



# Journal of Health and Medical Sciences

**Smith, Andrew P, and Smith, Hugo N. (2019), Wellbeing at Work and the Lie Scale. In: *Journal of Health and Medical Sciences*, Vol.2, No.1, 40-51.**

ISSN 2622-7258

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1994.02.01.18

The online version of this article can be found at:

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Published by:  
The Asian Institute of Research

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# Wellbeing at Work and the Lie Scale

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## Abstract

This article describes the “Wellbeing Process” model which is based on the Demands-Resources-Individual Effects (DRIVE) approach developed in occupational stress research. This model requires measurement of many variables and this is often not practical with established questionnaires due to their length. In order to remove this problem a short questionnaire (the Wellbeing Process Questionnaire, WPQ) was developed and validated. This enabled the well-being process to be evaluated and established predictors of positive and negative appraisals and outcomes defined. Results using this measuring instrument in a range of samples from different occupational sectors will be described. One issue with measures of wellbeing at work is that they may be influenced by the extent to which the person aims to present a socially desirable profile or lie about their wellbeing. This was examined in the study presented here. The results showed that measures related to negative outcomes were associated with scores on the lie scale. In contrast, positive outcomes and “the good job score” (the difference between positive appraisals/outcomes and negative appraisals/outcomes) were not correlated with scores on the lie scale. This result demonstrates the suitability of the WPQ for investigating wellbeing at work.

**Keywords:** Wellbeing, Occupational Health, Lie Scale

## 1. Introduction

Our approach to wellbeing at work has been to consider it as a process. This was based on occupational stress research and the development of the Demands-Resources-Individual Effects (DRIVE) model (Mark & Smith, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2018a, 2018b). This model emphasised the importance of measuring potentially negative job characteristics, such as job demands, resources that help one deal with challenges, such as control and support, and individual differences in coping styles. A major feature of the model was that it is relatively easy to add new variables. This has led to the inclusion of positive outcomes, such as life satisfaction, positive affect and happiness (Smith, 2011a, 2011b; Smith & Wadsworth, 2011; Smith, Wadsworth, Chaplin, Allen, & Mark, 2011; Wadsworth, Chaplin, Allen, & Smith, 2010). These positive outcomes are generally referred to as wellbeing. Our approach to wellbeing has been to include both positive and negative job characteristics (e.g. demands, control and support), appraisals (e.g. perceived stress and job satisfaction), individual differences (e.g. positive personality and negative coping) and outcomes (anxiety/depression and happiness). Other variables that have been included in the model relate to ethnicity (Capasso, Zurlo, & Smith, 2016a, 2016b, 2018; Zurlo, Vallone, & Smith, 2018), psychological contract fulfilment (Ahmad, Firman, Smith, & Smith, 2018a, 2018b), resilience, burnout and work-life balance (Omosehin & Smith, 2019) and training attitudes (Nor & Smith, 2018).

The addition of many factors leads to very long measuring instruments which reduce compliance and take time to complete. The Wellbeing Process Questionnaire (WPQ - Williams & Smith, 2012, 2016, 2018a, 2018b; Williams, Pendlebury & Smith, 2017; Williams, Thomas & Smith, 2017) and the Smith Wellbeing Questionnaire (SWELL – Smith & Smith, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Fan & Smith, 2017a, 2017b, 2018) were developed based on the use of short items that were shown to be highly correlated with longer established measuring instruments. These short questionnaires have been shown to have good reliability and validity. As well as in extensive cross-sectional research, the WPQ has been used in longitudinal studies which provide a better indication of causality (Galvin, 2016; Nelson, 2017). One potential problem with all measures of wellbeing at work is the extent to which they are influenced by the person trying to give a favourable impression of themselves. This has led to the development of “lie scales” which provide the researcher with a measure that can be co-varied to adjust for favourable impression biases (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991; Framingham, 2019).

