Editorial

Addressing Risks: Mental Health, Work-Related Stress, and Occupational Disease Management to Enhance Well-Being

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In this special issue, Biomed Research International, section Public Health, decided to investigate the link between workers’ health and work-related stress, and occupational disease management to enhance well-being.

The literature indicates that mental health and work-related stress are an increasing concern and that the management and mitigation of psychosocial risk require an interdisciplinary approach [1, 2]. In the recent international literature, mental health problems are associated with new and broader sources of work-related stress which can increase an individual’s vulnerability to more serious mental health issues as well as physical and psychosomatic complaints. In addition, there is evidence of the detrimental impact of work-related stress and mental health issues on workers’ health and safety, particularly with regard to cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and employee well-being [3, 4].

After a peer review process involving international experts, the 13 papers accepted in this special issue are empirical contributions that highlight the importance of a contextualized health approach to occupational environments. These contributions from a broad group of authors from different disciplinary sectors (organizational psychology, occupational medicine, management, nursing, medicine, epidemiology, mathematics, and mental health) represent a significant heterogeneity of countries (Asia, Australia, Eastern-Europe, Northern-Europe, South Africa, and Southern-Europe). Thus, this special issue reflects an international research perspective, which is vital for the progress of science in the field of psychosocial risk and mental health.

We highlight the importance of interdisciplinary contributions as the relationships between health sciences and work and organizations are underestimated compared to the importance given to the more general and contextualized approach of clinical health science. The concept of healthy workers in dynamic organizations that face constant issues (i.e., aging workforce, economic turbulence, and digital communication/technologies) appears to be more related to job conditions. In all of the contributions published, the concept of work contextualized health seems to emerge strongly. More than before, organizations make a critical difference when it comes to their employees’ health and well-being, as they ultimately shape and contribute to their welfare.

Consequently, this special issue complements the majority of studies on mental health themes conducted in clinical, neuroscientific, and psychiatric contexts, which usually led to a person-centered analysis or research conducted in artificial laboratory settings, by offering a more ecological approach that focuses on the importance of the dimensions of “work, organizations, and occupations” in determining employees’ health and well-being. Indeed, trauma and diseases related to stress and mental health that originate in the workplace...
may have a different pattern of development or require an
organization-centered treatment approach, including field
and intervention studies.

In that sense, eight out of the 13 articles published in
this special issue examined (a) antecedents and consequences
of health problems and work-related stress, while five articles
provided (b) organizational strategies and interventions to
improve health and well-being. A brief summary of each paper
is presented below.

Regarding the antecedents of employees’ health and well-
being, S. García-Herrero and colleagues investigated occupa-
tional stress in a sample of 2,211 healthcare workers derived
by the sixth European Working Condition Survey (EWCS)
in their paper “The Influence of Recognition and Social Sup-
port on European Health Professionals’ Occupational Stress:
A Demands-Control-Social Support—Recognition Bayesian
Network Model.” Using a Bayesian network analysis, the
authors indicated that emotional demands have a greater
impact on stress due to workload than family demands.

In the article, “Exploration of the Association between
Nurses’ Moral Distress and Secondary Traumatic Stress Syn-
drome: Implications for Patient Safety in Mental Health Ser-
dices,” M. Christodoulou-Fella and colleagues investigated
work-related moral distress (MD) and secondary traumatic
stress syndrome (STSS) in association with compromised
health status among health professionals. Remarkably, sit-
uations that may lead health professionals to be in moral
distress seem to be principally associated with the work
environment.

Also, M. Iorga and colleagues in the article “Factors
Influencing Burnout Syndrome in Obstetrics and Gyneco-
logy Physicians” addressed environmental and individual
antecedents on burnout syndrome among obstetric and gyneco-
logy physicians. Interestingly, both the posture adopted
during medical interventions and their long working hours
had important negative effects on physicians’ well-being.

In the article “Leadership and Bullying in the Forestry
Organization of Turkey,” M. M. Bayramoğlu and D. Tok-
soy examined bullying prevalence and antecedents in 1,189
forestry engineers working at 25 different Regional Direc-
torates of Forestry in Turkey. Their results have important
implications for bullying acceptability and awareness, which
are crucial factors in the emergence of bullying in workplace
settings.

