

# Mental health and well-being in the mining industry: A case study

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# Why is mental health important?

- Poor mental health has been linked with:
  - Increased stress and depressive symptoms
  - Burnout
  - Poor physical health (e.g., cardiovascular disease)
  - Overuse of alcohol
  - Physical inactivity & poor diet leading to obesity

# Why *Mental health*?

- More more than being free of distress or other mental problems.
- It is to possess self-confidence, mastery, positive relationships with other people, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, and feelings of continued growth and development.
- Well-being

(Ryff, 1989)

# Well-being

- Psychological well-being has implications for
  - individual health and happiness,
  - social cohesion,
  - economic productivity, and
  - the development or prevention of mental health disorders.

# Factors affecting Mental health in Mining - what we know...

- Increasing work pressures associated with productivity demands
  - 40% (N= 1058) said that the pace they were required to work impacted their levels of mental stress
- Working in remote locations often living away from families and access to support services.

# Factors affecting Mental health in Mining - what we know...

- Organisational characteristics, such as extended rosters, fly-in fly-out arrangements, and living on camp have been linked with
  - **Social isolation** (Carter & Kaczmarek, 2009)
  - **Stress** (Lovell & Critchley, 2010)
  - **Relationship strain** (Parker et al., 1997)
  - **Poor help-seeking behaviours** (Collis, 1999)

# But...

- Information on mental health issues in mining has focused almost exclusively on FIFO contexts
- What about local mines?
  - Are there positive mental health stories in mining and what can we learn from them?

# Who we talked to

- **Participants**

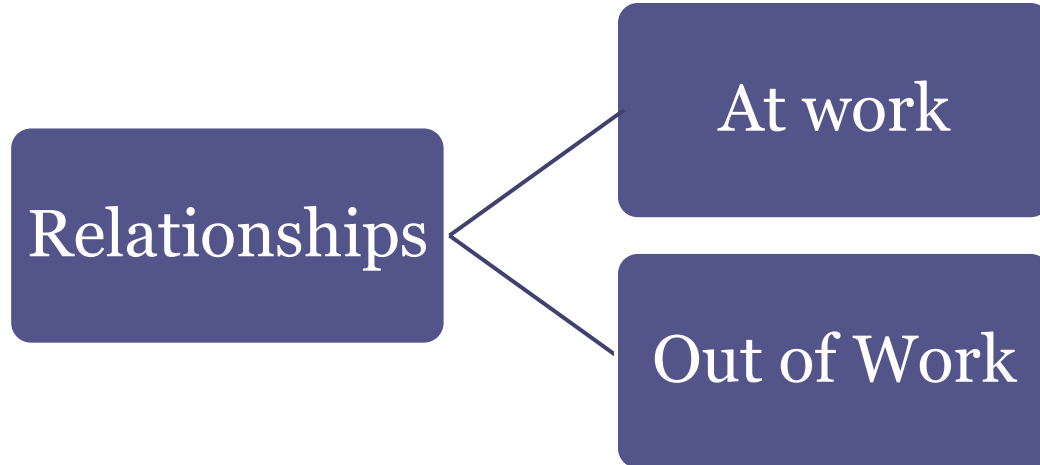
- Ten mine workers (9 male) with an average age of 43.6 years
- Working an average of 8.5 years in the industry (range 11 months-30+ years)
- Four workshop, six production
- Eight workers lived less than an hour from site with two choosing to stay in town and travel home for the weekend
- Three of the workers held supervising roles



