

The Psychology of the Recession on the Workplace



Edited by
ALEXANDER-STAMATIOS G. ANTONIOU
CARY L. COOPER

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Edited by

Alexander-Stamatios G. Antoniou

Lecturer in Psychology, University of Athens, Greece

Cary L. Cooper CBE

Distinguished Professor of Organizational Psychology and Health, Lancaster University, UK

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Contents

	of figures of tables	vii viii
List of tuoles List of contributors		ix
	Foreword by Lennart Levi Preface	
PAl	RT I INDIVIDUAL HEALTH, STRESS AND WELL-BEING	
1	Well-being among Greeks and immigrants before and after the current financial crisis	3
2	Alexander-Stamatios Antoniou and Marina Dalla Socioeconomic adversity and family stressors in relation to	
۷	school achievement among Greek, Serbian and Albanian	
	students	23
	Alexander-Stamatios Antoniou, Marina Dalla, Ledi Kashahu, Dhori Karaj, George Michailidis and Evi Georgiadi	
3	The impact of the recession and its aftermath on individual	
	health and well-being	42
4	Esther Greenglass, Zdravko Marjanovic and Lisa Fiksenbaum Workaholism and psychosocial functioning: individual,	~0
	family and workplace perspectives Diana Malinowska, Monika Trzebińska, Aleksandra Tokarz	59
	and Bruce D. Kirkcaldy	
5	The mark of recession in the high-tech industry: high stress	
	and low burnout	89
6	Ayala Malach-Pines and Nurit Zaidman The adverse effects of recession-related events on the health	
O	and well-being of individuals	101
	Oi-Ling Siu	101
7	Temporary employment, quality of working life and	
	well-being	117
	Alfred F. Wagenaar, Michiel A. J. Kompier, Toon W. Taris	
	and Irene L. D. Houtman	

PART II JOB INSECURITY, JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

8	Economic recession, job insecurity and employee and organizational health	143
	Ronald Burke	
9	The psychology of unemployment: laying off people in a recession Adrian Furnham	155
10	Perceiving and responding to job insecurity: the importance	
10	of multilevel contexts	176
1 1	Lixin Jiang, Tahira Probst and Robert R. Sinclair	
11	Unemployment and mental health	196
	Howard Kahn	
12	The effects of not working: a psychological framework for understanding the experience of job loss Ellen I. Shupe and Katelyn A. Buchholz	209
PAI	RT III SPECIFIC ISSUES IN RECESSION	
13	Effects of the recession on psychological contracts between	
	employers and employees	233
	Donald A. J. Cable and Michael O'Driscoll	233
14	The individual afront the antinomies of the contemporary	
	world	250
	Menelaos Givalos	250
15		
13	The psychological effects of restructuring	261
16	Kathleen Otto, Thomas Rigotti and Gisela Mohr	
10	Social support in times of economic stress	276
	Ewelina Smoktunowicz, Roman Cieslak and Charles C. Benight	
D. 1		
PAF	RT IV WORK-FAMILY BALANCE/CONFLICT	
1.50		
17	The dynamism of balancing work and family in a developing	
	society: evidence from Taiwan	293
	Luo Lu	
18	Low income families and occupational health: implications of economic stress for work-family conflict research and practice	308
	Robert R. Sinclair, Tahira Probst, Leslie B. Hammer and	200
	Meline M. Schaffer	
Inde.	x	325

1. Well-being among Greeks and immigrants before and after the current financial crisis

Alexander-Stamatios Antoniou and Marina Dalla

INTRODUCTION

From ancient Greek philosophy to modern day existential and utilitarian philosophy as well as clinical, developmental, humanistic psychology and research, human history has emphasized the pursuit of well-being (for example, Ryff and Singer, 2008). The central role of well-being is provided by Aristotle in Book I of *Nichomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 1925: 4) which states that: happiness is 'the highest of all goods achievable by action' and that it is 'living well and faring well'. The importance attributed to happiness across cultures and ages is also seen in the *Dhammapada* from India, which describes happiness as independent of material things and sense desires: 'Let us live happily, without possessions. Let us feed on happiness like the shining gods' (*Dhammapada*, 2000). However, in the philosophical systems of Confucianism and Taoism personal well-being and happiness consist of pursuing a virtuous life through moral capabilities (Lu, 2001).

