Leadership Education in Finland: A Critical Examination of Well-Being Management Approaches

Pinja Ryky[*] (iD)
The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health / University of Helsinki, FINLAND

Anu Järvensivu (iD)
Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, FINLAND

Sami Paavola (iD)
University of Helsinki, FINLAND

Abstract: This study examines how work well-being is addressed in Finnish leadership education programs. The data consist of 91 publicly available course descriptions from Finnish leadership education programs in 2023, including those for master's degrees from universities of applied sciences, traditional university-level leadership programs, and specialist vocational qualifications in leadership and business management. The study uses content analysis to examine the role of work well-being in leadership training. The results indicate that work well-being is often linked to organizational performance and treated as a tool for achieving economic goals, with less emphasis on the inherent value of employee well-being. This instrumental approach is prevalent across the different types of leadership training programs, including those found in the universities of applied sciences, traditional universities, and programs for specialist vocational qualifications in leadership and business management. The study also finds that leadership training programs often emphasize self-leadership and personal development, which can perpetuate a culture of individual responsibility for well-being and may lead to superficial leadership practices. The study concludes that Finnish leadership educators should prioritize holistic approaches to work well-being in leadership training, emphasizing its intrinsic value alongside its role in organizational performance, while researchers could explore methods to integrate and evaluate these balanced perspectives in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: *Adult education, course descriptions, leadership education, well-being management.*

Introduction

The rising prevalence of burnout and absenteeism in Finland highlights the urgent need to prioritize workplace well-being, yet leadership education has often been neglecting this theme (Cinar & Bilodeau, 2022; Giacalone & Thompson, 2006; Luoma & Viitala, 2015; Painter-Morland, 2015a; Painter-Morland et al., 2016). Despite increasing societal awareness, the integration of well-being into leadership curricula remains limited and poorly understood (Juuti, 2021a). This study investigates the extent and emphasis of workplace well-being integration within Finnish leadership training programs.

The prevailing understanding of well-being integration within leadership education is regarded as insufficient due to several compelling reasons. Leadership curricula predominantly emphasize organizational and economic outcomes, frequently neglecting the critical psychological and ethical dimensions of well-being (Giacalone & Thompson, 2006). In leadership programs, well-being remains peripheral rather than central, consequently limiting the ability of future leaders to effectively balance employee well-being with organizational demands (Painter-Morland, 2015a). Additionally, there is a notable deficiency of comprehensive research that explores how well-being is systematically incorporated into leadership training, particularly with respect to the foundational values that underlie this integration.

This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing how well-being is represented in leadership training programs and the values these programs convey, thus enhancing the understanding of leadership education's role in promoting workplace well-being.

Our research questions are:

---

[*] **Corresponding author:**
Pinja Ryky, The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health & University of Helsinki, Finland. ✉ pinja.ryky@ttl.fi

- How are workplace well-being themes represented and integrated into leadership training programs based on course titles, components, or syllabi, and how do these vary across different types of programs?

- What values regarding workplace well-being are reflected in the descriptions of leadership programs?

Addressing workplace well-being is critical, as research indicates ongoing challenges in Finland (Blomgren & Perhoniemi, 2022; Hakanen & Kaltiainen, 2024; Kela, 2024) and the EU, where work-related stress accounts for significant lost workdays (Skakon et al., 2010). Given the extensive time Finnish employees spend at work (Eurostat, 2023), integrating well-being into leadership education is essential for improving overall health (Clifton & Harter, 2021) and ensuring long-term organizational success, which includes employee well-being in organizational settings (Ogbonnaya & Aryee, 2021; Renee Baptiste, 2008).

Our research focuses specifically on the following: (a) master's degree in leadership programs from a university of applied sciences (in Finnish: "ylempi ammattikorkeakoulututkinto" [YAMK]); (b) traditional university-level leadership programs; and (c) programs for a specialist vocational qualification in leadership and business management (in Finnish: "johtamisen ja yritysjohtamisen erikoisammattitutkinto" [JYEAT]). In this article, the above abbreviations are used to avoid misunderstandings. The data consist of 91 documents guiding these leadership trainings, and it is analyzed using content analysis (Elo et al., 2022; Salo, 2015).

In the article, we conduct an analysis of themes related to workplace well-being as presented in the course descriptions. Finally, we reflect on the values conveyed by the course descriptions concerning the management of workplace well-being.

Literature Review

Work well-being is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon shaped by the relationship between the individual, work, and the social environment (Dooris et al., 2018; Jarden et al., 2018; Laine, 2018; Utriainen et al., 2011). It encompasses physical, psychological, and emotional health, job satisfaction, and a sense of purpose (Seligman, 2018), varying across industries, organizations, and societies (Niinihuhta et al., 2022). Defined as multidimensional, work well-being influences mental health, absenteeism, performance, and overall quality of working life, incorporating social, physical, psychological, and emotional elements (Cvenkel, 2020; Niinihuhta et al., 2022). It is shaped by individual traits, social support, competence, meaningful work environments, and life circumstances (Dooris et al., 2018; Jarden et al., 2018; Laine, 2018; Utriainen et al., 2011). In work well-being literature, *work ability* is also often mentioned: It refers to a person's capacity to perform their job, considering the demands of the work, their health, and their physical and mental resources (Schaupp et al., 2013).

Leadership cannot be unambiguously defined, as different researchers offer over 1,500 different definitions and dozens of models. This diversity complicates the development of leadership and the justification of new knowledge (Juuti, 2021b). The conceptual dimensions of leadership often take on a concrete form precisely through training, centralizing the role of leadership education as a defining element of leadership (Painter-Morland, 2015b).

Traditional models, like Transactional Leadership (Burns, 1978), provide structure through rewards and punishments but often neglect deeper well-being needs, such as intrinsic motivation. Transformational Leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994) inspires through shared vision and individualized support, promoting engagement and well-being, though it risks burnout if expectations are unrealistic. More contemporary theories emphasize interpersonal relationships. Authentic Leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) fosters trust through transparency and ethical conduct, while Ethical Leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006) reduces stress by promoting fairness. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) strengthens belonging through high-quality leader-follower relationships. Emotional intelligence and mindfulness further enhance well-being. Emotional Intelligence (Cherniss et al., 1998) helps leaders manage emotions to reduce stress, while Resonant Leadership (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005) creates emotionally positive environments. Mindfulness (Reb et al., 2014) aids stress management through present-moment focus. Other theories prioritize empowerment and clarity. Empowering Leadership (Zhang & Bartol, 2010) boosts autonomy and satisfaction through delegation, while Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971) reduces uncertainty by clarifying expectations. Situational Leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) adapts styles to employees' needs, balancing direction and autonomy. Collaborative approaches also contribute to well-being. Distributed Leadership (Spillane, 2005) fosters team cohesion through shared responsibility, while Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) creates a culture of care and growth. Each leadership theory has unique benefits but also limitations, as outlined in Appendix 1. Optimizing effectiveness depends on aligning approaches with organizational contexts and addressing potential drawbacks.

Leading well-being requires leaders to take a more proactive role, as the research literature suggests, in order to achieve better outcomes for both employees and the organization as a whole (Ogbonnaya & Aryee, 2021; Renee Baptiste, 2008; Tsai, 2011). Traditional HRM practices that are aimed solely at improving organizational performance may overlook the critical role of employee well-being (Ogbonnaya & Aryee, 2021; Renee Baptiste, 2008). However, it is known that when leaders focus on well-being—for example, through the building of supportive relationships and trust—it not only benefits employees but also enhances organizational productivity (Ogbonnaya & Aryee, 2021; Renee Baptiste, 2008). Previous research on leadership education highlights the dominance of an instrumental perspective, rooted in utilitarian

assumptions, which limits the teaching of responsible, ethical, and sustainable leadership practices while organizational well-being is often justified in economic terms (Painter-Morland, 2015a).

Values can be divided into two main categories based on what they describe: intrinsic values and instrumental or extrinsic values (Lehtonen, 2009). *Intrinsic values* or *basic values* are valuable in themselves. They are not tools for achieving other goals. Examples of intrinsic values include happiness, goodness, truth, and beauty. *Instrumental values* or *extrinsic values* only derive their worth when used to strive for intrinsic values. They are the means to achieve other values.

The values presented in leadership course descriptions are not just theoretical but are also embedded in the training's content and implementation (Slemp et al., 2015). These values shape how well-being is managed in workplaces (Jia et al., 2022). Leadership training values directly impact the type of leadership promoted, with organizational interests often equated with well-being, a mindset that limits the development of responsible leadership education (Gayed et al., 2018; Giacalone & Thompson, 2006; Painter-Morland et al., 2016). This organization-centered worldview complicates the teaching of responsible leadership, as business education, though emphasizing ethics, often justifies decisions through economic values (Giacalone & Thompson, 2006). Education based on intrinsic ethical values fosters an atmosphere where employees feel valued and respected, promoting well-being (Jia et al., 2022).

While Finnish leadership training has received limited research, it is known that some institutions adopt an interactive view of leadership alongside traditional methods like classroom teaching (Juuti, 2021b). Comparative research on Finnish leadership education within the Nordic context is limited, largely due to Finland's decentralized educational system, which operates across multiple institutions (Aas & Törnsén, 2016; Ranki et al., 2021).

