EFPA Work and Organization Working Group

Report 2021-2023 #2

2.1 Individual level interventions

Resilience (by Fruzsina Szécsényi)

In the psychological literature, resilience is described as an individual's resistance in the face of stressful life events (Bengel & Lyssenko, 2012). Initially, resilience was referred to as a stable personality trait. However, it was increasingly emphasized that resilience should not be viewed as a character trait, but rather refers to a process that is modifiable through interventions (Lehr et al., 2018; Rönnau-Böse & Föhlich-Gildhoff, 2020).
In their review, Forbes and Fikretoglu (2018) showed that the majority of the 92 resilience trainings included were neither grounded in scientific concepts and were hardly differentiable from anti-stress trainings. Therefore Sonnenmoser (2018) suggests that resilience trainings should be designed in the context of a specific stressor. They should also be resource-oriented and strengthen one or more modifiable resilience factors, such as self-efficacy or optimism. The theoretical foundation should be heterogeneous and include various methods, including those of cognitive behavioral therapy or mindfulness-based procedures (Sonnenmoser, 2018).

Self-efficacy (by Roberta Fida)

Promoting self-efficacy is also another important area for individual level interventions. Work self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform and succeed in specific work-related tasks or situations. It is a key component of self-efficacy, which is a person's belief in their ability to accomplish goals in various domains of life. Work self-efficacy is influenced by a person's experiences, skills, knowledge, and social support, and it can have a significant impact on job performance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. People with higher levels of work self-efficacy are more likely to take on challenging tasks, persist in the face of obstacles, and feel more confident and satisfied in their work. According to recent studies work self-efficacy should include several dimensions such as task self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy, social self-efficacy and moral self-efficacy (Barbaranelli et al., 2018; Fida et al., 2022; Fida, Laschinger, et al., 2018; Fida, Paciello, Tramontano, Barbaranelli, et al., 2015; Paciello et al., 2016, 2022).
A recent study conducted in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fida et al., 2022) involved 393 full-time employees and they were assessed three times from January 2020 to January 2021. The results of the study showed that work self-efficacy had a protective role in promoting wellbeing during the pandemic. Specifically, higher levels of work self-efficacy were associated with lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, at 6 and 12 months

from the beginning of the pandemic. The protective effect of work self-efficacy was found to be consistent across the year-long study period, indicating its enduring impact on wellbeing.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a form of attention that helps individuals pay attention to the details of their experiences without judgment or the need to immediately change them. According to Michalak et al. (2018), mindfulness is not just a technique to improve personal well-being, but rather a conscious lifestyle choice. The primary characteristics of mindfulness-based practices involve training in mindfulness to increase concentration on the present moment. This includes enhancing awareness and consciousness of the present moment, as well as transitioning from the "doing mode" to the "being mode" and being able to recognize and interrupt build-up processes in the mind.

The large body of scientific research (e.g., Kohn, 2018) has led to mindfulness also being accepted as an effective method in business, as mindfulness has a positive effect on attention, among other things (Chang-Gusko et al., 2019). Improved emotion regulation through mindfulness-based interventions results primarily from awareness and acceptance of personal feelings (Kohn, 2018). In addition, mindfulness meditations are said to establish a practice of individually cultivating alertness, compassion, and wisdom to better manage stress, pain, and chronic illness (Kohn, 2018). Study findings further suggest that motivations to begin a personal mindfulness practice are predominantly in support of mental health and stress management (Jiwani et al., 2022).

Mindfulness and meditation can benefit well-being through various mechanisms, including changing brain wave activity and improving attention (Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Siegel, 2007). These mechanisms can also affect other areas such as emotional intelligence and information processing (Chaskalson, 2011). Mindfulness in the workplace is particularly relevant to interpersonal interactions, such as conflict management and prosocial behaviors (Blume et al., 2010). However, the challenge of transferring mindfulness training to daily work life is recognized, and the benefits can be categorized into attentional, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological domains (Good et al., 2016). Mindfulness could also enhance leadership effectiveness by promoting resilience and well-being as well as reducing anxiety and burnout (Donaldson-Feilder, Lewis & Yarker, 2019).

The research conducted by Pang and Ruch (2019) showed how to combine Mindfulness and Character Strengths (such as love of learning and appreciation of beauty) into a training program called mindfulness-based strengths practice (MBSP). The study indicates that integrating character strengths can counteract the potential decline in motivation that might result from practicing mindfulness alone. Therefore, if the primary goal is to enhance job performance, incorporating character strengths in addition to mindfulness training may be beneficial. While practicing mindfulness alone appears to be more effective for improving psychological well-being in the workplace, combining character strengths with mindfulness can positively impact motivation levels and consequently improve task performance.

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2. 2. A narrative examination of the role of work and organizational psychologists in promoting engagement (by Delia Virga)

According to the meta-analysis conducted by Virga et al. (2021), human resources experts should consider implementing interventions that focus on soft skills development and positive psychology in order to enhance work engagement. The study also found that combining different techniques, such as CBT and relaxation or mindfulness and relaxation, can be effective in boosting work engagement. The authors recommend a short intervention, lasting up to two weeks, that utilizes positive psychology methods or soft skills training. Additionally, they suggest having brief reminder sessions, such as two-hour sessions per month, to refresh employees' knowledge of the intervention content and address any questions. This "ideal" intervention is more likely to result in increased work engagement. Essentially, during soft skills training interventions, participants focus on developing positive relationships with colleagues, improving communication processes and empowerment, and learning coping skills. Positive interventions also aim to enhance personal effectiveness by training participants to develop personal resources such as optimism, efficacy beliefs, hope, and resilience (Ouweneel et al., 2013; Mastenbroek et al., 2015). Participants may view this intervention as exercises to improve their positive feelings towards themselves (Rizzato,

2014) or to reframe their thinking towards positive outcomes and beliefs (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012). To ensure ongoing effectiveness, periodic follow-up meetings can be conducted online by HR specialists to refresh participants' knowledge and clarify any issues or problems. These meetings can optimize the implementation of the intervention in work engagement.

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