

# EXAMINING THE PARADOX OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS

# RESEARCH IN OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND WELL-BEING

Series Editors: Pamela L. Perrewé, Peter D. Harms  
and Chu-Hsiang (Daisy) Chang

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RESEARCH IN OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND  
WELL-BEING VOLUME 20

# EXAMINING THE PARADOX OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS

Building Resilience or  
Creating Depletion

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

# OVERVIEW

Volume 20 of *Research in Occupational Stress and Well-Being* features chapters that expand our understanding of how occupational stressors can build employee resilience and enhance their well-being while at the same time creating negative employee outcomes such as depletion, exhaustion, and depression. Much of the prior literature in occupational stress and well-being have emphasized the negative aspects of experienced stress at work. However, there is also research that examines how individuals and teams can become stronger and more resilient by being exposed to occupational stressors. To this end, we take a hard look at examining the seemingly paradoxical outcomes of work stressors, the circumstances or conditions that can change or even reverse the relationship between stressors and outcomes, and theoretical accounts for apparent contradictions in this literature. We begin with several chapters examining the more positive aspects of experienced work stress (e.g., resilience) and end with chapters focusing on the more negative aspects of work stress (e.g., mistreatment).

In the first chapter, Anita C. Keller and Chu-Hsiang (Daisy) Chang examine the paradoxical effects of coping and argue that coping can be best understood by disentangling between- from within-person effects. The aim of this chapter is to provide a better understanding of the positive and negative outcomes of coping in the workplace by integrating between- and within-person perspectives on coping with learning approaches. They offer a brief overview of the state of knowledge on the paradoxical effects of coping in the workplace and then discuss the between-person followed by the within-person perspectives on the effects of coping. Further, they integrate the multi-level perspective with the learning-based approach to explain why paradoxical effects of coping may exist and offer an agenda for future research on coping at work.

In the second chapter, Danielle D. King, Richard P. DeShon, Cassandra N. Phetmisy, and Dominique Burrows take an in-depth look at resilience research. They use a self-regulation perspective to outline a nomological network scheme for resilience research. They address “quicksand” concerns by differentiating between and providing a framework for the importance of both behavioral and emotional regulation in resilience effects. They highlight distinctions between trait versus behavioral resilience and clarify distinctions between resilience and other concepts in the persistence domain (e.g., grit, hardiness). Further, they address “shadow” side resilience concerns by theoretically detailing that the absence of negative emotions nor the presence of success or well-being are characteristic of resilience. They define resilience as continued, self-regulated goal striving despite adversity and they model the direct effect of adversity factors (e.g., severity) on resilience. This work offers important insights for research, organizational practice, and broader society concerning stress effects, well-being, success, and resilience.

The third chapter also examines the paradoxical role of resilience in a customer-facing workplace. In this chapter, Nicolina Taylor, Esther L. Jean, and Wayne S. Crawford detail how and when emotional labor induced stress can lead to episodic and prolonged resilience. They outline a paradoxical event in which employees engaging in emotional labor can create and sustain resiliency by not deploying an acting strategy and instead, breaking character. Employees may feel empowered and be able to acknowledge their lack of resources after breaking character. Such actions are paradoxical of course, due to simultaneously improving employee well-being and potentially damaging the organization–customer relationship. They further explore individual and organizational factors that impact this process such as personality and organizational culture, which they argue can serve as boundary conditions to workplace resilience capacity.

In the fourth chapter, Karen Landay and Joseph Schaefer examine the paradox of passion in the workplace. They integrate the Dualistic Model of Passion, which includes both harmonious and obsessive passion, with identity theory, and identity threat. Specifically, they provide a unique theoretical lens through which to examine the paradox of passion by which individuals overidentify with their work, which can result in “too much of a good thing”. Further, they discuss the various reactions that individuals enact in response to threats to their passion-related identities, and how these reactions impact well-being, experienced stress, and burnout.

In the fifth chapter, Andrea Bazzoli and Tahira M. Probst examine an intriguing construct, that of job insecurity. They argue that although job insecurity has been seen as a hindrance stressor, certain positive psychological variables, such as self-efficacy, might influence the perceptions of job insecurity. Using a cross-lagged dataset, they find five distinct latent profiles of employee perceptions. Specifically, employees might view job insecurity as irrelevant, simultaneously moderately challenging and hindering, primarily hindering, both highly challenging and highly hindering, or primarily challenging. They discuss implications for theory and practice considering the paradoxical findings indicating both positive as well as negative outcomes from job insecurity.

