TIRED OF BEING FATIGUED? INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

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One of the most common workplace issues discussed today is that of always feeling fatigued. Today many employees at all levels in organizations are overloaded and overwhelmed, feel they can never disconnect from work, worry about work-life balance, and are getting burned out and exhausted from overwork. Some people attribute that fatigue to individual issues, such as the inability to say no, create balance, or have competitive drive. Others attribute it to changes in work habits as a result of techno-logical advances. And still others attribute it to organizational structures and job demands. It appears that everyone is partially correct. This special issue of *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* addresses two core questions: What are the causes of fatigue, and what can be done to reduce it? To address these questions, the articles assess the issue of fatigue from different perspectives, and they provide recom-mendations about actions that individuals, consultants, human-resources professionals, leaders, and organizations can take to reduce the fatigue that is plaguing staff at all levels of the organization.

Keywords: fatigue, work-life integration, psychological detachment, burnout, special issue

Employee fatigue is a significant problem today largely because of high-demand jobs, disruption of circadian rhythms, cumulative sleep debt, and pressure created by expectations that people be "always on" (Sadeghniiat-Haghighi & Yazdi, 2015). It is increasingly difficult for employees to "switch off," particularly when workloads are high, work hours are increasing, and technology facilitates an always-on set of work expectations (Deal, 2015; Smit & Barber, 2016).

Fatigued employees need to recover during nonwork time in order to restore and replenish physical and psychological resources that have been depleted while at work. Being able to disconnect and recover has been shown to help reduce workplace fatigue and enhance productivity and engagement (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016).

Fatigue is defined as extreme tiredness, typically resulting from mental or physical exertion or illness. When thinking about fatigue at work, we think of it as feeling tired, having low energy, or being sleepy as a result of prolonged mental or physical work, extended periods of stress, anxiety, or inadequate sleep. Given the demands put on today's employees, this special issue of *Consulting*

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Psychology Journal: Practice and Research addresses some of the causes of employee fatigue and explores solutions and interventions that can be used by both practitioners and organizations to ameliorate fatigue. Each of the six articles included in this special issue explores important aspects of fatigue in the workplace today, including sleep, job burnout, and organizational systems contributing to this outcome.

Overview of the Special Issue

Focusing at the individual level, Kenneth Nowack (2017) investigates sleep as a primary cause of fatigue in leaders. He looks at the relationships among fatigue, lack of sleep, and emotional intelligence. This is one of the first studies to demonstrate that too little sleep results in lower social and emotional competence, even after controlling for stress level in leaders. Lower quality and quantity of sleep are shown to impair leadership effectiveness, directly affecting organizational productivity, retention, engagement, and job satisfaction. Nowack also offers specific recommendations for both practitioners and organizations to address sleep and fatigue issues for employees.

Given the relationships among fatigue, sleep, and leadership effectiveness, Elena Svetieva, Cathleen Clerkin, and Marian Ruderman (2017) examine the primary barriers to sleep as exhibited by 384 leaders, and they describe beliefs about success, productivity, and the necessity for sleep that underpin leaders' sleep patterns. Importantly, the results from their study confirm that today's workers are sleep deprived as a result of work demands and the inability to detach from them. The authors also suggest strategies individuals and organizations can use to improve sleep to help combat fatigue.

One of the beliefs about the workplace that causes reductions in sleep is the notion that strong performance is required for success (Svetieva et al., 2017). Anthony Grant (2017) addresses this issue directly, discussing the effects of stress from high-performance work cultures on fatigue. He describes a method of solution-focused cognitive–behavioral coaching to reduce stress-related fatigue, and he advocates focusing on cultures with high performance and high well-being, which he indicates is where sustainable high performance can be found. One contribution of this article is his presentation of a "Performance/Well-being Matrix" framework consisting of two orthogonal dimensions: (1) performance (high/low) and (2) well-being (high/low). This framework can help coaches, consultants, and organizations create high-performing employees who experience high well-being.

An article by Matthew Grawitch, Jessica Waldrop, Kaitlyn Erb, Paul Werth, and Sarah Guarino (2017) also addresses the association between individual well-being and performance at work. It reports on two studies that examined the potential differences in productivity loss that occur due to mental-health and physical-health decrements. Although a moderate relationship exists between the factors, the authors demonstrate that both contributed uniquely to the explanation of important well-being constructs (i.e., satisfaction with work-life balance, emotional exhaustion, work engagement, depression, life satisfaction, and turnover intentions).

Both Alec Levenson (2017) and Christina Maslach (2017) focus primarily on the organizational level of workplace fatigue. The former presents the perspective that organizational-systems issues are a substantial part of what causes fatigue, and he describes the levels of systems that can affect it. The article is notable for its summary of a systems view of fatigue, including diagnostics around job design, organization design, and the organization's strategy to address it. He concludes with recommendations for addressing the systems issues at the different levels that can exacerbate fatigue.

Maslach also focuses on systems-level issues. She discusses the tendency to look at the individual level to address fatigue and stress, which she believes does not address the issues fully. A key strength of this article is its delineation of three important critical issues surrounding job burnout and interventions aimed at addressing it within organizations: the psychology-centric focus of burnout, fixing the person versus fixing the job, and new ideas about solutions.

Although fatigue and stress are certainly felt at the individual level, Maslach joins Levenson in saying that individual-level approaches are inadequate when trying to reduce fatigue, stress, and

burnout. Instead, she says organizations need to look at these issues as results of a system rather than defects in an individual. Only when leaders realize that it is necessary to fix the system to help individuals will fatigue be addressed effectively.

Conclusion

Throughout this special issue, a series of recommendations for actions have been made to help individuals, leaders, and organizations address and reduce fatigue. The recommendations emphasize a multimodal, multilevel approach because most evidence suggests that only by addressing the systems that people work in will the fatigue felt by employees at every level be modified. For example, people can certainly work on improving their sleep habits and they can disconnect from work, but it is only when those individual actions are paired with systemic changes at the organizational and team levels that fatigue will be addressed in a substantial way. Our hope is that this special issue can help practitioners lead the way in helping organizations address and effectively manage fatigue that has risen to high levels, contributing to a myriad of adverse and costly individual and organizational outcomes.

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