007), giving rise to two competing perspectives: the "win-win" view and the "conflict"

view.

The "win-win" perspective argues that HPWPs benefit both employers (by improving organizational performance) and employees (by enhancing well-being), creating a mutually advantageous situation (Ho & Kuvaas, 2020). In contrast, the "conflict" perspective contends that employee well-being and organizational performance represent distinct goals (Macky & Boxall, 2008), with HPWPs benefiting employers through improved performance while reducing employee well-being, thus producing conflicting outcomes and demonstrating a "contradictory effect" or "double-edged sword effect." Both perspectives have received empirical support. Some studies find that HPWPs positively influence job satisfaction (Takeuchi et al., 2009), positive affect (Luu, 2019), psychological well-being, and health well-being (Khoreva & Wechtler, 2018), thereby enhancing overall employee well-being (Huang et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2018; Cao et al., 2019). Other research demonstrates that HPWPs increase work stress, anxiety, and role overload (Jensen et al., 2013), leading to emotional exhaustion (Boselie et al., 2005; Sun & Wang, 2016; Zhang et al., 2019) and negatively impacting employee well-being (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Qi et al., 2021).

We argue that these divergent conclusions may stem from four factors. First, the inconsistency relates to the type of well-being measured (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019). Employee well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing subjective well-being, psychological well-being, health well-being, and social well-being, with indicators ranging from positive metrics (e.g., job satisfaction, positive affect) to negative ones (e.g., negative emotions, work stress, burnout). HPWPs may have differential effects across these dimensions and indicators. Yet existing research has typically examined only partial indicators—for instance, some studies focus solely on job satisfaction and find positive effects on both performance and well-being (Riordan et al., 2005), while others examine only health well-being (e.g., psychosomatic symptoms) and find positive effects on performance but negative effects on well-being (Truss, 2001). To date, research has largely neglected the multidimensional nature of employee well-being (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Guerci et al., 2022), and systematic empirical analysis of HPWPs' relationships with different well-being dimensions remains lacking (Guerci et al., 2022).

Second, beyond the consistent findings regarding psychological well-being, research conclusions about HPWPs' relationships with the other three dimensions remain contradictory. While most studies support positive effects on subjective and relational well-being, some find negative correlations (Khoreva & Wechtler, 2018). Similarly, although most research supports the notion that HPWPs' negative effects manifest primarily in health well-being (Ogbonnaya & Messersmith, 2018; Salas-Vallina et al., 2021; Qi et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2018), other studies show that HPWPs can improve health well-being (Mihail & Kloutsiniotis, 2016). These inconsistent findings regarding the strength and direction of relationships necessitate systematic and in-depth analysis.

Third, the divergent conclusions may arise from neglecting contextual variables

that moderate the HPWPs-well-being relationship. HPWPs research often adopts a "universalistic" perspective, assuming HPWPs are equally effective across all countries, industries, and organizations (Rauch & Hatak, 2016). However, HPWPs' effectiveness is constrained by various contextual factors (Sun & Wang, 2016). While existing research has examined organizational culture, job characteristics, and demographic variables, it has largely overlooked cultural context and industry differences (Pagán-Castaño et al., 2020). Employees' perceptions and interpretations of HPWPs influence their attitudes and behaviors (Yan et al., 2016; Drover et al., 2018), and these perceptions vary according to cultural values (Su et al., 2019) and industry context (Tzabbar et al., 2017). Yet cross-cultural and cross-industry studies of the HPWPs-well-being relationship remain rare.

Fourth, although scholars have conducted comprehensive qualitative reviews of HRM and employee well-being (Guest, 2017; Zhang & Chen, 2017), few have focused specifically on HPWPs, and meta-analytic studies are notably absent. As a quantitative literature review method, meta-analysis offers two unparalleled advantages (Certo et al., 2006): (1) it can synthesize multiple empirical findings on the same topic, providing more accurate estimates of effect sizes and true relationships, yielding more persuasive general conclusions; and (2) it can examine boundary conditions and test moderating effects, better elucidating variable relationships.

Based on these considerations, this study employs meta-analysis to systematically examine the relationship between employee-perceived HPWPs and employee well-being, aiming to advance understanding in two ways. First, we clarify the relationships between HPWPs and different well-being dimensions—their strength and direction—to test whether HPWPs have "contradictory effects" on employee well-being and determine whether the "win-win" or "conflict" perspective better fits the relationship, thereby resolving previous inconsistencies. Second, we explore contextual constraints on the HPWPs-well-being relationship, specifically examining whether cultural context and industry differences moderate these relationships, to provide theoretical guidance for context-appropriate HPWPs implementation.

