



HERO Industry Research Review

Association between Employee Flourishing, Lifestyle Behaviors, Health,
and Work-Related Indicators

Study Title: Flourishing in New Zealand Workers: Associations With Lifestyle Behaviors, Physical Health, Psychosocial, and Work-Related Indicators

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Study Overview

Well-being is a broadly defined concept that takes into consideration various aspects of health, not simply the physical health domain or the absence of illness or disease. According to Gallup, the construct of well-being is made up of 6 domains: life evaluation, physical health, emotional health, healthy behavior, work environment and basic access.¹ This study focuses on the related concept of flourishing, which is a construct closely aligned with the emotional health domain and can be defined as (but not limited to): being emotionally stable, resilient, and optimistic and having higher self-esteem, meaning, and positive relationships in one's life. In sum, flourishing focuses more on mental and emotional health whereas well-being encompasses the physical aspects of health as well.

Many organizations are interested in improving workforce flourishing due to its connection to productivity outcomes. Learning what factors may be modifiable and can promote or protect flourishing is important to employers aiming to create a supportive culture that drives workforce health and productivity. This article seeks to identify some of those characteristics associated with flourishing.

Methodology

The study used data from the Sovereign Flourishing Index (<http://www.mywellbeing.co.nz/mw/>), a survey specifically designed to assess the flourishing of New Zealanders. In addition to measures on flourishing, this instrument incorporates questions that consider participants' physical health, lifestyle behaviors, psycho-social attributes and work-related characteristics. Study participants were paid employees, aged 18 or older (n=5549). Logistic regression models were used to measure how aspects of physical health, lifestyle, psycho-social and work-related characteristics may be associated with the odds of flourishing. See Figure 1 for information on study measures.

Results

Predictors of Flourishing

Sociodemographic

- Workers with higher incomes and education levels had greater odds of flourishing.
- Older workers (those 50 years of age and older compared to those 30 years of age and younger) had greater odds of flourishing.
- Married workers (compared to those living with a partner or who had never married) had higher odds of flourishing.
- Worker's ethnicity or sex had no association with flourishing.

Lifestyle Behaviors

- Workers with more frequent participation in the Five Ways of Well-Being had greater odds of flourishing.

Physical Health

- Workers who reported better physical health (particularly related to: self-rated health, daily activity difficulty and self-reported chronic conditions) had higher odds of flourishing.

