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Occupational Health Psychology, Job Stress, and Absenteeism: Stress Reduction as an Absence Management Strategy

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Goals

- Discuss the emerging field of Occupational Health Psychology (OHP)
- Discuss how OHP can help organizations reduce stress and create safer and healthier work environments leading to fewer absences
- Present examples of OHP research and interventions that illustrate the effects of work-family stress on health and safety of workers

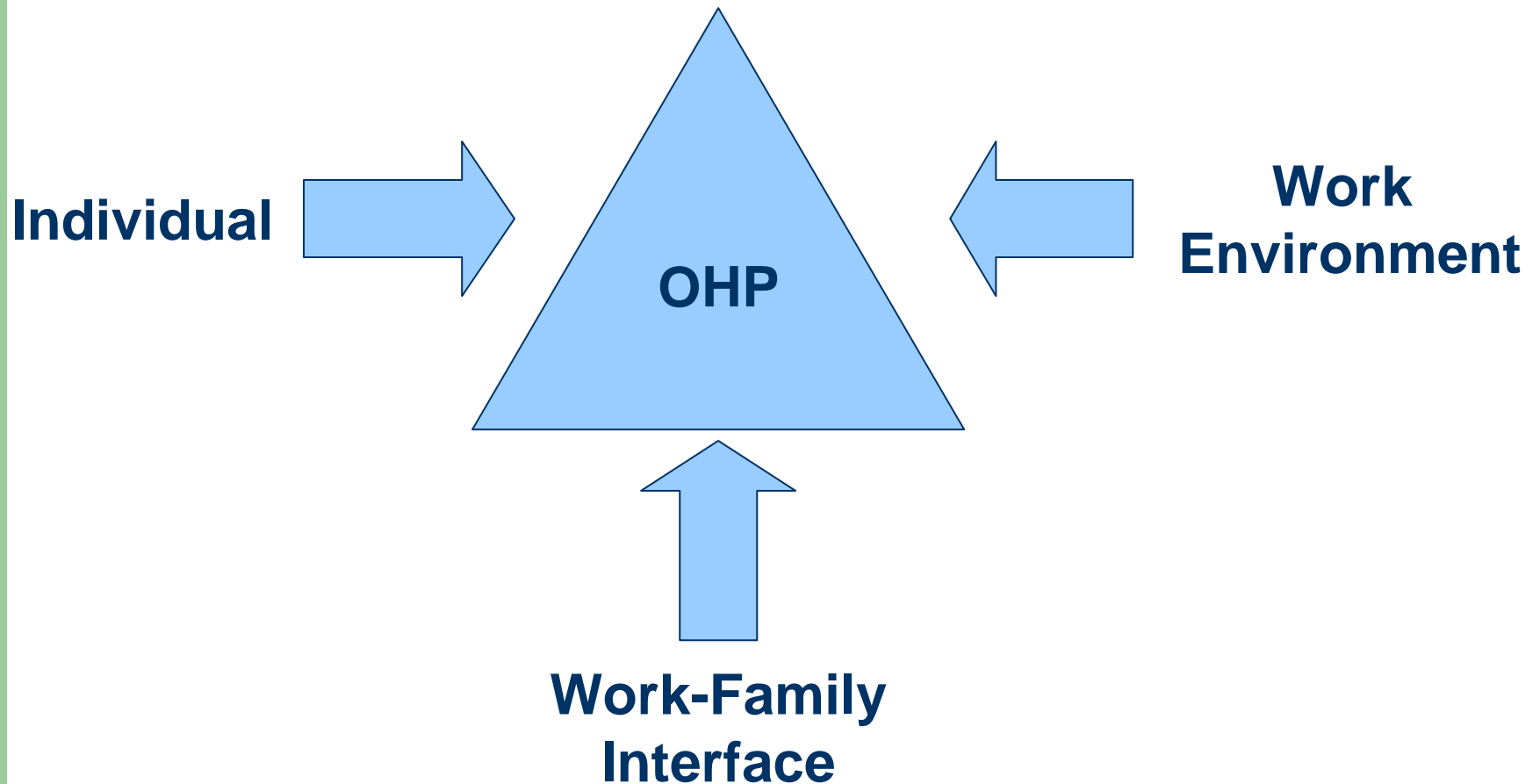


What is Occupational Health Psychology (OHP)?

- The application of psychology to improving the quality of work life and to protecting and promoting the safety, health and well-being of workers.
 - Sauter, Hurrell, Fox, Tetrick, & Barling, 1999



OHP Focuses on Individual and work environment and work-family interface



Negative Effects of Stress

- **High stress results in:**
 - ↑ Blood Pressure
 - ↑ Coronary Heart Disease
 - ↑ Immune system dysfunction
 - ↑ **Sick days**
 - Longer wound healing
 - Activation of latent viruses
 - Dysfunctional response to bacteria



How Does Stress Affect the Workplace?