While no comprehensive study compares Nordic leadership training systems, a 2021 memorandum by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra examines lifelong learning frameworks, which influence adult learning and can also be seen as foundational to leadership training (Ranki et al., 2021). Norway leads with an integrated, legislatively backed system for lifelong learning, while Finland and Iceland are transitioning towards similar systemic approaches. In contrast, Sweden and Denmark rely on decentralized, sector-driven models that prioritize flexibility but lack cohesive oversight (Ranki et al., 2021). These frameworks integrate adult learning into workplace contexts, aligning leadership training with practical needs. Studies show that Finnish leadership education emphasizes work-life balance and digitalization while reflecting Nordic democratic leadership values. Finland's approach, tailored to local contexts, contrasts with the more centralized models of Sweden and Norway, all of which balance accountability with trust-based practices (Aas & Törnsén, 2016).

This overview examined ways to support employees' physical, psychological, and social health, including safety, work-life balance, and professional development, recognizing the crucial role of workplace well-being in both individual and organizational flourishing. These aspects are closely linked to organizational culture and leadership practices that create environments where employees can thrive (Cvenkel, 2020). Leadership styles such as transformational, participative, and ethical leadership have been positively associated with enhanced work well-being (Chughtai et al., 2015; Skakon et al., 2010).

A key distinction in well-being theory lies between instrumental and intrinsic approaches; this distinction has important implications for leadership education programs. The instrumental perspective focuses on aligning individual and organizational goals through external motivators like rewards, aiming at organizational success. However, this approach risks reducing well-being to a mere productivity tool. In contrast, the intrinsic perspective emphasizes the promotion of genuine well-being through leadership grounded in trust, ethics, and emotional intelligence, as demonstrated in Authentic Leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), Ethical Leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006), and Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977).

Effective leadership in promoting well-being thus requires integrating these values into both strategic and operational practices, with proactive measures for mental well-being, such as creating supportive conditions and fostering employee engagement (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2022; Niinihuhta et al., 2022; Schaupp et al., 2013). This theoretical framework informs the analysis of how work well-being themes and values are represented and integrated within Finnish leadership training programs. This examination contributes to understanding how workplace well-being is incorporated into leadership practices and its potential to enhance educational outcomes.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed thematic content analysis to investigate 91 publicly available course descriptions from Finnish leadership education programs (at JYEAT, YAMK, and traditional university levels) in 2023. The data were collected using the online service of the Vipunen- Education Statistics Finland (n.d.) ("Opetushallitus"), known as Vipunen, and were analyzed in three phases: preparation, analysis, and reporting (Elo et al., 2022). The *preparation phase* involved familiarization with the data and identifying key concepts related to workplace well-being (Joyce et al., 2022; Konecki, 2019; Teetzen et al., 2023). The *analysis phase* included extracting excerpts related to well-being and coding them based on a data-driven approach. We also assessed whether employee well-being was framed as an intrinsic or instrumental

value (Lehtonen, 2009). Finally, the *reporting phase* involved articulating the findings and comparing them with existing research (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Elo et al., 2022; Salo, 2015).

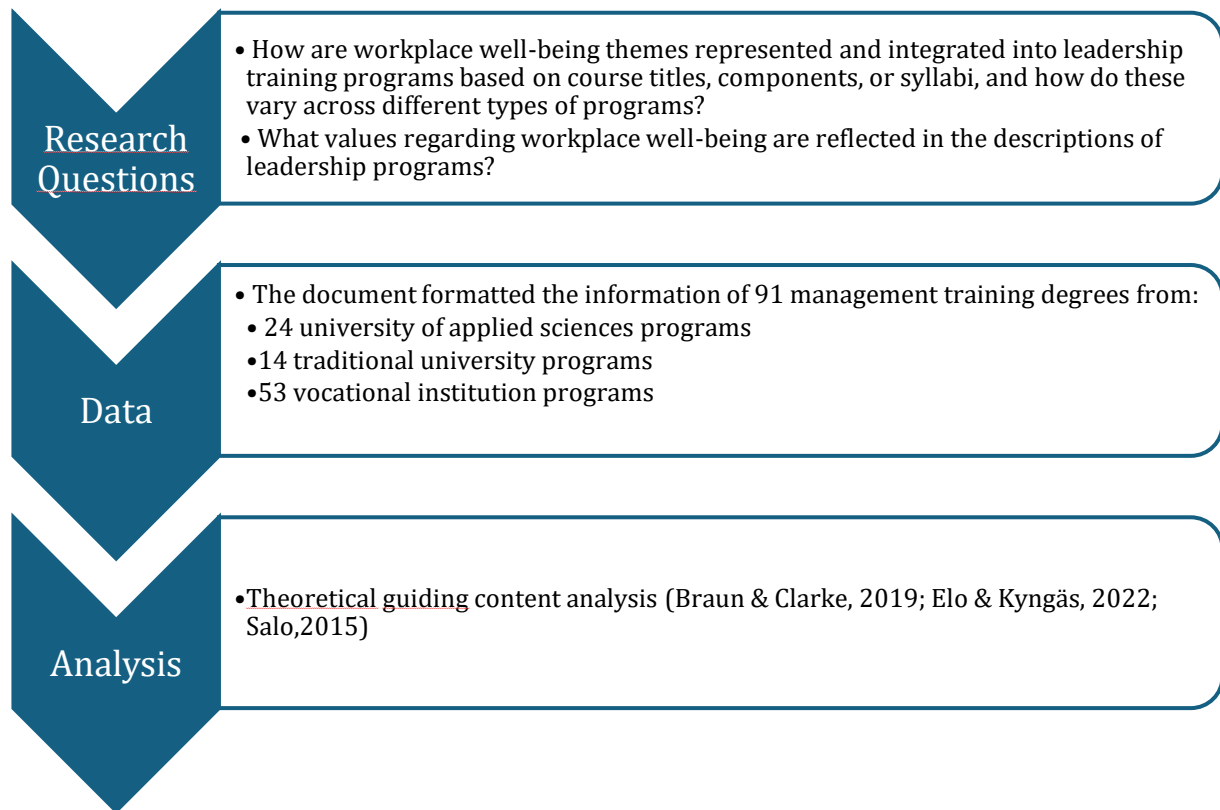Our research design is presented in the following figure (Figure 1).

Research Questions
- How are workplace well-being themes represented and integrated into leadership training programs based on course titles, components, or syllabi, and how do these vary across different types of programs?
- What values regarding workplace well-being are reflected in the descriptions of leadership programs?

Data
- The document formatted the information of 91 management training degrees from:
  - 24 university of applied sciences programs
  - 14 traditional university programs
  - 53 vocational institution programs

Analysis
- Theoretical guiding content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Elo & Kyngäs, 2022; Salo,2015)

Figure 1. Research Design

Sample and Data Collection

The JYEAT programs are subject to the regulatory framework established by the Finnish National Agency for Education. This ensures a consistent foundation for each qualification, despite potential variations in content and practical implementation. According to the Finnish National Agency for Education, a JYEAT degree provides in-depth expertise for professionals working in leadership roles across various organizations (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). The degree develops skills that can be applied to improving organizational performance and efficiency. The degree program comprises 180 credits, of which, 80 are dedicated to one of two specializations: leadership and business management, or internal auditing. The remaining 100 credits consist of elective courses chosen by the student. Graduates of the program can work in responsible leadership roles or internal audit positions within organizations (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019).

Before starting the actual research work, we needed to conduct a review to identify which educational organizations offer leadership training in Finland. For this, we utilized the Finnish National Agency for Education's online service, Vipunen, which provides official information on institutions with permits for vocational education, YAMKs, and other universities (Vipunen- Education Statistics Finland, n.d.). We compiled data from all these institutions into an Excel file, which served as the working document for our initial survey. We selected programs that meet at least one of the following criteria: (1) the leadership training must lead to a qualification, (2) it must consist of at least 60 credits, or (3) it must have a duration of at least one year. After this filtering, we included EMBA programs from universities (specific master's programs), advanced studies from YAMKs, and JYEAT programs. The review included 24 YAMKs offering leadership studies, 14 traditional university leadership programs, and 53 vocational institutions offering JYEATs. We documented the institution, the leadership training programs it offers, and the scope of those programs in a separate file.

Our data collection began by exploring how themes of work well-being management are presented in the professional leadership training programs. We included all officially recognized programs that met at least one of the selection criteria. We selected a total of 91 training programs, compiled into a 34-page Word document (6,119 words, 54,855 characters excluding spaces). Our research questions were refined based on insights from the data.

Analyzing the Data

In this study, we employed thematic content analysis to investigate leadership training documents, integrating both data-driven and theory-driven approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Elo et al., 2022; Salo, 2015). The unit of analysis focused on entire training programs and their titles, as well as on specific sections within the training programs. Our analytical strategy varied according to the specific research questions posed, and the analysis adhered to the three primary phases outlined in the content analysis (Elo et al., 2022).

During the preparation phase, we familiarized ourselves with the data and selected appropriate units of analysis that guided our exploration. In addressing the first research question, we analyzed course descriptions from vocational institutions offering JYEATs, YAMKs, and other universities through a content analysis framework informed by an open-minded theoretical lens (Konecki, 2019; Salo, 2015). Specifically, we aimed to investigate how themes of employee well-being are integrated into leadership education. We focused on the key concepts related to workplace well-being, including well-being, development, trust, organizational culture, solution-focused approaches, capability, emotions, safety, interaction, collaboration, and community. These concepts represent fundamental components of a healthy work environment that foster psychological and emotional safety, which are essential for enhancing employee productivity and commitment. For instance, the concepts of well-being and trust are closely associated with leadership behavior that promotes workplace resilience. Leaders who actively foster trust and prioritize employee well-being contribute to an organizational culture that enhances the mental well-being of the workforce, thereby strengthening team cohesion and commitment (Teetzen et al., 2023). Moreover, collaboration and a robust organizational culture are vital in creating an environment conducive to employee well-being (Joyce et al., 2022).

