

LINE MANAGER BEHAVIOUR: A PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK FACTOR IN THE WORKPLACE



A line manager's behaviour is a psychosocial risk factor

because:

- Employees face daily exposure to this potential hazard
- Employees' thoughts and feelings about themselves and the workplace are affected
- Employee mental health and wellbeing are directly impacted
- There is potential for serious harm

Poor Management Style

- Low emotional regulation (acting angry)
- Using emotional manipulation (guilt, shame, fear, etc) to control employees
- Not putting effort into building relationships
- Lack of care for employees
- Lack of respect for employees
- Not respecting personal time and boundaries

Research indicates that...

- 1 More than 80% of employees say they would rather have good mental health than a high-paying job.¹
- 2 Two-thirds of employees would take a pay cut for a job that better supports their mental wellness.¹
- 3 Work stress negatively impacts employees' home life (71%), wellbeing (64%), and relationships (62%).¹
- 4 Support from line managers is one of the key resources that can help prevent the risk of stress and burnout.²
- 5 Employees who work for a bad manager were up to 60 per cent more likely to suffer a heart attack, stroke or other life-threatening cardiac condition.³

Organisational Impact

When organisations say they care about mental health, but tolerate poor management behaviour, employees lose trust and confidence in their organisation.

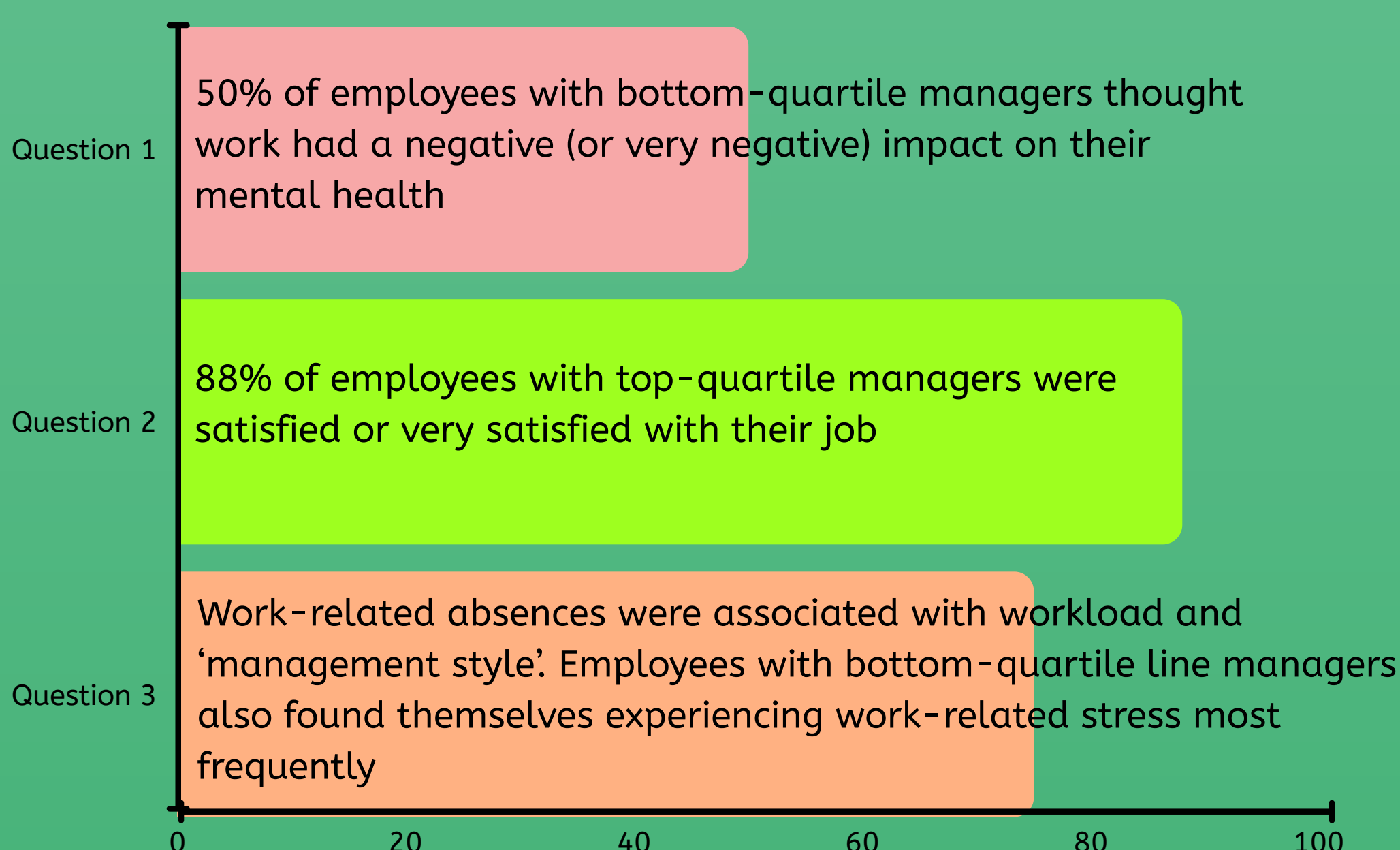
50% of employees quit their job to "get away from their manager" at some point in their career.⁴

Expected Line Manager Behaviour

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) identified line manager behaviours that support health, wellbeing and engagement:

- being open, fair and consistent
- handling conflict and people management issues
- providing knowledge, clarity and guidance
- building and sustaining relationships
- supporting development.

CIPD surveyed around 6000 employees² who rated their line managers on these behaviours. Analysis of this research revealed that poor line manager behaviour has significant negative impacts on employees:



Conclusion

"Employers need to think carefully about how they recruit and develop managers at all levels to ensure they are equipped with the people management skills needed to manage people effectively."

-Ben Willmott, head of public policy at the CIPD

Because a line manager's behaviour and the culture they create has a major impact on employee wellbeing, organisations should be considering ways to better support and guide managers.

Line managers require education, training and coaching in people skills just as much, if not more, as technical skills because poor line manager behaviour is a psychosocial risk factor.

Key Sources & Acknowledgements

1. 2025 UKG Mental health at work: Managers and Money.
2. 2023 CIPD Survey Report - The Importance of People Management: Analysis of its Impact on Employees. May 2023
3. Nyberg, A. (2009). The Impact of Managerial Leadership on Stress and Health among Employees. Karolinska Institute.
4. Gallup, 2015. State of the American Manager: Analytics and Advice for Leaders.