Psychological well-being physical health and work behaviour

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Overview

- What is psychological wellbeing?
- Research evidence:
  - Psychological wellbeing & health
  - Psychological wellbeing and work performance
- Workplace factors linked to psychological wellbeing
- Developing psychological wellbeing
Psychological well-being (PWB)

• Low stress (NOT low pressure) and...

• The positive emotions that people experience (hedonic) and...

• The extent to which people experience a positive sense of purpose in their work (eudaimonic)
The Wellbeing Continuum

Premature death

Illness  Symptoms  Signs

Neutral point

Wellbeing Maximised

Awareness  Education  Growth

No discernible illness or wellness

Source: John Travis (2004)
Psychological well-being (PWB) & health?

• Evidence?
• Effect size?
• Protective effect of positive PWB?
(ill) Health

- Cardiovascular disease
  Heart attack, stroke, blood pressure, etc...
- Sugar/fat metabolism
  Diabetes, obesity,
- Immune system
  Minor infections ... serious diseases
- Health behaviour
CVD & PWB

• **Evidence**
  Many studies link chronic stress and measures of PWB with CVD (e.g. 11/11 prospective studies predicted CVD; 6/6 predicted disease progression)*
  Effect may be less consistent among women

• **Effect size**
  Some (approx 30%)**may be due to health-related behaviour ... or stable personality factors
  Conservative effect: (risk ratio) = 1.4-1.6***

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*Hemingway & Marmot, 1999; **Chandola et al., (2008; ***Kivinaki et al., 2006)
Sugar/fat metabolism & PWB

• Evidence
Studies link stress and PWB with obesity* and diabetes**
Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies

• Effect size
Fewer estimates than for CVD
Effect size (Odds ratio) = 1.1-1.61* (reduced <0.78> with social support***)
Burn out ... 1.84 increase in risk of diabetes****

*Brunner et al., 2007; **Heraclides et al., 2009; ***Toker et al., 2012; ****Melamed et al., 2006
Immune system & PWB

• **Evidence**
  Stress and PWB linked to suppression of immune system; upper respiratory tract infections; poorer wound healing
  ... but also some auto-immune diseases (excessive immune reactions)

• **Effect size**
  Outcomes measured are very diverse
  Specific illness ... biological markers (e.g. IL6, reduced lymphocyte reactions)
Protective effect of positive PWB

• Positive PWB linked to:
  Lower mortality rates - high vs low PWB (2 SD difference)… increased life span of 4-10 years
• Healthy behaviour … mostly cross-sectional studies
• Better cardiovascular health
  “Taken together, studies … demonstrate that Positive PWB protects against CVD even when controlling for typical CVD risk factors and ill-being.” (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012)
• Immune system, diabetes, etc?
Does good health cause happiness?

- Positive emotions undo ill effects of negative emotions
- Optimism & Positive PWB predict disease
- Psycho-biology supports a causal link from PWB to physical health
Mechanisms

Stress

Hypothalamus reacts and releases biochemicals (specifically CRF)

HPA & Sympathetic Nervous System activated

Longer term consequences, including heart disease, immune system disruption

Shorter term physical reactions: increased BP, pulse rate ...
Stomach distress, headache, musculoskeletal pain, sleep disturbances
Mechanisms
Psychological well-being (PWB) & performance?

• Evidence?

• Types of Performance?
Is psychological wellbeing linked to work performance?

• Measure psychological wellbeing: Standardised (self-report) measures

• Measure performance: Individual performance indicators (e.g. self-report, supervisor assessment, objective performance, etc.)
  Organizational performance indicators (e.g. sickness absence, presenteeism, service user satisfaction, staff retention, recruitment, etc.)
Performance & PWB:

- Individual performance*
  - Overall performance: $r=0.40$ (31 samples; $n=10,000+$)
  - Supervisor/Peer rating: $r=0.42$ (11 samples; $n=1750$)
  - Self rating: $r=0.41$ (12 samples; $n=6475$)
  
- Organizational performance**
  - 66 different organisations
  - PWB (Emotional exhaustion) correlated with
    - Client satisfaction ($r=-0.55$); Productivity ($r=-0.40$)

*Ford et al (2011)

**Taris & Schreurs (2009)
Story so far...

- So ... positive psychological well-being is good for:

  Individual health

  Individual performance

  Organizational performance ... recruitment, retention... service user satisfaction...etc...
Why?