The aim of the present study was to examine whether associations between the predictor variables of the WPQ and outcomes were influenced by impression management (scores on the lie scale). These analyses were carried out for both positive and negative outcomes independently and combined into a single “good job” score (the difference between the positive outcomes/appraisals and the negative outcomes/appraisals).

## **2. Methods**

This study involved a survey of the well-being of university staff. It was carried out with the informed consent of the volunteers and approval from the ethics committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University. University staff (academic, technical and administrative) were recruited by an advert on the university noticeboard and were asked to complete an online survey presented using Qualtrics software. They were paid £10 for completing the survey, which is shown in Appendix 1.

### *2.1 Participants*

One hundred and fifteen members of staff (age range 21-60 years; 37 male; 66 single; 106 white British) completed the survey.

### *2.2 Measures*

The following measures were derived from the survey:

- Negative job characteristics
- Positive job characteristics
- Positive personality
- Negative coping
- Positive outcomes
- Negative outcomes
- Difference between positive and negative outcomes
- Lie scale score

### *2.3 Statistical analysis*

The above measures were dichotomised using a median split and logistic regressions carried out with the positive and negative outcomes, and the difference between them as dependent variables.

## **3. Results**

The first logistic regression carried out used negative outcomes as the dependent variable. The results are shown in Table 1 and there were significant effects of the lie scale and the absence of positive work characteristics.

Table 1. Significant predictors of negative outcomes

Variable	B	S. E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	CI lower	CI higher
Lie scale	1.087	.425	6.549	1	.010	2.214	1.290	6.821
Positive work	-1.097	.463	5.602	1	.018	.334	0.115	0.828

The second logistic regression used positive outcomes as the dependent variable. There were significant effects of positive personality and positive work characteristics. There was no significant effect of lie scale scores.

Table 2. Significant predictors of positive outcomes and the lie scale

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	CI lower	CI higher
Positive personality	1.703	.503	11.459	1	.001	5.489	2.048	14.710
Lie scale	.745	.520	2.054	1	.152	2.107	0.760	5.849
Positive work	2.361	.525	20.229	1	.000	10.605	3.790	29.676

The final regression used a composite wellbeing score (positive outcomes – negative outcomes) as the dependent variable. This again showed significant effects of positive personality and positive work characteristics but no significant effects of the lie scale.

Table 3. Significant predictors of wellbeing (positive outcomes – negative outcomes) and the lie scale

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	CI lower	CI higher
Positive personality	1.650	.472	12.216	1	.000	5.208	2.064	13.140
Lie scale	0.95	.479	.039	1	.843	1.100	0.430	2.810
Positive work	1.740	.498	12.189	1	.000	5.698	2.145	15.134

#### 4. Discussion

The development of the wellbeing process model has involved several stages. The first was the development of a conceptual framework based on the DRIVE model. This model included positive and negative job characteristics, appraisals and outcomes. In order to adopt a multi-variate approach it was important to measure a large number of different factors. To do this using many of the established questionnaires would have resulted in extremely long surveys which would have reduced compliance and would not be appropriate for many real-life situations. Short items were, therefore, developed and these were shown to be correlated with the longer measures from which they were developed. The reliability and validity of the WPQ was established in surveys involving different occupational sectors. One key feature of the DRIVE model is the ability to add new predictors and outcomes. Studies have investigated variables such as ethnicity and culture, resilience, work-life-balance, psychological contract fulfilment and burnout. Other similar measuring instruments (e.g. the SWELL) have included questions about the physical working environment (e.g. noise exposure), working hours, presenteeism, absenteeism and musculoskeletal disorders.

One area that has not been addressed is whether impression biases influence scores on the WPQ. This was examined in the present study and it was found that lie scale scores were related to the reporting of negative outcomes. In contrast to this, lie scale scores did not predict positive outcomes or wellbeing scores based on the difference between positive and negative scores. This result shows the importance of including both positive and negative measures in the questionnaire and suggests that a short lie scale is included in future research on wellbeing at work.