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2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Conceptualization and Measurement of High-Performance Work Systems

Human resource systems are combinations of HR policies, programs, and practices grounded in organizational values and strategic objectives (Arthur & Boyles, 2007). Since the 1980s, as HRM has gained strategic importance in organizations, research has shifted from a micro, function-oriented perspective to a macro, strategic orientation (Wright & Boswell, 2002), focusing on how integrated HR systems affect strategic goals and performance. Huselid

(1995) argued that integrated HRM systems—not individual practices—create sustained competitive advantage, as they are characterized by specificity, complexity, inimitability, and path dependency.

High-performance work systems (HPWPs) are defined as integrated bundles of interrelated and synergistic HRM practices designed to improve organizational performance (Wright & McMahan, 1992). Conceptualizations of HPWPs remain debated. Most scholars view HPWPs as synonymous with high-performance work practices, high-involvement work systems, high-commitment work systems, or best HR practices (Liu & Zhou, 2004; Cheng & Zhao, 2011). Others argue these represent distinct HRM systems with different emphases: HPWS focuses on organizational performance, high-commitment systems aim to increase organizational commitment, and high-involvement systems emphasize employee participation in achieving organizational goals (Zhang & Li, 2015). Given these disagreements, this study focuses exclusively on high-performance work systems or practices, using HPWPs as the unified abbreviation to examine their effects on employee well-being.

HPWPs typically include selective staffing, extensive training, performance-based compensation, employee participation in decision-making, information sharing, job security, teamwork (self-managed teams), flexible work arrangements, and employee relations (Combs et al., 2006; Sun et al., 2007; Zhang & Li, 2015). Based on the AMO model, HPWPs comprise three key practice bundles: ability-enhancing practices (selective hiring and training) that develop employee capabilities; motivation-enhancing practices (performance appraisal and compensation) that energize employees; and opportunity-enhancing practices (flexible job design, information sharing, participation, teamwork) that create opportunities for engagement. By enhancing abilities, motivating employees, and creating participation opportunities, HPWPs increase job satisfaction and well-being, thereby influencing organizational performance (Van De Voorde et al., 2012).

HPWPs can be measured from organizational or employee perspectives. The organizational perspective examines implemented HPWPs' effects on firm performance, typically using manager/HR manager ratings. The employee perspective investigates individual-perceived HPWPs' effects on personal performance, well-being, proactive behavior, and engagement (Zhang & Morris, 2013). While early research focused on organizational-level HPWPs, recent studies increasingly emphasize employee-perceived HPWPs (Jiang et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2020) because organizational intentions and employee perceptions often diverge, implementation intensity varies (Zhang et al., 2019), and employees attribute different meanings and emotional experiences to the same HPWPs (Chuang & Liao, 2010). Moreover, employee-perceived HPWPs more strongly predict individual outcomes than manager-reported practices (Kilroy et al., 2016). Therefore, this study adopts an employee-perceived perspective.

2.2 Conceptualization and Measurement of Employee Well-Being

Employee well-being has been conceptualized through subjective and psychological well-being perspectives. Subjective well-being involves cognitive evaluations and emotional experiences of one's work life, commonly measured by job satisfaction and positive/negative affect (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011; Kaluza et al., 2020). Psychological well-being focuses on fulfillment through self-actualization, personal growth, and self-concordance (Ryff & Keys, 1995), emphasizing meaning, competence, and potential realization (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012). Unlike the stable structure of subjective well-being, psychological well-being lacks consensus, with common indicators including engagement, involvement, thriving, and meaningfulness (Grant et al., 2007; Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012).

Recent research shows integration trends (Slemp et al., 2013). The integrated perspective incorporates subjective and psychological well-being indicators plus health and relational well-being. Grant et al. (2007) proposed that employee well-being represents the overall quality of work experiences and personal effectiveness, measured by psychological well-being, health-related well-being, and relational well-being—a conceptualization widely adopted in subsequent research (Van De Voorde et al., 2012; Kooij et al., 2013). Health well-being concerns subjective experiences of physical health status, while relational well-being refers to the quality of relationships with others and the organization, also termed social well-being.

Based on this review, this study measures employee well-being across four dimensions: subjective well-being (job satisfaction, positive/negative affect), psychological well-being (engagement, involvement, thriving, meaningfulness), health well-being (stress, burnout, emotional exhaustion), and relational well-being (trust, interpersonal relationships, organizational support).

2.3 The Relationship Between High-Performance Work Systems and Employee Well-Being

Drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study examines the relationship between employee-perceived HPWPs and well-being dimensions. COR theory posits that individuals strive to obtain, retain, foster, and protect valued resources to cope with environmental pressures and achieve personal goals (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Resources include material assets (e.g., money), conditions (e.g., status, social relationships, support), personal characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy), and energies (e.g., vitality). Well-being stems from subjective experiences of need and goal fulfillment, with resources serving as tools and conditions for achieving these ends. Adequate, need-satisfying resources reduce goal-achievement uncertainty (Zhang & Lin, 2018), enhance expectations and psychological safety, activate resource gain cycles that boost well-being, and conversely, resource loss or threat of loss activates loss cycles that undermine well-being.