Concerning the consequences of psychosocial risks in the
workplace on both psychological and physiological health
indicators at the individual level, X. Liu and colleagues in
the paper “The Risk Factors of High Blood Pressure among
Young Adults in the Tujia-Nationality Settlement of China”
concluded that hypertension has increased in China’s South
West province of Hubei during the last years. An interesting
finding is that one of the main risk factors of such increased
hypertension is associated with work: being a blue collar
employee who works in rural areas.

In a similar vein, M. U. Javaid and colleagues, in the
paper “Does Psychosocial Work Environment Factors Predict
Stress and Mean Arterial Pressure in the Malaysian Industry
Workers?” investigated the influence of psychosocial work
environment factors on the health of Malaysian workers in
the petrochemical industry. According to the Job Demands-
Resources theory, their results revealed that psychosocial

demands predicted stress and increased mean arterial pres-
sure. These findings are particularly relevant because mental
health problems and work-related stress are hot topics in the
Asia-Pacific region.

In addition, stress-related issues in workplace settings
are also associated with indirect indicators of organizational
productivity. For example, S. Berlanda and colleagues in
the article “Dissatisfaction in Child Welfare and Its Role in
Predicting Self-Efficacy and Satisfaction at Work: A Mixed-
Method Research” highlighted the key role of psychosocial
factors such as interpersonal trust and mutual respect in pre-
dicting professional self-efficacy and job satisfaction among
child welfare workers.

The article by M. Vignoli and colleagues “Workplace
Phobic Anxiety as a Mental Health Phenomenon in the Job
Demands-Resources Model” examined the emerging concept
of workplace phobic anxiety in a nonclinical context using
the Job Demands-Resources Model. As well as increasing
an awareness of workplace phobic anxiety as a relevant
psychosocial risk at work, the results are particularly inter-
esting for increasing an organization’s productivity because
workplace phobia was found to be linked to absenteeism.

On the other hand, five articles focused on interventions
in order to improve employees’ health and well-being.

First, in the paper “Interventions: Employees’ Perceptions
of What Reduces Stress,” S. Pignata and colleagues examined
qualitative information from 419 Australian employees about
what measures they perceived to be effective in reducing
stress among the strategies implemented at their universities.
Their conclusions highlight the importance of implementing
diverse multilevel strategies ranging from teaching protective
coping strategies to individuals, introducing changes in job
roles, and increasing recognition at the organizational level.

In an interesting longitudinal study titled “Long-Term
Effectiveness of a Stress Management Intervention at Work:
A 9-Year Follow-Up Study Based on a Randomized Wait-
List Controlled Trial in Male Managers,” J. Li and colleagues
offer evidence on the long-term effectiveness of an 18-hour
psychotherapeutic stress management intervention (SMI) in
the workplace over a 9-year period. This intervention, rooted
in the solid theoretical framework of the Effort Reward
Imbalance (ERI) model of work stress, seems to be a promis-
ing and inspiring tool for developing work contextualized
mental health programs.

The paper “Exposure to Workplace Bullying: The Role
of Coping Strategies in Dealing with Work Stressors” authored
by W. Van den Brande and colleagues pointed out the inter-
action between work stressors (i.e., workload, job insecurity,
role conflict, and role ambiguity) and employees’ coping
strategies (i.e., problem- and emotion-focused) in predicting
exposure to workplace bullying. Their results identified a
potential prevention area at both individual and organiza-
tional levels.

Y.-T. Ke and colleagues, in the paper “Posttraumatic
Psychiatric Disorders and Resilience in Healthcare Providers
following a Disastrous Earthquake: An Interventional Study
in Taiwan,” argued that posttraumatic psychiatric disorders
were common in healthcare providers following a medical response to an earthquake. However, the introduction of an early intervention that added muscle and mental relaxation tools to the more classic psychotherapeutic measures increased employees’ resilience and reduced posttraumatic stress symptoms one month after the natural disaster in Taiwan.

Finally, the results from the study by Z. Gong and colleagues “How to Apply Feedback to Improve Subjective Wellbeing of Government Servants Engaged in Environmental Protection in China?” showed that supervisor feedback, through the fulfillment of basic psychological needs satisfaction, played a key role in increasing the subjective well-being of government servants engaged in environmental protection roles. The implications are particularly relevant in high power distance cultures.

In conclusion, we hope that this special issue will inspire academics and practitioners to consider addressing the specific organizational aspects that may be created or exacerbated by work rather than overestimating individual behavior, personality, and psychiatric syndromes. Well-being lies not only in the person, but also in the organization in which s/he works.

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