

MONASH University

MONASH BUSINESS SCHOOL

Positive psychology and work satisfaction

JUN GU, PHD

GROUP OF EIGHT ASSOCIATE

EFMD EQUIS ACCREDITED

AMBA ACCREDITED



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Positive psychology

- When asked "what is happiness to you?", we tend to have a number of ideas and scenarios flashing through our minds. Write down these ideas using concise words and share quickly with the person(s) next to you.



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Positive psychology and work satisfaction

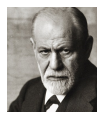
- Positive psychology introduction
- Optimism
- Positive emotions
- Optimal experience of flow
 - Mindfulness
 - Individual character strengths
 - Creativity
- Need to belong
- Meaning of life & accomplishments
- Happiness in the workplace
 - Calling to a career/work
 - Satisfaction
 - Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)
 - Organizational commitment

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Positive psychology intro

- Positive psychology: the research on how individuals can optimize and sustain positive life experiences in multiple areas (e.g., work, family, relationship, fitness, etc.)
- An revolution from early psychological tradition that focused on "what's wrong with people?" (e.g., psychoanalysis, behaviorism, etc.)
- Answers questions such as "How to live a good and fulfilling life?", "What makes life worth living?", or "how to flourish and realize our ultimate potential?"



Optimism



- Definition: a global expectation that more good things than bad will happen in the future (Faith, hope, positive expectations, etc.)
 - Optimists tend to explain negative events or experiences by attributing them to external, transient, specific factors such as the prevailing circumstances
 - Pessimists tend to explain negative events by attributing them to internal, stable, global factors
 - E.g., after losing a valuable client, optimists: "the client had issues" or "I couldn't do my best in that specific environment"; Pessimists: "I am not good at managing clients" or "I am stupid".



Optimism

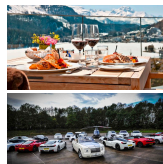


- Compared to pessimists, optimists experience
 - Better academic and sport performance
 - Superior career success and marital satisfaction
 - More resilience and less depression when facing stressful events
 - Better health
- Optimism is influenced by
 - Past experience
 - Role models (e.g., parents)
 - Psychological training programs

Positive emotions



- Excitement, Cheerfulness, Ecstasy, Joy, Awe, Gratitude, Serenity, Relief, Interest, Love, Pride, Contentment, Inspiration, etc.
- We experience positive emotions when we savour and appreciate pleasures such as
 - Bodily needs (e.g., good food, massage, etc.)
 - Desired materials (e.g., money, new car, etc.)
 - Natural environment (e.g., beach, forest, etc.)
 -



The optimal experience of flow



- "Being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost."

---- **Mihály Csikszentmihályi**



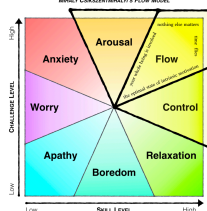
The optimal experience of flow



- Definition: A state of absorption that comes from engagement in activities which involve using one's signature strengths (e.g., reading, running, playing music, house chore, dance, etc.)
- Conditions of flow
 - Deep concentration on the task
 - Using personal signature strengths
 - Challenging task that requires skill
 - Clear goals and immediately feedback




MICHIE CROCKFORD'S FLOW MODEL



Mindfulness



- Defined as the state of being **attentive** to and **aware** of what is taking place in the **present**.
- Employees who are more mindful tend to
 - Show more self-regulation or autonomy in daily tasks
 - Experience less psychological disturbance when facing adversities (e.g., disease)
 - Experience less negative emotion
 - Experience less anxiety
 - Experience higher self-esteem



Mindfulness



- Quick mindfulness exercises
 - Put away your laptop and phone, sit straight,
 - Follow my instruction to relax your whole body: relax the top of your head, your eyes, your teeth, your throat, your shoulders, your biceps, your forearms, your wrist, your fingers, your torso, your hips, your thighs, your knees, your ankle, and your toes
 - In a relaxed state, close your eyes, try to stretch your hearing as far as possible, keep breathing naturally and focus on your hearing. Pay attention to what you can hear. Don't force anything, simply pay attention.



Mindfulness



- Mindfulness at work is influenced by various psychological, relational, and organizational factors
- Factors that increase mindfulness: practice (e.g., meditation), job autonomy, supervisor support, etc.
- Factors that reduces mindfulness: task routineness, poor environment support (e.g., noise, poor IT equipment)





Individual character strength



- **Wisdom and knowledge:** originality, curiosity, critical thinking, love of learning, wisdom
- **Courage:** courage, diligence, authenticity, passion
- **Humanity:** compassion, generosity, emotional intelligence
- **Justice:** teamwork, fairness, leadership
- **Temperance:** self-control, mercy, humility, prudence
- **Transcendence:** appreciation of beauty, gratitude, optimism, humor, spirituality



Individual character strength



- Character strengths are observed and measurable across various cultures, although each culture emphasizes on a subset of strengths
- It is positively associated with
 - The experience of flow
 - Positive youth development and academic success
 - General life satisfaction among adults and adolescents
 - Recovery from traumatic experience (e.g., 911, war, etc.)