According to COR theory, resource fluctuations (gains, maintenance, losses) mediate how HR practices affect well-being. HPWPs provide job resources that enable resource gains and enhance well-being (Boon & Kalshoven, 2014). First, recruitment, selection, and training practices enhance knowledge, abilities, and skills, helping individuals adapt to job demands and achieve high-level goals (Huang et al., 2016), thereby fostering personal growth and self-worth. This strengthens self-efficacy, competence, and environmental control (Guerci et al., 2022), increasing job satisfaction and involvement (Deci et al., 2017) and enhancing meaningfulness. Second, performance-based compensation provides fair material returns, increasing economic and conditional resources (Wei et al., 2020) and boosting material and life satisfaction. Thus, ability- and motivation-enhancing practices create material and personal resource gains that enhance subjective and psychological well-being.

Third, empowerment, participation opportunities, internal promotion, and job security signal organizational care, value, and support (Kuvaas, 2008), fostering trust and identification (Jiang & Zhao, 2017). Participation, teamwork, and open communication enhance belonging and job security while building strong internal networks (Evans & Davis, 2005), creating harmonious work climates and improving interpersonal relationships (Khoreva & Wechtler, 2018), thereby expanding relational resources and strengthening relational well-being (Hu & Jiang, 2018; Sanders et al., 2019).

However, HPWPs-provided resources often accompany high job demands (Jensen et al., 2013), potentially creating stress and actual or threatened resource loss (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), thereby reducing well-being. HPWPs' performance orientation demands higher quality and efficiency, increasing job requirements (Chaudhuri, 2009) and causing work overload (Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017), activating loss cycles. To meet demands and avoid resource loss (e.g., reduced pay, blocked promotion), employees invest more resources—longer hours, sustained attention, greater effort—depleting cognitive, emotional, and health resources and causing anxiety, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), thus reducing health well-being (Xia et al., 2019).

Consequently, HPWPs represent a double-edged sword for employee well-being: while enhancing subjective, psychological, and relational well-being, they simultaneously increase workload and impair health well-being (Van De Voorde et al., 2012).

Based on this theoretical analysis, we propose:

H1a: HPWPs positively predict subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and relational well-being.

H1b: HPWPs negatively predict health well-being.

2.4 Moderators of the HPWPs-Well-Being Relationship

2.4.1 Cultural Context Despite growing empirical research on HPWPs and well-being over the past decade, contradictory findings persist, suggesting the relationship involves a balance between job resources and demands with strict boundary conditions (Sun & Wang, 2016). HPWPs research often assumes universal effectiveness across cultures (Rauch & Hatak, 2016), yet effectiveness is constrained by multiple contextual factors (Sun & Wang, 2016). While studies have examined organizational culture, job characteristics, and demographics, they have largely ignored cultural context and industry differences (Pagán-Castaño et al., 2020). Employees' perceptions and interpretations of HPWPs affect their attitudes and behaviors (Yan et al., 2016; Drover et al., 2018), and these perceptions vary by cultural values (Su et al., 2019) and industry context (Tzabbar et al., 2017). However, cross-cultural and cross-industry studies remain rare (Li & Deng, 2010; Rode et al., 2016).

National culture comprises deep value systems shared by a country's members, shaping cognition and evaluation of objects' meanings and importance (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede et al., 2010). Employees' perceptions of HPWPs' effectiveness are culturally influenced. For example, Lawler et al. (1992) found that high-incentive compensation designs significantly impacted U.S. employees but not Japanese employees. Employee well-being represents overall quality evaluations of work experiences, and these subjective experiences vary culturally. Khoreva and Wechtler (2018) found HPWPs negatively correlated with relational well-being in high power distance contexts, whereas Salas-Vallina et al. (2021) found positive correlations in low power distance contexts. Ehrnrooth and Björkman (2012) found HPWPs produced dual effects in Nordic samples. Thus, cultural context may moderate the HPWPs-well-being relationship.

Hofstede's cultural values model is most widely used (Naseer et al., 2019). Eastern and Western cultures differ markedly on power distance, collectivism-individualism, and long-term-short-term orientation (Wang et al., 2022). Eastern cultures feature high power distance, collectivism, and long-term orientation, with stronger organizational dependence and adaptation to hierarchical, institutionalized environments. Western cultures exhibit low power distance, individualism, and short-term orientation, emphasizing individual freedom and adaptation to flat, flexible structures. This study focuses on these three cultural dimensions.

