

Occupational Health Psychology Employer Report

The Occupational Health Psychology Program

Occupational Health Psychology (OHP) is a relatively new field dedicated to promoting, maintaining, and improving physical, psychological, emotional, and mental health and well-being at work.

The OHP program at the University of Houston is an inter-departmental endeavor that draws on the knowledge of experts from the Departments of Psychology, Management, Industrial Engineering, and School of Law. Between April and July 2002, the Department of Psychology conducted a curriculum development survey intended to capture concerns of Houston-area employers; its purpose was to compare and contrast areas of employer interest with the OHP program curriculum. As a participant on this survey, we are providing you with this report summarizing the results of the survey.

Overview of Report

This report is presented in two sections. The first section addresses general background information regarding the participants and survey methodology. The second section addresses results of the employer survey and includes three components: a) the extent of employer concern for various OHP-related issues, including top employer concerns, b) the extent to which employers provide OHP-related services and programs to employees, and c) a description of organizational OHP-related structure. Within each section, industry differences are presented.

Section I – Participants and Methodology

Participants

Employer surveys were mailed to a random sample of HR managers or other key informants if no HR manager was listed in the Dunn and Bradstreet database. Small firms were over-sampled to insure sufficient representation. Of the 864 firms invited to participate, 143 surveys were returned for a response rate of 17%. One hundred and thirty-four surveys were returned due to incorrect or incomplete addresses.

The organizational sample consisted of nine industries: the goods producing industry (i.e. manufacturing, food processing and trucking) included 19.6% of the sample; retail/service and education comprised 16% and 15.5%, respectively; and the remainder of the sample was divided closely between six industries (i.e., construction, energy, government, medical, professional/consulting, and community service/religious). The median firm size was 55 employees.

Measures

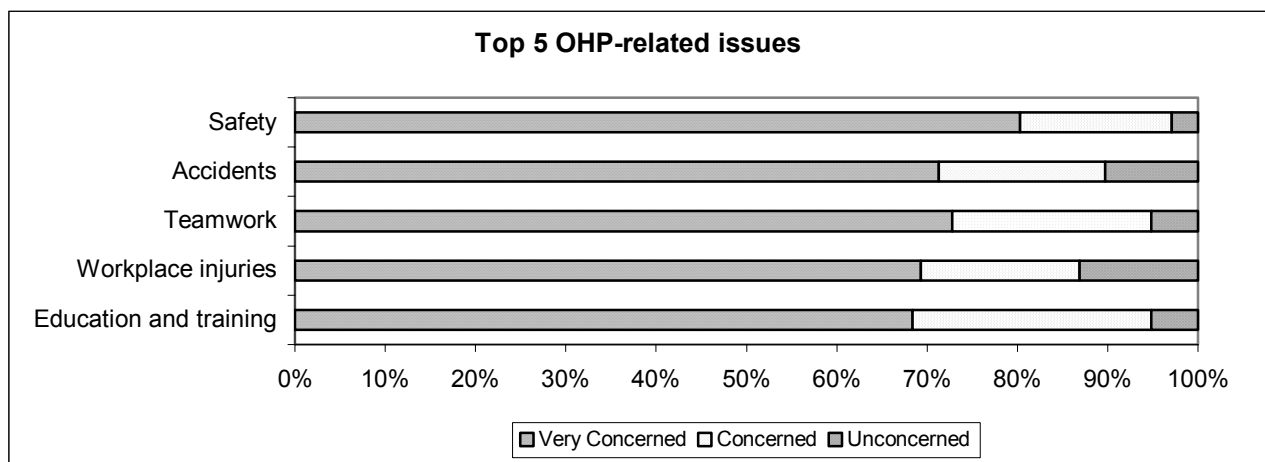
A survey was created to assess employer interest and involvement in OHP-related issues. The survey required participants to rate the extent to which his/her organization was concerned with

various OHP-related issues on a 6-point Likert-type scale (from 'not at all' to 'a very great extent'). In addition, the survey assessed the number of OHP-related services and programs offered by the employer, the structure of OHP-related staff within the organization, and the extent to which the organization was interested in collaboration with the University of Houston.