By identifying these concepts, we ensured that our analysis captured the critical dynamics of leadership that influence both the immediate and long-term well-being of employees. This approach aligns with theoretical frameworks and empirical findings from organizational health research (Teetzen et al., 2023). However, we remained cautious about imposing overly rigid boundaries on our investigation at this stage. Restricting the conceptualization of research may hinder the discovery of unexpected phenomena within the data (Konecki, 2019).

In the analysis phase, we systematically extracted excerpts related to well-being and employed a data-driven coding process. For example, an excerpt stating, "strengthen one's well-being in a changing operational environment," in a context describing skillsets for a leadership student, was coded as "Strengthening the leader's well-being." After the initial coding phase, a thorough review was conducted to identify the type of educational institution in question. The codes were categorized to describe both theoretical and practical dimensions across different educational programs. Following this, theoretical and pedagogical orientations towards workplace well-being began to emerge visually. Upon identifying patterns and similarities among the codes, they were proposed as themes and color-coded to distinguish them from other themes. This process represents the progression of the codes toward thematic development.

The analysis resulted in the emergence of thematic categories, such as "Workplace Well-being Leadership Through Cultural Development". Under this theme, several code clusters were identified. These included developing organizational culture through leadership, leading a thriving work community and workplace development, and leading workplace development. Other identified clusters emphasized a leadership approach that allows for failures and experimentation, fostering trust and safety, developing company culture through personnel management, and enhancing personnel skills through targeted leadership. The importance of people's well-being in organizational performance was also highlighted, along with leading workplace change, renewing and human-centered leadership within social and health care contexts, and coaching leadership as a path to community well-being. These codes reflect the diverse approaches to fostering workplace well-being by cultivating organizational culture through leadership. An example image of code formation and the visual map is provided in Appendix 2.

To address the second research question, we assessed whether perspectives on employee well-being are framed as intrinsic or instrumental values within the academic curricula. This analysis was grounded in the intrinsic versus instrumental value framework (Lehtonen, 2009). We scrutinized the course descriptions from JYEATs, YAMKs, and other university leadership education to discern whether they present employee well-being as an end or as a means to achieve other objectives, such as enhancing productivity.

In the reporting phase, we documented our findings in writing and visualized them (Elo et al., 2022). We compared our results with existing research to assess how they align with or differ from previous studies. Emphasizing a reflexive approach, we noted that the researchers' perspectives shaped interpretations, recognizing that others might interpret the data differently. To enhance consistency, we held team discussions in order to reach a consensus on the findings. Although only one researcher was directly responsible for coding, researcher triangulation was practiced through discussions of the codes. The team collaboratively resolved which categories each code should be assigned to, ensuring a more comprehensive and consistent approach to data analysis.

Findings/Results

The results section will initially examine the perspectives of work well-being through common themes and then by different types of leadership training programs, including YAMK degrees, leadership training degrees from other universities, and professional JYEAT degrees. Finally, we will analyze the values that the descriptions of these various leadership training programs reflect.

The common themes of work well-being in leadership training based on the course descriptions

The leadership training incorporates work well-being through a combination of direct approaches, such as managing work well-being and promoting health, alongside strategic perspectives, including the integration of well-being into organizational strategy and leadership development. The emphasis on these themes varies between the programs, reflecting different approaches to the importance of work well-being in leadership contexts. Work well-being is incorporated into leadership training through various themes across different educational programs. However, the language used to describe it often remains broad and generalized, exemplified by statements like, "The student understands the importance of people and well-being in the operations of companies and organizations." While well-being is recognized as a key component, its treatment frequently lacks depth and specific detail.

Work well-being is approached differently across the various Finnish leadership education institutions. The YAMK programs integrate work well-being into leadership training, emphasizing the strategic importance of work well-being by linking it to organizational development, productivity, and employer branding. This is exemplified in a course titled "Development and Leadership in the Social and Healthcare Sector," that stated: "The student is able to analyze the aspects of strategic human resource management and its significance for the successful operation of the organization, as well as for the well-being of the work community."

In the YAMK programs, there is a strong emphasis on strain and resource management in leading work well-being. Managing psychosocial functioning and resources within the work community highlights the importance of understanding both the mental and social dimensions of employee well-being, ensuring that leaders address these aspects in their management practices. The focus on processes that maintain and repair well-being suggests that leaders mostly learn to implement reactive strategies to support employee health and address any issues that arise: "You are able to guide employees, as a supervisor, in monitoring and evaluating their own well-being at work. You are familiar with processes that support and restore workplace well-being." Leading through challenging situations and resource management emphasizes the need for leaders to effectively navigate difficulties, utilizing available resources to support employees in times of stress.

The YAMK programs are closely aligned with the challenges of specific industries, for example the module "Well-being at work in first aid: You know how to perceive the multidimensionality of well-being at work and apply information to the first aid environment; You deepen your competence in managing well-being at work both in theory and in connection with the practical working life of the field of first aid; You recognize the different well-being needs of the personnel and perceive the utilization and role of stakeholders, such as occupational health care, in promoting well-being at work." YAMK also provides practical tools for developing work well-being; students learn how different factors are influencing work well-being. For example, at one YAMK, on the "Leadership of Work Well-being" course "The student analyzes factors affecting work well-being ... utilizes evidence-based knowledge in promoting work well-being and leads processes that enhance it." Similarly, at another YAMK, students learn to develop work well-being at a practical level: "The student knows the factors connected to work well-being and can develop work well-being." Furthermore, the YAMK programs highlight the leader's role in fostering a positive work environment. They stress the importance of strain and resource management, equipping leaders with supportive and empowering strategies for enhancing employee well-being and resilience. Leaders are trained to understand and address both the mental and social dimensions of employee well-being.

In the traditional-university programs, work well-being is treated as a broad topic within the curriculum but is not explored in much depth. This suggests a more generalized understanding of work well-being, without a specific emphasis on practical application or leadership integration. In the "Work Well-Being and Work Ability Management" course, leaders are taught to understand the connection between workplace well-being and productivity. Similarly, the HR eMBA program (20 ECTS) emphasizes that it "provides tools and models for developing and improving workplace well-being within an organization" and highlights that "workplace well-being and competence management are significant competitive advantages." However, it is important to assess how applicable these tools are in different organizational environments.

The JYEAT programs share this focus on leadership but distinctly emphasize the leader's personal role in well-being management. They prioritize leading and developing employee well-being, alongside enhancing operational and leadership skills. The JYEAT programs also connect well-being to key concepts like change management and team development, suggesting a proactive approach to cultivating a healthy and thriving work environment. The presence of a "work well-being card" likely indicates a dedicated certification or module, further formalizing this commitment.

Communication and Dialogue in the Leadership Well-Being Training

The leadership training emphasizes communication and dialogue, with a particular focus on fostering interaction and resolving conflicts. These topics are integrated into the curricula of the various leadership programs in specific ways.

In the YAMK programs, there is a strong focus on the role of dialogue and communication in leadership. Dialogical leadership and work community development are emphasized as crucial skills. Leaders are trained to manage effective communication in the workplace, highlighting a approach to fostering interactions that enhance overall well-being. The programs include modules focused on improving workplace communication and well-being, emphasizing the link between interaction and a healthy work environment. This training promotes dialogical leadership, encouraging open and constructive communication, while also addressing organizational culture, workplace safety, and well-being as essential components of a functional work environment.

In the traditional-university programs, communication is also an emphasized theme. Organizational culture is framed as strengthening social relationships within the workplace. The programs include skills like work-community facilitation, which focuses on fostering collaboration and teamwork. Attention is paid to leading the workplace atmosphere and emotions, emphasizing the emotional aspects of interaction: "Managing the atmosphere of the work community, the staff and one's own emotions rises to a significant position because emotions greatly affect the functioning of our most important tool, the brain." Improving communication in manager–subordinate relationships is seen as critical for effective leadership. For example, on the "Dialogical Leadership" course, students learn to use dialogue as a tool for leadership, but it remains unclear how thoroughly the theories and practices of dialogicality are addressed. Similarly, the goal of the "Interaction in People Management" course is for leaders to be able to assess and develop their interaction skills, but the course description does not specify what types of interaction methods will be taught on the course.

In the JYEAT programs, communication is directly addressed through conflict resolution in the workplace: "Development of operations and leadership, the role of the leader, self-awareness and conflict resolution in the workplace". This highlights the importance of managing interpersonal dynamics in challenging situations.

A Focus on Organizational Culture Development

The leadership training programs focus on developing organizational culture by building adaptable work communities. The YAMK programs emphasize leading diverse, self-directed teams, having future-oriented leadership, and fostering renewal, while the other university programs highlight the leadership of diversity and the JYEAT programs focus on change management.

The YAMK programs particularly promote inclusive, dynamic cultures that encourage innovation, psychological safety, and trust. They highlight the role of HR in shaping company culture and emphasize employee development through competence management, recognizing well-being as essential to organizational success.

