

# Psychological well-being at work: Causes, consequences and solutions

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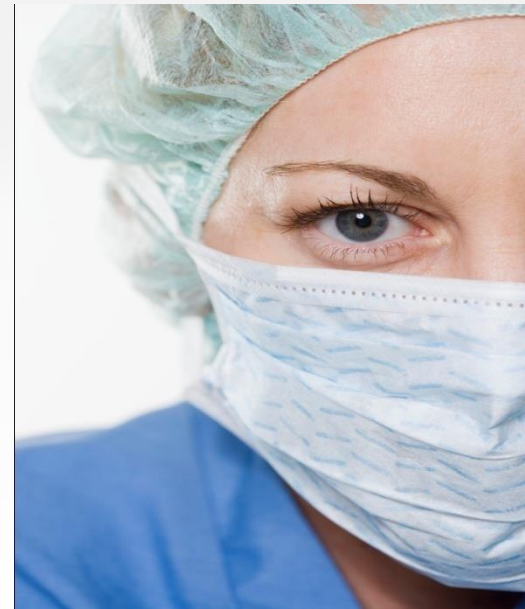
Universities of Manchester & Leeds

# Overview

- Why psychological well-being is important
  - For individuals
  - For organisations
- Causes/Drivers of psychological well-being at work
- Key workplace factors
- Solutions/interventions

# Why psychological well-being matters

- Cardiovascular risk
  - Blood pressure
  - Cholesterol
  - HR variability
- Weight/Diabetes
  - Glucose regulation
  - Protein & fat metabolism
- Immune system
  - Inflammatory processes
  - Autoimmune problems



