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EMPLOYER BRANDING AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING: THE IMPACT OF A WELL- BEING POLICY ON APPLICANT ATTRACTION

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INTRODUCTION

1. War for Talent:

- “The scarcity of skilled talent in the global economy has reached critical levels” (Yu et al., 2022, p. 515)
- Netherlands and Belgium highest labor shortages in EU (European Commission, 2023)
- Attracting and retaining talent a priority for CEOs globally
- > **Importance of employer branding**

CEOs look to drive revenue and profit growth with a focus on retaining quality talent, modifying business models, and accelerating digital transformation

Holding the line on costs is less of a focus

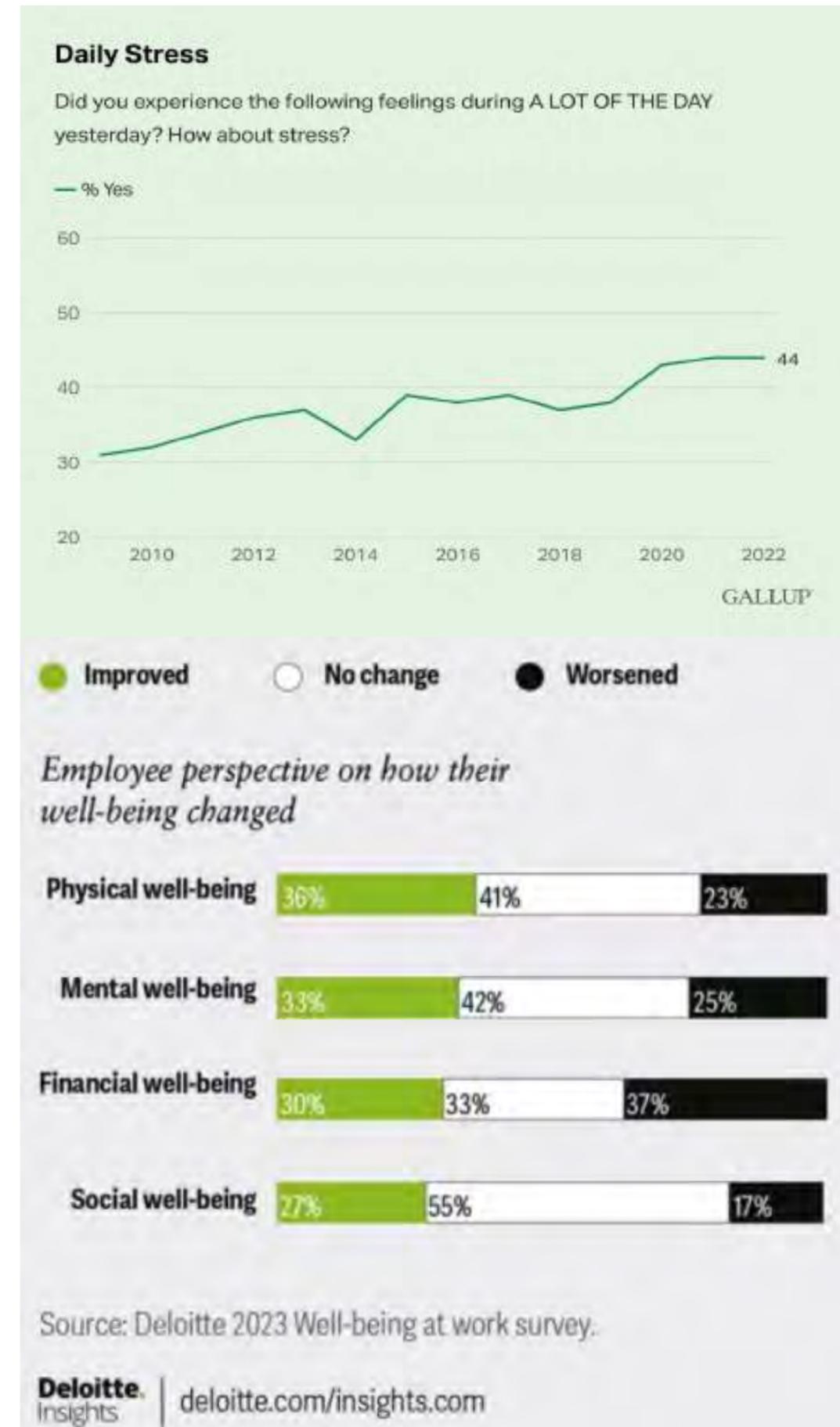
Q: Select the internal factors or issues that your company will focus on in 2023.