In the traditional-university leadership training, work well-being is often examined as part of strategic management and comprehensive organizational culture. Traditional-university offerings tend to reflect a stronger academic or theoretical approach to well-being leadership, focusing on culture rather than interventions. Work well-being is mentioned as part of coaching leadership, with claims that "coaching leadership has been shown to positively impact on both organizational productivity and the well-being experienced by its members." The course descriptions lack specificity in relation to management practices. Additionally, on many courses there may not be a direct reference to work well-being, even though "people management" is acknowledged as part of leadership.

In the traditional-university programs, there is an emphasis on developing a diverse and experimental approach to organizational culture. This includes promoting a culture of innovation and experimentation, which aligns with the broader objectives of effective leadership in adapting to the needs of the organization and its employees. On the "Management of Experimentation Culture – The Experimental Leader" course, a failure-tolerant experimentation culture is emphasized, creating a safe environment where employees dare to try new things and learn from their mistakes. This is a good example of how the traditional universities strive to promote a learning-friendly leadership culture.

The traditional universities appear to be the most future oriented. The offerings of these universities clearly reflect an effort to keep up with new trends in leadership. For example, the goal of the "Leading New Work" course is to identify the key characteristics and changes in working life and workplace cultures. The aim of the "Leadership Today and Tomorrow" course is to "be able to assess the future development trends of leadership and to gain perspectives on the management of diverse work communities." These courses demonstrate these universities' attempts to stay current and equip students with the skills to face future challenges. However, while these universities strive to respond to new leadership trends, it is relevant to consider how deeply these courses address these themes.

Traditional university course offerings emphasize consulting-like approaches to organizational development. For instance, the course Leader as an Agent of Organizational Renewal (5 ECTS) poses the question, "How can a leader influence organizational culture?" and states, "You will learn to strengthen a growth mindset through solution-focused feedback." Courses in personnel management focus on developing corporate culture. The course descriptions emphasize

the role of organizational culture in strengthening social relationships, thereby improving the atmosphere and collaboration within the work community. For instance, one course description states that "organizational culture becomes the glue that binds members together, and you learn how to create a successful organizational culture."

In the JYEAT programs, the goal is leading a healthy work community and fostering its development, with a clear emphasis on the importance of well-being in leadership. This approach suggests a strategic role for leaders in cultivating an environment where continuous growth and improvement are prioritized. For example, in the "Acting as a Leader" qualification component, the student must be able to "lead and develop the employees and employee well-being of the company or area of responsibility." The criteria for a successful performance include, among others, "building an encouraging and motivating work atmosphere."

At the same time, the JYEAT training is strongly focused on organizational goals. In the "Managing the Development of the Work Community" component, the student must be able to "identify the operational culture and practices of the work community and the need for their renewal in accordance with the organization's guidelines." The criteria for a successful performance include, among others, "assessing the renewal needs of the work community and using experts as needed to assist in development" and "communicating the plan openly, actively, and fairly." In the "Managing Employee Competence" component, the student must be able to "lead the personnel of their area of responsibility according to the strategic goals of the company or organization." The criteria for a successful performance include, among others, "promoting employee well-being and supporting change management" and "encouraging staff to perform well in a fair and consistent manner."

Collective and Individual Orientations to Well-Being Management

The YAMK training sends conflicting messages about who is ultimately responsible for managing well-being. In the YAMK training, the roles of workplace actors in building well-being are highlighted, recognizing that promoting well-being is a collective effort involving leaders, employees, and other stakeholders working together to foster a healthy work environment. According to the documents, the importance of stakeholders and their roles in well-being leadership are recognized. On one course, it is mentioned that a leader's role "is to identify different well-being needs and understand the use and role of stakeholders, such as occupational healthcare providers, in promoting workplace well-being". On the course "Leadership of Work Well-Being," which is part of the "Leadership and Development in Social and Healthcare Change" module, it is noted that a leader must use evidence-based knowledge in promoting work well-being.

In the YAMK programs, the importance of a leader's personal well-being is emphasized as an essential part of effective leadership. The well-being of leaders affects not only their individual performance but also the overall well-being of the entire organization. It demonstrates that effective leadership is rooted in the leader's ability to maintain their health and wellness, which directly impacts on their capacity to support and guide their teams. Leaders are encouraged to prioritize their well-being, recognizing that their physical and mental health influences the work environment. By focusing on personal well-being, leaders can model healthy behavior and practices for their employees, fostering a culture where well-being is valued. The connection between personal well-being and effective leadership underscores that leaders who take care of themselves are better equipped to lead others, make informed decisions, and navigate challenges effectively. In the YAMK programs, there is a strong emphasis on leader understanding and guiding employees through their well-being journeys. Leaders are trained to identify different well-being needs, tailoring their approach to suit the diverse requirements present in the workplace. Supervisors are encouraged to guide employees in assessing their own well-being, promoting self-awareness and personal responsibility for maintaining health at work: "You are able to guide employees, as a supervisor, in monitoring and evaluating their own well-being at work.". Acting as a guide and learning supporter is seen as a critical leadership function, where leaders assist employees in developing not only their skills but also their understanding of personal well-being.

In traditional-university programs, the emphasis on guidance and the roles of actors is more general. Specific details about the roles of various actors are less elaborated upon, indicating that while the concept of collaboration exists, it may not be thoroughly explored. In these universities, it is also visible that the leader should focus on personal development and identity work. For example, in a course titled "The Identity of a Leader," students learn "how to facilitate the successful functioning of the work community."

In the JYEAT programs, the focus is on the systematic promotion of well-being through collaboration with various actors. This structured approach engages multiple stakeholders in order to improve workplace well-being effectively. The JYEAT training emphasizes managing and developing employee well-being as part of a manager's daily life. For instance, in the JYEAT program of one institution, the aim is to "lead and develop the employees and employee well-being of the company or area of responsibility […] to promote the employee well-being of the company or area of responsibility systematically in collaboration with staff and other stakeholders […] to promote employee well-being and support change management." In the JYEAT programs, while there is also a focus on leading and developing employee work well-being, the understanding that leaders must first cultivate their own well-being is implicit in the overall development of leadership capabilities.

Differences Between the Leadership Training Programs

The YAMK programs prominently feature digitalization and interventions. The leadership programs emphasize managing employee well-being in digital and remote environments, particularly in the social and healthcare sectors: "To promote employees' well-being in social and healthcare digital environments." This training addresses the challenges of sustaining well-being in digital workspaces, including online customer interactions, and focuses on the specific needs of employees engaging with clients through digital platforms: "Managing and Developing Online Client Work in Social and Healthcare Sectors (5 ECTS): This module addresses the leadership and development of digital client work, equipping students with the knowledge and skills required to manage and innovate in digital environments within the social and healthcare fields". Additionally, it highlights work-community psychology and the importance of understanding psychological dynamics in remote teams, ensuring that leadership is responsive to the mental health and well-being of a distributed workforce. These themes illustrate how leadership training is evolving to meet the unique challenges of digital work environments. Leaders are trained to build interventions for organizations that are grounded in research, preparing them to design and implement strategies based on proven methods: "You know how to build an evidence-based, goal-oriented intervention to promote well-being for organizations." The use of research evidence in managing work well-being reflects a commitment to informed decision-making.

While the YAMK programs often focus on practical, organization-specific interventions, other universities tend to offer a more general, research-based approach. Traditional university courses are grounded in the latest theoretical frameworks, aiming to address broader leadership challenges. However, from a critical perspective, it is important to assess how deeply and practically these courses address the presented themes and how well they meet the needs of different organizations.

The JYEAT programs include well-being management, but the course descriptions related to it are more limited and one-dimensional compared with both the YAMK and traditional university training. The JYEAT degree structures are similar across the programs as they are defined by the Finnish National Agency for Education, unlike the programs of the traditional universities and YAMKs, which have more flexibility. The JYEAT degree includes a mandatory section, "Acting as a Leader" (80 credits), and two elective sections: "Managing the Development of the Work Community" (50 credits) and "Managing Employee Competence" (50 credits). These allow students to tailor their studies to their work needs.

In summary, the traditional-university education typically addresses employee well-being from a theoretical and academic perspective, focusing on new trends. However, one university course explicitly mentions the provision of tools. The YAMKs take a more practical, work-life-oriented approach, while the JYEAT programs offer the most direct connection between employee well-being and management practices. The differences in how each type of education handles well-being are outlined in Appendix 3.

The findings illustrate the key focus areas that emerge in the data-driven analysis across the different types of training programs. The YAMK leadership programs and traditional-university leadership programs share several common themes, such as the strategic importance of work well-being and the development of interaction. However, the YAMK programs place a greater emphasis on practical interventions and focus on specific fields, such as the social and health sector, while the other universities approach the subject more theoretically. In the JYEAT programs, concrete tools and strategic planning are emphasized, but the themes are more general and less diverse compared with YAMK and traditional-university programs.

Intrinsic and Instrumental Values Across Leadership Training Programs

When analyzing the role of work well-being development in organizations based on the descriptions of the leadership training programs, we observed differences in values across the educational levels. The treatment of work well-being can be instrumental, intrinsic, or somewhere in between, depending on the emphasis of the training. As an instrumental value, work well-being is specifically a means of achieving economic benefit and productivity.

In the YAMK leadership training, the management of work well-being can manifest as both an intrinsic and instrumental value, depending on the context in which it is addressed. However, work well-being is often primarily seen as an instrumental value within organizational operations. For example, in a certain YAMK's management training, it is viewed as part of HRM, where the development of work well-being is seen as supporting the achievement of organizational goals. This benefits-oriented perspective is further emphasized when promoting work well-being is linked to strengthening the employer's brand and achieving business objectives. In some contexts, work well-being is primarily highlighted for the sake of the individual's health and well-being, where its significance for the individual's health is emphasized before productivity. In this case, work well-being itself is a goal and is seen as valuable without a direct connection to economic benefits or productivity.