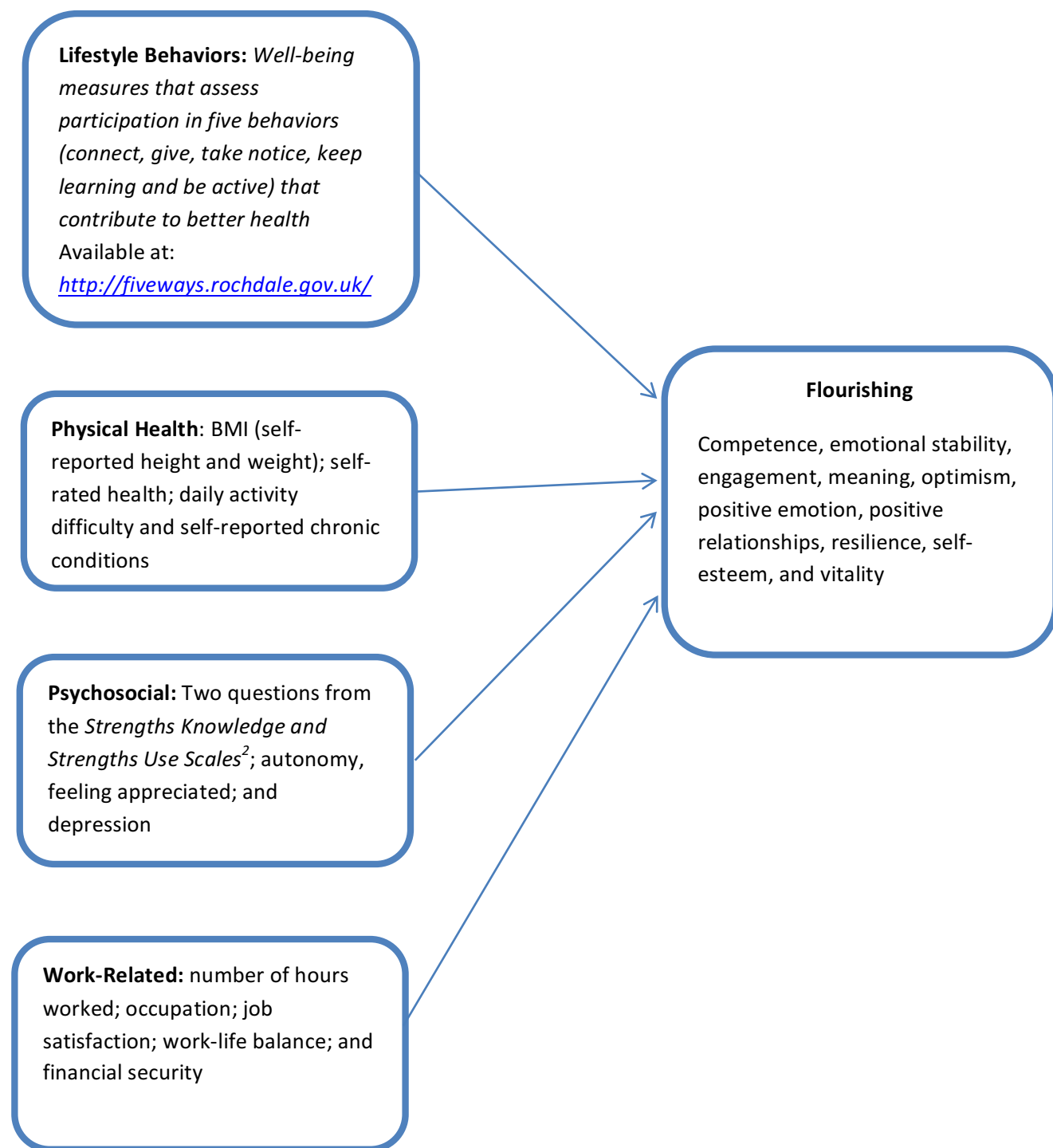
Psychosocial

- Workers who reported better psychosocial health (particularly related to: Strengths Knowledge and Strengths Use Scales, autonomy, feeling appreciated and depression) had higher odds of flourishing.

Work-Related

- Workers with better work-related characteristics (particularly related to: job satisfaction, work-life balance, and financial security) had higher odds of flourishing.

Figure 1. Study Measures



Study Conclusions

The study concluded that approximately 25% of New Zealanders who participated in paid employment were considered to be flourishing, in contrast to 10% (not working) and 9% (permanently sick or disabled). It also established that various sociodemographic, lifestyle, physical health, psychosocial and work-related characteristics were associated with flourishing among New Zealand workers (please see table above for details). These results are important as they suggest associations regarding how the odds of flourishing may be optimized via an organization's employee wellness program and related initiatives, which could potentially have a positive impact on productivity.

Reviewer Commentary

Since the 1980's, the concept of flourishing has been explored and discussed in the scientific literature. However, until recently, this concept has been given less attention in the field of employee health and wellness. Currently, the landscape of employee health and wellness is changing, moving from a focus on physical aspects of health (such as exercise and biometric screenings) to a broader definition of health that includes a more balanced approach to mental, emotional, and psychosocial components of health. Given this more encompassing definition of health, now, more attention is being paid to flourishing and related socio-emotional concepts such as thriving (optimal development of life)³ and purpose (one's reason for existence)⁴. Studies such as this one provide us insights regarding the measurement of this multidimensional concept and can inform an employer's strategy on the value of well-being to create a flourishing and subsequently more productive workforce.

The results from this article must be interpreted carefully with consideration of study limitations. One main limitation is that this study was based on results from a survey and not an intervention. With this, there is some difficulty evaluating if certain characteristics increase one's odds of flourishing or if flourishing influences certain characteristics. In addition, these analyses were conducted among New Zealand workers. There may be concerns about the generalizability of these findings to employees in other countries. Lastly, this study was correlational, not causal, so we cannot determine the direction of the relationship between the

measured predictors and flourishing as an outcome. Developing studies that overcome these limitations could be a future area of research.

About the HERO Reviewer

Kristi Rahrig Jenkins, PhD, MPH, is the Research Program Manager for MHealthy, the health and well-being initiative for the University of Michigan's faculty, staff, and dependents. She leads the development and execution of the evaluation and scientific research activities of MHealthy, including data collection, management, and analysis; developing and sustaining scientific partnerships; and serving as the point person for all internal and external data-related inquiries and processes. Kristi has over fourteen years of experience in research units at the University. Before joining MHealthy in 2009, Kristi worked for the University's Addiction Research Center and the Institute for Social Research exploring research questions related to health and health behavior across the life course, particularly issues related to chronic disease, family relationships, social and psychological aspects of health, and population health. Kristi holds a MPH in community health education from the University of South Florida and a PhD in Sociology from Wayne State University.

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