Global CEOs		Global C-suite		US CEOs		Europe CEOs		China CEOs		Japan CEOs		Latin America CEOs	
Attract and retain talent	1	Attract and retain talent	1	Drive revenue growth	1	Attract and retain talent	1	Modify business model	1	Attract and retain talent	1	Reduce costs	1
Drive revenue growth	2	Accelerate pace of digital transformation	2	Attract and retain talent	2	Drive revenue growth	2	Reduce costs	2	Develop Next Gen leaders	2	Accelerate pace of digital transformation	2
Modify business model	3	Reduce costs	3	Drive profit growth	3	Accelerate pace of digital transformation	3	Focus more on sustainability	3	Drive profit growth	3	Attract and retain talent	3

INTRODUCTION

2. Importance of well-being at work:

- Daily work stress at a record high (Gallup, 2023)
- Advent of phenomena like the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting (Serenko et al., 2022)
 - Employees cite reasons such as work-life conflict and impaired physical and mental health



INTRODUCTION

3. Expectations of potential applic

WORKERS VALUE EMPLOYER SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

% OF WORKERS WHO BELIEVE THEIR EMPLOYER IS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT EMPLOYEES' MENTAL HEALTH THAN THEY WERE IN THE PAST:

71% agree

71%



% OF WORKERS WHO AGREE THAT HOW EMPLOYERS SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH WILL BE AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION FOR THEM WHEN THEY LOOK FOR FUTURE WORK:

81% agree, including 30% who strongly agree

81%



30%
who strongly agree

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46%

of people say their expectation around happiness at work has increased in just the last year.

86%

of people say that how they feel at work impacts how they feel at home.



Stress

is leading to turnover. After pay considerations, stress, lack of satisfaction, and happiness are the leading reasons people look for new opportunities.



Source: Indeed & Glassdoor

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) What is the effect of communicating a well-being policy on applicant attraction?
- 2) Which mechanisms underlie this effect?
- 3) Which kind of well-being policies are considered (more) attractive?
- 4) Who considers well-being policies (more) attractive?

1) EFFECT OF COMMUNICATING A WELL-BEING POLICY

Signalling theory (Spence, 1973):

- Assumption: Information asymmetry
 - Potential applicants have limited information of how it would be to work for an organization
- > Potential applicants use a well-being policy as a signal



2) MECHANISMS

Potential applicants derive inferences from signals (Highhouse et al., 2007)

→ **Employer brand personality** (Slaughter et al., 2010)

1. **Organizational warmth** (Fiske et al., 2007)

- Perceived organizational intent
- Friendly, helpful and sincere

2. **Organizational competence** (Fiske et al., 2007)

- Perceived organizational ability
- Intelligent, skillful and effective



-> Perceptions of organizational warmth and competence explain potential applicants' attraction towards an organization (Carpentier et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2021)

3) DIFFERENT WELL-BEING POLICIES

Well-being policies can focus on different dimensions

1. Prevention vs. promotion policies (Kozusznik et al., 2023)

- a) Prevention:** Protecting well-being, preventing negative experiences
- b) Promotion:** Enhancing well-being, promoting positive experiences

“[Our mental health program] offers tools and resources (...) to reduce the risk of stress and burnout and to eliminate the stigma relating to mental health” – Shell

“programs to encourage physical activity, healthy eating, and good mental health” – Nestlé

3) DIFFERENT WELL-BEING POLICIES

2. Individual-level vs. organizational-level policies (Sonnentag et al., 2023)

a) **Individual-level:** Addressing individual behavior and needs – employees develop skills and strategies to manage *their own* well-being