Behavioural factors linked to positive PWB

• Less distraction from work tasks due to psycho-somatic complaints etc...
• Better memory (poor PWB= bias towards negative events)
• Motivation and self-efficacy
• Flexibility and originality
• Response to unfavourable feedback
• More positive judgements about others
• Higher levels of “Engagement”
• More productive

and... are likely to live longer ... be sick less often ... and have happier work and home life

Ford et al., 2011; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005
Workplace factors linked to wellbeing

Demands - Cognitive
- Physical
- Emotional

Achievement

Control

Resources & Support

robertsoncooper
Important workplace factors*

- Demands
- Control
- Resources & Support

The same factors drive psychological well-being, and also influence absence, engagement, performance, presenteeism etc...

*Bakker & Demerouti, (2007)
The “6 essential” sources of pressure

- **Resources and communication** (Pressure from lack of resources or information)
- **Control and autonomy** (Limitations on how the job is done or freedom to make decisions)
- **Balanced workload** (Peaks and troughs in workload, difficult deadlines, unsocial hours, work life balance challenges)
- **Job security & change** (Pressure from change and uncertainty about the future)
- **Work relationships** (High pressure relationships with colleagues, customers, bosses)
- **Job conditions** (Pressure from working conditions or pay and benefits)
The ASSET measurement model

6 Essentials
- Resources & communication
- Control
- Balanced workload
- Job security & change
- Work relationships
- Job conditions

Your health
- Strain on physical health
- Strain on psychological health

Psychological well-being
- Positive psychological well-being
- Sense of purpose

Engagement & related scales
- Engagement
- Perceived commitment of organisation to employee
- Commitment of employee to organisation

Business Outcomes
Developing wellbeing: Who’s responsibility?

- The individual employees
- The organization
An integrated, strategic approach

• What benefits do we expect from improved wellbeing?
• How do these benefits relate to corporate goals?
• How will we measure the benefits?
Illustrative benefits

- **Police force**
  Improvements in physical & psychological health and engagement

- **NHS Trust (six month follow up)**
  Reduction in staff turnover at of 3.6%
  Reduction in stress related sickness absence of 7%

- **Railway company**
  Improvements in managers’ confidence
  Identification of key risk areas
  Estimated productivity benefits of £1M
Strategic outcome goals?

- Employee attitude & wellbeing (e.g. engagement survey results, wellbeing levels, citizenship or anti-social behaviour)
- Sickness absence
- Presenteeism
- Occupational health or EAP referrals
- Safety & accidents
- Performance & productivity
- Employee turnover
- Employee recruitment and retention
- Physical health markers
- ...
- ...?
Developing wellbeing

- Strategy & goals
- Senior leadership engagement
- Action Momentum Interest Attitudes
- Organizational Capability
  - measurement
  - job and systems design etc...
- Management capability
  - stress management
  - resilience toolkits etc...
- Individual Capability
  - personal resilience
  - wellbeing awareness etc...
Developing wellbeing

Organizational Capability
- measurement
- job and systems design …

Management capability
- stress management
- resilience toolkits …

Individual Capability
- personal resilience
- wellbeing awareness…

Positive outcomes
- Lower sickness absence
- Performance & productivity
- Employee retention
- Recruitment of employees
- Customer/service user satisfaction
- Increased capacity to cope with pressure

More Good Days at Work for everyone!
Key messages

• Focus on ROI and identify strategic benefits: recruitment, retention, service user satisfaction, absence, etc...
• A multi-function (joined up) approach will maximise the benefits
• The belief that well-being and performance are in conflict is commonplace
• Interventions need to be based on evidence - e.g. a well-being survey, focus group data ...and focused on strategic benefits
• Most successful interventions build from bottom up
• Some people don’t get it
• The terminology matters
Access to Good Day at Work

Introducing our new FREE well-being network.

Good day at work