In the sixth chapter of Volume 20, Alexander R. Marbut and Peter D. Harms tackle the role of vigilance in the workplace. They argue that some characteristics, such as vigilance, that make employees successful, may fail in the long-term because of burnout or fatigue. They pay particular attention to neuroticism and argue that vigilance-related professions, such as information technology, have a higher rate of neuroticism. Thus, vigilance work could be an area in which neurotic individuals thrive because it requires prolonged physiological arousal to maintain attention and mental concentration. These authors also examine contextual and individual moderators and explain how neuroticism might be associated with positive as well as negative performance outcomes.

In the final chapter of this volume, Katharine McMahon, Jamie Pockrandt, Stefanie Fox, Nick Zike, and Liu-Qin Yang examine the paradoxical relationships of workplace mistreatment. Workplace mistreatment encompasses several negative relational experiences ranging in severity from incivility to physical violence.



The literature commonly finds evidence of an array of negative individual and organizational outcomes due to mistreatment incidents in the workplace. However, they argue that the literature often fails to prominently address the paradoxical occasions in which certain forms of workplace mistreatment might be beneficial, or at the very least non-disruptive to desirable work outcomes. This chapter presents a qualitative review of the literature on workplace mistreatment, with the intention of identifying findings from empirical studies that indicate the contingencies of processes in which workplace mistreatment leads to these paradoxical outcomes and the circumstances under which they occur. Their review suggests that different forms of aggression such as bullying, abusive supervision, incivility, and ostracism have positive relationships with paradoxical outcomes and characteristics such as resilience, prosocial behaviors, socially desirable behaviors, job performance, job satisfaction, and creativity. The authors encourage researchers and practitioners to utilize the information to further their understanding of the nomological network of workplace mistreatment and its underlying mechanisms, such as social learning and coping.

Together, these chapters represent theoretically sound and rigorous research examining the paradoxical roles of occupational stress. We are thrilled with our authors and the depth of their research. This volume represents insightful, intriguing, and timely research into the paradox of experienced stress in the workplace. We hope you will enjoy Volume 20 of *Research in Occupational Stress and Well-Being*.

**Pamela L. Perrewé\*, Peter D. Harms, and  
Chu-Hsiang (Daisy) Chang**

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\**Personal note from Pamela L. Perrewé:* I accepted the Lead and Founding Editor position for *Research in Occupational Stress and Well Being* over 20 years ago. Given this is Volume 20, I thought the timing was right to step away from my position as Editor. I would like to thank all my authors, my editorial review board members, and my co-editors for working with me over the years on this research series. It has been my distinct pleasure to work with so many amazing scholars who are not only my colleagues, but they have become my friends. I have the utmost confidence in Peter D. Harms and Chu-Hsiang (Daisy) Chang to continue to push *Research in Occupational Stress and Well Being* forward. It has been a true honor to have been the editor of this series and I thank all of you.

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# CONTENTS

<i>About the Contributors</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<b>Chapter 1 Becoming Comfortable with the Uncomfortable: The Paradoxical Role of Learning in the Coping Process</b> <i>Anita C. Keller and Chu-Hsiang (Daisy) Chang</i>	<i>1</i>
<b>Chapter 2 What is Resilience? Offering Construct Clarity to Address “Quicksand” and “Shadow Side” Resilience Concerns</b> <i>Danielle D. King, Richard P. DeShon, Cassandra N. Phetmisy and Dominique Burrows</i>	<i>25</i>
<b>Chapter 3 Walking the Tightrope: How and When the Paradoxical Act of Breaking Character Leads to Resilience</b> <i>Nicolina Taylor, Esther L. Jean and Wayne S. Crawford</i>	<i>51</i>
<b>Chapter 4 My Work is Who I Am, But It’s Killing Me: An Identity-based Approach to the Paradox of Passion</b> <i>Karen Landay and Joseph Schaefer</i>	<i>79</i>
<b>Chapter 5 The Role of Positive Psychological Variables in the Cognitive Appraisal of Job Insecurity: A Latent Class Approach</b> <i>Andrea Bazzoli and Tahira M. Probst</i>	<i>107</i>
<b>Chapter 6 The Paradox of Neuroticism and Vigilance Work</b> <i>Alexander R. Marbut and Peter D. Harms</i>	<i>129</i>
<b>Chapter 7 Paradoxical Relationships of Workplace Mistreatment</b> <i>Katharine McMahon, Jamie Pockrandt, Stefanie Fox, Nick Zike and Liu-Qin Yang</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>171</i>

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## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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