“We believe in the importance of empowering colleagues to take control of all aspects of well-being – emotional, physical, and financial” – Thermo Fisher Scientific

b) **Organizational-level:** Addressing workplace and organizational factors – organizations implement strategies and norms to manage employee well-being

“We play an active role in nurturing an open and inclusive culture, enabled by our leaders, by providing progressive policies and supporting tools” – Diageo

4) MODERATING VARIABLES

Person-organization fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023)

1. Complementary fit

– Meeting needs, preferences, and desires

-> **Neuroticism**



2. Supplementary fit

– Congruence between own values, characteristics, and traits and those of the organization

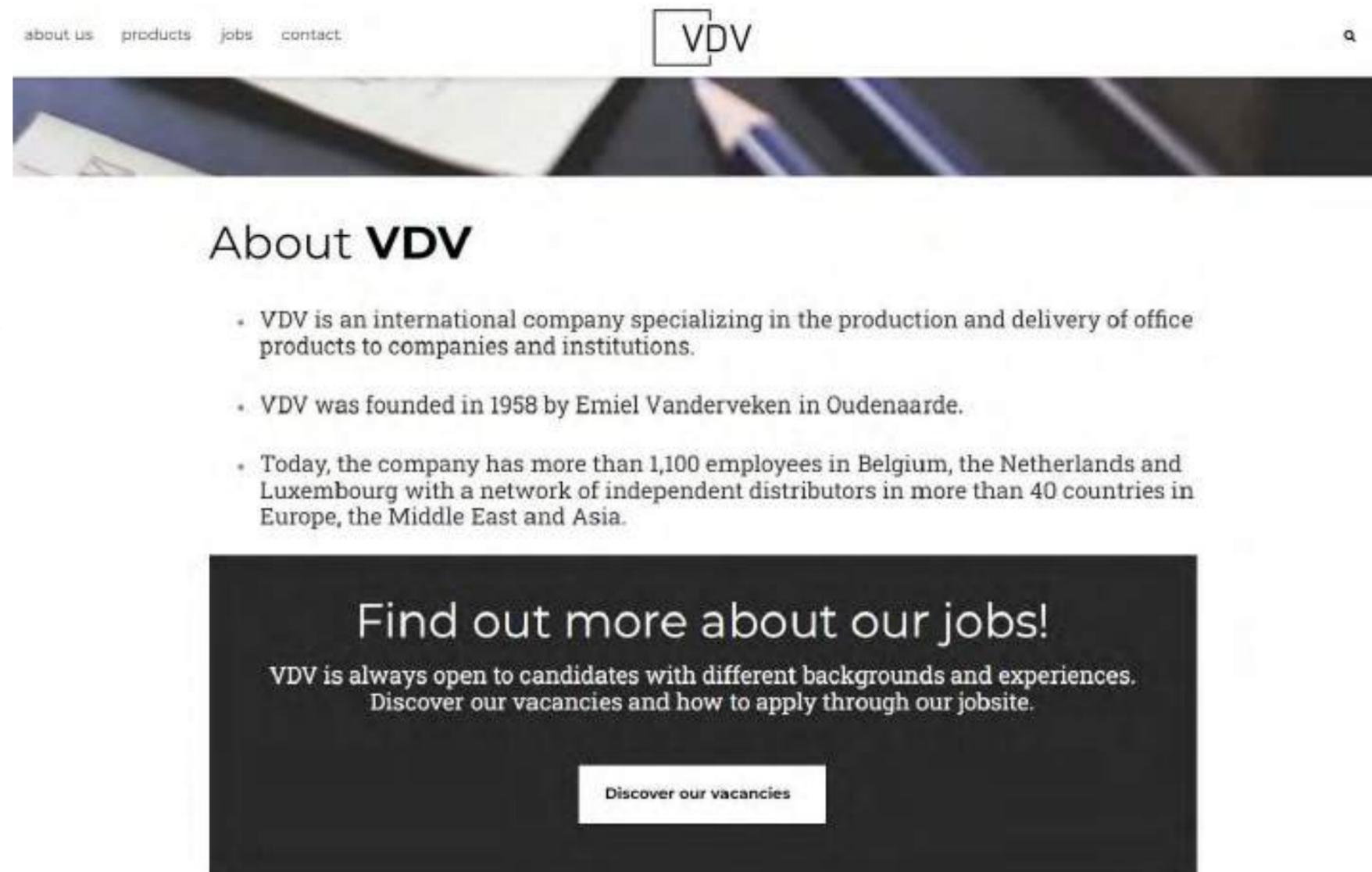
-> **Conscientiousness**



METHOD

1. Design

- 2x2 between-subjects experimental design
 - Prevention or promotion
 - Individual-level or organizational-level
 - + control group
- Website of an organization named VDV
- Pretest
 - Last year or recently graduated MBA students
 - $N = 47$, average age = 22 years, $SD = 1.13$, 61.7% female



METHOD

Prevention (organizational-level) policy

Promotion (organizational-level) policy



Our well-being policy

At VDV, we find it important to **protect** the well-being of employees. As an organization, we therefore try to **prevent** our employees from **feeling bad or dissatisfied**. For example, we strive to avoid an imbalance or **conflicts between work and private life** as much as possible, and our jobs are designed in a flexible manner.

We also count on our managers to provide support to employees and to help them combat fatigue and reduce stress. In this way, we ensure a company culture that focuses on protecting the well-being of the employees, and where there is also room to escape from the hustle and stress for a while. That is how we make sure that the work does not overwhelm or discourage you.

Specifically, we enable flexible working arrangements such as flextime and hybrid home and office work, and we avoid requiring employees to be constantly available. Thanks to these measures, we prevent our employees' well-being from deteriorating.

Our well-being policy

At VDV, we find it important to **optimize** the well-being of the employees. As an organization, we therefore try to ensure that our employees **feel good and satisfied**. For example, we strive to **create a comfortable balance between work and private life**, and our jobs are designed in a flexible manner.

