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Positive Leadership and Experiences Explaining Workers' Well-being in Knowledge-intensive Organisation

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Northern Finland possesses one of the richest mineral deposits in the world. According to estimates, the mining industry will have a remarkable impact on the development of the entire region. It is estimated that within the next 20 years, more than 5000 people will be employed in mining in this region. The most sought-after employee group will likely be knowledge workers. A similar trend is foreseen in the arctic worldwide. Knowledge workers play a crucial role in developing and improving operations in mining organisations. Knowledge-intensive work is considered mentally demanding because it constantly requires new expertise, and time pressure factors are explicit. Additional demands peculiar to the mining industry in the north come from the geographically and socially isolated locations and, accordingly, the long distances. These issues create concern for the well-being of knowledge workers in mining organisations.

Several studies have shown how important leadership is for well-being at work. This article argues that there is a particular need to develop a new positive leadership approach to support the well-being of knowledge workers. This positive approach may strengthen the knowledge creation and workplace innovation expected in knowledge work. Positive leadership utilizes in-depth appreciation of the authentic experiences that create well-being for knowledge workers. By applying the inductive methodological principle of leadership psychology and focusing on the positive, the role of authentic experiences in well-being becomes evident. This may facilitate a realistic and more sustainable leadership practice. Positive leadership has the potential to create practices helping to identify and more effectively realize the accessible possibilities that enhance the well-being of knowledge workers in mining organizations located in the distant area.

Keywords: knowledge work; well-being; leadership; positive approach; mining

Introduction

Intensified interest in the arctic areas has become evident in recent decades. Accordingly, the growing importance of the arctic region has been emphasized in countries' strategies worldwide.[1] The greatest potential in the arctic region has been seen in natural resources, with mining industry identified as a crucial sector among the oil, gas and forest industry.

Mining in the arctic region is expanding. New mineral deposits have been found and actors in the arctic are willing to uncover novel technical as well as

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social means to utilise these opportunities in a sustainable manner. Because of the growth of the mining industry, the number of people working in the arctic conditions is increasing as well. There is already a challenge finding enough qualified labour for the mining industry.

Living and working in the arctic is complicated due to low temperatures, long distances, an ageing population, depopulation and shortage of services.[2] However, new mines may at least facilitate the resettlement and immigration to the area and vitalize the regional labour market. Moreover, cooperation between mining organisations and local municipalities can create new services in the region. This has been the case, for instance, in the northern part of Finland, where four new mines are already running and another four are planned for the near future.

According to an annual global survey conducted by the Fraser Institute, a Canadian think tank, Finland is currently ranked as the world's most attractive mining location.[3] In 2011, the estimated turnover in the mining industry in Finland was around 1.48 billion euros.[4] The mining industry is an increasingly important sector of the Finnish economy and a growing financial actor especially in the northern part of Finland. The area contains one of the richest mineral deposits in the world. According to the estimates, the mining industry will have a remarkable impact on the economic development and internationalisation of the region.

Mines have brought and will bring a larger workforce to northern Finland, which will have a considerable social impact on the local communities. A goal has been set to increase the number of mining personnel in northern Finland to 5000 by the year 2030.[5] If this goal is reached, there will be a remarkable demand for new educated mining work experts in the region. The same demand is taking place in other regions of Finland, but exclusively in the north. Mining organisations employ experts from different fields such as IT specialists,

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[2] Myllylä, Y., (2010).

[3] Fraser Institute. "Alberta, New Brunswick Ranked Best Provinces for Mining Investment; Finland No. 1 Worldwide While Quebec Drops Out of Top 10." Available from http://www.fraserinstitute.org/research-news/news/display.Asp x?id=19402 (accessed March 20, 2013).

[4] Uusisuo, M., *Mining in Finland* (2012).

[5] Hernesniemi et al., *Kalliosta Kullaksi Kummusta Klusteriksi* (2011).

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engineers, geologists, environmental analysts, finance professionals and mining planners. All these experts are doing the so-called knowledge work. Knowledge workers with high special professional profiles will likely be the most sought-after employees in the future for the mining industry.

Mining is a typical knowledge-intensive work sector. Knowledge workers play a crucial role in the functional operations that affect cost efficiency and productivity in mining organizations. Creativity, the ability to innovate and complex reflective thinking beyond routines are required in knowledge work. Simultaneously, knowledge-intensive work is mentally demanding, which creates concern about the preconditions for the well-being of knowledge workers. Knowledge work in general, and in mining organisations in particular, requires constant acquisition of new expertise. These workers expected to do their best at all times, typically in very challenging work conditions.

An additional threat to knowledge workers in mining organizations at the arctic regions is that these organizations are usually located in remote areas.[6] Long distances together with cold climates create specific difficulties that do not manifest only as practical and physiological work challenges, but may also become extensive social or even whole life issues. Due to the often isolated locations of their work settings, maintaining the integrity and balance of life may appear critical for knowledge workers in the mining industry in terms of well-being both on and off the job.