Section II - Results

Part A: Employer Concerns

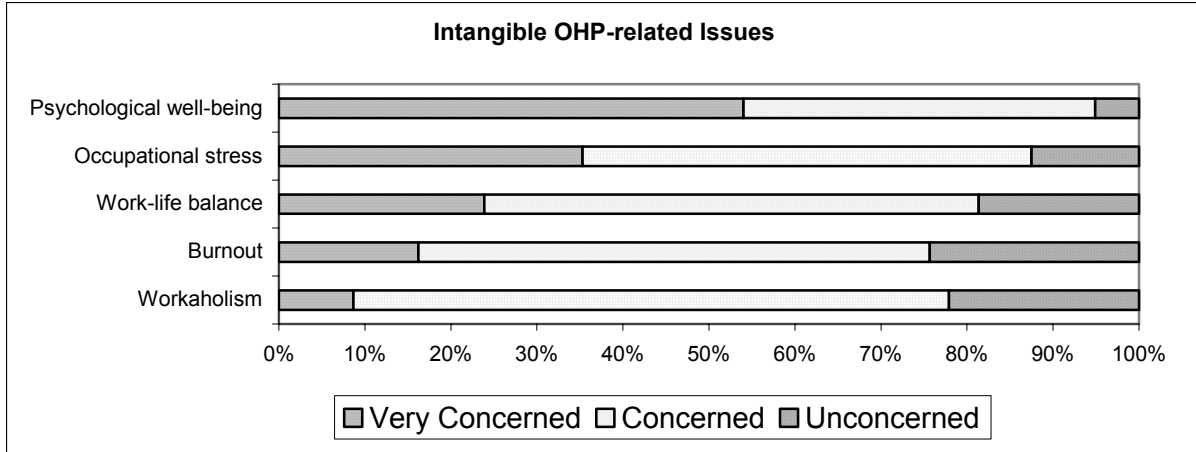
Appendix A presents the average extent of concern with all OHP-related issues and Appendix B displays the frequency of responses for all OHP-related issues; OHP-related issues are listed in descending order. The chart presented below displays the top five OHP-related issues among all respondents. As shown below, an overwhelming majority of organizational representatives indicated that they were very concerned about issues relating to physical health and well-being of employees; three of the top five OHP-related issues (safety, accidents, and workplace injuries) were identified as relating to tangible aspects of the job. In fact, only 1 participant reported that his/her organization was 'unconcerned' with safety and accidents.



Surprisingly, results indicated that there were few industry differences regarding the top five OHP-related issues. All industries (except education) rated accidents, safety, and teamwork among their top three OHP-related issues. One exception to this finding was in the area of education, with participants ranking education and training, changing technology, and occupational stress as the most important OHP-related issues. There was consensus regarding OHP-related issues given the least priority among organizations: globalization, workaholism, and the aging workforce were all rated as of little to no concern to the organization.

In sharp contrast to the consensus regarding concern for tangible aspects of employee health, there was less agreement among organizations regarding the extent of concern for intangible issues. The chart below displays the extent to which participants reported that their organizations were concerned about intangible issues. A cursory examination of the Top 5 OHP-related issues chart and the one presented below indicates that 1) organizations are less concerned about intangible issues than tangible ones, and 2) there is more variability in responses regarding intangible issues than tangible ones. It is interesting to note that only 55%

of organizational respondents reported that they were 'very concerned' with the intangible OHP-related issue rated as most important (i.e., psychological well-being) whereas 68% reported that they were 'very concerned' with the tangible OHP-related issue rated as least important (i.e., education and training).



Statistical analyses supported the preliminary contention that organizations are more concerned with tangible OHP-related issues than intangible ones. Two composite scores were formed by calculating the average amount of concern for tangible OHP-related issues (e.g., accidents, safety, and workplace injuries) and intangible OHP-related issues (e.g., burnout, occupational stress, and work-life balance). Results indicated that tangible issues (average = 4.11) were of greater concern to organizations than intangible issues (average = 3.05).

Part B: Services

Services provided by an organization typically reflect the issues about which it is most concerned. The table presented below displays the percentage of organizations that provide the services and programs to 1) no employees, 2) some employees, and 3) all employees.

Results are moderately consistent with those presented in Part A. Tangible issues seem to take precedence over the intangible ones because services relating to safety and medical insurance are provided to more employees than are programs relating to psychological issues such as stress management and social skills training. However, it should be noted that a number of other services (e.g., job training programs) that cannot be readily categorized as factors relating to tangible or intangible aspects of employee health are offered frequently. In addition, other factors such as the size of the organization affect its ability to provide services to employees.

	Do not offer	Offer to some employees	Offer to all employees
Child care assistance	82%	6%	12%
Educational assistance	26%	26%	48%
Elder care assistance	87%	3%	9%
Employee involvement programs	43%	18%	35%
Flexible work schedules	30%	45%	24%
Health risk assessment	62%	11%	25%
Job training programs	16%	28%	55%
Medical insurance	2%	9%	88%
Preventative health training	56%	15%	33%
Safety training	9%	21%	76%
Social skills training	68%	22%	12%
Stress management training	59%	26%	18%
Wellness/fitness programs	53%	12%	33%

Data indicated that industry differences did not affect the most frequently provided services and programs. Of the nine industries surveyed, the services most often provided were medical insurance and safety training. Similarly, there was consensus regarding the services given the least priority as reflected by provision of services: stress management, social skills training, and elder and child care assistance.