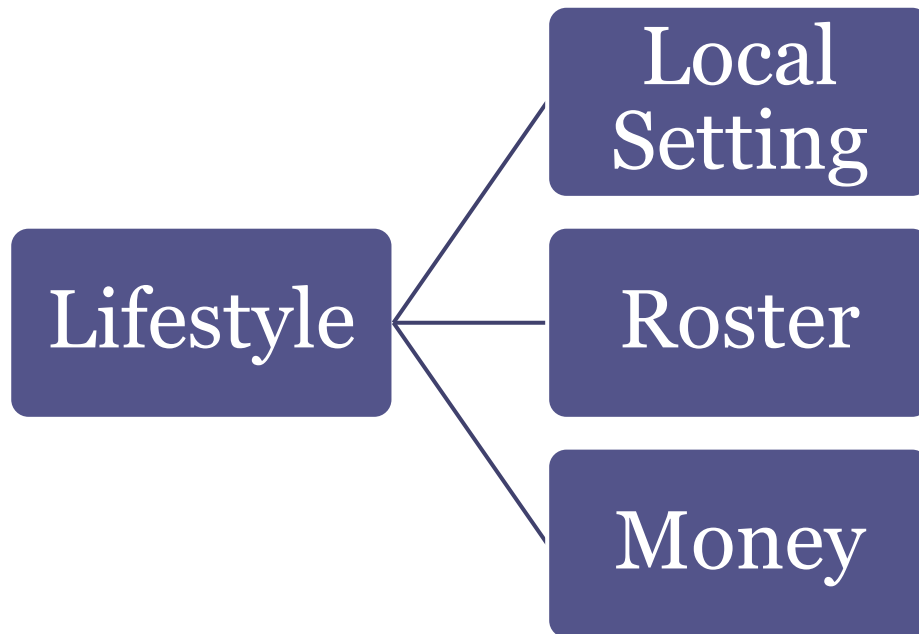
# 4 key themes emerged from the data

1. Relationships,
2. Lifestyle,
3. Work characteristics, and
4. Mental health status

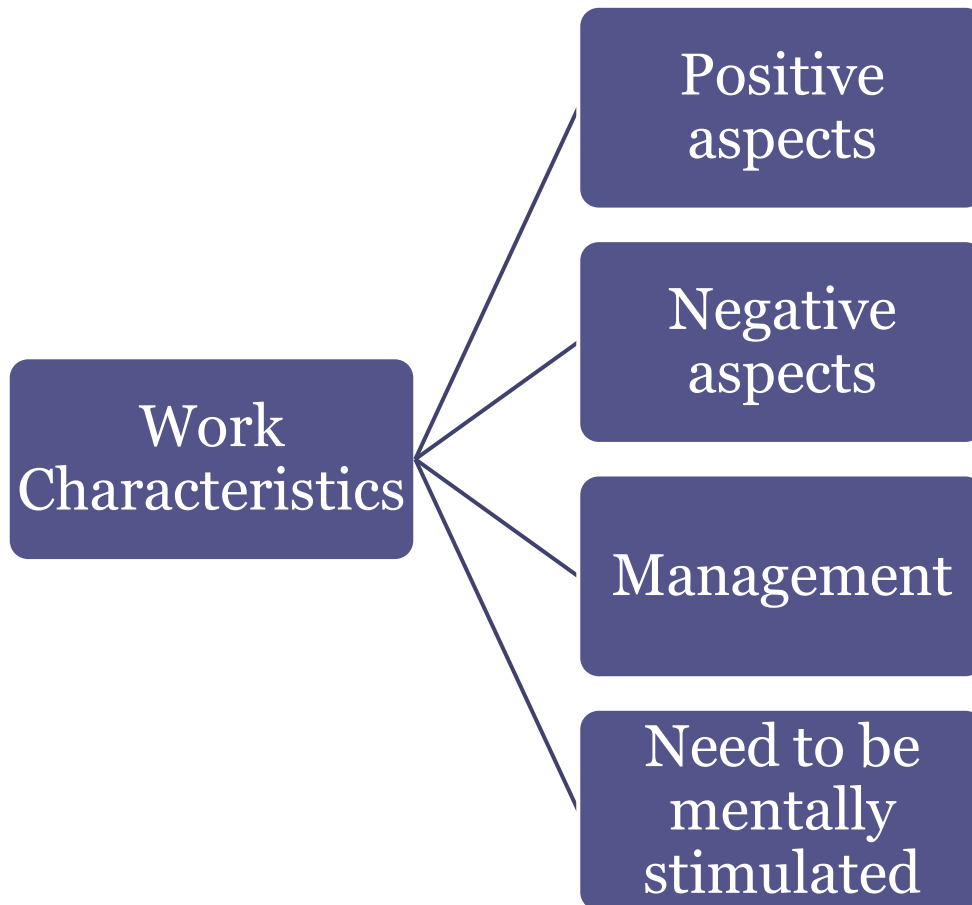
# *Relationships*



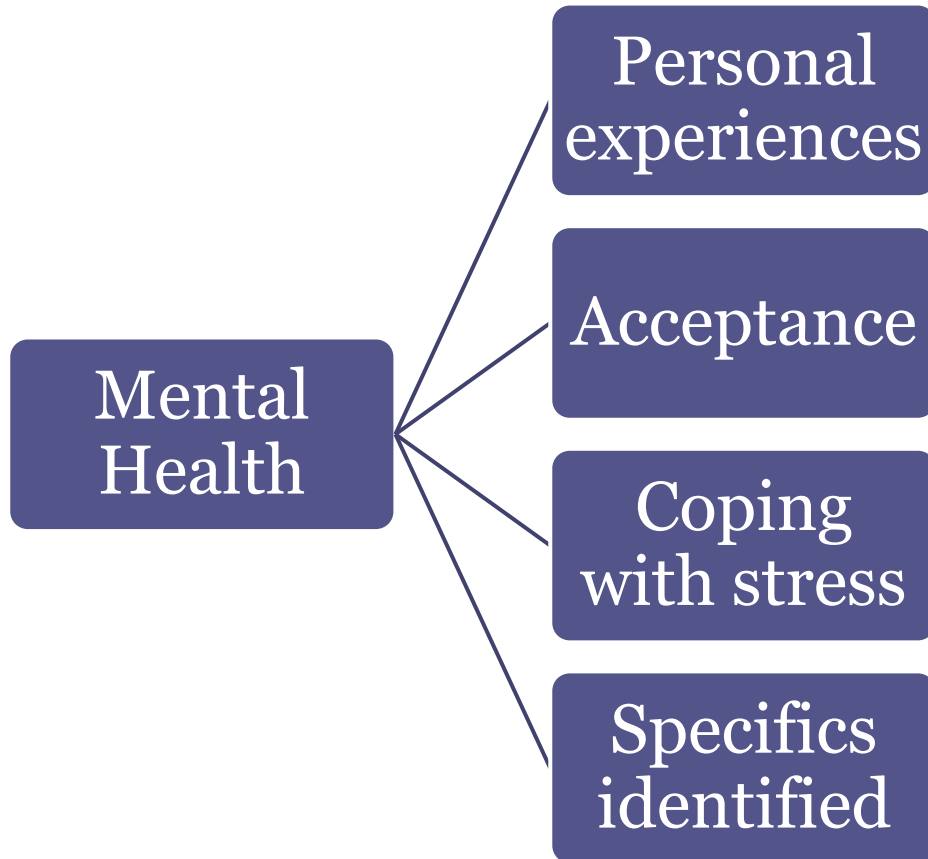
# *Lifestyle*



# Work Characteristics



# *Mental Health*



- Overall, those miners who subjectively rated their happiness and mental well-being more highly expressed more satisfaction with indicators of well-being.
- In particular on this site,
  - Self-acceptance
  - Positive relations with others
  - Environmental mastery
  - Autonomy

# Implications

- Workplace culture
  - Closeness built on local connections - friendship
  - Management who are respected
- Policy
  - Rostering which allows adequate sleep on night duty and time with family and friends
- Support for mental health issues
  - Built on trust between colleagues
  - Knowledge that supervisors are willing to be supportive and accommodating

# Some challenges to research in mining...

- On a particularly loud piece of machinery...
  - *Have you ever been injured?*
  - Have I ever what?
  - *Been injured?*
  - Injured?
  - *Yep.*
  - Here?
  - *Yes.*
  - No.
- *So if you had to describe your perfect manager or supervisor, what would that look like?*
  - Angelina Jolie.



# Conclusions

- Mining need not be hazardous to your mental health
  - Importance of time with family
  - Adequate sleep
  - Camaraderie on site between workmates and respect for bosses
    - However while we can learn from the positives, building a supportive framework for mental health needs to be based on the strengths of each individual site
    - **How healthy and happy is your site??**

“A few of us are complete nutters but that keeps the morale up”

Thank you