Leadership practice plays a significant role in employee well-being in an organisation.[7] There is a clear need to develop appropriate leadership practices that not only support knowledge work, but also effectively enhance the well-being of knowledge workers in distinctive work settings such as mining organizations. In this paper, *we argue that it is essential to have a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of knowledge workers that create the basis for their sense of well-being at work.* Leadership psychology is one promising

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[6] Rissanen, T., *Suomen Kaivostoiminnan Toimialakatsaus* (2011).
[7] Kelloway et al., "Positive Leadership and Employee Well-Being." *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 20 (2013), 107–117.

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research area that utilizes the experiential viewpoint to understand the preconditions of employee well-being at work.

One dimension of leadership psychology is based on a positive approach. *We try to discover how positive leadership practice might be worth careful exploration when a leader is urged to understand the experiential basis of the well-being of knowledge workers.* Intellectual functions like critical reflective thinking and innovations required in knowledge work are interestingly parallel features to positive emotions and attentiveness to the potential presented by the positive approach in leadership psychology research. In previous studies these parallels between knowledge work and positive leadership practices have been slightly overlooked. This article is the part of an ongoing research project that focuses on the experiential construction of knowledge workers' well-being in a mining organisation in northern Finland from a positive leadership approach.

Knowledge work

The rise of knowledge work has been foreseen for some decades. The growth of information, change and learning needs, competition, professional demands and the information and communication technology (ICT) has created a demand for employees to handle and manage information. Hence knowledge is an important driver of all meaningful activities in an organisation. Lack of knowledge and undeveloped ability to act with knowledge generate unsuccessful results for an organisation. Nowadays knowledge-intensive companies are regarded as valuable, fast-growing and highly profitable.[8]

For example, ICT is often considered the core of an information society, or better, of a knowledge society. It is argued that an essential part of the prevailing society is the innovative meaning of both information and information technology as sources of organizational productivity, development and activity.[9] In congruence with this argument, we maintain that knowledge, in a general sense, is the meaning given to information. Knowledge is not created, for instance, by computers, but by people who attach meaning to information they

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[8] Davenport, T. H., *Thinking for a Living* (2005).

[9] Brown, M. M., "Understanding E-Government", The American Review of Public Administration 37 (2007), 178–197.

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encounter in their varied life settings, including work. Thus knowledge has become a major production resource with capital, materials and a work force.[10] The employee who is producing knowledge at work, or who is attaching meaning to information related to work tasks, can be called a knowledge worker. The number of knowledge workers has increased significantly during the last decades.[11]

The term knowledge work was first coined by Peter Drucker in the 1950's. He described knowledge workers as those who work primarily with information and use knowledge at work. At the moment, there is still no consensus about the definition of knowledge work. Besides the above-mentioned definition, we contend that knowledge work refers to organisational activities and professions that emphasise theoretical knowledge, creativity and the use of analytical skills.[12] Knowledge work encompasses both professional work (e.g., accounting, scientific work and engineering) and more contemporary work, like consulting and software development. Horibe adds management and sales to the list.[13]

Knowledge workers are mainly employed in public services and industries which include, for example, mining, water maintenance services and building.[14] These workers usually have higher education and special skills with the ability to apply these attributes in practice.[15] Knowledge workers also have high degrees of expertise, and the primary purpose of their jobs involves creating and distributing new understanding and applying existing knowledge in novel ways.[16] Knowledge workers' skills also help to identify and solve problems.[17]

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[10] Krone et al., "Knowledge Integration for Enterprise Resources Planning Application Design", *Knowledge and Process Management* 16 (2009), 1–12.

[11] O´Donohue et al., "The Psychological Contract of Knowledge Workers. *Journal of Knowledge Management* 11 (2007), 73–82.

[12] Newell et al., *Managing Knowledge Work and Innovation* (2009).

[13] Horibe, F., *Managing Knowledge Workers* (1999).

[14] Melin, H., "Keitä tietotyöläiset ovat?" *In* Tietotyö ja työelämän muutos, ed. R. Blom, H. Melin and P. Pyöriä, 2001.

[15] O´Donohue et al. (2007).

[16] Pyöriä, 2001; Pyöriä, "The Rise of Knowledge Work." *In Knowledge Workers in the Information Society,* ed. P. Pyöriä, H. Melin, and R. Blom, 2005; Davenport (2005); Newell et al. (2009).

[17] Newell et al. (2009).

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Knowledge work constantly requires new know-how and learning. In a mining organisation, that means high-level know-how about the technology specific to mining. Knowledge workers experience pressure to innovate first-class quality systems and designs to find better solutions. The goal is to achieve greater cost-efficiency and overall productivity. Knowledge workers usually face major time pressures to deliver these plans and designs.