(1) Power Distance

Power distance refers to individuals' acceptance of unequal power distribution in organizations; higher power distance indicates greater acceptance of power inequality (Clugston et al., 2000). HPWPs emphasize participation and empowerment, granting autonomy and flexibility. Employees in different power distance contexts perceive these practices differently. High power distance employees more readily accept power inequality, showing lower sensitivity to empowerment and participation, preferring to follow leaders' decisions. Some studies

find high power distance employees resist autonomy and empowerment, viewing participation with fear and distrust (Chen & Aryee, 2007; Newman & Nollen, 1996). Liu and Zhou (2004) found high power distance employees participate little in management, preferring leader direction. Without administrative orders, they become disoriented or work at cross-purposes, reducing efficiency. Low power distance employees prefer participation and autonomy, which positively affect satisfaction, commitment, and identification (Shi & Li, 2009), energizing engagement and self-actualization.

Trust is central to organizational relationships and a key determinant of performance and supervisor-subordinate relations (Zheng, 1999). Chen (2014) notes that in high power distance cultures, mutual trust between employees and enterprises is lower than in low power distance countries. High power distance employees maintain greater social distance from superiors (Zheng et al., 2023), while low power distance employees perceive smaller emotional gaps with supervisors (Xie et al., 2012), more readily accepting HPWPs requiring high participation and interpreting them as signals of organizational value and resource provision, thereby affecting perceived organizational support and trust (Zhong et al., 2015). Thus, low power distance strengthens the positive HPWPs-relational well-being relationship.

Furthermore, high power distance employees may view HPWPs' job demands as legitimate role requirements, accepting long hours and overtime as normal without negative emotional experiences. Oruh and Dibia (2020) found power distance prevents employees from challenging employers on stress-related issues. Therefore, high power distance may weaken HPWPs' negative effects on emotional and health well-being compared to low power distance contexts. We hypothesize:

H2a: Power distance moderates the HPWPs-subjective well-being and HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships, with low power distance employees showing stronger positive relationships than high power distance employees.

H2b: Power distance moderates the HPWPs-relational well-being relationship, with low power distance employees showing stronger positive relationships than high power distance employees.

H2c: Power distance moderates the HPWPs-health well-being relationship, with low power distance employees showing stronger negative relationships than high power distance employees.

(2) Collectivism and Individualism

Collectivism and individualism represent tendencies toward group-based versus individual activity. Collectivist cultures emphasize interdependence, cooperation, and harmony, with psychological experiences influenced by group members (Erdogan & Liden, 2006; Francesco & Chen, 2004). Individualist cultures stress self-independence, self-worth, and personal experience, with emotions self-determined (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Individualist employees value personal interests, self-actualization, and development, with stronger self-enhancement motives (Gu et al., 2022). They more readily accept HPWPs that build personal resources (e.g., autonomy, participation) and perceive stronger investment in employee growth and support (Zhong et al., 2015). Collectivist employees emphasize collective goals, suppressing individual needs (Zou & Zuo, 2004), with weaker motivation to acquire HPWPs-provided personal resources. Thus, individualist employees perceive stronger HPWPs-subjective well-being and HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships.

Collectivist employees prioritize collective interests (Madhavan, 2011), emphasizing goal alignment and interpersonal harmony (Zhang et al., 2020). HPWPs' supportive resources and practices building positive psychological connections (e.g., information sharing, teamwork) better meet collectivist employees' relational needs. Additionally, collectivist employees show stronger organizational identification (Li & Xu, 2014), more readily accepting HPWPs and aligning with the organization. Therefore, collectivist employees show stronger HPWPs-relational well-being relationships.

HPWPs are performance-oriented, increasing work intensity and demands (Jensen et al., 2013). Collectivist employees, prioritizing collective welfare (Wagner, 1995), interpret high job demands as inevitable role requirements, reframing them as challenging rather than hindering stressors that motivate resource mobilization to achieve goals (Sun & Wang, 2016) and avoid resource loss. Individualist employees, more attuned to inner feelings (Yang & Li, 2021), react more strongly to demands and resource loss threats, consuming more emotional and health resources (Li et al., 2015) and more readily experiencing health well-being impairment. We hypothesize:

H3a: Collectivism-individualism moderates the HPWPs-subjective well-being and HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships, with individualist employees showing stronger positive relationships than collectivist employees.

H3b: Collectivism-individualism moderates the HPWPs-relational well-being relationship, with collectivist employees showing stronger positive relationships than individualist employees.

H3c: Collectivism-individualism moderates the HPWPs-health well-being relationship, with individualist employees showing stronger negative relationships than collectivist employees.

(3) Long-Term and Short-Term Orientation

Long-term orientation reflects future-oriented values emphasizing delayed gratification, patience, perseverance, and resilience, while short-term orientation focuses on present benefits, personal freedom, and immediate satisfaction (Gu et al., 2022). HPWPs strengthen abilities and skills through training, motivate through fair compensation and appraisal, and provide development opportunities, signaling long-term investment in employees. Long-term-oriented employees value career prospects and advancement, perceiving HPWPs as caring about

employee development and growth (Vo & Bartram, 2012). HPWPs better meet their psychological needs, making them feel valued, enhancing self-worth and intrinsic motivation (Cao et al., 2019), increasing involvement, identification, trust, and belonging (Alfes et al., 2012), thereby strengthening subjective, psychological, and relational well-being.