We also count on our managers to take the needs of employees into account and to offer them support to promote their energy and improve their resilience. In this way, we ensure a pleasant company culture that focuses on improving the well-being of the employees, and where there is also room for relaxation and enjoyable moments. That is how we make work manageable and satisfying for you.

Specifically, we enable flexible working arrangements such as flextime and hybrid home and office work, and we make sure that employees do not have to be constantly available. Thanks to these measures, we actively promote the well-being of our employees.

METHOD

Individual-level (prevention) policy



Our well-being policy

At VDV, we find it important that employees can protect their well-being. Therefore, we try to encourage our employees to adapt their behavior and develop the necessary skills to prevent feeling bad or dissatisfied. For example, it is important that **you learn to avoid** an imbalance or conflicts between work and private life as much as possible.

To combat fatigue and reduce stress, **you also learn to design your job** in a flexible way yourself. In doing so, **you focus** on protecting your own well-being to prevent being overwhelmed or discouraged by work. That is how you make it possible to take time for yourself and to escape from the hustle and stress for a while.

Specifically, with us you have the choice, among other things, to follow individual coaching, training courses, and workshops on topics such as stress management and how to stop worrying. In this way, you learn how you can prevent your well-being from deteriorating.

Organizational-level (prevention) policy



Our well-being policy

At VDV, we find it important to protect the well-being of employees. As an organization, we therefore try to prevent our employees from feeling bad or dissatisfied. For example, **we strive to avoid** an imbalance or conflicts between work and private life as much as possible, and **our jobs are designed** in a flexible manner.

We also count on our managers to provide support to employees and to help them combat fatigue and reduce stress. In this way, we ensure a **company culture that focuses** on protecting the well-being of the employees, and where there is also **room to escape** from the hustle and stress for a while. That is how we make sure that the work does not overwhelm or discourage you.

Specifically, we enable flexible working arrangements such as flextime and hybrid home and office work, and we avoid requiring employees to be constantly available. Thanks to these measures, we prevent our employees' well-being from deteriorating.