Knowledge workers prefer autonomy in their work.[18] Moreover, knowledge work itself demands autonomy because it is a prerequisite for creativity. However, in practice, knowledge workers' autonomy is limited. They cannot position themselves outside of an organisation's strategy and objectives. Nonetheless, within this framework, they do have a great deal of autonomy to decide how to achieve the given goals.[19] To sum up, knowledge work requires a high degree of social and organizational commitment, intellectual reflective understanding and personal responsibility for work.[20] We argue that theoretically, the underlying foundational requirement for knowledge work is the human ability to attach meaning to information through experiential reflection and self-reflection. The task of knowledge workers is to elaborate on and utilise this ability at work.

Knowledge workers usually work in teams[21] because knowledge is often generated in social situations.[22] This means that knowledge as meaning given to things or information is not restricted to an individual knowledge worker's personal experiences. Creating knowledge and working with that knowledge are not bound by physical space and linear time. Both occur in an environment in which information is interpreted collectively and the formed knowledge is shared. There is evidence that work becomes more efficient when knowledge workers work collaboratively and interprofessionally.[23]

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[18] Davenport (2005); Newell et al. (2009).
[19] Newell et al. (2009).
[20] Megill, K. A. *Thinking for a Living* (2005).
[21] Newell et al. (2009).
[22] Megill (2005).
[23] Syväjärvi et al., "The Impact of Information Technology on Human Capacity, Interprofessional Practice and Management", *Problems and Perspectives in Management* 1 (2005), 82–95.

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Knowledge work can be challenging because there are several restrictions on people's ability to receive, organise and use information. Our perceptive skills have limits, our attention is aimed at just one thing at a time and our memory is open to distractions. Knowledge work is all about continuous innovation and learning, which calls for precise concentration and meaning-making.

One feature of knowledge work can be described as ambiguous and boundary less. On the one hand, knowledge work is more independent than work in general; there is stable work status, better salary and inspiring tasks. On the contrary, there are long working hours, a mental burden influenced by busy schedules and competition within the organisation and between rival organizations. Quite typically knowledge is the crucial success factor for these organizations.[24]

These conflicting features are a good reason for mining organisations' present interest in employee well-being. Ambiguous characteristics of knowledge work can trigger stress-related symptoms and cause even more serious outcomes such as burnout. For mining organisations, the most negative, and still realistic, result would be the loss of expert knowledge workers and the erosion of knowledge work expertise. In the highly competitive hiring markets for knowledge workers, this would be a catastrophe for mining organisations. Thus there is truly a critical need for a better understanding of the factors that compose and maintain the positive well-being of knowledge workers not only in mining organisations, but in all knowledge work as well.

Well-being of Knowledge Workers

Employee well-being is one success factor for any organisation. Thus healthy, happy, subjective and eudaemonic workers can be seen as being open to more creative, innovative, productive and effective activities in an organisation. For some years the well-being at work has indeed been considered a hot topic among organisations, researchers and workers. For example, in many countries, several

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[24] Pyöriä, P. "Tietotyö, Työelämän Muutos ja Hyvinvointi." (2002).

national and organisational projects have been related to improving employee well-being. However, it has appeared difficult to achieve this goal because of the multiple challenges in the current complex and dynamic organisational life.

There is a vast amount of research on employee well-being. One of the most common research interests has been around work stress and burnout.[25] Well-being has often been perceived through these two concepts. An absence of stress symptoms and burnout has generally been interpreted as a primary indicator of well-being. In contrast, there are a growing number of scholars[26] who think that well-being is more than the lack of negative indicators. They argue that the majority of workers feel well at work, and therefore, it is not reasonable to examine well-being merely from the problem and ill-being point of view. A more positive approach is thus justified. From this perspective, the view of positive psychology has been utilised abundantly in well-being research since the turn of the millennium.[27] Typically work-related concepts that have been linked to positive are job satisfaction,[28] flow,[29] work commitment and change.[30]

Many scholars argue that the positive (e.g., satisfaction and flow) and the negative (e.g., stress and burnout) are not separate from each other.[31] This means that, when studying well-being at work, positive and negative should be studied together. Beerhr and Grebner argue that while negative events cause negative

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[25] e.g., Maslach, C. and M.P. Leiter, *The Truth about Burnout* (1997).

[26] e.g., Jenkins, S. and R. Delbridge, "In Pursuit of Happiness: A Sociological Examination of Employee Identifications amongst a 'Happy' Call-centre Workforce." *Organization* 0 (2013), 1–21.

[27] Seligman, M. E. P. and M. Csikszentmihalyi, "Positive Psychology – an Introduction." *American Psychologist* 55, no 1 (2000), 5–14.

[28] Piirainen H, M et. al., *Työ ja Terveys -Haastattelututkimus 2003* (2003).

[29] Csikszentmihalyi, M. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990).

