Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work

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International Labour Office

II° Workshop on Workplace Health Promotion
30-31 March 2006, The House of Estates, Helsinki
Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work

An ILO Educational Approach to Formulate a Comprehensive Policy and Actions at Work to Address These Problems
Examples of the Scope of the Problem

In Canada, 50% of workers suffer from a high level of stress (1999, Public Heath Canada).

In Europe, 23% of workers reported overall fatigue (2000, European Survey on Working Conditions).

In a US study, 32% of 586 nurses identified themselves as victims of workplace violence (Colorado Nurses Assn, 1997).

In a study of 954 New South Wales police personnel in Australia, 20% would seek advice from work-place staff about alcohol (1999).
Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work
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- Stress
- Tobacco
- Alcohol & Drugs
- HIV/AIDS
- Violence
Expanding SOLVE

Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work
The Top Ten Health Hazards Worldwide

(in terms of how much death and disease they cause / in order of danger)

- Underweight
- Unsafe sex
- High blood pressure
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Contaminated water
- Sanitation and hygiene
- Iron deficiency
- Indoor pollution
- High cholesterol and obesity

WHO World Health Report 2002
What SOLVE Addresses of the Top Ten Health Hazards

- Underweight
- Unsafe sex
- High blood pressure
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Contaminated water
- Sanitation and hygiene
- Iron deficiency
- Indoor pollution
- High cholesterol and obesity
Fatalities Attributed to Work

- 32% Cancer
- 19% Accidents and violence
- 17% Contagious diseases
- 7% Respiratory
- 23% Circulatory
- 1% Psychological disorders
- 1% Accidents and violence

- Contagious diseases
- Cardio-vascular system
- Uro-genital system
- Cancer
- Psychological disorders
- Respiratory system
- Digestive system
- Accidents and violence
Factors Influencing Psychosocial Issues

The community

The social environment

The family

The person

Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work
Focus on the Individual

For the worker:
- higher risk of accident
- increased family or social problems
- stigmatization and discrimination
- deteriorating health
- physical or psychological illness
- pain, distress, disability and death
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The Health Belief Model (Modified)

Event(s)

Perceived susceptibility and severity

Perceived threat

Perceived benefits minus barriers

Likelihood taking action

Additional psychosocial Problems

Stress

Violence

Alcohol

Drugs

Tobacco

Unprotected sex

Action effective

Problem diminished

Likelihood taking action

Yes

No

Perceived threat

Yes

No

Perceived benefits minus barriers

Yes

No

Likelihood taking action

Yes

No
Factors Influencing Psychosocial Issues

The community

The social environment

The family

The person

Work
Focus on the Workplace

For the enterprise or organization:

- poor morale
- increased absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover
- reduced productivity
- reduced profits or services
- higher costs
- reduced competitiveness
The Impact of Psychosocial Problems at Work

Increased absenteeism
Increased turnover
Loss of skills
Loss of tacit knowledge
Declining morale

Insurance costs
Retirement funds
Safety and health
Medical assistance
Counselling

Increasing demands for recruitment and training

Increased health problems in the community with reduced labour pool and diminished access to resources

Increased costs
Declining profits or ability to provide services
Declining capacity

Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work
A database with 2,000,000 subjects was created to study the costs of health risk factors. The following were included:

- Australian Health Management Group
- Bank One
- Detroit Diesel
- Genesis Health System
- Honeywell General Electric
- The Progressive Corporation
- Steelcase
- Xerox
- United Autoworkers General Motors (UAW-GM)

*Study by the Health Management Resource Center of the University of Michigan*
There is a clear relationship between health risk factors and health care costs

- **Reduction** of one worker health risk factor = $150 reduction in health care costs per worker
- **Increase** of one worker health risk factor = $350 increase in health care costs per worker

Therefore the cost associated with an increase in health risk factors is more than twice the amount saved by the reduction of risk factors.

*Study by the Health Management Resource Center of the University of Michigan (Edington. D.W., (2001)  *American Journal of Health Promotion*)
The Traditional Approach

- Most resources focus on the treatment of very ill or dependent worker
- Few if any resources go towards prevention
Paradigm Shift

- The focus of our efforts needs to be on preventing healthy workers from becoming ill.
- Therefore the paradigm shift is from treatment to prevention.
The Goal of SOLVE

Integration of the psychosocial issues of stress, alcohol and drugs, violence, HIV-AIDS and tobacco into a comprehensive organizational policy and development of action based on the policy
The SOLVE Policy Concept

Strategies
- Prevention
- Worker involvement
- Personal growth
- Empowerment
- Treatment
- Non-discrimination

Policy

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The SOLVE Cycle

1. Broadening organizational policy through SOLVE to include psychosocial problems
2. Identifying specific problems and assessing needs
3. Evaluating workplace psychosocial problems and modifying the concept as needed
4. Implementing workplace action through MicroSolve modules
The SOLVE Programme

The SOLVE methodology moves from concept to policy to action

- Briefing package for managing directors 2 hours
- The SOLVE policy-level course 4 days
- SOLVE for mid-level managers 3 days
- Course for staff-union counsellors 3 days
- SOLVE for course directors 3 days
- An introduction to SOLVE for workers 1 hour
- MicroSOLVEs (22) 1.5 hours
What is SOLVE for Managing Directors?