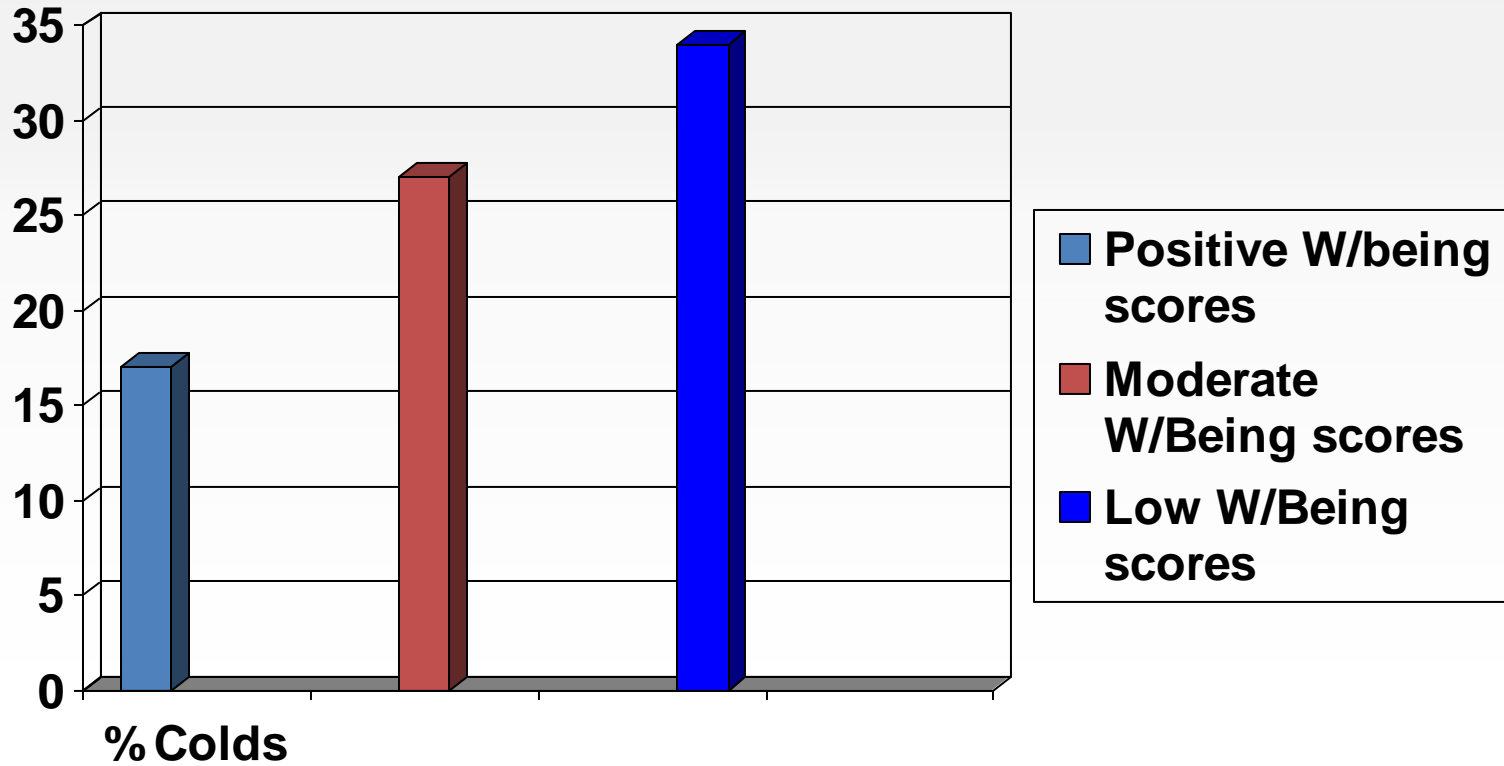
# Why psychological well-being matters

More than 40 longitudinal studies in last 10-12 years  
Psychological well-being factors (positive feelings, negative feelings, optimism, depression, anxiety, predict:

- Earlier death
- General ill health (including heart disease, blood pressure, immune system functioning, frailty in later life, cancer(?) ...)

*Source: Diener & Chan, 2011*

# Why does it matter?



Source: Cohen et al., *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 2003

# Psychological well-being

- Positive affect  
Happiness, positive emotions  
(Hedonic)



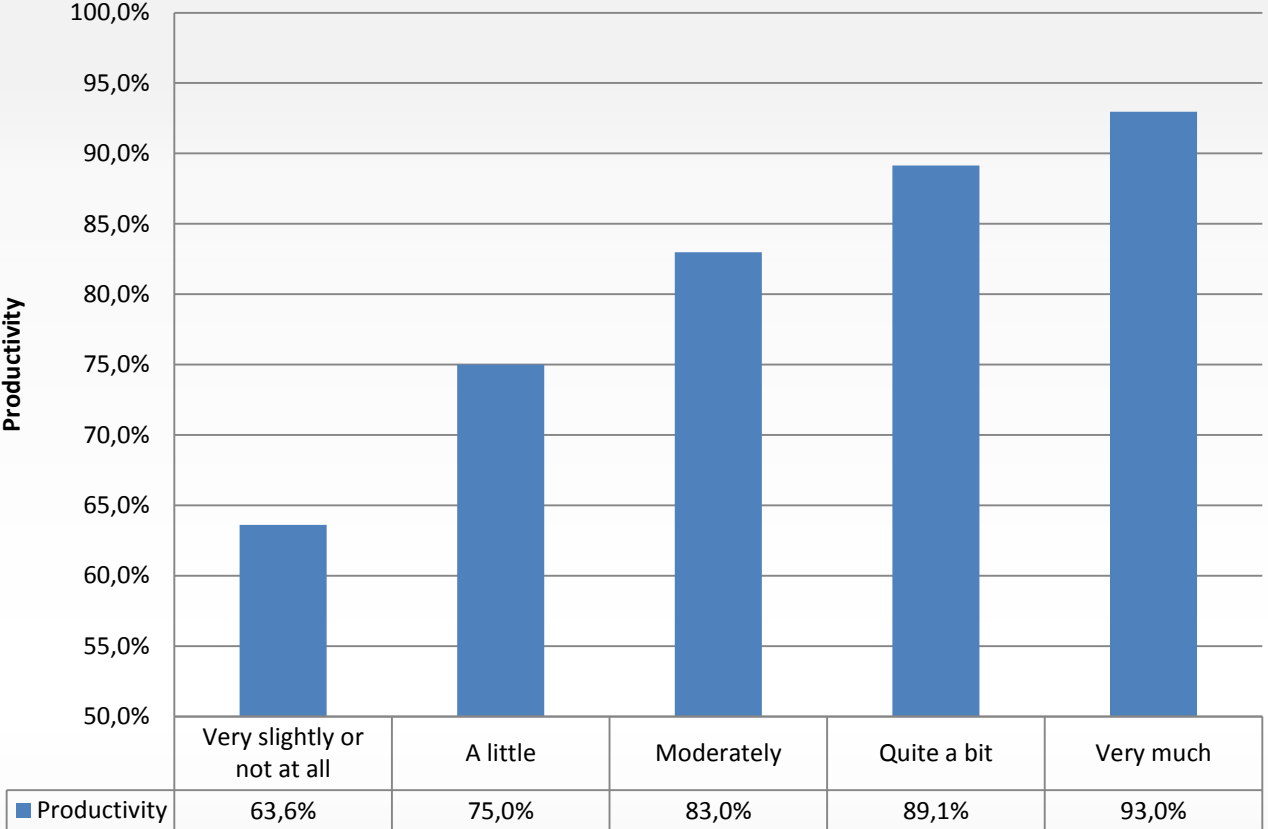
- Purpose & meaning  
(Eudaimonic)