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## Appendix: The Survey

### Wellbeing

1. I have been feeling in good spirits (for example: I feel optimistic about the future, feel good about myself and confident in my abilities)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

2. I have been feeling good about my relationships with others (for example: Getting along well with friends/colleagues, feeling loved by those close to me)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

3. I have been feeling in control of my mood (for example: feeling energetic and interested when I need to be, but able to relax when I want to)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

4. I feel that I do not have the time I need to get my work done (for example: I am under constant time pressure, interrupted in my work, or overwhelmed by responsibility or work demands)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

5. I am satisfied with my relationships at work (for example: I get the respect I deserve from colleagues, I am treated fairly, I receive support when I need it)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

6. I feel that I have been rewarded for my efforts (for example: The respect, role, and job prospects I receive are suitable for my efforts and achievements)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

7. I find it difficult to withdraw from my work obligations. (For example: work is always on my mind, I find it difficult to relax when I get home from work, people close to me say I sacrifice too much for my job).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree				

8. I feel that my work is too demanding (for example: I have to work very fast, I have to work very hard, I have conflicting demands)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

9. I feel that I get adequate control over my work (for example: I have a choice in what I do or how I do things, I am able to learn new things, I am able to be creative)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly

10. I feel that I am supported by my colleagues (for example: there is a good atmosphere at work, I get along with my colleagues, my colleagues understand me)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly

11. I feel that I have been subjected to bullying in the workplace in the past 12 months (for example: unjustified criticism, verbal/non-verbal threats, violence, humiliation or exclusion)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly

12. I feel that I am not consulted about changes at work (for example: There is no opportunity to question managers about change, I am unclear about how change will work out in practice).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly

13. I feel that I don't understand my role clearly (For example: I am not clear of what is expected of me and what tasks I need to perform)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly

14. I feel that I get along well with my supervisor ( For example: I know where I stand in terms of their opinion of me, my supervisor understands me, my supervisor recognises my potential)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly

15. I feel that my supervisor supports me (For example: My supervisor helps me when I need it, my supervisor would use their power to help me)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly

16. Thinking about myself and how I normally feel, in general, I mostly experience positive feelings (For example: I feel alert, inspired, determined, attentive)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly

17. Thinking about myself and how I normally feel, in general, I mostly experience negative feelings (For example: I feel upset, hostile, ashamed, nervous)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Disagree strongly

Agree strongly



18. In general, I feel optimistic about the future (For example: I usually expect the best, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad, It's easy for me to relax)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

19. In general, I feel pessimistic about the future ( For example: If something can go wrong for me it will, I hardly ever expect things to go my way, I rarely count on good things happening to me)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

20. I am confident in my ability to solve problems that I might face in life (For example: I can usually handle whatever comes my way, If I try hard enough I can overcome difficult problems, I can stick to my aims and accomplish my goals)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

21. Overall, I feel that I have positive self-esteem (For example: On the whole I am satisfied with myself, I am able to do things as well as most other people, I feel that I am a person of worth)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

22. Overall, I feel that I have low self-esteem (For example: At times, I feel that I am no good at all, at times I feel useless, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

23. I feel that I have the social support I need (For example: There is someone who will listen to me when I need to talk, there is someone who will give me good advice, there is someone who shows me love and affection)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

24. I feel that I can provide the social support that others need (For example: There is someone who I listen to when they need to talk, there is someone who I can provide with help for their problems)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

25. When I find myself in stressful situations, I take a problem-focused approach (e.g. I take one step at a time, I change things about the situation or myself to deal with the issue, I don't let my feelings interfere too much).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

26. When I find myself in stressful situations, I look for social support (e.g. I talk to someone to get more information, I ask someone for advice, I talk to someone about how I'm feeling).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

27. When I find myself in stressful situations, I blame myself (e.g. I criticize or lecture myself, I realise I brought the problem on myself).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

28. When I find myself in stressful situations, I wish for things to improve (e.g. I hope a miracle will happen, I wish I could change things about myself or circumstances, I daydream about a better situation).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