[30] Mauno, S. and U. Kinnunen, "The Stability of Job and Family Involvement: Applying the Multi-wave, Multi-variable Technique to Longitudinal Data." *Work and Stress*, 14 (2000), 51–64; Elias, S. M., "Employee Commitment in Times of Change: Assessing the Importance of Attitudes Toward Organizational Change", *Journal of Management* 35 (2009), 37–55; Gilstrap, J.B. and B.J. Collins, "The Importance of Being Trustworthy: Trust as Mediator of the Relationship Between Leaders Behaviors and Employee Job Satisfaction." *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 19 (2012), 152 –163.

[31] Lazarus, R. S. *Psychological Stress and the Coping* Process (1966); Selye, H. *Stress of life* (1976); Beehr, T. A. and S. I. Grebner, "When Stress Is Less (Harmful)" (2005); Syväjärvi, A. et al., *Inhimillisesti Tehokas Sairaala – Työn Mielekkyys Henkilöstön Kokemana* (2012).

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experiences such as stress, they can also cause positive experiences like satisfaction.[32] We suggest that one relevant concept to integrate the negative and positive in well-being research is authenticity. By authenticity we refer to experiences that take place in actual life settings, for instance in everyday work settings, and are featured as integrative experiences forming the holistic sense of feeling good in life or in a particular life area, for instance at work.

Well-being research is traditionally performed utilising quantitative research methods. Data is collected through questionnaires, scales or tests, with indicators of well-being classified beforehand. The procedure for this kind of quantitative methodology requires that a scholar define the phenomenon of well-being in advance.[33] Consequently, a researcher must know the main structure or dimensions of well-being before starting to produce new scientific knowledge about it. The positive aspect of applying quantitative methodology to well-being research is to gain knowledge that is valid for comparison over time and in varied contexts. The shortcoming, however, is that the vital dimensions of well-being may be overlooked.

We believe it is important to make methodological choices in well-being studies that provide the possibility for a novel and unexpected understanding of the phenomenon based strictly on the systematic inductive analysis of empirical data. In our view, well-being, especially in knowledge work and for knowledge workers, is basically an experiential phenomenon that can be grasped only partly through standardized quantitative methodology. As argued above, we consider that all knowledge as a phenomenon is experientially grounded in meanings attributed to the things in the world, and, further, that people experience well-being differently because of their life experiences, their personality (including inherent temperament), and the organisation or work itself.[34]

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[32] Beehr and Grebner (2005).
[33] Perttula et al., "Miten Huomaan Olevani Työuupunut? Työuupumuksen Tunnistamiskokemusten Fenomenologis-psykologista Kuvausta." *Työ ja Ihminen* 3 (2001), 157–169.
[34] Feldt et. al. "Työhyvinvoinnin Yksilöllisyys" (2008).

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Well-being at Work and Off Work

From the viewpoint presented, the most promising research design for studying knowledge workers' well-being is to gather detailed descriptions about personal experiences that constitute the integrative sense of feeling good at work. The results may express the authentic character of the experiential understanding of well-being in the actual life settings of knowledge workers. This would offer beneficial knowledge for regarding employees' situations and the prerequisites of well-being in a holistic sense. This viewpoint implies that well-being as authentic experience also includes the situations and life incidents to which these authentic experiences are related. Authentic experiences as manifestations of well-being include both aspects: the life situation and the meaning given to that situation. Phenomenology, for instance, would provide a suitable methodology for studying and analyzing authentic experiences. It aims to uncover the implicit structure and meaning of human experiences.[35] Sanders stated 30 years ago that phenomenology would be a new way of viewing organisational research.[36] However, phenomenological studies were infrequent back then and they still are.

The work itself has great meaning to employee well-being. Studies have revealed that things related to positive well-being at work facilitate, for example, a good social working environment, a good salary, a healthy balance between work and family life and appreciative behaviour based on roles and work performance.[37] Appreciative behaviour can mean positive feedback and encouragement from leaders. Kivistö and Kalimo add that good working ability is based on good physical health, work assignments, stable work status, working conditions and good career development possibilities.[38]

The main threats to knowledge workers' positive well-being at work are

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[35] Giorgi, A. "The theory, practice and evalution of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research." *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 28 (1997).

[36] Sanders, P. "Phenomenology: a new way of viewing organizational research." *Academy of Management Review* 7 (1982), 353–360.

[37] Grzywacz et al., "A Multi-level Perspective on the Synergies Between Work and Family." *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 80 (2007), 559–574.

[38] Kivistö and Kalimo, "Tietotekniikan Ammattilaisten Työ, Voimavarat ja Hyvinvointi." (2002); Ilies, R. et al., "Authentic Leadership and Eudaemonic Well-being: Understanding Leader-follower Outcomes." *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005), 373–394.

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increased work load, time pressures and long working hours.[39] It is quite common for knowledge workers to work longer hours than the average 37 to 40hours per week.[40] According to Julkunen, 4 % of knowledge workers work up to 60 hours per week.[41] The ever-present busy schedules are also the reason for decreased well-being at work, as they can erode innovation and creativity.[42]

Detachment from work is a good basis for recovery when an employee feels that work is becoming too much to bear.[43] However, recovery from work can be difficult for knowledge workers because they can be self-sacrificing in their work.[44] It is difficult for them to separate work time from free time because of today's technology of laptops, tablets and smart phones, which follow workers home. It is critical, however, to find a balance between work and other areas of life.