- Negative affect  
Anxiety  
Depression  
Negative emotions



# Well-being (positive emotions at work) and Productivity



39,000 people from 27 organisations , over last five years

# Psychological well-being: Organisational outcomes

## Some studies:

- Donald et al., (2005) – almost a quarter (23%) of variance in **employee productivity** (sample of 16,000UK employees) is explained by:
  - **Psychological well-being**
  - Perceived commitment of organisation to employee
  - Resources and communications
- Cropanzano and Wright (1999) Five year longitudinal study of psychological well-being and performance. Strong correlation between **well-being and work performance**
- Taris & Schreurs (2009) **Client satisfaction** (66 organisations,  $r=.29$ )
- Ford et al., (2011) **Overall performance** (111 organisations, total sample 10,000+,  $r=.40$ )



# Positive Psychological well-being and behaviour

- Fewer 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
  - More productive
- 
- Are likely to live longer ... be sick less often ... and have happier work and home life

# Drivers of psychological well-being at work

**Achievement**



**work**



**Demands**

- *Cognitive*
- *Physical*
- *Emotional*

**Control**

**Support**



# Important workplace factors

- **Demands**
- **Control**
- **Support**

The same factors drive positive psychological well-being, mental ill-health ...and also absence and presenteeism

# Solutions?

- Manage job pressures effectively
- Build resilience
- Encourage healthy behaviours, especially exercise