Traditional-university leadership programs also exhibit both intrinsic and instrumental attitudes toward well-being management. The role of work well-being in these universities varies, but in many cases, it is presented more as an instrumental value than as an intrinsic one. An intrinsic perspective would be exemplified by the course titled "The Importance of Emotions in Brain Function." This refers to the significance of well-being itself, not just as a tool for

achieving other goals. Additionally, in a course on leading organizational culture, there is a discussion on how to change an organizational culture for the sake of trust and safety, meaning that changes are primarily made to improve well-being, not just to increase productivity. These university course offerings have more references to an instrumental attitude towards well-being management. For example, on a certain EMBA program, work well-being is linked to coaching leadership and organizational culture renewal, where it is seen as an important tool for increasing organizational productivity. The treatment of work well-being is emphasized in the context of developing interaction and personnel management, but the focus is on productivity and organizational operations. In other university course modules, such as "Solution-Focused Development Discussions as an Organizational Means to Achieve Goals," it is evident that discussions between employer and employee are primarily conducted to achieve organizational objectives. Similarly, in courses titled "Coaching Leadership as a Path to Organizational Productivity," "Managing Work Well-Being as a Competitive Advantage," "The Connection Between Work Well-Being and Productivity," and "Work Well-Being as a Profitable Production Factor," well-being itself is not stated to be important; rather, its significance arises from the fact that well-being is a means to improve productivity and succeed in competition.

In the JYEAT qualifications from vocational institutions, we examined the mandatory module "Acting as a Leader" (80 credits). An intrinsic attitude is emphasized here when work well-being is seen as valuable and as a central component of employee well-being and workplace atmosphere. For example, the goals "to build an encouraging and motivating work atmosphere" and "to promote the company's or area's work well-being systematically, together with personnel and other actors" reflect an intrinsic perspective as they emphasize work well-being as an important factor in the functioning of the work community. In the JYEAT programs, work well-being is most often viewed as instrumental, but its significance is also highlighted as an intrinsic value supporting employee well-being. In the descriptions of the JYEAT programs, goals related to work well-being are often presented as part of the company's sustainable management and as providing support for employees' long-term work capacity, which partly indicates an intrinsic perspective, but the practical benefit aspect remains central. An instrumental attitude manifests when work well-being is primarily managed as a tool for achieving strategic goals. This is evident, for example, when stating that "personnel and work well-being are managed according to strategic goals" or when work well-being is directly linked to improving operational efficiency and profitability. In this case, work well-being is seen to enhance organizational performance and achieve business objectives.

In summary, it can be stated that work well-being serves as a tool for achieving organizational goals in the YAMK programs; in the traditional-university programs, productivity is often emphasized; and in the JYEAT programs, work well-being holds some intrinsic significance, although its instrumental role is simultaneously evident. The key differences between the types of training are presented in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1. Intrinsic and Instrumental Perspectives on Workplace Well-Being in Leadership Training Programs

Leadership training provider	The Intrinsic Approach	The Instrumental Approach
YAMK	Workplace well-being is valued for individual health and wellness, emphasizing its importance for personal health over productivity.	Workplace well-being is treated as a tool with which to enhance organizational productivity, employer branding, or other business goals (e.g., promoting well-being in order to improve the employer's brand).
Traditional University	The course on the importance of emotions in brain function emphasizes well-being for its own sake. Organizational culture is also changed for trust and safety.	Solution-focused development discussions, coaching leadership as a path to productivity, and managing well-being as a competitive advantage all reflect the view that well-being is an essential tool for enhancing productivity.
JYEAT Provider	The ideas that workplace well-being "builds an encouraging and motivating work atmosphere" and "systematically promotes well-being" highlight well-being for its own sake.	Well-being is managed according to strategic goals, where it is seen as a tool for enhancing organizational performance and profitability.

The findings reveal critical distinctions between YAMK, traditional university, and JYEAT programs, which necessitate contextual interpretation to enhance their applicability. For instance, the emphasis on practical, workplace-specific interventions in YAMK programs highlights the need for curricula tailored to professional contexts, whereas traditional university programs, with their focus on theoretical frameworks, may better serve students aiming for academic or policy-oriented careers. The JYEAT programs, by contrast, could enhance their impact by integrating more holistic approaches to well-being, moving beyond instrumental perspectives. These findings underscore the importance of aligning educational interventions with the specific needs and goals of diverse student groups, thereby contributing to the development of more effective leadership training programs.

Discussion

Our results demonstrate that the traditional-university education addressed employee well-being from a theoretical, trend-focused perspective, while the YAMKs emphasized practical, work-life-oriented approaches. The JYEAT programs offered the most direct link between well-being and management practices. Our findings emphasize the need for leadership that balances individual and collective concerns. Leaders must be adept at addressing the needs of both individual employees and the work community. The course content places a strong emphasis on dialogical methods and including stakeholders, which is a positive approach; however, the level of ambition could be further elevated by promoting a deeper culture of collaboration and shared responsibility.

Through education, leaders can become more aware of the significance of well-being and acquire the tools necessary for its management. However, it is crucial that leadership training extends beyond theoretical frameworks and includes practical, actionable methods and tools for enhancing work well-being. The course descriptions mention more human-centered leadership approaches, such as servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), but there is a suspicion that this may merely indicate following "management fads" without substantial grounding. Our results raise the question of whether the increasing presence of consultant-style language in university programs is one indication of such superficiality. We need deeper teaching on the values of well-being in leadership education. Well-being interventions are discussed in leadership programs, but it is possible that this reflects the therapeutic turn in education, where interventions and training aim to fix the structural issues of well-being (Brunila, 2012; Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015).

Themes related to work well-being are evident in the course offerings of the types of education we compared. On one hand, work well-being is seen as a guarantor of people's welfare and part of responsible leadership; on the other hand, it is viewed to improve organizational productivity and efficiency. The descriptions of degree requirements and course materials may not accurately reflect the reality of leadership education. Providers often emphasize the strategic relevance of management studies to working life and highlight the link between paid programs, like JYEAT and EMBA programs, and increased productivity. Perhaps the message to organizations is that purchasing these programs will boost productivity and competitiveness. This dual role reveals a conflict where economic and human interests intersect, leading to the question of whether promoting work well-being is ethically driven or financially motivated. On the other hand, one could argue that an instrumental approach is still better than completely neglecting work well-being.

The emphasis on the leader's personal well-being and, on the other hand, the solitary role of the leader should raise concerns, as it may support the myth of the heroic leader (Juuti, 2021b). The term *heroic leader* describes a leadership style that embodies the traditional, individual-centered leadership model. The heroic leader is often seen as a savior or pivotal figure who alone takes responsibility for the organization's success or problem-solving. Leadership models such as Charismatic Leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), Transformational Leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994), Authentic Leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and Resonant Leadership (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005) align with this perspective by prioritizing the leader's vision, influence, and well-being as central to organizational success. While these approaches can inspire and motivate, they risk fostering dependency, unrealistic expectations, and overshadowing collective efforts. When leadership students are trained to emphasize self-leadership and personal development—as our findings also show—it is understandable that a culture of self-leadership prevails in many organizations. In such an environment, employees are expected to take responsibility for their own work and well-being, as the leadership model emphasizes the individual's ability to manage and develop themselves (Inam et al., 2023; Kummelstedt, 2023; Tsai, 2011). This leads to superficial leadership, where organizational support, collective goals, and collaboration among employees are sidelined, with the focus being on individual performance (Shiferaw et al., 2023; Tsai, 2011) In contrast, Distributed Leadership (Spillane, 2005) could challenge this narrative by promoting shared responsibility and prioritizing employee needs over leader-centric approaches.

Achieving the societal and economic objectives of leadership training requires balancing the instrumental and intrinsic values of work well-being management. In Sitra's (the Finnish Innovation Fund) memorandum written by Ranki et al. (2021), an intrinsic and instrumental approach to adult learning has been compared across the Nordic countries. In the Nordic countries, lifelong learning is generally viewed as having instrumental value, which aligns with the findings of our more focused Finnish leadership education research. In Finland, lifelong learning is recognized as having instrumental value but not as an independent objective with intrinsic value. This approach is similar in Sweden and Denmark, where legislation acknowledges aspects of lifelong learning but does not treat it as a distinct phenomenon. In contrast, Iceland and Norway offer stronger legislative support for lifelong learning (Ranki et al., 2021). Our study demonstrates that Finnish leadership training course descriptions often link well-being to organizational performance, with less emphasis on the inherent value of employee well-being. This trend is consistent across the different educational levels analyzed—including YAMKs, traditional universities, and JYEAT programs—though to varying degrees. In executive education, particularly EMBA programs, the focus is on strategy and finance, with people management often treated as a byproduct, as noted in Sini Juuti's dissertation (Juuti, 2021a).