From our perspective, well-being at work as a concept can be problematic if it separates work from other life areas such as home and family. Well-being at work is affected by off-work issues as well. Family, for instance, can be a strong positive resource for employees, as can recreational activities such as hobbies. Many organisations also support employee free time with activities provided for free or for a small fee. These are usually sports-related activities and organisational events available for the employees' families. Typically, the goal is to enhance the sense of community among workers. These family-oriented organisations are suitable for knowledge workers because they can also provide flexible working hours and arrange opportunities to work at home.

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[39] Huhtala, H. and M-R. Parzefall, "Innovatiivisuus ja Aikapaine Tietotyössä." *Työ ja Ihminen* 20 2006), 149–157.

[40] Julkunen, R. et al., "Tietotyön Työajat." *Työ ja Ihminen* 18 (2004): 159–168; Nätti, J. et al., "Tietotyö, Ansiotyö Kotona ja Perhe." *Työ ja Ihminen* 19 (2005), 71–90.

[41] Julkunen et al. (2004).

[42] Huhtala and Parzefall (2006).

[43] Sonnentag, s. and U. Kruel, "Psychological Detachment from Work During Off-job Time: The Role of Job Stressors, Job Involvement, and Recovery-related Self-efficacy." *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 15 (2006), 197–217;Tirkkonen, M. and U. Kinnunen, "Palautumisen Tehostaminen Kasvattaa Työhyvinvointia." *Psykologia* 48 (2013), 196–210.

[44] Kivistö, M. and S. Kivistö, "Palautumista Edistävät Käytännöt IT-ammattilaisten Työhyvinvoinnin Voimavarana." *Psykologia* 44 (2009), 168–184; Räisänen, K., M. Kivistö, M. Gockel, H. Lindholm, M. T. Tuomisto, J. Schildt, A. Viljanen, S. Sarna, R. Kalimo, and H. Hurri, "Tietotyöntekijöiden Uhrautuvaisuus, Hyvinvointi ja Työkuormitus." *Työ ja Ihminen* 19 (2005), 257–274.

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In terms of well-being and knowledge work, there are many organizational and behavioural factors that are important for knowledge retention.[45] Some of these are quite heavily related to knowledge behaviour, leadership and people knowledge loss risks. Working at home can also support well-being in knowledge work. There is a positive correlation with the quality of working life as well.[46] Some other positive effects of working at home include reduced stress and a better overall quality of life. However, working at home can also generate negative effects for knowledge workers. Employees may work longer hours, experience negative effects on their social life and feel isolated from other employees, and this could have an effect on the sense of community within an organisation. From the knowledge worker's point of view, working at home should be organised so the working space is peaceful because they need to concentrate in order to be productive.

Leadership and the Well-being of Knowledge Workers

Knowledge-intensive work can present challenges to well-being; because it is attractive and creative work, an employee can easily end up working long hours and then experiencing fatigue or even burnout. It is significant when an organisation is interested in the well-being of knowledge workers. Awareness of this interest, in itself, may increase knowledge workers' well-being and their commitment to an organisation.[47] Both well-being and commitment are important as it is quite well known that human resource policies enhance employee identification and attachment both to work and to the organisation. For example, a high level of commitment can result in more loyalty, increased teamwork and reduced labour turnover.[48] Indeed, these factors are important in the case of the mining industry. In addition, the positive interaction between a

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[45] Martins, E.C. and H.W.J. Meyer, "Organizational and Behavioral Factors That Influence Knowledge Retention." *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 16 (2012), 77–96.

[46] Grzywacz et al. (2007).

[47] Avey, J. B. et al., "Experimentally Analyzing the Impact of Leader Positivity on Follower Positivity and Performance." *The Leadership Quarterly* 22 (2011), 282–294.

[48] e.g Guest, D.E. Personnel management: the end of orthodoxy. *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 29 (1991): 149–175.

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leader and the workers is considered advisable to support a healthy working relationship. Good leadership practice is thus one of the most important factors in maintaining and improving well-being at work.[49]

Leadership is an interactive process between employees and their leader, and it sets a certain direction for an organisation, motivating and inspiring employees to achieve a common goal.[50] Basically, the emphasis is on people rather than on managing operations such as the time tables of an organisation. An important role for organisational leaders is to create the positive in their followers.[51] Therefore, leadership needs to be distinguished from management, decision-making and authoritarian positions.[52]

Leadership in knowledge organisations has distinctive features compared to other organisations.[53] The biggest difference is that the characteristics of knowledge workers's jobs require all knowledge workers to be leaders in some ways. The ability to present one's knowledge in such a way that others in the work community can adopt them is a form of good leadership.[54] The degree of autonomy and the responsibilities they possess also require self-leadership skills and strategies. However, knowledge workers' autonomy can be a challenge for leaders. The interaction between a knowledge worker and a leader must be based on trust in order to be functional and successful. This can be seen in the knowledge sharing between knowledge workers and a leader.