METHOD

2. Participants

- 368 Belgian employed potential applicants
- Online questionnaires
- Average age = 42 years, $SD = 12.36$
- Average work experience = 19.5 years, $SD = 12.50$
- 55% female
- 82% working on full-time



3. Measures

Construct	Items	Scale	Reference	α	Example item
Organizational attractiveness	5 items	7-point Likert	Hughes et al. (2003)	.93	"A job at this organization is very appealing to me."
Application intentions	4 items	7-point Likert	Hughes et al. (2003)	.91	"I would make this organization one of my first choices as an employer."
Organizational warmth	4 items	7-point Likert	Wang et al. (2017)	.94	"I perceive this organization as friendly."
Organizational competence	4 items	7-point Likert	Wang et al. (2017)	.94	"I perceive this organization as capable."
Neuroticism	10 items	5-point Likert	Goldberg (1999)	.90	"I have frequent mood swings."
Conscientiousness	10 items	5-point Likert	Goldberg (1999)	.86	"I am always prepared."

- Control variables
 - Gender
 - Work experience
 - Job satisfaction ($\alpha = .83$, Judge et al., 1998)
 - Having children
- Post-experimental open questions

RESULTS

Variable	Control (<i>N</i> =61)	Prevention		Promotion	
		Individual-level (<i>N</i> =81)	Organizational- level (<i>N</i> =69)	Individual-level (<i>N</i> =78)	Organizational- level (<i>N</i> =79)
Organizational attractiveness	3.95 (1.28)	4.54 (1.28)	4.80 (1.30)	4.67 (1.20)	4.87 (1.18)
Application intentions	3.68 (1.28)	4.18 (1.22)	4.38 (1.14)	4.14 (1.10)	4.48 (1.13)
Organizational warmth	4.05 (1.05)	4.34 (1.24)	5.23 (0.94)	4.96 (1.08)	5.01 (1.04)
Organizational competence	4.65 (1.02)	4.60 (0.99)	5.09 (0.85)	4.88 (0.95)	4.88 (0.92)

Note. *N* = 368. Results expressed as mean (standard deviation).

RESULTS

Mediation (indirect) effects		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95%CI</i>	Supported?
1					
a	Well-being policy → Organizational warmth → Organizational attractiveness	0.40	0.09	[0.24, 0.58]	Yes
b	Well-being policy → Organizational warmth → Application intentions	0.31	0.08	[0.17, 0.47]	Yes
2					
a	Well-being policy → Organizational competence → Organizational attractiveness	0.05	0.04	[-0.01, 0.13]	Nb
b	Well-being policy → Organizational competence → Application intentions	0.06	0.05	[-0.02, 0.17]	Nb
3					
a	Prevention-promotion → Organizational warmth → Organizational attractiveness	0.11	0.07	[-0.02, 0.25]	Nb
b	Prevention-promotion → Organizational warmth → Application intentions	0.09	0.06	[-0.01, 0.21]	Nb
4					
a	Individual-organizational → Organizational competence → Organizational attractiveness	0.07	0.04	[0.01, 0.15]	Yes
b	Individual-organizational → Organizational competence → Application intentions	0.07	0.04	[0.01, 0.16]	Yes

RESULTS

Moderation effects		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95%CI</i>	<i>p</i>	Supported?
1						
	a Well-being policy*Neuroticism→Organizational attractiveness	0.10	0.25	[-0.40, 0.59]	0.70	Nb
	b Well-being policy*Neuroticism→Application intentions	0.24	0.24	[-0.22, 0.70]	0.31	Nb
2						
	a Prevention-promotion*Neuroticism→Organizational attractiveness	-0.21	0.22	[-0.63; 0.22]	0.34	Nb
	b Prevention-promotion*Neuroticism→Application intentions	-0.13	0.20	[-0.52; 0.27]	0.52	Nb
3						
	a Well-being policy*Conscientiousness→Organizational attractiveness	-0.15	0.32	[-0.77; 0.47]	0.64	Nb
	b Well-being policy*Conscientiousness→Application intentions	-0.16	0.30	[-0.74; 0.43]	0.60	Nb
4						
	a Individual-organizational*Conscientiousness→Organizational attractiveness	-0.10	0.27	[-0.63; 0.43]	0.71	Nb
	b Individual-organizational*Conscientiousness→Application intentions	-0.08	0.25	[-0.56; 0.41]	0.76	Nb

