

Book Review

Ana Maria Rossi, James A. Meurs, Pamela L. Perrewé, eds. 2014. *Improving Employee Health and Well-Being*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc. \$39.00. pp. 215. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-62396-517-4.

This slender paperback publication is the fourth volume in a series titled *Stress and Quality of Working Life*. It addresses the topic of employee health and well-being and does so through the eyes of a select group of knowledgeable, academic authors. Through the 12 chapters that comprise this work, the "... multi-disciplinary group of experts ..." (p. vii) offers an international perspective on how individuals, organizations, and societies can create healthier workplaces for employees. The book is divided into three sections. Section I includes six chapters and focuses on the role of the individual in organizational stress and well-being. Section II contains two chapters and examines the social aspects of occupational stress. Section III is comprised of four chapters and addresses the role of prevention and intervention in the workplace. The following material is drawn from select chapters with the purpose of demonstrating the type and flow of content that one will encounter in each section of the book.

The first chapter in Section I explores politics in the workplace and the resulting effects on personal well-being. Authors Christopher C. Rosen and Daniel C. Ganster present a framework "... that (a) explains how exposure to workplace politics affects employee health and well-being over time and (b) identifies factors that serve to mitigate these influences" (p. 4). Rosen and Ganster explore three streams of research: perceptions of organizational politics, political behavior, and political skill. The authors use these three factors to explain employee stress and the mitigating factors that can result in a less stressful work environment for employees. As an example, if the actual or perceived political environment of a given organization is deeply rooted in the organizational culture and is not minimized, Rosen and Ganster posit that employee health may seriously deteriorate: "... employees who work in highly political contexts may experience chronically high levels of inflammation, elevated resting blood pressure, and harmful changes to their metabolic system that may be detected by high body mass index numbers, elevated cholesterol and triglycerides, and

changes in insulin and glucose tolerance” (p. 12). Employees may find they can mitigate these negative factors by exerting control over their work environment. Some employees are naturally skillful politically and are therefore able to successfully cope within a politically charged environment. Employees who are not as politically competent must learn the skills and then apply them when needed.

The balance of Section I includes chapters with a similar emphasis on the well-being of the individual within the workplace. For example, in Chapter 3, Raphael Henrique C. Di Lascio focuses on the difference “... between sense and meaning of work with quality of working life, as well as to understand to whom quality of working life is most relevant—the employee or the employer” (p. 35). Parts of this chapter specifically address employee well-being and satisfaction as it relates to the quality of working life.

The two chapters that constitute the smaller Section II shift the reader’s attention from the emphasis on personal work-related stress to the larger role of the social aspects of occupational stress. An effective example of the social content included in this section is found in Chapter 8. Marcos Weiss Bliacheris spotlights the socio-environmental responsibility required in public policy administration in Brazil. “Just as there is a search for a more environmentally sustainable world, people and businesses are being required to take attitudes that are not only environmentally but also socially more just, which is also being demanded of public administration” (p. 120). Bliacheris offers a list of relevant international texts along with national legal frameworks that address general environmental issues.

The just, socio-environmental world for which Bliacheris advocates improves employee quality of life by “... taking measures to promote a physical environment with safe, healthy work; adopting measures for the evaluation and control of the air quality in air-conditioned environments ...” (p. 125) along with replacing noisy equipment and making “... employees sensitive to sustainable practices with dissemination via the intranet, posters, labels, and newsletters ...” (p. 125). Citing employee training, Bliacheris suggests that employee health and well-being can be achieved through a coordinated effort between the employer and its employees. The information in this chapter is an effective counterpoint to the topic of oppression at work, which is the subject of the other chapter in Section II.

In Section II, Chapter 7, author José Viera Leite notes that “[i]t is not work in itself that oppresses people who work, as we often think, but rather the way it is structured” (p. 103). Leite’s discussion examines aspects of work such as ineffective, authoritarian supervisors, and low wages as issues that likely create “... disenchantment by the workers ...” (p. 104) and suggest overall oppressive management styles and structures. Both Bliacheris and Leite speak to matters that are external to the employee; however, Bliacheris attends to the physical environment while Leite deals with the emotional inner aspect of the employee.

Section III spotlights the role of prevention and intervention in the quality of working life. Chapter 9 tackles the problematic subject of workplace violence using a risk management approach. The chapter addresses such issues as the creation of antiviolence policies and the safety management of the physical

workplace. Chapter 10 focuses on noncommunicable or chronic diseases. These diseases "... are the leading cause of death worldwide and have caused high numbers of premature deaths, loss of quality of life, and a high degree of limitation in work and leisure activities" (p. 153). The authors discuss behavior modification in the workplace to aid in reducing risk factors, thereby promoting health rather than illness. Chapter 11 examines quality of life and self-care topics among a specific group of Brazilian civil servants. This chapter contains a good amount of statistical analysis causing it to be a more complicated chapter to read and digest.

The twelfth and last chapter in the book is representative of this third section as it addresses job stress prevention. Authors Joseph J. Hurrell, Jr. and Steven L. Sauter draw important stress-related conclusions from the current stress prevention literature. They focus on four levels of prevention: individual level, job level, organizational level, and supra-organizational level. On the individual level, health promotion, stress management, and treatment are discussed. On the job level, job design and redesign are examined, and training is cited as a method "... to reduce job stress by addressing the job context" (p. 195). On the organizational level, the authors review organizational culture, leadership, and work/life balance. The last level of prevention, supra-organizational, addresses higher-level concerns such as prevention regulation, prevention standards, disability, and new directions in the prevention of job stress.

This newly published volume from the *Stress and Quality of Working Life* series contains a collection of brief, straightforward, and academically oriented chapters that successfully tackles the topic of employee health and well-being from various perspectives. Editors Rossi, Meurs, and Perrewé have effectively compiled independently written chapters that logically flow from the individual micro level to the social and legal macro level. Both academicians and corporate managers will gain a useful awareness of how employee health and well-being is currently studied and analyzed and how to use this information to design programs and procedures that can potentially improve the health and well-being of employees.

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