Should we still care about burnout and engagement?

Dr Luke Fletcher, Aston Business School
l.fletcher1@aston.ac.uk

IOSH Yorkshire Branch Event: 17th May 2019
OVERVIEW OF SESSION

• What do we mean by wellbeing?

• Why should we still care?

• Mapping out different types of wellbeing

• A closer look at:
  • burnout
  • engagement
  • resources and demands
  • meaningfulness as a critical need
WHAT IS WELLBEING?

• Wellbeing is not simple to define as it is culturally and socially embedded, and is multifaceted:

  • Some emphasise happiness and contentment with one’s self, i.e. wellbeing as being satisfied with one’s situation in life (e.g. life satisfaction)

  • Others emphasise one’s commitment to a leading a purposeful and full life, i.e. wellbeing as having an active fulfilling life (e.g. meaning in life)

  • And some focus on physical and mental health, i.e. wellbeing as a healthy and productive life (e.g. GHQ12)
SO WHY SHOULD WE STILL CARE?

NHS England survey reveals 'alarming downturn' in staff wellbeing (Guardian, Feb 2019)

PTSD 'at crisis levels' among police officers (BBC, May 2019)

Severe mental illness on the rise since the early 1990s (BBC reporting on research between 1990 and 2014)

Just 15% of employees are engaged. The rest lose $7 trillion in productivity (Gallup, 2018)
MAPPING OUT DIFFERENT TYPES OF WELLBEING

**Hedonic**
- Views pleasure and happiness as central
- More self directed, focus is on self interests
- Emphasises quantity over quality of experience, particularly positive versus negative mood.

**Eudaimonomic**
- Views self-realization and self development as central
- More socially and culturally embedded, focus is on congruence between self and environment
- Emphasises quality over quantity of experience, particularly fulfilment of psychological needs
MAPPING OUT WELLBEING

- Activation
- Displeasure
- Pleasure
- Deactivation

WORKAHOLISM / ANXIETY

ENGAGEMENT

BURNOUT / ALIENATION

JOB SATISFACTION
A CLOSER LOOK AT BURNOUT

- Burnout
  - Depersonalisation and cynicism
  - Emotional exhaustion and mental fatigue
  - Feeling ineffective and lacking in confidence

Burnout
A CLOSER LOOK AT ENGAGEMENT

Attentive, focused, and mentally alert

Feeling enthusiastic and excited

Feeling energised to put in effort

Engagement

Bailey et al. (2017)
WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Work resources
  - Support from colleagues
  - Access to right info/equipment

- Work demands
  - Breakdowns in communication
  - High workloads
  - High pressure and deadlines

Level of personal control
DIFFERENTIATING RESOURCES

- Personal
- Organizational
- Relational
- Task/Job

Fletcher (2017)
DIFFERENTIATING DEMANDS

Challenge demands
- Facilitates both engagement and burnout
- Promote growth and mastery
- Depletes energy which can lead to strain
- Allows the regulation and replenishment of energies to occur

Examples include increased responsibilities, short term increased workload, novel assignments/activities

Hindrance demands
- Facilitates burnout, but not engagement
- Does not promote growth or mastery
- Depletes energy which can lead to strain
- Disrupts the regulation and replenishment of energies

Examples include red tape, communication breakdowns, technological issues.
Meaningfulness as a critical need?

"Meaningfulness is a fundamental human need because it identifies and satisfies what is of profound importance for living a human kind of life" (Yeoman, 2014, p.241)

"Man’s main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life" (Frankl, 1959, p.115)

"People need to feel as if they matter, that their contributions have meaning" (Kahn, 2010, p.24).

Meaningfulness is about an authentic connection between one’s work and a broader collective or contextualised purpose (Bailey & Madden, 2015)
## Facilitating Meaningfulness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Weeks 2 to 8</th>
<th>Weeks 8 to 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Baseline survey</td>
<td>No training</td>
<td>End of development period survey; final survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfulness</td>
<td>Baseline survey</td>
<td>2 hour training session and 4 weeks personal development</td>
<td>End of development period survey; final survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Meaningfulness intervention

- Identify, describe, and reflect upon a relatively meaningful event/situation that happened at work over the last week or so;
- Focus a different broader source of meaningfulness and discuss how this could be utilised/strengthened within the workplace;
- Set a behavioural goal, and a plan to achieve it, that they feel would have a meaningful impact to themselves and in their workplace. Plus some space of reflection of previous goal.

Fletcher and Schofield (in press)
Quantitative Findings

Control Group

- Meaningfulness in work
- Meaningfulness at work
- Job engagement
- Organisation engagement
- Personal Initiative

Meaningfulness Intervention Group

+ + + +

Aston Business School
Qualitative Findings

Micro: Individual level

Meso: Team/Org level

Macro: External level
1) **Buy-In and Initial Scepticism:** “I thought you were here to tell us how to get more meaning from our work”

2) **Building self-efficacy and abilities needed to reflect:** “it’s a different way of thinking which I struggled with to start with”

3) **Sustaining motivation in meaningfulness activities:** “sometimes a lot of effort is needed”
1) Team Climate and Intergroup Relations: “a shared mentality of what matters”

2) Capacity of line managers: “you want the managers to get together and take a step back”

3) Utilizing change agents: “it’s like converting to a religion… it needs to be sold in the right way”

4) Harnessing existing strategies, systems, processes: “it’s finding a way to sneak it in and it not become a tick in the box”
1) Socio-Political/Economic Environment: “last week it was incredibly difficult because of the Referendum result and so everything just seemed meaningless anyway...I was really negative ...I wasn’t my usual working self””
Thank you for listening
Key Publications


