

Rapid Fire Session
What's Work Got to Do With It?
Evaluating EAP user feedback on job stress and other working conditions

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Evaluating EAP user feedback on job stress and other working conditions

Marc Milot, PhD
Director, Principal Researcher/Consultant
WorkReach Solutions
APAS Laboratory Inc.



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Presentation overview





• WorkReach is a provider of research-based solutions and services for the EAP industry.



• WorkReach is an institute of APAS Laboratory Inc.



• Research partner: Canadian EAP vendor Arete Humans Resources Inc.

Job stress is a major source of distress

- Job stress is a top source of stress for North American adults
- Has escalated progressively over the past few decades
- Associated with a number of health problems
- Measures of "working conditions" can include job stressors



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Why should we care about the experience of job stress in EAP users?

- Little is known about job stress in EAP users versus general working population
- As a distinct subgroup of "help-seeking" employees their feedback is unique
- The EAP and workplace health industry could have a lot to learn
- Evaluating working conditions (such as job stressors) through EAP users may have important practice implications



Three primary research questions

- What proportion of EAP users seek help with issues related at least in part to job stress?
- Is their work and health status different than those presenting with issues unrelated to job stress? What are the top job stressors in EAP users?
- Is there a cumulative effect of the number of job stressors on presenting health & work status?

Methodology



Sample

- 383 EAP users
- At work
- Insured
- Some cases screened out
- Voluntary



Measures

- General current health
 - As well as health change in last year
- Workplace Outcome Suite (5-item version):
 - Workplace engagement
 - Workplace distress
 - Life satisfaction
 - Presenteeism
- Incidence of specific job stressors (list of 9) – collected only from job stress group

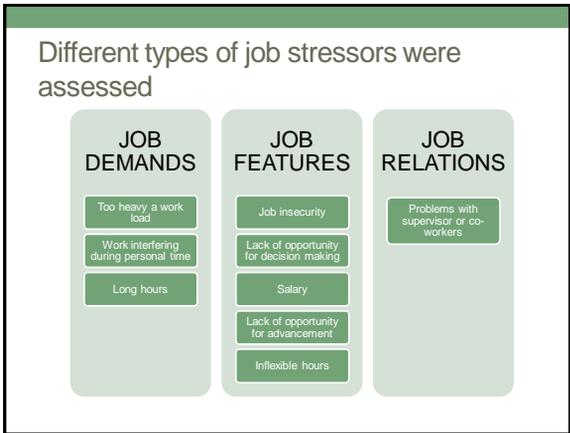


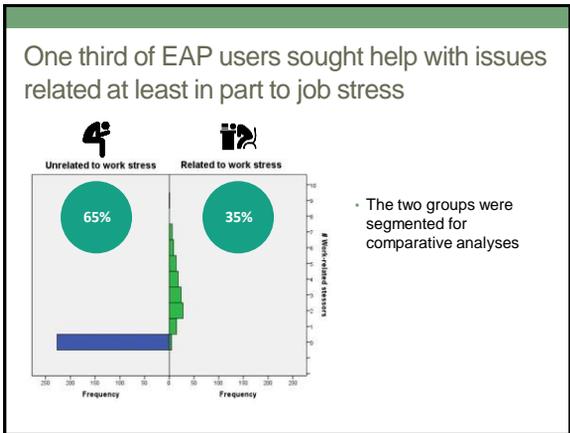
Methodology

- Data was collected during phone intake (2016)
- Employees seeking help for issues related at least in part to job stress identified

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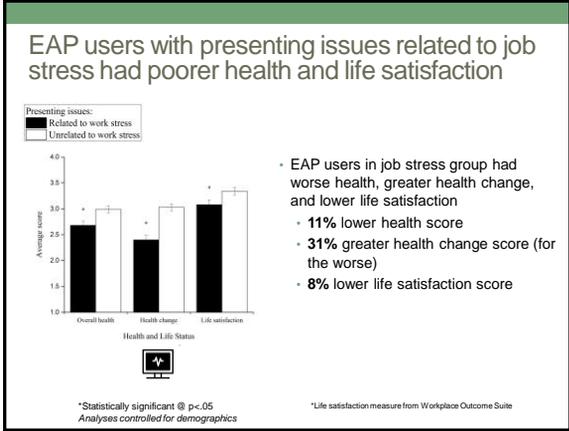
Basic demographics had little association with group membership

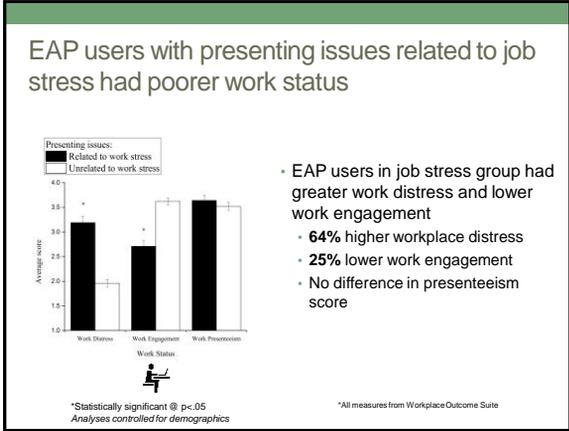
- The demographic profile of those in the job stress group was very similar to that of the other group