Our study highlights that work well-being in leadership training is understood both as an intrinsic value and as an instrumental value. This duality is critical as it reflects the broad recognition of the importance of work well-being while simultaneously linking it to organizational economic objectives. This raises ethical and practical challenges for leaders,

who must balance the well-being of employees with the pressures of productivity and profitability. The findings on well-being values in leadership education align with previous research (Painter-Morland, 2015a, 2015b; Painter-Morland et al., 2016). As Giacalone and Thompson (2006) argued, the organizational worldview, which justifies focusing on economic goals to enable well-being, should be questioned. Materialism, driven by desires for power and financial gain, leads to negative outcomes, such as lower well-being, poorer relationships, and less community contribution. A shift from an organization-centered worldview to a human-centered worldview in business education promotes societal well-being, sustainability, and ethical decision-making, resulting in better outcomes like improved relationships and overall health (Giacalone & Thompson, 2006).

A holistic approach blends intrinsic values with practical strategies, addressing physical, psychological, and social dimensions of well-being. For example, Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971) and empowering leadership (Zhang & Bartol, 2010) emphasize the importance of providing employees with both autonomy and clear guidance, while LMX theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) highlights the critical role of supportive relationships in fostering well-being. Additionally, mindfulness practices (Reb et al., 2014) offer tools for stress management that align with these broader frameworks. Through the integration of diverse theoretical and pedagogical frameworks, leadership education programs can develop leaders equipped to prioritize well-being authentically while understanding its organizational significance. Such a perspective not only aligns with ethical leadership practices but also provides a robust basis for analyzing and advancing leadership education curricula.

The findings have practical implications for curriculum development. In the educational context, integrating real-world case studies, simulations, and experiential learning activities across all program types is needed to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Additionally, the inclusion of modules on managing well-being in digital and remote work environments would address the challenges posed by an increasingly digitalized workplace. The findings advocate for collaborative interventions targeting organizational culture. Based on our analysis, it appears that there are already enough exercises focused on self-awareness and self-leadership. For example, leadership training programs could focus on equipping participants with skills aligned with developmental work interventions, such as fostering effective communication, facilitating conflict resolution with collaborative tools, and designing proactive strategies for leading and promoting well-being within organizational settings. These practical applications ensure that the research findings contribute not only to theoretical knowledge but also to actionable strategies for enhancing workplace well-being and leadership quality.

Conclusion

While the growing focus on well-being themes in leadership training is encouraging, it is essential to critically evaluate how these themes are integrated and the values they promote. This research highlights a troubling trend: Well-being is frequently viewed as a means to achieve external goals, such as increased productivity or improved employer branding, rather than being valued for its intrinsic worth. This instrumental approach risks diluting the genuine value of well-being and may lead to superficial management practices. We argue that leadership education should approach work well-being more broadly as part of responsible and sustainable leadership, where economic and human goals are mutually supportive, as previous research also demonstrates (Giacalone & Thompson, 2006; Painter-Morland, 2015a, 2015b; Painter-Morland et al., 2016).

The increasing emphasis on well-being in leadership training prompts important inquiries into the essence of leadership and the values of education. Future research should explore the tension between economic objectives and human well-being by examining how the incorporation of well-being themes influences graduates' values, decision-making, and the practical tools they employ to foster well-being in the workplace. Moreover, future research should evaluate the long-term effects of leadership training on graduates' values and decision-making.

Despite the emphasis on the economic significance of business education, well-being should be prioritized. The lack of ethical instruction has been problematic, necessitating changes to better prepare students for value conflicts. Recommendations include diversifying teaching, collaborating with other disciplines, and integrating ethical values into the curriculum, as suggested by Giacalone and Thompson (2006).

Moreover, leadership training programs should better incorporate perspectives on social sustainability into their curricula. It is crucial to develop the theoretical and methodological frameworks of these programs in order to provide clearer and more practical guidance for leaders facing complex social, societal, and economic challenges. This ensures that leadership extends beyond merely pursuing economic efficiency and supports broader societal goals.

Recommendations

1. Integrating Well-Being and Ethics in Leadership Training: Leadership training programs should embed well-being and ethical decision-making into their curriculum. This involves creating modules that address societal and environmental impacts of leadership choices, supported by case studies and real-world projects. Practical methods such as community engagement initiatives and reflective assessments will ensure students develop the skills to make socially responsible decisions.

2. Advancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Collaboration with experts from diverse scientific fields is essential to create a holistic and impactful curriculum. Joint workshops, interdisciplinary courses, and industry partnerships will provide students with diverse perspectives and tools. Collaborative learning activities, such as leadership simulations and applied projects, will bridge theory with practice.

3. Collaborative Forums for Curriculum Development: Leadership trainer students, teaching staff and researchers can co-create innovative teaching strategies through structured forums. These forums involve identifying challenges, brainstorming solutions, and prototyping new teaching methods. Selected strategies are piloted and refined based on feedback, ensuring continuous improvement in teaching well-being leadership.

Limitations

The data provided a somewhat superficial view of the role of work well-being in leadership training, largely due to the nature of the materials used. The documents are likely intended to briefly outline the objectives and content of the programs, lacking depth on the subject. Additionally, course descriptions may reflect the marketing perspectives of educational institutions, making them promotional rather than accurately reflecting actual leadership training content. Even though the descriptions have been crafted to be marketable, they nonetheless reveal what the educators believe will appeal to companies and leaders. Despite these limitations, the data-driven approach was flexible, which allowed for the emergence of themes without preconceived hypotheses. A theory-guided analysis helped deepen the interpretation, ensuring that the findings were well contextualized within existing research.

Ethics Statements

This research is part of a larger study that has received a favorable ethical statement from the Ethics Committee of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. This sub-study does not involve conventional ethical issues, as the research material consists of publicly available listings of training organization permits, documents related to the qualifications, and the components of the qualifications that are publicly available on institutions' websites.

Acknowledgements

Not applicable

Conflict of Interest

Not applicable

Funding

Authorship Contribution Statement

Ryky: Conceptualization, design, analysis, writing. Järvensivu: Concept and design, editing/reviewing, critical revision of manuscript, supervision. Paavola: Concept and design, critical revision of manuscript, supervision.

References

Aas, M., & Törnsén, M. (2016). Nordic studies in education-special issue: Educational leadership in Nordic countries. *Nordic Studies in Education, 36*(2), 81-85. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-5949-2016-02-01

Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*(3), 315-338. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994). Transformational leadership and organizational culture. *International Journal of Public Administration, 17*(3-4), 541-554. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900699408524907

Blomgren, J., & Perhoniemi, R. (2022). *The number of sickness allowance days due to mental health disorders is increasing again.* Tietotarjotin [Kela Info Tray]. https://tinyurl.com/23jsyzxs

Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2005). *Resonant leadership: Renewing yourself and connecting with others through mindfulness, hope, and compassion*. Harvard Business Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589-597. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. (2006). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *17*(6), 595-616. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.004

Brunila, K. (2012). From risk to resilience: The therapeutic ethos in youth education. *Education Inquiry, 3*(3), 451-464. https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v3i3.22046

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership.* Harper & Row. https://tinyurl.com/49duvfk8

Cherniss, C., Goleman, D., Emmerling, R., Cowan, K., & Adler, M. (1998). *Bringing emotional intelligence to the workplace.* Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations. https://bit.ly/4a23niz

Chughtai, A., Byrne, M., & Flood, B. (2015). Linking ethical leadership to employee well-being: The role of trust in supervisor. *Journal of Business Ethics, 128*, 653-663. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2126-7

Cinar, A. B., & Bilodeau, S. (2022). Sustainable workplace mental well being for sustainable SMEs: How? *Sustainability, 14*(9), Article 5290. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14095290

Clifton, J., & Harter, J. (2021). *Wellbeing at work: How to build resilient and thriving teams.* Gallup Press.

Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1987). Toward a behavioral theory of charismatic leadership in organizational settings. *The Academy of Management Review, 12*(4), 637-647. https://doi.org/10.2307/258069

Cvenkel, N. (2020). Workplace well-being: Understanding psychologically 'WELL' employees and the sustainable healthy workplace. In N. Cvenkel (Ed.), *Well-being in the workplace: Governance and sustainability insights to promote workplace health* (pp. 25-62). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3619-9_3

Dooris, M., Farrier, A., & Froggett, L. (2018). Wellbeing: The challenge of 'operationalising' an holistic concept within a reductionist public health programme. *Perspectives in Public Health, 138*(2), 93-99. https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913917711204

Ecclestone, K., & Brunila, K. (2015). Governing emotionally vulnerable subjects and 'therapisation' of social justice. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society, 23*(4), 485-506. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2015.1015152

Elo, S., Kajula, O., Tohmola, A., & Kääriäinen, M. (2022). Laadullisen sisällönanalyysin vaiheet ja eteneminen [The phases and progression of qualitative content analysis]. *Hoitotiede, 34*(4), 215-225. https://journal.fi/hoitotiede/article/view/128987

Eurostat. (2023). *Duration of working life – Statistics.* https://tinyurl.com/2eth3kpp

Finnish National Agency for Education. (2019). *Specialist vocational qualification in leadership and business management.* ePerusteet. Retrieved December 20, 2024, from https://tinyurl.com/2unsnpde

Gayed, A., Milligan-Saville, J. S., Nicholas, J., Bryan, B. T., LaMontagne, A. D., Milner, A., Madan, I., Calvo, R. A., Christensen, H., Mykletun, A., Glozier, N., & Harvey, S. B. (2018). Effectiveness of training workplace managers to understand and support the mental health needs of employees: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 75*(6), 462-470. https://doi.org/10.1136/oemed-2017-104789

Giacalone, R. A., & Thompson, K. R. (2006). Business ethics and social responsibility education: Shifting the worldview. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 5*(3), 266-277. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2006.22697016

Graen, G. B., & Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. *Leadership Quarterly, 6*(2), 219-247. https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(95)90036-5

Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness.* Paulist Press.