Moreover, long-term-oriented employees focus on future goals rather than immediate gratification, showing greater persistence and resilience—valuable personal resources for coping with HPWPs-induced stress and challenges. They maintain optimism under pressure, buffering negative health effects. Thus, they experience higher health well-being. We hypothesize:

H4a: Long-term-short-term orientation moderates the HPWPs-subjective well-being and HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships, with long-term-oriented employees showing stronger positive relationships than short-term-oriented employees.

H4b: Long-term-short-term orientation moderates the HPWPs-relational well-being relationship, with long-term-oriented employees showing stronger positive relationships than short-term-oriented employees.

H4c: Long-term-short-term orientation moderates the HPWPs-health well-being relationship, with short-term-oriented employees showing stronger negative relationships than long-term-oriented employees.

2.4.2 Industry Moderating Effects Based on sample distribution, we categorize industries into productive services (financial, communication, business, and HR support services), healthcare services, and others (mixed or unspecified industries, excluded from discussion). Organizations in different industries face distinct technological environments and labor markets, developing different HR strategies and practices (Young et al., 2010). Thus, HPWPs' content and effectiveness may vary by industry.

As service economies dominate globally (Liao et al., 2009), HPWPs in services have gained attention (Mihail & Kloutsiniotis, 2016). Productive services provide intermediate services to manufacturing, characterized by high knowledge intensity, innovation, and industrial integration (Li et al., 2016; Xia & Xiao, 2019). Their human capital is highly professional, mobile, and market-oriented, with organizations relying on external labor markets rather than long-term development (Erickson, 2004). Their HR practices feature an inducement system: recruitment emphasizes technical competence, training is limited, appraisal is results-oriented and controlling, compensation emphasizes external equity, promotion opportunities are limited, job security is minimal, and employee-organization relations are primarily economic exchange (Liu & Liu, 2005).

Healthcare services are labor-, knowledge-, and technology-intensive (Fan et al., 2014). Medical staff work affects patients' health and lives, requiring not only technical expertise but also stress tolerance and emotional labor capacity (Fan

et al., 2014). To provide professional services and maintain harmonious doctor-patient relationships, healthcare requires workforce stability and long-term professional development. Thus, hospitals adopt extensive training, participative management, internal promotion, and job security practices (Huang et al., 2016) to manage high work demands and stress. This system emphasizes internal equity, builds internal labor markets, fosters trust (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021), provides job security, emphasizes career development, and seeks long-term relationships (Zhang et al., 2013). Healthcare employees and organizations engage in social exchange based on mutual trust and emotional investment (Shore et al., 2006), representing an investment-oriented HR system (Liu & Liu, 2005).

Healthcare's investment-oriented practices provide resources for career growth and personal development, alleviating resource depletion from high demands while enhancing abilities and motivation (Sadatsafavi et al., 2015), creating resource gains. Conversely, productive services' inducement-oriented practices emphasize economic exchange and control with less social exchange and emotional care, more readily causing resource depletion (Schaufeli, 2006). Therefore, healthcare employees perceive stronger organizational support from HPWPs, better achieving self-goals and values and enhancing psychological well-being.

However, healthcare's heavy responsibilities require intense concentration and continuous presence, resulting in long hours, high intensity, and shift work as the norm (Zhao et al., 2020). Maintaining harmonious doctor-patient relationships requires constant emotional labor, creating enormous psychological pressure that affects physical and mental health. We hypothesize:

H5: Industry moderates the HPWPs-subjective well-being, HPWPs-psychological well-being, and HPWPs-health well-being relationships. Healthcare employees show stronger positive HPWPs-subjective well-being and HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships than productive service employees, while productive service employees show stronger positive HPWPs-health well-being relationships than healthcare employees.

Based on this theoretical framework, Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper] presents our research model.

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3. Research Methods

3.1 Literature Search and Screening

To comprehensively identify empirical literature on HPWPs and employee well-being, we first combined Chinese terms for "high-performance work system/practice," "human resource management," "HRM management/practice/system/bundles," and "HR practice/system/bundles" with well-being terms including "happiness," "well-being," "job satisfaction," "positive/negative affect," "engagement," "involvement," "thriving," "meaningfulness," "organizational support," "trust," "relationship," "job stress,"

"burnout," and "exhaustion," searching CNKI, Wanfang, and VIP databases. Second, we combined English terms "high performance work practice/system," "HPWPs," "HPWS," "Human Resource Management," "human resource practice/system," "HRM management/practice/system/bundles," and "Human Resource practice/system/bundles" with the same well-being terms, searching Web of Science, ProQuest, Elsevier, and Google Scholar. Third, to avoid omissions, we manually searched reference lists of key review papers (e.g., Peccei & Voorde, 2019; Guest, 2017) and empirical papers (e.g., Guerci et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2013). To ensure quality, we included only core journal papers (CSSCI/SSCI), excluding dissertations, conference papers, and unpublished work. The search concluded in March 2023.

