Work, Stress, and Well-Being

Frank Landy, James Campbell Quick, and Stanislav Kasl

Work-related stress may lead to injuries and psychological disorders. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has identified psychological disorders as one of the ten leading work-related diseases and injuries during the 1980s (Sauter, Murphy, & Hurrell, 1990). This article sets out a framework, strategy, and recommendations for enhancing stress management skills and the psychological well-being of individuals in occupational environments. Central to the strategy are attention to work design variables, such as control, uncertainty, conflict, and task demands, surveillance of psychological disorders in the workplace, education of managers and workers concerning psychological well-being and stress in the workplace, and treatment of individuals in distress.

KEY WORDS: stress; surveillance; work design; prevention.

INTRODUCTION

This article sets out a strategy for enhancing worker psychological well-being and for preventing psychological disorders in the workplace. The first section addresses exogenous and endogenous work design variables. The second section addresses the surveillance of psychological disorders in the workplace. The third section addresses mental health promotion and distress prevention. A systems view for understanding the issues addressed in these three sections in the context of work and well-being is set out in Fig. 1. The final section of the article addresses public and organizational policy initiatives as
well as work re-design, education, and treatment interventions in the workplace. These policies and interventions influence whether the interaction of the individual with the work environment results in strain or in adjustment and well-being.

**STRESS, STRESSORS, AND STRAIN**

In our treatment of stress in the workplace, we have adopted a convention intended to distinguish between the objective events, conditions, and work demands/characteristics that trigger worker reactions, the workers' immediate reactions, and the workers' secondary reactions. We refer to the antecedent or contributory variables as stressors/demands and the immediate consequent and/or secondary worker reactions as strains. The term stress is simply used to refer to the broad domain of research and intervention related to work and well-being.

A recurring "question" in stress research and theorizing has been the extent to which stress is a product of the environment (e.g., "stressors") and the extent to which strain results from organismic variables that are attributed to the individual (e.g., vulnerability caused by Type A behavior pattern). Endogenous factors represent the latter approach. Our position will be that exogenous variables (e.g., work design) and endogenous variables (e.g., TABP) interact to produce strain.