Leadership in a knowledge-intensive organisation is important because knowledge workers are people with specialised expertise. Ribiere and Sitar suggest that knowledge workers should be led through intellectual power, conviction, persuasion and interactive dialogue.[55] Leadership behaviour should encourage values like innovation, positive thinking, an optimistic attitude,

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[49] Ilies et al. (2005).
[50] Northouse, P. G. *Leadership – Theory and Practice* (2007); Ribiere, V. M. and A. S. Sitar, "Critical Role of Leadership in Nurturing a Knowledge-supporting Culture." *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* 1 (2003), 39-48.
[51] Kelloway et al. (2013).
[52] Haslam, S. A., S D. Reicher, and M. J. Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership* (2011).
[53] Amar, A. D. *Managing Knowledge Workers* (2002).
[54] Megill (2005).
[55] Ribiere and Sitar (2003).

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maximum contribution, and risk taking, with no punishment for making mistakes. Furthermore, leadership should motivate, inspire and help workers to identify their strengths and weaknesses in the workplace. Cameron finds that focusing on strengths rather than correcting weaknesses leads to better work performances and greater well-being.[56]

Connecting Leadership and Well-being

Leadership affects employee well-being in an organisation. It is leaders' responsibility to provide the best possible working climate for knowledge workers to flourish and create new innovations. When employee well-being is connected with leadership practice, there are better opportunities to intervene and find solutions for well-being issues.

Therefore, the successful development methods of well-being in an organisation are quite usually linked to a good leadership practice. Leadership activates changes that directly affect employees, their work, their well-being and their level of hope and motivation.[57] Furthermore, goals, procedures and follow-ups related to well-being need to be integrated into a strategy that eases the implementation of changes and makes these changes more effective in the long run. This kind of strategy is highlighted in a mining organisation, which is characterised by long hours, distinctive working conditions and pressure to maintain and improve employee well-being.

Uncertainty and busy schedules at work might affect the commitment of knowledge workers, but Amar states that with good leadership and a supportive organisational climate these issues can be eliminated.[58] Leadership can also help knowledge workers identify their own knowledge gaps[59] because knowledge workers are motivated by opportunities to learn and increase their own specialised knowledge.[60]

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[56] Cameron, K. S. *Positive Leadership* (2012).
[57] Searle, T.P. and J.E. Jr. Barbuto, Servant Leadership, Hope, and Organizational Virtuousness: A Framework Exploring Positive Micro and Macro Behavior and Performance Impact. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 18 (2011), 107–117.
[58] Amar (2002).
[59] Ribiere and Sitar (2003).
[60] Harrigan, K. R. and G. Dalmia, "Knowledge Workers: The Last Bastion of Competitive Advantage." *Planning Review* 19, no. 6 (1991), 4–9.

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Employees themselves have a big responsibility and means of their own to maintain a good standard of well-being. Pearce and Manz refer to this as self-leadership, which involves leading one's own behaviour in order to achieve one's goals and objectives.[61] It also includes intrinsic motivation, self-influenced skills development and self-rewarding. Prussia found that self-leadership strategies had an effect on work performance through self-efficacy.[62] Achieving positive well-being at work through self-leadership is about reflecting on one's circumstances at work and in life in general and making choices that result in positive and uplifting experiences. Self-leadership is a key element for knowledge workers because of their autonomy and their challenging work responsibilities.

The Need for the Perspective of Leadership Psychology

Development of well-being in an organisation requires the expertise of leadership psychology because, from a leader's point of view, it is crucial to understand the authentic basis of employees's needs, goals and behaviour.[63] This approach is emphasised when an employee's resources are based on positive behaviour and strengths in an organisation. Basing an organisation's leadership practice on formal status and the exercising of power is a weak approach to the effective leadership that fosters well-being. If a leader's position is merely formal, the leader does not become aware of employees' attributes and is unable to recognise their strengths and weaknesses. Leadership is not just about getting people to do things. It is more about getting people to want to do things.[64] This requires the orientation provided by leadership psychology.

Many factors like ICT, competition and economy play a large role in mining organisations, which are changing at a frantic pace. Knowledge workers in all industries, but particular mining, have to work constantly to stay up to date

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[61] Pearce, C. L. and C. C. Manz, "The New Silver Bullets of Leadership: The Importance of Self- and Shared Leadership in Knowledge Work." *Organizational Dynamics* 34 (2005), 130–140.

[62] Prussia, G. E. et al., "Self-leadership and Performance Outcomes: The Mediating Influence of Self-efficacy." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 19 (1998), 523–538.

[63] Yammarino, F. J. et al., "Authentic Leadership and Positive Organizational Behavior: A Meso, Multi-level Perspective." *The Leadership Quarterly* 19 (2008), 693–707.