We applied these inclusion criteria: (1) exclude theoretical, review, and case studies; (2) exclude studies not reporting sample sizes and correlation coefficients (or convertible statistics like β or t-values) (Su et al., 2019); (3) focus on individual-level HPWPs-well-being relationships, excluding cross-level studies; (4) examine HPWPs or practice bundles' effects on well-being, excluding single HRM practice studies; (5) include only one publication per duplicate dataset. The final sample comprised 53 papers: 11 Chinese core journals and 42 English journals, including 55 independent studies with 92 effect sizes and total N = 51,750. Samples came from Eastern cultures (China, India, Japan, South Korea, Pakistan) and Western cultures (UK, Germany, USA, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Australia, Brazil, Finland, Belgium, Greece). Publication years ranged from 2008 to 2022. Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper] illustrates the screening process.

3.2 Literature Coding

Following Wei (2021), we developed a coding sheet including: publication information (authors, title, year), HPWPs measurement, well-being type (subjective and sub-dimensions, psychological and sub-dimensions, health and sub-dimensions, social and sub-dimensions), country, industry (manufacturing, traditional services, productive services, healthcare, internet/high-tech, etc.), data source (manager/employee ratings), research method and timing (cross-sectional/other), sample size, measurement instruments, reliability coefficients, and correlation coefficients.

Country data coded cultural differences using Hofstede's cultural values, coding power distance, collectivism-individualism, and long-term-short-term orientation dimensions on 0-100 scales, with 50 as the cutoff (Wang et al., 2022). Low scores represent low power distance, collectivism, and short-term orientation; high scores represent high power distance, individualism, and long-term orientation. Independent samples served as the unit of analysis; multiple independent samples within one article were coded separately.

HPWPs measurement includes holistic and dimensional approaches. This study focuses on overall effects, so dimensional studies were combined using Hedges

and Olkin's (1985) composite effect size calculation strategy to integrate correlations into overall HPWPs-well-being effect sizes.

Well-being dimensions were coded based on original conceptualizations and measures. "Job satisfaction and/or positive/negative affect" coded as "subjective well-being" (negative affect correlations reverse-coded when aggregating). "Engagement/involvement/thriving/meaningfulness" coded as "psychological well-being." "Trust/organizational support/interpersonal relationships" coded as "relational well-being." "Job stress/burnout/emotional exhaustion" coded as "health well-being" (reverse-coded when aggregating, with higher scores indicating better health). Among 53 papers, no studies examined individual-level HPWPs with thriving or meaningfulness, so psychological well-being indicators include only engagement/involvement.

Three researchers independently coded literature using standardized criteria, achieving 88.7% agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and reference to original texts.

3.3 Meta-Analytic Procedure

We used Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA) 3.0 software, preprocessing data before analysis. First, correlation coefficients (r) served as effect sizes, with other statistics converted to r when necessary. Second, to reduce measurement error from scale inconsistency, we corrected effect sizes using reliability coefficients. For missing reliability data, we first checked original texts; if unreported, we substituted weighted reliability from other studies using the same scale (Wang et al., 2022), or if no identical scale existed, used the mean weighted reliability from other studies. Sample data and corrected correlations were then entered into CMA 3.0 for effect size conversion, publication bias analysis, heterogeneity testing, main effect testing, and moderation analysis.

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4. Research Results

4.1 Effect Size Conversion

We first converted correlation coefficients (r) to Fisher's Z values using Fisher's transformation formula, then weighted Z values by the inverse of their squared standard errors (where i indexes studies and Zi represents Fisher's Z), computed weighted averages, and finally converted back to r' for precise, reliable integrated effect sizes (Hedges & Olkin, 1985).

4.2 Publication Bias and Heterogeneity Tests

Publication bias occurs when published studies systematically differ from the complete research population (Kepes et al., 2012), as statistically significant results are more likely to be published (Dickersin, 1997). We assessed publication

bias using fail-safe N—the number of unpublished null-result studies needed to overturn meta-analytic findings. Rosenthal (1979) suggested bias may be severe when fail-safe N < 5k + 10 (k = number of effect sizes). However, some researchers argue this standard is unreliable due to varying significance levels. Wei et al. (2018) and Wang et al. (2012) recommend comparing fail-safe N directly to k, with fail-safe N > k indicating no severe bias, a standard adopted in top-tier journals (Joshi & Roh, 2009; Bell et al., 2011). We followed this criterion.