Part C: Organizational Structure

The organizational structure portion of the questionnaire assessed 1) the extent to which organizations employ personnel that work in the area of employee health and well-being, and 2) the extent to which organizations employed specific employee health professionals. Results were consistent with the services provided. That is to say, most organizations employ individuals to maintain employee medical-related benefits and physical safety. Similarly, the majority of employee health professionals were employed in the area of benefits/compensation. Also consistent with results presented earlier, organizations seem to place more emphasis on tangible aspects of employee health than intangible ones; only 36% of responding organizations have a department devoted to psychological health. There were no differences between industries.

Employee Health Professional	Percentage of Employers Employing
Benefits/Compensation Personnel	83%
Industrial Hygienist	17%
Occupational Doctor	16%
Occupational Health Psychologist	11%
Occupational Nurse	19%
Organizational Development Specialist	17%
Safety Engineer	40%

Function	Percentage of Employers Providing
Physical health of employees	44%
Psychological health of employees	36%
Health-related benefits	88%
Environmental quality	58%
Safety	93%
Security	81%

Appendix A

Extent of Concern with OHP-related Issues

OHP-related issue	N	Average	SD
Safety	137	4.28	1.10
Accidents	136	3.95	1.35
Teamwork	136	3.87	1.11
Workplace Injuries	137	3.78	1.50
Education & Training	136	3.76	1.13
Employee Commitment	136	3.76	1.10
Physical Well-Being	136	3.59	1.03
Psychological Well-being	137	3.48	1.09
Attendance	136	3.39	1.42
Changing Technology	136	3.29	1.26
Turnover	136	3.25	1.39
Work Load	135	3.19	1.09
Occupational Stress	136	3.04	1.18
Work Schedules	134	3.04	1.33
Work Pace	134	3.01	1.21
Work-Life Balance	134	2.78	1.25
Burnout	137	2.75	1.39
Retirement	134	2.74	1.22
Diversity	133	2.73	1.46
Family Issues	135	2.73	1.10
Alcohol/Drug Abuse	135	2.70	1.62
Workplace Violence	136	2.62	1.67
Work Design	133	2.57	1.27
Skills Obsolescence	131	2.55	1.28
Career Planning	131	2.53	1.28
Disability Compensation	135	2.52	1.38
Job Security	134	2.52	1.40
Ergonomics	132	2.42	1.20
Aging Workforce	137	2.09	1.31
Workaholism	134	2.02	1.24
Globalization	133	1.74	1.36

Appendix B

Frequency of Concern with OHP-related issues

OHP-related issue	N	Not at all	A very small extent	A small extent	Some extent	A great extent	A very great extent
Safety	137	1	3	9	14	26	84
Accidents	136	1	13	7	18	29	68
Teamwork	136	0	7	11	19	55	44
Workplace Injuries	137	5	13	10	14	32	63
Education & Training	136	3	4	8	28	57	36
Employee Commitment	136	3	4	5	32	58	34
Physical Well-Being	136	1	3	14	41	51	26
Psychological Well-being	137	1	6	16	40	51	23
Attendance	136	4	15	15	27	40	35
Changing Technology	136	5	10	13	41	47	20
Turnover	136	4	13	25	27	37	30
Work Load	135	1	8	25	46	41	14
Occupational Stress	136	1	16	23	48	33	15
Work Schedules	134	6	13	23	37	38	17
Work Pace	134	5	10	26	42	40	11
Work-Life Balance	134	6	19	18	59	20	12
Burnout	137	10	17	28	38	30	14
Retirement	134	8	14	23	57	24	8
Diversity	133	13	18	18	40	31	13
Family Issues	135	3	15	36	49	26	6
Alcohol/Drug Abuse	135	16	20	24	27	25	23
Workplace Violence	136	18	23	24	23	24	24
Work Design	133	8	22	28	42	27	6
Skills Obsolescence	131	9	20	28	46	20	8
Career Planning	131	12	16	30	40	30	3
Disability Compensation	135	9	26	31	36	21	12
Job Security	134	13	20	27	44	18	12
Ergonomics	132	9	23	28	53	14	5
Aging Workforce	137	21	26	27	49	10	4
Workaholism	134	16	33	33	39	10	3
Globalization	133	33	29	24	35	10	2