

SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP: OPTIMISE WELLBEING & PERFORMANCE FOR THE LONG-TERM

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ABSTRACT

96% of leaders experience some degree of burnout during their career, and the knock-on effects of such a crisis are pervasive. The CEO of an organisation oversees all aspects of the business, playing a unique and essential leadership role in the workplace and yet the topic of CEO wellbeing has received little attention in the research literature.

AIM

Adopting an Applied Positive Psychology (APP) lens to this interpretative phenomenological analysis study (IPA), the data offers insights into how CEOs experience and recover from a crisis of wellbeing. In line with the APP approach, pragmatic elements were added in order to explore how CEOs may better manage and sustain their wellbeing now.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In-depth interviews with three male CEOs who had experienced a crisis of wellbeing were conducted. Participants were all working in the professional services industry in London at the time of crisis.

RESULTS

Three themes emerged: energy management, increased responsibility and relationships. This highlights the need for updated models of resilience and leadership to address these key areas. Data analysis also identified the potential for post-traumatic growth following a crisis of wellbeing. These results, and suggestions for future research, will be shared in an interactive format. 2

CONCLUSION

This paper challenges stigma and offers the first insight into PTG experienced by CEOs who have experienced a crisis of wellbeing. Furthermore, it provides a unique perspective on the importance of self-acceptance, self-awareness and energy management in resilience and leadership. This lays the foundation for a sustainable approach to leadership in which CEOs are empowered to sustain their wellbeing and support those around them to do the same. As we face a future which is unprecedented, CEOs are arguably under more pressure than ever. The knowledge garnered from this study is essential to enable CEOs and leaders to optimise the opportunities that lie ahead.

KEYWORDS

1. leadership 2. resilience 3. workplace wellbeing 4. post- traumatic growth 5. burnout 6. stress 7. psychological wellbeing

BIOGRAPHY

Charlotte Wiseman Charlotte is an organisational wellbeing consultant and leadership trainer known for her pioneering work in 'mental fitness'. It was her own personal journey overcoming chronic stress that first led her to explore applied positive psychology techniques in 2009. The changes she experienced were so inspiring that she left her long standing career to pursue an MSc in Applied Positive Psychology. Charlotte works with clients such as Soho House and Audible, to cultivate optimal wellbeing, performance and resilience in the workplace. She is a member of the BPS, IPPA, EMCC and has been featured in the Journal of Public Mental Health.