Work-Family Interventions: Lessons from the Work, Family, & Health Study

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To date, few work-family studies have utilized intervention designs (Hammer & Sauter, 2013). Rigorous interventions can be complex to develop, challenging to implement, and complicated to evaluate. Thus, the aim of the current paper is to advance the next wave of work-family intervention research through a description of the Work, Family, & Health Study (WFHS), in addition to a discussion of challenges experienced. The WFHS is the largest work-family intervention effort to date, and was focused on increasing family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) and employee control over work time in an attempt to improve employee, family, and organizational outcomes in both information technology and healthcare industries (Kossek, Hammer, Kelly, & Moen, 2014).

Within the design phase of the WFHS, a logic model (King et al., 2012) was conceptualized based on successful pilot work, which utilized smaller-scale experimental designs (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, & Zimmerman, 2011; Moen, Fan, & Kelly, 2013). Intervention materials were then integrated and customized for use in the information technology and healthcare industries. Challenges included determining the extent to which customization was needed for the separate industries and ...

During intervention implementation, supervisor training with behavior tracking and facilitated group sessions were introduced into worksites as primary intervention components. Trained field interviewers assisted in collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the organizations, supervisors, employees, spouses/partners, and children at baseline, 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months (Bray et al., 2013). Challenges included determining the unit of randomization in two separate organizational structures, conducting data collection during an unforeseen merger, and …

Once the evaluation phase was reached, analysts cleaned datasets, qualitative data was transcribed and coded, and intervention effects were analyzed. Challenges during this phase included correctly linking datasets, making sense of unexpected results (e.g., effects on distal, but not proximal hypothesized outcomes), and explaining differential findings based on industry.

Initial results from the WFHS indicate that the intervention improves FSSB, control over work time, work-family conflict, and family time adequacy (Kelly et al., 2014), while also increasing daily shared time by parents and children (Davis et al., 2015), sleep (Olson et al., 2015), and safety compliance and organizational citizenship behaviors (Hammer et al., in press). Furthermore, a positive return on investment has been found (Barbosa et al., in press). Despite the challenges faced, these beneficial effects suggest that work-family interventions are warranted and worthy of future investigation.

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