Hakanen, J., & Kaltiainen, J. (2024, October 2). *Todennäköinen työuupumus on lisääntynyt* [Likely burnout has increased]. Työterveyslaitos [Finnish Institute of Occupational Health FIOH]. https://tinyurl.com/4ed3m2ec

Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1969). Managing research and development personnel: An application of leadership theory. *Research Management, 12*(5), 331-338. https://doi.org/10.1080/00345334.1969.11755973

House, R. J. (1971). A path goal theory of leader effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 16*(3), 321-339. https://doi.org/10.2307/2391905

Inam, A., Ho, J. A., Sheikh, A. A., Shafqat, M., & Najam, U. (2023). How self-leadership enhances normative commitment and work performance by engaging people at work? *Current Psychology, 42*, 3596-3609. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01697-5

Jarden, R. J., Sandham, M., Siegert, R. J., & Koziol-McLain, J. (2018). Intensive care nurse conceptions of well-being: A prototype analysis. *Nursing in Critical Care, 23*(6), 324-331. https://doi.org/10.1111/nicc.12379

Jia, K., Zhu, T., Zhang, W., Rasool, S. F., Asghar, A., & Chin, T. (2022). The linkage between ethical leadership, well-being, work engagement, and innovative work behavior: The empirical evidence from the higher education sector of China.

International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(9), Article 5414. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19095414

Joyce, A., Moussa, B., Elmes, A., Campbell, P., Suchowerska, R., Buick, F., Barraket, J., & Carey, G. (2022). Organisational structures and processes for health and well-being: Insights from work integration social enterprise. *BMC Public Health, 22*, Article 1624. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13920-4

Juuti, S. (2021a). *Current and future leadership education in Finland* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Jyväskylä]. Jyväskylä University Digital Archive. https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/74074

Juuti, S. (2021b). Johtamispuhetta ja kehittämisdiskursseja suomalaisissa johtamisinstituutioissa: Lähtökohtia johtamisen kehittämisen tutkimiseen [Leadership discourse and development discourses in Finnish leadership institutions: Foundations for researching leadership development]. *Työelämän Tutkimus, 19*(3), 471-478. https://doi.org/10.37455/tt.110803

Kela [The Social Insurance Institution (SII)]. (2024, January 19). *Mielenterveysongelmat veivät jo yli 100 000 suomalaista pitkälle sairauspoissaololle vuonna 2023* [Mental health problems led to over 100,000 Finns taking long sick leaves in 2023]. https://tinyurl.com/mpzafnva

Konecki, K. T. (2019). Creative thinking in qualitative research and analysis. *Qualitative Sociology Review, 15*(3), 6-25. https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.15.3.01

Kummelstedt, C. (2023). The role of hierarchy in realizing collective leadership in a self-managing organization. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 36*, 355-375. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-022-09615-x

Laine, S. (2018). *Occupational well-being in school communities: Action research in Finnish and Estonian schools 2009–2014* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Eastern Finland]. UEF//EREPOSITORY. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-61-2750-7

Lehtonen, T. (2009). Arvot ja arvojohtaminen: Filosofisia huomautuksia [Values and value-based leadership: Philosophical remarks]. *Hallinnon tutkimus, 28*(4), 3-15. https://tinyurl.com/5dzky3fs

Luoma, M., & Viitala, R. (2015). Suomalainen henkilöstöjohtaminen kirjallisuuden valossa [Finnish human resource management in light of the literature]. In J. Kauhanen, S. Leppävuori, L. Malin, & S. Mansukoski (Eds.), *Henkilöstöjohtaminen suomessa 1960-2015 – Ihmisistä on kysymys* (pp.15-41). Aalto University.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2022). *Mental wellbeing at work: NICE guideline [NG212]*. https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng212

Niinihuhta, M., Terkamo-Moisio, A., Kvist, T., & Häggman-Laitila, A. (2022). A comprehensive evaluation of factors affecting nurse leaders' work-related well-being. *Leadership in Health Services, 35*(3), 460-474. https://doi.org/10.1108/LHS-12-2021-0098

Ogbonnaya, C., & Aryee, S. (2021). HRM practices, employee well-being, and organizational performance. In P. Brough, E. Gardiner, & K. Daniels (Eds.), *Handbook on management and employment practices* (pp. 1-23). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24936-6_17-1

Painter-Morland, M. (2015a). A critical analysis of ethics management practices. In A. Pullen, & C. Rhodes (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to ethics, politics and organizations* (pp. 335-351). Routledge.

Painter-Morland, M. (2015b). Philosophical assumptions undermining responsible management education. *Journal of Management Development, 34*(1), 61-75. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-06-2014-0060

Painter-Morland, M., Sabet, E., Molthan-Hill, P., Goworek, H., & de Leeuw, S. (2016). Beyond the curriculum: Integrating sustainability into business schools. *Journal of Business Ethics, 139*, 737-754. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2896-6

Ranki, S., Ryky, P., Santamäki, I., & Smidt, H. (2021). *Lifelong learning governance in the Nordic countries: A comparison. Towards a systemic approach.* Sitra [The Finnish Innovation Fund]. https://tinyurl.com/csz4d4rp

Reb, J., Narayanan, J., & Chaturvedi, S. (2014). Leading mindfully: Two studies on the influence of supervisor trait mindfulness on employee well-being and performance. *Mindfulness, 5*, 36-45. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-012-0144-z

Renee Baptiste, N. (2008). Tightening the link between employee wellbeing at work and performance: A new dimension for HRM. *Management Decision, 46*(2), 284-309. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740810854168

Salo, U.-M. (2015). Simsalabim, sisällönanalyysi ja koodaamisen haasteet [Abracadabra, content analysis and the challenges of coding]. In S. Aaltonen, & R. Högbacka (Eds.), *Umpikujasta oivallukseen: Refleksiivisyys empiirisessä tutkimuksessa* [From deadlock to insight: Reflexivity in empirical research] (pp. 166-190). Tampere University Press. https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-44-9786-5

Schaupp, M., Koli, A., Kurki, A.-L., & Ala-Laurinaho, A. (2013). *Yhteinen muutos: Työhyvinvointia työtä kehittämällä* [Collective change: Enhancing workplace well-being through work development]. Työterveyslaitos [Finnish Institute of Occupational Health].

Seligman, M. (2018). PERMA and the building blocks of well-being. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 13*(4), 333-335. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1437466

Shiferaw, R. M., Birbirsa, Z. A., & Werke, S. Z. (2023). Entrepreneurial leadership, learning organization and organizational culture relationship: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 12,* Article 38. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-023-00305-z

Skakon, J., Nielsen, K., Borg, V., & Guzman, J. (2010). Are leaders' well-being, behaviours and style associated with the affective well-being of their employees? A systematic review of three decades of research. *Work and Stress, 24*(2), 107-139. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2010.495262

Slemp, G. R., Kern, M. L., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2015). Workplace well-being: The role of job crafting and autonomy support. *Psychology of Well-Being, 5*, Article 7. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13612-015-0034-y

Spillane, J. P. (2005). Distributed leadership. *The Educational Forum*, *69*(2), 143-150. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720508984678

Teetzen, F., Klug, K., Steinmetz, H., & Gregersen, S. (2023). Organizational health climate as a precondition for health-oriented leadership: Expanding the link between leadership and employee well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*. Article 1181599. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1181599

Tsai, Y. (2011). Relationship between organizational culture, leadership behavior and job satisfaction. *BMC Health Services Research, 11,* Article 98. https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-11-98

Utriainen, K., Kyngäs, H., & Nikkilä, J. (2011). A theoretical model of ageing hospital nurses' well-being at work. *Journal of Nursing Management, 19*, 1037-1046. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2834.2011.01263.x

Vipunen- Education Statistics Finland. (n.d.). *Opetushallinnon tilastopalvelu* [Educational administration statistics service]. Retrieved December 20, 2024, from https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/

Zhang, X., & Bartol, K. M. (2010). Linking empowering leadership and employee creativity: The influence of psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and creative process engagement. *Academy of Management Journal*, *53*(1), 107-128. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.48037118

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Table A1. A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Theories and their Contribution to Workplace Well-being

Leadership Theory	Key Concepts	How it Addresses Workplace Well-being	Considerations and Limitations
Authentic Leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005)	Self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective	Fosters trust and transparency: Leads with integrity and genuineness, builds trust and psychological safety, encouraging open communication and a supportive workplace.	Authenticity must be paired with competence and strategic thinking; otherwise, it may not address well-being challenges effectively.
Charismatic Leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987)	Visionary influence, emotional connection, inspiring followers through personal charm and vision	Boosts morale: Inspires hope and purpose during uncertainty, fostering motivation and a sense of meaning.	Risks dependency on the leader and burnout from high demands without sufficient practical support.
Distributed Leadership (Spillane, 2005)	Shared responsibility, collaborative practices across the organization	Encourages collaboration: Fosters autonomy and collective ownership, reducing hierarchical stress and promoting team cohesion.	Can create role ambiguity or conflicts if responsibilities are not clearly defined.
Emotional Intelligence (Cherniss et al., 1998)	Self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, motivation	Promotes emotional regulation: Enables leaders to understand and manage emotions, creating a positive and supportive environment, reducing stress and conflict.	Effectiveness depends on leaders' ability and willingness to apply emotional intelligence in practice consistently.
Empowering Leadership (Zhang & Bartol, 2010)	Delegation, participation, resource provision	Enhances autonomy: Builds employee confidence and control over their work, leading to reduced stress and higher satisfaction.	May result in overload or decision-making anxiety if adequate resources and boundaries are not provided.
Ethical Leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006)	Fairness, integrity, ethical decision-making, role modeling	Promotes trust and fairness: Creates a positive culture by emphasizing justice and integrity, reducing stress from perceived workplace inequities.	Success requires consistent behavior from leaders; ethical dilemmas can still create stress.
Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)	High-quality relationships between leaders and followers, based on trust, respect, and mutual obligation	Builds strong connections: Fosters trust and open communication, promotes a sense of value and belonging, leading to reduced stress and improved well-being.	Inequalities in LMX relationships can create perceptions of favoritism, harming team cohesion and overall morale.
Mindfulness (Reb et al., 2014)	Present moment awareness, non-judgmental observation, acceptance	Reduces stress and enhances focus: Provides tools for stress management, improves emotional regulation, enhances focus and productivity, leading to a calmer and more mindful workplace.	Benefits are often individual and may not lead to organizational-level change without broader systemic interventions.