Current psychological research has tended to fall into two general view-points of well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2001). The hedonic viewpoint focuses on subjective well-being as a 'relatively stable feeling of happiness one has towards his or her life' (Oishi et al., 2007: 347), reflecting general perceived life satisfaction and affective balance by the presence of positive affect and the relative lack of negative affect (Diener et al., 2003). According to the hedonistic approach, people around the world tend to reach towards things that bring pleasure and to avoid painful experiences (Oishi et al., 2007), whilst holding the desire to feel positive emotions and to avoid feeling negative emotions (Larsen, 2000). Not surprisingly, over 10000 respondents from 48 nations rate personal happiness as the most important when compared to success, intelligence, knowledge, material wealth, etc. (Oishi et al., 2007); and most people believe that they can move in an





The 'Greekness' of Pontics is part of their acculturation experience and is tightly knitted with a positive position in the ethnic hierarchy of the hosts. They belong to the first accepted ethnic group, as research on the ethnic hierarchy showed (Dalla and Motti-Stefanidi, 2010), although there are no differences in acculturation orientations between Pontics and Albanian immigrants. An important factor in the study of ethnicity, acculturation and psychological well-being in plural societies is the social capital as well as social networks and sense of trust (Heim et al., 2011). However, the presence of group differences on life satisfaction between native and Pontic Greeks indicates that the 'Greekness' appears to have no moderating effect on their psychological health. In this sense, it is important to consider other contextual factors that affect the life satisfaction of Pontic Greeks.

Regarding Albanian immigrants, it seems that the sense of belonging to the heritage group leads to dissatisfaction and feelings of unhappiness. They do not derive life satisfaction from their sense of belonging and sense of inclusion in their heritage country. Support for this finding may result from approach-avoidance conflict theory (Lewin, 1935) that involves two negative threats, fears or frustrations. Such conflicts face immigrants coming from socioeconomically disadvantaged countries and politically unstable regions who may feel uncertainty not only for their adoptive country, but also for their background country (Akhtar, 1999). Albanian immigrants with a high heritage of acculturation have to confront on the one hand, a high heritage maintenance, and on the other hand, the adaptation to their new country, or a high heritage maintenance and the distance from their motherland or their difficulty in returning to their background country, due to economic situations. It is possible that failure to negotiate these representations can result in a problematic conflict described as 'caught between a rock and a hard place'. Because such conflicts are highly stressful, these may result in adverse mental health outcomes and low life satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This study provides evidence that the life satisfaction of Greek people and immigrants in Greece has decreased as a result of the economic crisis. The findings show several similarities with previous surveys in countries with analogous economic problems (Askitas and Zimmermann, 2011). Relatively few studies have examined the life satisfaction of immigrant groups, especially after economic crisis. The current research indicated lower levels of life satisfaction of Albanian immigrants and Pontic Greeks

versus natives. Ethnic group identification seems to have a negative effect on the life satisfaction of Albanian immigrants. Future studies are expected to reveal how the way immigrants feel about their life in the country of settlement influences their general life satisfaction.

Furthermore, it is important to examine, for example, why Pontic Greeks that are more accepted than Albanian immigrants in Greece show lower satisfaction than natives. In conclusion, future studies are needed to reveal the association of economic crisis with mental health and life satisfaction. The most important concept to keep in mind for future research is that economic crisis is a traumatic transition that is accompanied by the increase in all of the psychological distress indicators, including general health, sadness and anxiety.

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The Psychology of the Recession on the Workplace

'Two deep human needs are to master the world and to feel safe and secure. The Great Recession thwarted both needs for millions of people around the world. Antoniou and Cooper's global team of scholars address the psychological, economic, social, and other dimensions of our current crisis while charting paths whereby we can again satisfy these needs. Let us rise above the crisis and follow Aristotle's path to living well and faring well. This book offers a plan for doing so.'

- James Campell Quick, The University of Texas at Arlington, USA

An economic recession can affect the aggregate well-being of a population. This highly regarded and timely book shows a significant increase in the mean levels of distress and dissatisfaction in the workplace in recent years.

In particular, increasing job demands, intrinsic job insecurity and increasingly inadequate salaries make substantial contributions to psychological distress, family conflict and related behaviors. The contributors reveal that the recession has fundamentally altered the way employees view their work and leaders. With employers and employees still facing a continued period of uncertainty, a severe impact on employment relations is a continuing reality.

Given the difficult economic times, many people are feeling the pressure to work harder. This book will be valuable for undergraduate students and practitioners in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management.

Alexander-Stamatios G. Antoniou is a Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Athens, Greece and **Cary L. Cooper** CBE is Distinguished Professor of Organizational Psychology and Health at Lancaster University, UK.

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