[64] Haslam et al. (2011).

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with changes. The perspective of leadership psychology is highlighted particularly during times of change and good performance, thus well-being and human experience are often put to the test.[65] Now leadership emphasizes how to influence humans, but is even more authentically and additionally keen on exploring humans and self, shared identity, affirmative bias and human interaction. Organisational changes require leaders to manage in a way that smoothly integrates people's values, needs, goals and resources. In case of leadership, Luthans and Youssef have indicated how positive state-like capacities such as hope and resiliency are more flexible and thus open to change and development.[66] Leadership deficiencies can reach a critical point during times of change, particularly when leadership psychology is not effectively applied. In the heavily changing and performance oriented mining industry, this might be why employee well-being often suffers during organisational change processes.

Further, as noted above in relation to authentic human experience, a psychological understanding of employees' inner worlds is not enough to foster well-being. The perspective of leadership psychology stresses that leaders have to understand employees in the work context.[67] Leadership, then, is irreversibly linked to group processes as leader and employees share the same experiences, even though the meanings they attribute to those experiences may differ.[68] Awareness of a group's (work community's, organisation's) unity and the variations within the group is important for the leader. Creating a functional social identity for working groups requires the leader to adopt a psychological perspective and cultivate a leadership style that supports both individual and collective well-being.

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[65] Syväjärvi, A. and M. Kesti, "Positive Human Tacit Signal Approach and Competence System Intelligence Model in Organization," 139–166 (2012); March, J.G. *The Ambiguities of Experience* (2010).

[66] Luthans, F. and C.M. Youssef, "Emerging Positive Organizational Behavior," *Journal of Management* 33 (2007), 321–349.

[67] e.g. Syväjärvi and Kesti (2012).

[68] Haslam (2011).

Positive Leadership Practice

In research, it is stated that positive attitudes should be emphasised in leadership practice (rf. positive leadership) in order to achieve excellent work performance.[69] Creativity and the focus on innovation involved in knowledge work require a positive state of mind and a strong state of well-being. Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions provides a framework that shows an association between positive affective states and developing the personal resources that are critical for well-being.[70] According to Fredrickson, positive emotions broaden the cognitive thought processes and build enduring personal resources that affect both psychological and physical well-being. According to this theory, fostering positive emotions in a knowledge-intensive organisation will help workers to be more creative.

Positive leadership is a promising approach to addressing the issues of well-being within the framework of positive psychology,[71] positive organisational scholarship[72] and a perspective on positive change.[73] Positive leadership aims to create an inspiring organisational climate where the strengths and resources of employees are highlighted. Positive leadership is a rare approach in current organizational life, where it is more common to focus on problems. We argue that a problem-based approach complicates the issues of well-being because it creates friction between employees and leaders. It is challenging for knowledge workers to maintain well-being when there is pressure to create new strategies, make detailed calculations and deliver results within a strict time frame. A positive leadership orientation can help employees to endure these conditions and improve their coping skills.[74] Fostering positive

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[69] e.g., Rego, A. et al., "Authentic Leadership Promoting Employees' Psychological Capital and Creativity." *Journal of Business Research* 65 (2012), 429–437; Syväjärvi and Kesti (2012).

[70] Fredrickson, B. L. "The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions." *American Psychologist* 56 (2001), 218–226.

[71] Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000).

[72] Cameron, K. S. et al., *Positive Organizational Scholarship – Foundations of a New Discipline* (2003).

[73] Cooperrider, D. L. and Srivastva, S. "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life." *Research in Organizational Change and Development* 1 (1987), 129–169.

[74] Fredrickson, 2001.

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leadership within an organisation can also enhance the creation of critical knowledge.

Positive leadership does not ignore negative interpretations given to work events, but recognises the value of the negative in creating exceptional results.[75] Difficult situations have the potential to activate outcomes that would never had happened otherwise. Thus, leaders who adopt a positive orientation integrate positive and negative attitudes, but seek solution-oriented energy and outcomes from both. In fact, all this is in the core of authenticity. Authenticity can be defined as owning one's personal experiences captured by the injunction to know 'oneself.' Moreover, the practice of positive leadership assumes that problems and conflicts in an organisation give employees a chance to reflect and learn about themselves and the group's dynamics.

Discussion

The aim of this paper was to study the well-being of knowledge workers in the mining industry. This was done in terms of leadership and contextualized by the arctic regions where the expanding mining industry is largely located. As the mining industry in the arctic regions is expanding, there exists a serious demand to find new qualified and committed knowledge workers. They have been identified as the key employee group for mining organizations. The research tasks were to reflectively analyze the two claims presented. First, it was stated that it is essential to understand the experiences of knowledge workers for being able to develop appropriate leadership practice in mining organizations. Second, it was expected that the positive approach to leadership practice focusing on the experiences of knowledge workers might be an effective means of enhancing employee well-being. By reviewing the previous and current research on the features of knowledge work and well-being at work, we presented an overall view of knowledge work in a mining organisation and the challenges to the well-being of knowledge workers operating in the arctic region. It is concluded that

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[75] Algera, P. M., and M. Lips-Wiersma, "Radical authentic leadership: Co-creating the Conditions under which All Members of the Organization Can Be Authentic." *The Leadership Quarterly* 23 (2012), 118–131.