29. When I find myself in stressful situations, I try to avoid the problem (e.g. I keep things to myself, I go on as if nothing has happened, I try to make myself feel better by eating/drinking/smoking).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

36. I prefer to keep to myself (For example: I don't talk much to other people, I feel withdrawn, I prefer not to draw attention to myself)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

37. I feel that I have an agreeable nature (For example: I feel sympathy toward people in need, I like being kind to people, I'm co-operative)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

38. I feel that I have a disagreeable nature (For example: I can be rude, harsh, unsympathetic)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

39. I feel that I am a conscientious person (For example: I am always prepared, I make plans and stick to them, I pay attention to details)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

40. I feel that I am laid-back about things (For example: I do just enough to get by, I tend to not complete what I've started, I find it difficult to get down to work)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

41. I feel that I can get on well with others (For example: I'm usually relaxed around others, I tend not to get jealous, I accept people as they are)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

42. I don't really get on well with people (For example: I tend to get jealous of others, I tend to get touchy, I often get moody)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

43. I feel that I am open to new ideas (For example: I enjoy philosophical discussion, I like to be imaginative, I like to be creative)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

44. I am not interested in new ideas (For example: I tend to avoid philosophical discussions, I don't like to be creative, I don't try to come up with new perspectives on things)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

45. On a scale of one to ten, how happy would you say you are in general?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely unhappy					Extremely happy				

46. On a scale of one to ten, how depressed would you say you are in general? (e.g. feeling 'down', no longer looking forward to things or enjoying things that you used to)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all depressed					Extremely depressed				

47. On a scale of one to ten, how anxious would you say you are in general? (e.g. feeling tense or 'wound up', unable to relax, feelings of worry or panic)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all anxious					Extremely anxious				

48. In general, how would you rate your physical health

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely poor					Extremely good				

49. Overall, how stressful is your life outside of work?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all stressful					Very Stressful				

### Hassles and Uplifts

Please take a moment to think about your daily life and your recent experiences (for example your daily tasks, your interactions with others, your thoughts about work or personal factors).

50. In the past week, how many of your experiences have been uplifting (i.e. made you feel happy or joyful, or gave a sense of satisfaction)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
None					All				

51. In the past week, how many of your experiences have been a hassle (i.e. irritated you, or made you upset or angry)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
None					All				

### Stressful Life Events

52. How much is your rating of life stress above influenced by one or more specific stressful life events (e.g. a death in the family, separation, family or financial crisis)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all					Very Much				

53. Overall, how stressful do you find your job?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all stressful					Very Stressful				

54. Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very Dissatisfied					Very Satisfied				

55. Overall, I feel that I am satisfied with my life (For example: In most ways my life is close to my ideal, so far I have gotten the important things I want in life)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disagree strongly					Agree strongly				

### Flourishing

56. I feel that I lead a purposeful and meaningful life (e.g. I am engaged and interested in my daily activities, I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others, I am a good person and live a good life).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree				

### **Lie Scale**

214. How often do you give a false impression of yourself?

Always    Often    Sometimes    Rarely    Never    I'd rather not say

215. If you say you will do something, do you always keep your promise no matter how inconvenient it might be?

Yes    No    I'd rather not say

216. Were you ever greedy by helping yourself to more than your share of anything?

Yes    No    I'd rather not say

217. Have you ever blamed someone for doing something you knew was really your fault?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

218. Are all of your habits good and desirable ones?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

219. Have you ever taken anything that belonged to someone else?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

220. Have you ever broken or lost something belonging to someone else?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

221. Have you ever said anything bad or nasty about anyone?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

222. As a child were you ever cheeky to your parents?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

223. Have you ever cheated at a game?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

224. Have you ever taken advantage of someone?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

225. Do you always practice what you preach?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say

226. Do you sometimes put off until tomorrow what you ought to do today?

Yes      No      I'd rather not say