

## Well-Being at Work – In Context

### Understanding how work impacts on health and well-being: The role of the organizational context

The Work and Organizational Psychology (WOP) Research Unit at Nottingham Trent University has commenced a 2.5 year research project on the aetiology of work-related health and well-being. The research is supported by the Economic & Social Research Council's First Grant Scheme (Grant Number RES-061-25-0344).

The aim of this work is **to understand how the organizational context impacts on work-related health and well-being.**

We know a lot on how the immediate job characteristics (for example, job demands, job control, variety, and autonomy) can affect work-related health and well-being. However, our knowledge on how broader organizational factors (for example, policies and procedures, change, and the social climate) can impact on such outcomes is limited. Organizations are inherently complex and hierarchical in nature. Taking into account the broader organizational context can help to better understand employee health and well-being.

This research is innovative in that it looks beyond the impact of the immediate work environment and seeks to estimate the impact of the broader organizational context on health and well-being. It will achieve its aim by taking a multilevel and longitudinal approach, looking at multiple levels of analysis (job characteristics and organizational context) across multiple time points. This will help to disentangle causes from effects and to help improve the quality of working life of the UK working population.

This work fits with the wider national policy and research agendas related to health and well-being at work to: (i) understand and improve the quality of working life, (ii) contribute towards developing an evidence-based policy agenda, and (iii) provide businesses with the knowledge and tools to manage employee health and well-being.

#### The Research Team

Dr Maria Karanika-Murray is leading the investigation and Dr George Michaelides is managing the project. Maria and George have conducted research for the Health & Safety Executive, the Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council, the European Commission/European Agency for Safety & Health at Work, and a number of national and international industry partners and businesses.

The research team is supported by a steering group of international experts in the areas of work and health. This includes Dr Nadine Mellor (Health & Safety Laboratory), Dr Marc van Veldhoven (Department of Human Resource Studies, Tilburg University, the Netherlands), and Professor Kevin Daniels (Loughborough University Business School).

The project has the support of the Health & Safety Executive (Dr David Riley), and the Local Government Employers' National Health & Safety Policy Adviser (Steve Sumner OBE).

### **Methodology and Data Collection**

Data will be collected by means of an online survey which includes questions on demographics, the organizational context, the job itself, leadership, and outcomes (job satisfaction, absenteeism, turnover intentions, motivation, performance, and well-being). Research instruments will be available for inspection at organization on request.

The survey will be administered online and participants will be asked to complete the survey four times within a year. Administering the survey more than once is essential for establishing cause and effect relationships. The survey should take about 15-20 minutes to complete and respondents will be able to stop and start again at a later time.

Information about the project (posters, announcements) will be circulated to employees with a direct link to the online survey. This can be done directly using employee mailing lists or indirectly by forwarding an email with the link to employees.

### **Ethical Issues and Data Protection**

It is important to collect accurate data at all data collection points without compromising the identity of the respondents and of the organizations.

Participation in the project is voluntary and participants can choose to end the completion of the survey at any time or withdraw their participation two weeks after they completed the questionnaire. All responses will remain confidential and will be viewed only by the researchers for analytical purposes.

Data stored electronically will be anonymised, so that no individual can be identified, and stored on the researchers' password-protected computers at the University. The names of participating organizations in any feedback, reports, or publications will be used only after organizations have consented to it.

The data collected through the survey will be analysed using multilevel statistical techniques for longitudinal data in order to answer the main questions of the project.

The project has obtained ethical approval and the researchers adhere to the ethical principles of the British Psychological Society and follow its Guidelines for Professional Practice and Conduct.

### **Benefits for organizations**

Summative feedback on the aims of the study will be provided in the form of an executive summary from the final project report to participating organizations. This overall feedback will be provided at a mini-conference for stakeholders in September 2011.

In addition, if requested by the organization, a tailored detailed report on health and well-being outcomes and the factors that can affect these can be developed. The level of feedback and content of the report will be agreed with each of the organizations. This tailored feedback can include:

- (i) descriptive analysis of health and well-being outcomes,
- (ii) breakdown of the results across the various departments or sites, and/or
- (iii) examination of the factors that can affect these health outcomes.

The assessment of job characteristics, the organizational context, and work-related outcomes can be used as part of organizations' risk assessment and management

activities. As such, this project is in accordance with the HSE's Management Standards for work-related stress.

Finally, organizations taking part in this research project will be able to use the questionnaire developed for the project in the future.

As an outcome of the project, we aim to develop practical guidelines for the end users on the management of work-related health and well-being. These could greatly contribute to both academic knowledge and the practitioner community's efforts to improve the quality of working life for employees in the UK. They could also help UK businesses to implement health and well-being friendly practices, and to design sustainable interventions to improve well-being and job satisfaction, reduce absenteeism, and increase performance.

### **Invitation to Participate**

We would like to invite you to take part in this project. Your involvement in this project will help us to develop needed knowledge on the causes and management of health and well-being at work. We would welcome your participation.

### ***The Research Team***

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