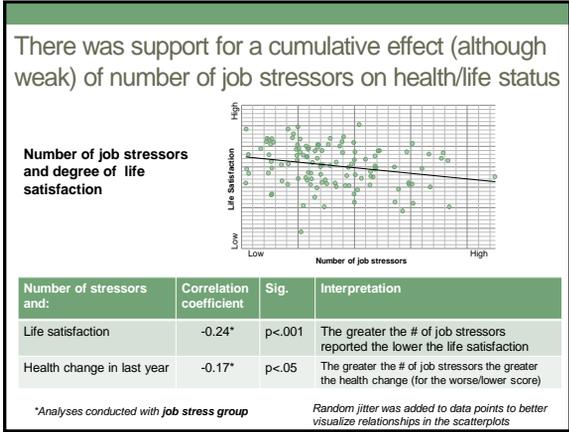
Variable	Category	Job stress group	Other group
Gender	Female	71%	77%
	Male	29%	23%
Marital status	Single	37%	27%
	Married/common law	53%	58%
	Divorced/separated/widowed	10%	15%
Age	19-29	23%	19%
	30-39	30%	32%
	40-49	25%	30%
	50+	22%	19%
Occupation type	Management	28%	25%
	Administration	14%	15%
	Professional	46%	45%
	Other	12%	15%

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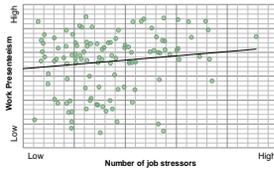


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There was support for a cumulative effect (although weak) of number of job stressors on work status

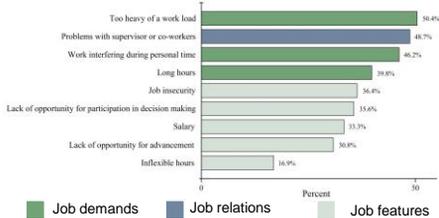
Number of job stressors and degree of work presenteeism



Number of stressors and:	Correlation coefficient	Sig.	Interpretation
Work distress	0.19*	p<.05	The greater the # of job stressors reported the greater the work distress
Work engagement	-0.17*	p<.05	The greater the # of job stressors the lower the work engagement
Work presenteeism	0.16*	p<.05	The greater the # of job stressors the greater the presenteeism

Top job stressors reported by EAP users in job stress group

Percentage of EAP users reporting a source of stress at work



- Job stressors related to demands were the most frequently reported
- Problems with supervisor/co-workers also a top source of job stress

*Analyses conducted with job stress group

EAP users with job stress appear to form a distinct group

- A group of individuals:
 - ✓ with lower health
 - ✓ with lower life satisfaction
 - ✓ with greater work distress and lower engagement
 - ✓ Potentially negatively impacted by cumulative effects of number of job stressors



OK. What then?

- From a broader perspective, what we have seen is that:
 - a) the measure of working conditions (such as job stressors) can be integrated into EAP evaluation practices and,
 - b) that the working conditions are associated with and likely aggravate clinical measures at intake (e.g., an individual's presenting status)

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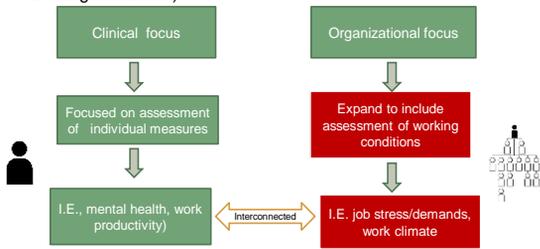
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Further developing programs to address major issue of job stress

- EAP counseling can be effective in managing job stress
- However, are there missed opportunities for further improving workplace health / health of EAP users?
- Could more be done within EAP field to further develop formalized interventions/programs and/or delivery approaches specific to job stress management?
- Delivered both at the organizational and individual level, addressed through different services (HR consulting versus EAP services, respectively)
- Decades of research could inform primary preventive interventions and secondary interventions developed specifically for use in EAP industry

Orienting EAP evaluation/research practices to include greater organizational focus

- Historically, EAP evaluation and research has taken a clinical focus and a limited organizational focus (e.g., little evaluation of working conditions)



Evaluation of working conditions for enriched EAP research and reporting

Enriched research & reporting

- Provide additional useful information to organizations or industries: more than utilization/basic trends
- Both organizational and clinical measures, and their interconnectedness
- Provide added value to confidential reports
- Expanded research possibilities and promotion of the field



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There are many measures of working conditions/the work environment that can be assessed by EAP user feedback

Examples
Job stressors
Work climate/culture
Safety
Workplace trust
Social support
Other job conditions
Many other psychosocial measures

Integration of assessments with an EAP's HR services and consulting



Expanded services

- Cost-effective brief workplace assessments based on feedback from a group of "help-seeking" employees (EAP users)
- Integrate into an EAP's HR or other organizational services/consulting
- Identify *modifiable* problem areas in workplace (such as important job stressors) and help deploy solutions (e.g., primary preventive interventions)

Concluding remarks

Study findings

- EAP users with presenting issues related to job stress appear to form a distinct group
- Future studies: what about outcomes?

Job stress management in the EAP field

- Could be an important strategic focus for providers

Evaluation of working conditions

- EAP industry could play a greater role in assessment of working conditions
- Many practice and knowledge translation possibilities
- Maintenance of confidentiality / anonymity

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Thank you!

"There is more to life than
increasing its speed."

– Mahatma Gandhi

mmilot@workreachsolutions.com



www.workreachsolutions.com