Creativity



- Creativity is generally conceived of as the generation of ideas, insights, or problem solutions that are both novel and potentially useful
- You have a glass of water and a glass of milk. How to empty the two glasses into a barrel so that water and milk can be differentiated and separated (Note: Any type of divider in the barrel is not allowed).



Creativity in the workplace



- People are more creative when they
 - are in positive moods
 - are under moderate stress
 - are rewarded for being creative
 - have creative colleagues and supervisors
 - have supportive organizational resources
- Organizational innovation: production or adoption, assimilation, and exploitation of a value-added novelty in economic and social spheres
 - renewal and enlargement of products, services, and markets
 - development of new methods of production
 - establishment of new management systems



Need to belong



- A fundamental human motivation to form and maintain frequent and non-aversive interactions within an ongoing relational bond
 - Consistent with need theories (e.g., Maslow's hierarchy of needs)
 - The Grant Study – 75-year longitudinal study by Harvard Medical School – revealed that warmth of relationships throughout life is the key to happiness
 - Deprivation of stable and good relationships leads to pathological outcomes
- A strong need to belong leads individuals to
 - Interpret situations and events regarding their implications for relationships
 - Experience happiness, contentment, and calm when accepted
 - Experience anxiety, depression, and jealousy when rejected

Meaning and achievement



- Meaning: the extent to which we experience life in ways that are useful, significant, and purposeful
 - Existentialism: we are free to define our own meaning in life
 - Individuals who experience more meaning and purposefulness are generally happier than those who find life meaningless
- Achievement: the pursuit of growth, potential realization, success, and mastery
 - People pursue achievement even though it does not result in other forms of happiness such as positive emotions, flow, social relationships, or meaning.

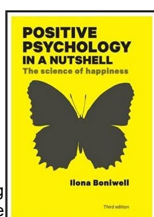


Happiness in a nutshell

What makes us happy?



- Yes: optimism, extraversion, social connections, marriage, engaging job, religiosity, leisure, quality sleep, physical exercise, and subjective health (what you think about your health).
- No: age, physical attractiveness, money (once basic needs are met), educational level, number of children, climate of residing region, housing, and objective health (what doctors say)
- Interventions: nurture mindfulness, practice kindness, write gratitude letters, increase optimistic mindset, reliving happy life experiences, spend time with loved ones, make and achieve personal goals, focus on personal strength



Calling to work



- Definition: a transcendent summons to a particular career/profession in a manner with a strong sense of purpose or meaningfulness
 - E.g., "I was drawn by something beyond myself to my current line of work"
 - E.g., "my career is an important part of my life meaning"
- Employees with stronger calling tend to be
 - More committed to their career choice
 - More committed to their current organization
 - More satisfied with their job
 - Less likely to search for an alternative to their occupation



Job satisfaction



- Definition: one's general attitude toward her job
- Key sources of Job Satisfaction
 - Work itself, pay and advancement, supervision, co-workers
- Enjoying the work itself is almost always most strongly correlated with high levels of job satisfaction
- Once a person reaches the level of comfortable living the relationship between pay and satisfaction virtually disappears



When job satisfaction is low



- When an employee's job satisfaction is low, her reaction depends on whether she adopts a constructive or destructive approach, and whether she seeks to resolve the dissatisfaction in an active or passive way
- High satisfaction increases individual productivity, organizational productivity, *organizational citizenship behaviour*, and customer satisfaction



Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)



- Voluntary, informal behaviours that contribute to organisational effectiveness, but are not rewarded or detected by formal performance evaluation systems.
 - Altruism (e.g., helping a co-worker with her work tasks)
 - Courtesy (e.g., being friendly and considerate toward coworkers)
 - Sportmanship (e.g., exhibit no negative behavior when something at work doesn't go as planned)
 - Conscientiousness (e.g., show more self-discipline than what's required at work)
 - Civiv virtue (e.g., support a good image of the organization even outside work)

Organizational Commitment



- Definition: A state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals, and wishes to maintain membership in the organization
 - Affective commitment: An employee's genuine emotional connection with the organization
 - Normative commitment: the obligation an employee feels to staying with an organization
 - Continuance commitment: an employee's calculation that it is in his or her best interest to stay with the organization based on the perceived benefits and costs of leaving it