Table A1. Continued

| Leadership Theory	Key Concepts	How it Addresses Workplace Well-being	Considerations and Limitations
Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971)	Clarifying paths to goals, removing obstacles, providing support	Reduces uncertainty: Helps employees navigate challenges and achieve goals with clear guidance and resources, improving confidence and reducing stress.	Effectiveness may diminish in dynamic environments where goals and paths are constantly evolving.
Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2018)	Positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment (PERMA model)	Cultivates a flourishing environment: Focuses on strengths and positive experiences, promotes engagement and meaning in work, fosters positive relationships, leading to increased well-being and job satisfaction.	Works best when integrated with structural changes addressing workload, fairness, and recognition; otherwise, risks being superficial.
Resonant Leadership (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005)	Emotional intelligence, mindfulness, relational resonance	Fosters harmony: Builds emotionally positive environments, reduces workplace stress, and promotes resilience and well-being.	Challenging to sustain resonance over time, especially in high-pressure situations.
Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977)	Empathy, listening, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, building community	Creates a culture of care: Prioritizes employee needs, fosters a sense of belonging and support, promotes personal and professional growth.	Requires genuine adoption and alignment with organizational values; may not suit highly hierarchical or results-driven settings.
Situational Leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969)	Flexibility, adapting leadership style based on readiness and needs of employees	Reduces stress: Tailors support and guidance to match employees' developmental needs, providing the right balance of direction and autonomy.	Requires accurate assessment of employee needs; inconsistent adaptation may lead to confusion or reduced trust.
Transactional Leadership (Burns, 1978)	Performance-based rewards and punishments, clear expectations	Provides structure: Creates predictability and reduces stress through clear expectations and consistent reinforcement.	Focuses on extrinsic motivation, which may neglect deeper well-being needs such as meaning and intrinsic satisfaction.
Transformational Leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994)	Idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration	Inspires and empowers: Motivates employees through a shared vision, encourages development and innovation, provides individualized support, leading to increased engagement and well-being.	Risks include burnout if leaders set unrealistic expectations or fail to provide adequate support for employees.

Appendix 2:
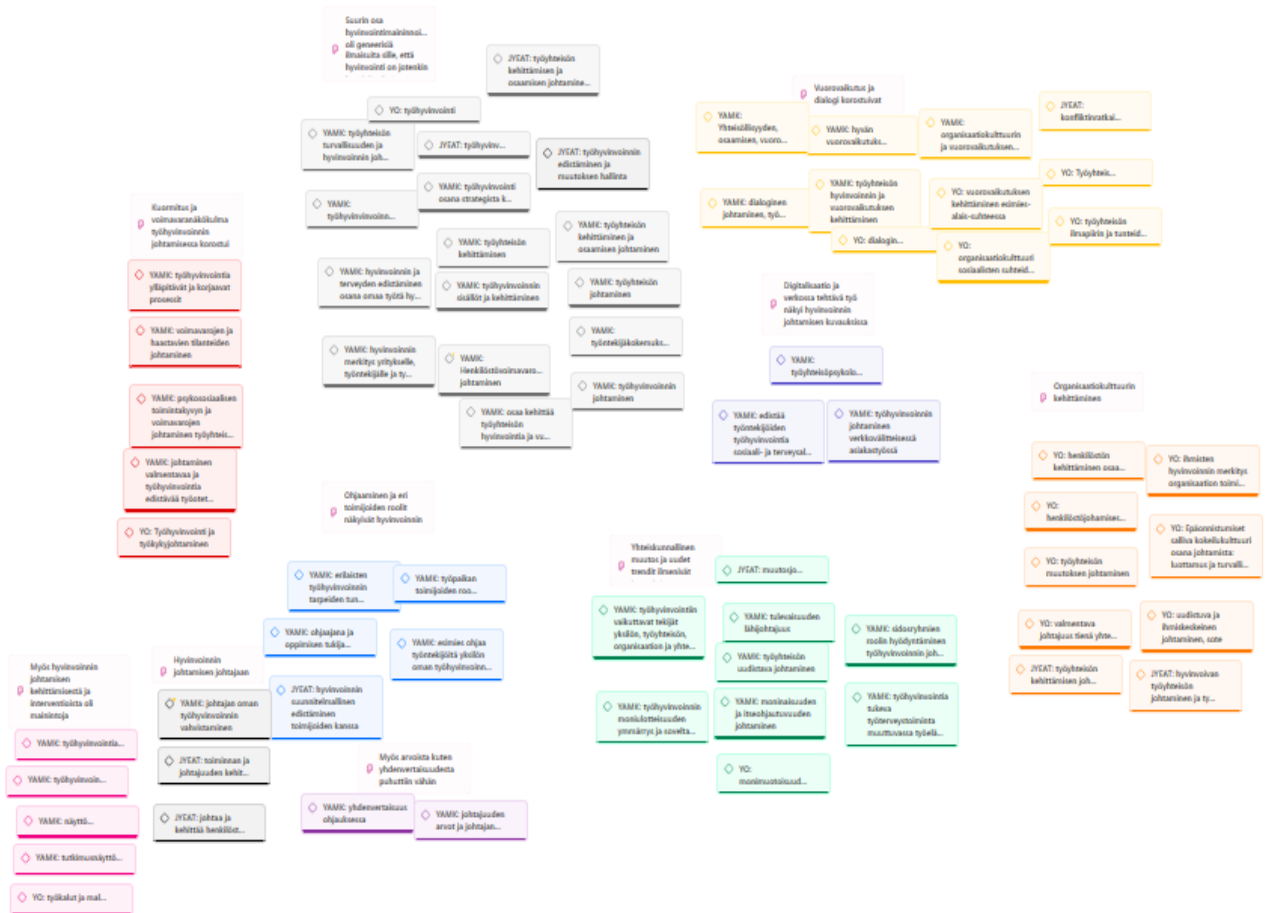
Figure A1. Example of Emerging Themes Based on Codes in Atlas.ti 24 Environment

Appendix 3:

Table A2. Table of the Manifestations of Well-Being Management Based on the Course Descriptions of Different Leadership Training Types

The Themes that Emerged	YAMKs	Traditional Universities	JYEAT programs
Overall Approach	A practical, work-life-oriented approach; comprehensive work well-being integration; a focus on strategic importance, practical tools; field-specific application in social and healthcare sectors	A theoretical and academic perspective; a focus on new trends; the broad treatment of work well-being; an emphasis on tools and models for development	A direct connection between well-being and management practices; the strategic and planned promotion of well-being
Shaping Organizational Culture	An emphasis on interaction and well-being; fosters an inclusive, dynamic work culture; promotes a culture of experimentation; advocates for human-centered leadership	A diverse and experimental approach; promotes innovation, coaches leadership; reinforces social relations	Leading a healthy work community; aligning with organizational goals
Promoting Well-Being Through Shared Action	Identifies stakeholders and roles; guides employees; involves stakeholders in a collective effort; implements evidence-based interventions	Supportive environments with collaboration among stakeholders	The systematic promotion of well-being through collaboration; cooperation with various actors
Prioritizing Leaders' Personal Well-being	The leader's well-being and its impact on workplace well-being are emphasized as essential for effective leadership	A focus on personal development and identity work	A focus on leadership with an emphasis on the leader's personal role in well-being management; acting as a leader; concrete tools (such as a well-being card)
Communication and Dialogue are Key Themes in Leadership Training	Dialogical leadership: communication; connects interaction and well-being; emphasizes organizational culture	Dialogical leadership and interaction skills; a dialogical work community; strengthens social relationships; improves communication; fosters an experimental culture; promotes coaching leadership	Conflict resolution; managing interpersonal dynamics
Differences Between the Leadership Training Programs	A focus on managing well-being in digital and remote environments; emphasizes evidence-based interventions	Less intervention oriented, more culture oriented	There is too little information on this issue to allow for an entry
Workplace Well-Being as Part of Strategic Development	Yes	Yes	Yes
Digitalization and Remote Management	Remote management; a digital work environment	Not mentioned clearly	Not mentioned clearly
Future Directions of Leadership	Partially mentioned, for example a course "Future Leadership"	Yes, management in one's "New Working Life"; future development trends	Not mentioned clearly
A Connection Between Well-Being at Work and Productivity	Yes	Yes	Yes, as part of work community development