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leadership aiming to enhance the well-being of knowledge workers benefits from the positive approach grounded in workers' integrative authentic experiences.

In recent years employee well-being has been a popular topic of discussion in organisations both in the private and public sectors. This is not a surprise as working life is constantly changing during the ongoing era of dynamic organizations. Employee well-being is the basis for any successful organisation, but we conclude that this need is emphasized in knowledge-intensive organisations. The main reason is that knowledge work and well-being as a phenomenon, as we theoretically perceive them, are grounded in the same human experiential character. In the context of work, knowledge is also formed in the reflective and self-reflective experiential acts of knowledge workers, and well-being is constructed through authentic experiences in their actual life settings, including the work environment. Therefore, it may truly matter if an employee is working in the mining industry located in the arctic. Empirical, especially phenomenologically-oriented research, is needed to find out how this special working environment is reflected in knowledge workers' authentic experiences of their well-being at work.

It is understandable that knowledge work is attractive work, given its opportunities to be creative and innovative. On the other hand, as we noted, knowledge work is also mentally demanding. It is thus vital for knowledge workers to find a functional balance between mental demands and self-care in order to create and maintain their well-being. Otherwise, there are no productive knowledge workers. Additionally, in the case of human resources and leadership it is vital to find out ways to produce loyalty, employee self-worth, psychological involvement, and feelings of being integral to the organizations; this is especially needed in the mining industry that is growing in arctic regions.

Leadership in a highly knowledge-intensive organisation differs from that in other organisations. However, in all organisations leaders should be able to inspire people, motivate them to want to do their job and let them know that the organisation appreciates the work they are doing. The leadership approach might have the power to shape the working environment and the possibilities for employees to flourish and do their best at work. Applying positive leadership

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principles to knowledge workers can open up new possibilities for understanding the structuring process of well-being in knowledge work. Implementing positive leadership practice is a multifaceted process that must integrate the issues of well-being, leadership practice based on authentic experiences, organisational goals, operational activities and follow-up, and include them in the organisation's strategy.

An examination of the concept of leadership is essential in complex organisations where there is goal-oriented activity and uncertainty. The perspective of leadership psychology helps to reveal the dynamic world of an organisation and its knowledge workers, and provide opportunities for reflection and learning. We assume that knowledge workers respect a leadership practice that is interested in and based on their authentic experiences. Regarding well-being at work, leadership psychology also emphasizes people's integrity, which lays a solid foundation for authentic well-being in an organisation.

To sum up, further attention must be paid to positive leadership, knowledge workers' authentic experiences and maintaining and creating both personal and work-related resources for well-being in knowledge-intensive organisations. From the organisation's point of view, it is essential that knowledge workers feel good, stay motivated and are devoted to their job because all of these factors affect the vitality of an organisation. From the knowledge worker's viewpoint, it is important that an organisation focus on their well-being by implementing a positive strength-based approach to leadership practice. According to a number of scholars, a positive orientation in leadership practice is more beneficial to both the organisation (productivity) and its employees (well-being) than focusing on weaknesses and problems.[76]

The positive approach in leadership psychology has been met with scepticism and suspicion by some critics. These critics imply that a focus on the

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[76] e.g., Clifton, D. O. and J. K. Harter, "Investing in Strengths" (2003); Cooperrider, D. and D. Whitney, *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry* (2007); Luthans and Youssef (2007); Kesti, M. *Strateginen Henkilöstötuottavuuden Johtaminen* (2010); Whitney D. and A. Trosten-Bloom, *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry* (2010); Lewis, S., *Positive Psychology at Work* (2011); Cameron (2012); Syväjärvi and Kesti (2012).

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positive is naïve; it ignores negative phenomena and produces unrealistic, delusional thinking.[77] However, the positive approach presented in this article requires hard work and dedication, and does not ignore negative events or experiences. The key is to perceive challenges as opportunities for growth and advancement, both for the employee and for the organisation. Open interaction between employees and leaders diminishes the harmful influences of negative experiences or events and establishes much-needed trust in an organisation.

We perceive that there is a place for a positive approach when studying knowledge workers' well-being. The positive approach has been applied abundantly in employee well-being research, but not in knowledge work research itself. This approach provides a new way of looking at the nature of knowledge-intensive work. Utilising the perspective of leadership psychology, the positive approach is expanded to analyse the integrative authentic experiences of knowledge workers. In our view, it offers a realistic platform for understanding what it takes to confront and to successfully lead workers in knowledge-intensive organisations like mining companies.

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[77] Ehrenreich, B., *Bright-sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America* (2009).

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