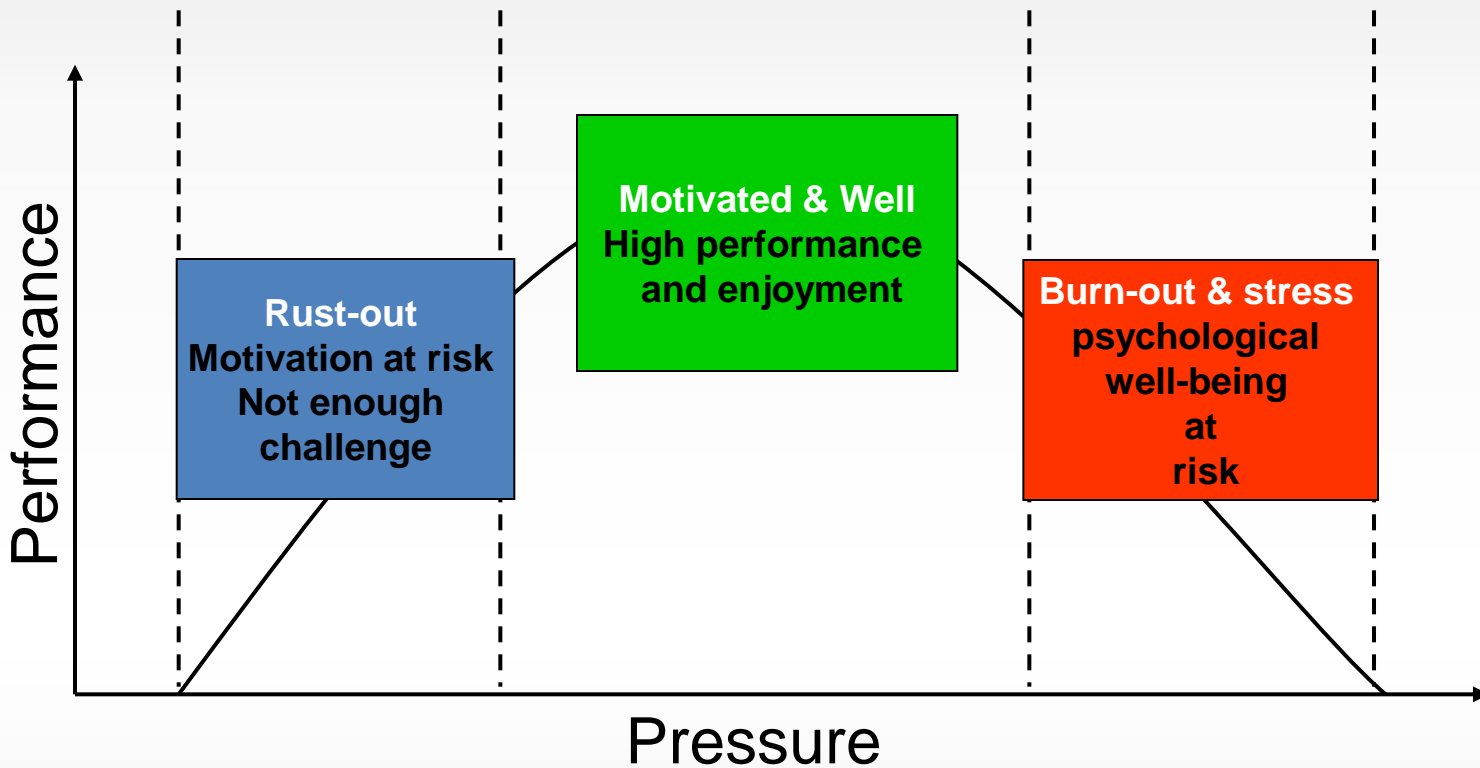


# Management & leadership

- Management/leadership behaviour related to:  
Burnout  
Health complaints  
Psychiatric disturbance

***“Even when controlling for: age, health practices, support from other people at work, support from home, stressful life events, and stressful work events.”***

# Pressure & Performance



# What is resilience?

- **Psychologically positive and healthy**  
*Resilience protects psychological well-being and health*
- **Behaviourally effective and capable**  
*Resilience helps to retain a focus on what matters and supports effective behaviour*

# More on resilience ...

- It is a combination of you and your circumstances



- It's **NOT** fixed ... so can be developed/taught



# Psychological well-being: The role of physical activity

Low physical activity:

- More likely to experience stress
- Poorer positive psychological well-being
- React to stressors more extremely

Physical activity	Odds ratio for stress
Low – sedentary or less than 2 hrs per week	1.0
Moderate – 2-4 hrs per week	0.42
High – more than 4hrs/several times per week	0.40
Jogging	0.27

# Beneficial effect of positive PWB

- Positive PWB linked to:  
**Lower mortality** rates
  - increased life span of 4-10 years
  - high vs low PWB (2 SD difference)...
- **Better health**, cardiovascular, immune system, diabetes, etc...
- **Behaviour** – work performance & health-related



# Lessons from cases

- Some people don't get it
- The terminology matters
- A strategic (joined up) approach will maximise the benefits ... but it's hard to achieve
- Interventions need to be based on evidence
- The belief that well-being and performance are in conflict is commonplace

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