Table 1 presents publication bias results. For HPWPs-subjective well-being, fail-safe N = 9,614, far exceeding k = 30 and (5k + 10) = 160, meaning 9,614 unpublished null studies would be needed to nullify the effect. All HPWPs-well-being relationships and sub-dimensions showed fail-safe N > k, with most > 5k + 10 (except job stress), indicating robust results without severe publication bias.

Heterogeneity tests assess whether effect sizes vary across studies, indicating potential moderators. We used Q and I^2 statistics. Q tests total variation, with significance indicating heterogeneity possibly due to culture, industry, or data source differences. I^2 represents the proportion of observed variation due to true effect size differences, with 75%, 50%, and 25% as high, medium, and low heterogeneity thresholds (Higgins et al., 2002). Table 1 shows all relationships have significant Q values ($p < 0.001$) and $I^2 > 75\%$, indicating high heterogeneity. Therefore, we used random-effects models for all analyses.

4.3 Main Effects Results

Table 2 presents main effects. HPWPs significantly positively correlate with subjective well-being (= 0.50), psychological well-being (= 0.49), relational well-being (= 0.58), and health well-being (= 0.23), with 95% confidence intervals excluding zero ($p < 0.001$). H1a is supported; H1b is not supported—results contradict H1b.

Specifically, HPWPs positively affect subjective well-being indicators job satisfaction (= 0.55, $p < 0.001$) and positive affect (= 0.61, $p < 0.001$), and negatively affect negative affect (= –0.25, $p < 0.05$). HPWPs positively predict psychological well-being indicator engagement/involvement (= 0.49, $p < 0.001$). HPWPs positively affect relational well-being indicators trust (= 0.70), organizational support (= 0.53), and interpersonal relationships (= 0.38), all $p < 0.01$. For health well-being, HPWPs negatively affect burnout (= –0.37, $p < 0.001$) but show no significant effects on job stress or emotional exhaustion. The overall HPWPs-health well-being effect is significantly positive.

4.4 Moderation Tests

We tested cultural and industry moderation (Tables 3 and 4) using QB statistics (between-group heterogeneity). Given high heterogeneity, random-effects

models were used. Healthcare HPWPs-psychological well-being had only one study, insufficient for moderation analysis.

Table 3 shows power distance and collectivism-individualism significantly moderate HPWPs-subjective well-being (QB = 10.02, p = 0.002; QB = 5.28, p = 0.022). Power distance significantly affects HPWPs-psychological well-being (QB = 4.67, p = 0.031). Contrary to hypotheses, high power distance and collectivist employees show stronger HPWPs-subjective well-being relationships (= 0.56; = 0.55) than low power distance and individualist employees (= 0.34; = 0.38). High power distance employees show stronger HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships (= 0.55) than low power distance employees (= 0.42).

Collectivism-individualism moderates HPWPs-health well-being (QB = 4.37, p = 0.037), with collectivist employees showing stronger positive relationships (= 0.30) than individualist employees (= 0.12). Cultural orientation does not significantly moderate HPWPs-relational well-being. H2c, H3a, H3b, H3c, H4a, and H4c are not supported; H2b is partially supported.

Table 4 shows industry significantly moderates HPWPs-subjective well-being and HPWPs-health well-being (QB = 5.99, p = 0.014; QB = 5.90, p = 0.015). Healthcare employees show stronger HPWPs-subjective well-being relationships (= 0.61) than productive service employees (= 0.18). However, healthcare employees show weaker HPWPs-health well-being relationships (= 0.14) than productive service employees (= 0.38). Industry does not significantly affect HPWPs-relational well-being (p > 0.05). H5 receives partial support.

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5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Main Effects of HPWPs on Employee Well-Being

Our meta-analysis of 55 independent studies reveals HPWPs significantly positively correlate with subjective, psychological, and relational well-being, consistent with previous research (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Cao et al., 2019). However, contrary to prior findings (Babic et al., 2019; Qi et al., 2021), we find HPWPs significantly positively correlate with health well-being, indicating HPWPs do not impair health well-being. Since HPWPs show consistent positive correlations across all well-being dimensions, we find no "contradictory effects" (Guerci et al., 2022). Our results do not support the double-edged sword perspective. Possible explanations include:

First, HPWPs provide essential job resources—autonomy, participation, organizational support, job enrichment, job security, and flexible design—that not only help employees meet job demands but also buffer negative effects of high demands on health well-being. These resources satisfy basic needs (competence, relatedness, autonomy), enhance self-efficacy and belonging (Hu et al., 2020), create resource gains, and improve psychological and relational well-being.

Second, different HPWPs bundles may have counteracting effects. For example, participation may enhance psychological well-being while harming relational well-being (Loon et al., 2019); incentive compensation may motivate employees while causing anxiety (Loon et al., 2019); flexible arrangements may increase autonomy and work-family balance while creating job insecurity (Lange, 2013). When combined, these opposing effects may cancel out.