A two-hour programme for top managers which:

- Introduces the integrated approach
- Demonstrates the impact of psychosocial issues on
  - corporate survivability, and
  - communities, families, workers and workplaces
- Is highly interactive:
  - case study discussions
  - mathematical cost analysis
### A Look at Some Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average worker takes <strong>7 days</strong> of sick leave <strong>per year</strong></th>
<th>Sample enterprise 100 workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 10 drink regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 30 smoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 10 have been victims of psychological or physical violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the scientific literature:

- People addicted to alcohol take **7 times** the sick leave as others
- Smokers take an average of **3 additional** sick leave days per year
- Victims of physical or psychological violence take an average of **7 additional** sick days per year.
What is the Policy-Level SOLVE Course?

A 32-hour interactive programme for operational managers

• Provides tools to design a corporate policy including psychosocial problems
• Demonstrates the impact on workers’ families and communities
• Highly interactive:
  • case study analysis
  • simulation exercises and
  • policy development activities
Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work

Traditional Subjects

- Stress
- Tobacco
- Alcohol & Drugs
- HIV/AIDS
- Violence

Introduction
Managing psychosocial problems at work
Stress
Alcohol and drugs
Violence
HIV
Tobacco
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09h00-09h30</td>
<td>Introduction and formalities</td>
<td>Understanding stress</td>
<td>Introduction violence</td>
<td>Introduction tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h00-10h30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stress Simulation 2</td>
<td>Understanding violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11h00-11h30</td>
<td>Introduction PowerPoint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tobacco Simulation 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>11h30-12h30</td>
<td>Management part I</td>
<td>Introduction Alcohol &amp; Drugs</td>
<td>Violence Simulation 4</td>
<td>Policy presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14h00-14h30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding Alcohol &amp; Drugs</td>
<td>Introduction AIDS</td>
<td>Case presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14h30-15h00</td>
<td>Simulation I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15h00-15h30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol &amp; Drugs Simulation 3</td>
<td>Understanding AIDS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16h00-16h30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case reconciliation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16h00-17h30</td>
<td>Introduction stress</td>
<td></td>
<td>AIDS Simulation 5</td>
<td>Summary and conclusions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work
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New subjects (2005)

Stress
Tobacco & Drugs
HIV/AIDS
Violence

Inadequate nutrition
Lack of regular exercise
Sleep deprivation
Gambling
Cyber addiction
Economic stressors
What is SOLVE for Workers?

A one-hour course for workers, workers’ representatives and supervisors

- Demonstrates how multiple psychosocial problems can impact the worker at work, during leisure activities and at home.
- Can familiarise workers with corporate policy
- Uses exercises, group discussion and individual action planning to achieve its objective
What is MicroSOLVE?

- Action-based follow-up to SOLVE
- Targeted at workers and supervisors
- Each MicroSOLVE addresses one psychosocial issue
- Each issue is broken down into modules on
  - recognising the problem
  - dealing with the problem
  - preventing the problem
Methodology

Each of the four SOLVE activities…

- Builds an open attitude towards the subject
- Builds a sufficient knowledge base so that the participant can apply knowledge learnt
- Applies the new knowledge through simulation exercises
Currently four mechanisms

- Questionnaire: attitudes, knowledge, perception and beliefs
- Pre-test / Post-test
- Qualitative evaluation by participants
- Three month post-course report on action plan

Fifth mechanism foreseen for next year

- Impact on absenteeism, turnover and productivity
SOLVE Selected Feedback

Improvements

• Reduce length of policy course
• Add course for managing directors
• Computerize simulation exercise

Strengths

• “I liked the application of theory to practice through the simulation exercises.” (Windhoek, Namibia 2001)
• “This course was very useful to understand five important psychosocial factors that might be spread easily at workplaces and to develop integrated policies using modern approaches.” (Annecy, France 2003)
Capacity to Organize SOLVE

Addressing Psychosocial Problems at Work

Courses held
Existing capacity
Participation
Proposed centre
**SOLVE** has been translated into in the following languages

- English
- French
- Spanish
- Thai
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Bulgarian
- Italian
Projects for 2005 -2006

The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition of the Policy Course

SOLVE adaptations for

- the healthcare sector (complete)
- the fire services (complete but not tested)
- public administration (complete)
- the maritime sector
- the air transport sector (complete)

Translate into Chinese and German languages

SOLVE for mid-level managers

SOLVE for trade union counsellors
For Further Information

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