DISCUSSION

Theoretical contributions and recap of results

- In line with signaling theory -> a well-being policy acts as a signal, improving potential applicants' attraction to the organization
- Potential applicants draw inferences of employer brand personality from a well-being policy
 - Primacy of organizational warmth
- Organizational-level policies lead to higher application intentions compared to individual-level policies
 - Mediated by both organizational warmth and competence
- No support for either moderating role of applicant personality from person organization fit theory

DISCUSSION

Limitations

1. Potential applicants may evaluate a well-being policy differently in a real-life situation
2. No combination of prevention-promotion or individual-organizational policies
3. Solely Belgian employed potential applicants -> generalizability
 - a) Other groups of potential applicants
 - b) Different cultures

FOLLOW-UP STUDY

Addresses two limitations:

1. Well-being in comparison to other factors (e.g., salary)?
 - Between-subjects experimental design
 - Average or above average salary
 - No well-being policy or well-being policy
2. More information always better? (e.g., Baum & Kabst, 2014)
 - ➔ Neutral information

• You just mentioned about wanting play less games, so are you willing to hand in 10% of your salary as well then?

Van Dijk: "No."

• And for the better of your health?

Van Dijk: "Then yes."



DISCUSSION

Practical implications

- Underlines the value of investing into an attractive well-being policy
 - Benefits to employee well-being, individual, and organizational performance (e.g., Guest et al., 2017)
 - Applicant attraction

Future research

- Credibility and authenticity of a well-being policy
- Employer branding and well-being?

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CORRELATION TABLE

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Gender	0.55	0.50												
2 Work experience	19.54	12.50	-0.14**											
3 Children	0.50	0.50	0.07	0.32***										
4 Job satisfaction	5.57	0.97	0.09	0.10	0.14**									
5 Well-being policy	0.83	0.37	0.01	0.03	-0.02	0.03								
6 Prevention-promotion	0.51	0.50	0.07	-0.09	0.02	0.03	/							
7 Individual-organizational	0.48	0.50	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.06	/	0.04						
8 Neuroticism	2.39	0.67	0.01	-0.21***	-0.14**	-0.34***	0.02	0.04	0.04					
9 Conscientiousness	3.88	0.54	0.24***	0.23***	0.18***	0.34***	-0.02	0.05	-0.05	-0.34***				
10 Organizational warmth	4.73	1.16	0.10	0.00	0.02	0.14**	0.26***	0.10	0.21***	0.00	0.12*			
11 Organizational competence	4.82	0.96	0.06	-0.10*	-0.02	0.09	0.08	0.03	0.13*	0.00	0.08	0.61***		
12 Organizational attractiveness	4.59	1.28	0.05	0.11*	0.04	0.05	0.22***	0.04	0.10	-0.04	0.12*	0.57***	0.44***	
13 Application intentions	4.19	1.20	0.04	0.16**	0.07	0.03	0.19**	0.02	0.12*	-0.08	0.12*	0.54***	0.46***	0.85***

Note. Coding is 0-1 for gender (male-female), children (no-yes), well-being policy (no-yes), prevention-promotion, and individual-organizational. Variables 8 and 9 were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, variables 4 and 10 to 13 on a 7-point Likert scale.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

PRETEST

Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables across Conditions (Pretest)

Variable	Prevention		Promotion	
	Individual-level	Organizational-level	Individual-level	Organizational-level
Prevention aspects	5.28 (1.25)	5.55 (0.90)	3.89 (1.40)	4.26 (1.55)
Promotion aspects	4.13 (1.24)	4.09 (1.43)	5.19 (1.10)	5.34 (1.01)
Individual-level aspects	5.68 (0.96)	3.47 (1.27)	5.87 (1.04)	3.06 (1.41)
Organizational-level aspects	4.02 (1.31)	5.70 (1.08)	3.79 (1.53)	5.87 (0.65)

Note. $N = 47$. Results expressed as mean (standard deviation).