- High stress = More sick days, greater risk for serious medical condition
- More health risks = Lower productivity
- Depression = Sick days, job loss, low productivity

Socio-demographic Changes



More Women in the Workforce

More Dual-Earner Couples

More Older Workers

More Diversity in the Workforce



Work-Family Conflict (WFC)

Work-Family Positive Spillover

Work-Family Conflict

- Work-Related Causes
 - Hours worked
 - Job Stress
 - Work Family Culture
 - Work Supports
 - Family Supportive Supervisory Behaviors

Work-Family Conflict Outcomes

- Absenteeism (+)
- family stress (+)
- turnover intentions (+)
- substance abuse (+)
- family, marital, job, and life satisfaction (-)
- organizational commitment (-)
- performance (-)

Work-Family Conflict and Health

- Psychological Health Outcomes
 - Psychological Strain
 - Depression
 - Burnout
 - Mood and Anxiety Disorders
- Physical Health Outcomes
 - General Health
 - Blood Pressure
 - CHD

Work-Family Positive Spillover

- Potential Causes of Positive Spillover
 - Job and Parent Involvement
 - Spouse support
 - Decision latitude
 - Resources such as Skills and perspectives, psychological and physical resources, social-capital resources, flexibility, and material resources

Outcomes of Positive Spillover

- Physical Health
 - Fewer Chronic conditions, overall well-being
- Mental Health
 - General Mental Health
 - Depressive Symptoms
 - Problem Drinking
 - Sleep Quality

How to Alleviate W-F Conflict

Formal & Informal Supports

- Child/elder care resource & referral services, flexible work scheduling, job sharing, perceived managerial support, work-family climate for sharing
- **Family-Friendly Culture** →
 - If the overarching org. philosophy is sensitive to the family needs of employees
- **Managerial Work-Family Training**
 - WFH Network Study

New Directions in Work and Family

WFC Reduction and Primary Preventions

- Increasing control over when and where work is done helps to alleviate such stress (e.g., Kelly & Moen, 2007),
- Providing supervisor support for work and family can reduce work-family conflict (Hammer et al., 2008)

Evaluation of a Work-Life Supervisor Support Training Intervention to Affect Worker Health

- Dr. Leslie B. Hammer, Portland State University
 - Dr. Ellen E. Kossek, Michigan State University
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Overall Project Goals

1. To identify critical family-supportive supervisor behaviors –to develop a measure of family supportive supervisory behaviors (FSSB) and to provide manager's with management tools
2. Develop and evaluate a training and self-monitoring intervention for supervisors to increase their family supportive supervisor behaviors
3. To examine the effects of training supervisors in family-supportive behaviors on worker **health, safety, family, and work-related** outcomes

Overview of Study

- **Focus groups** with workers and supervisors
- Face-to-face **survey data** collection from workers and supervisors at 12 grocery stores from one company; baseline data on work, family, safety and health outcomes and **objective health data (sleep and BP)**; spouses surveyed and children interviewed
- **Pilot training and self-monitoring intervention and evaluation**

Supervisor Sample

- Baseline Data: $N = 76$
 - 37 Males (49%); 39 Females (51%)
 - 98.7% White
 - Mean age is 44 years
 - A total of 40 managers were trained
- Evaluation Data: $N = 79$
 - 43 Males (54%); 36 Females (45%)
 - 97.5% White
 - Mean age is 44 years



Worker Sample

- Baseline Data: $N = 360$
 - 97 Males (27%); 262 Females (73%)
 - 91.7% White
 - Mean age is 38 years
- Evaluation Data: $N = 240$
 - 54 Males (22%); 186 Females (77%)
 - 92.1% White
 - Mean age is 39 years



Family Supportive Supervisory Behaviors (FSSB) Construct Development: 4 facets

- **Emotional/Social Support for family**
- **Structural/Tangible Support with scheduling conflicts**
- **Model Healthy Work-Family Behaviors**
- **Think Strategically about Work/Life Issues**

Family Supportive Supervisory Behaviors Construct (FSSB) Development: 4 facets

- **Emotional Support for family**

- Increase face to face contact; ask how employees are doing
- Communicate genuine concern about work/life challenges
- **Sample:** My supervisor takes the time to learn about employees' personal needs.

- **Instrumental Support with scheduling conflicts**

- Encourage employees to share schedule needs and constraints with supervisors and to learn new skills/jobs to increase their ability to fill different positions
- **Sample:** I can rely on my supervisor to help me with scheduling conflicts if needed.

Family Supportive Supervisory Behaviors (FSSB)

Construct Development: 4 facets

- **Work-Family Role Modeling**

- Show how you are taking care of your own work/life challenges
- **Sample:** My supervisor is a good role model for work and nonwork balance.

- **Creative Work-Family Management**

- Communicate and be knowledgeable about work/life programs (e.g., EAP)
- Think about department as a whole and relationships with other departments
- **Sample:** My supervisor is able to find ways to work with employees to meet both the needs of employees and the business.

Training Intervention Research Design

- Randomized selection of stores
 - 6 intervention sites and 6 control sites
- Intervention - 40 supervisors trained on supervisory supportive behaviors (FSSB facets)
 - Training (computer-based (cTRAIN) and face-to-face)
 - Supervisor self- monitoring
- Post-training data collection—evaluation



Preliminary Findings

- Baseline Survey: preliminary analyses indicated that workers who are supervised by family-supportive managers are more likely to experience:
 - lower levels of work and family conflict
 - higher job satisfaction
 - lower intentions to turnover
 - higher reports of physical health



Video: A Better Way to Work

Website:

<http://www.kpchr.org/workfamilyhealthnetwork/public/default.aspx>

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