Third, the HPWPs-well-being relationship may be moderated by other factors such as age, gender, and personality traits (Peccei, 2004). For instance, Kooij et al. (2013) found developmental HR practices' effects on well-being weaken with age. Young employees may view HPWPs demands as challenging stressors that trigger intrinsic motivation and passion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Passionate employees work voluntarily without experiencing burnout or health impairment (Franke & Schreier, 2010; Ollo-Lopez et al., 2010; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Personality traits may also moderate HPWPs-health well-being relationships; Zhang and Yang (2022) found HPWPs enhance well-being only for employees with self-actualizing personalities.

5.2 Moderators of the HPWPs-Well-Being Relationship

5.2.1 Cultural Moderation Cultural context influences HPWPs-well-being relationships. Collectivist employees show stronger HPWPs-health well-being relationships than individualist employees. Power distance and collectivism-individualism moderate HPWPs-subjective well-being and HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships, with high power distance and collectivist employees showing stronger relationships than low power distance and individualist employees—contrary to hypotheses.

These consistent findings suggest that in Eastern high power distance, collectivist cultures, HPWPs-subjective well-being and HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships are stronger than in Western low power distance, individualist cultures. This may reflect recent global economic patterns. Over the past decade, "East rises while West declines" (Li, 2021), with emerging Eastern economies growing robustly while Western economies stagnate, affecting job security and satisfaction. Additionally, national cultures may have evolved. Hauff and Richter's (2015) meta-analysis found countries deviating from Hofstede's (1980) original rankings—many Eastern European and South American countries reduced power distance and increased individualism since the 1990s, while Western countries like the U.S., Canada, and Germany increased power distance and decreased individualism. Future meta-analyses should track these cultural dynamics.

5.2.2 Industry Moderation Industry moderates HPWPs-psychological well-being and HPWPs-health well-being relationships. Healthcare employees show stronger HPWPs-psychological well-being relationships than productive service employees, likely because hospitals implement investment-oriented, internally-focused HPWPs (internal labor markets, extensive training, long-term security)

that foster long-term relationships and well-being. Productive services typically implement inducement-oriented, market-focused HPWPs with short-term, transactional employee relations, hindering career development and well-being.

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6. Summary and Outlook

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

First, this study clarifies relationships between HPWPs and employee well-being dimensions (subjective, psychological, relational, health). Prior research shows inconsistent conclusions; our meta-analysis of 55 studies finds consistently significant positive correlations across all dimensions, demonstrating "consistent effects." This supports the win-win perspective, extends existing research, and provides comprehensive understanding of HPWPs-well-being relationships.

Second, we find HPWPs positively affect health well-being, contradicting the "contradictory effects" view. Previous research suggests HPWPs improve some well-being dimensions while harming others, particularly health well-being (Guerci et al., 2022; Van De Voorde et al., 2012). Our findings show no significant negative effects and even significant positive effects on health well-being, challenging negative evaluations of HPWPs and prompting scholarly re-examination of their value.

Third, we extend boundary condition research from organizational and individual levels to macro cultural and industry levels. Our findings enrich cross-cultural and cross-industry HPWPs-well-being research and delineate clearer boundary conditions for understanding these relationships.

6.2 Practical Implications

First, HPWPs' effectiveness depends not only on implementation but also on employee perception and evaluation. Organizations should adopt user and product thinking, considering employees as internal customers and developing targeted, adaptive HR services that match employees' resource needs.

Second, organizations should consider employees' cultural values when designing HPWPs. Our findings show cultural values significantly moderate HPWPs' effects on well-being. Organizations should cultivate community consciousness, emphasize employee growth and development, and enhance identification and loyalty to maximize HPWPs effectiveness.

Third, healthcare employees perceive stronger HPWPs effects on psychological well-being than productive service employees. Organizations should align HR strategies with industry characteristics and organizational strategy to achieve synergy between organizational and employee goals, creating win-win outcomes for performance and well-being.

6.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This study has limitations: (1) The sample of 53 empirical papers is relatively small, potentially affecting stability; (2) Only Chinese and English literature was included, possibly creating selection bias; (3) Some meta-analytic effect sizes are small, with industries concentrated in services.

Future research should: (1) Include more cultural dimensions (e.g., uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, indulgence-restraint) and industry variables to verify cross-cultural and cross-industry consistency; (2) Explore mediating mechanisms (e.g., job expectations, self-efficacy) in HPWPs-well-being relationships; (3) Conduct cross-level meta-analyses to clarify how HPWPs enhance well-being and achieve dual wins; (4) Examine emerging HR practices (e.g., sustainable HRM, well-being-oriented HR, health-oriented HR systems) to better inform employee motivation strategies.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.