

SUPERVISOR BEHAVIOR AND EMPLOYEE PRESENTEEISM

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Presenteeism happens when employees are at work, but their cognitive energy is not devoted to their work. This study investigated the extent to which supervisor behavior is associated with employee presenteeism. It also investigated the efficacy of a measure of job-stress-related presenteeism. Australian employees completed a questionnaire asking how often they experience job-stress-related presenteeism and about their supervisors' behaviors. Results supported the hypothesis that supervisor behavior is associated with employees' presenteeism. Negative supervisor behaviors were more strongly correlated with presenteeism than positive supervisor behaviors. These results suggest presenteeism is subject to supervisor influence. In addition, results indicate that the measure of job-stress-related presenteeism pilottested in this study has good internal-consistency reliability and validity.

Those who seek to improve employees' quality of work-life by creating psychologically healthy work environments face a challenge: How does one get top management to devote the high-degree of attention necessary to improve the work environment? Top managers deal with a host of competing demands, so adding another item to their list of concerns is likely to be difficult. However, it may be easier to convince managers and business owners to monitor and improve workplace psychosocial factors if one can demonstrate that those factors affect outcomes of concern to them. Some organizations have already done this. Harrah's Entertainment and American Standard, for example, quantitatively measured how management practices affect employees and how those effects are transmitted through the service-profit chain to earnings (Grossman, 2006).

Although using these types of sophisticated measurement systems is tenable for organizations with sales of billions of dollars per year, it may not be for many organizations. What we seek, therefore, is a more simple, though still convincing, means of showing managers how it is in their interest to create psychosocially healthy work environments. This goal does not

include complicated causal chains and layers of intervening variables. Instead, we would like to show managers how their own behavior affects employee behavior.

Managers get things done mostly not by way of their own efforts, but through the efforts of their employees. For high-level results, managers need employees who are focused and productive. Mid- and lower-level managers are likely to be particularly affected by employees who are not highly focused on their work. Cooper (1994) argued that the costs of such employees,

...come in the form of lack of added value to the product or service rendered, or indeed, even a decrement to performance, in the sense that additional labour or materials are required to rectify the poor quality product or service. This is the great hidden cost of stress at work, that is, of not adequately creating the work environments that lead to enhanced well-being and productivity. (p. 2)

We, therefore, set out to identify management-practice outcomes that would be salient to managers, but not prohibitively difficult to assess. We wanted variables (a) with evident effects on productivity and on managers themselves; (b) that would not be unduly difficult to measure or which are causally ambiguous (such as health-care costs); and (c) that would be easily understood and face valid. The concept of presenteeism fulfills this description.

Presenteeism

Presenteeism occurs when employees are physically present, but mentally absent. In other words, employees are at work, but their cognitive energy is not devoted to their work. In some cases, they will be going through the motions of work while their attention is focused elsewhere. In other cases, they will not be working at all. So, unlike absenteeism, where the employee is either present or absent, there will be varying degrees of presenteeism.

We were introduced to the construct by Cooper (1994), who defined presenteeism as "...people turning up to work, who are so distressed by their jobs or some aspect of the organizational climate that they contribute little, if anything, to their work" (p. 2). As defined by Cooper, then, presenteeism is a consequence of a negative work environment. This article agrees that employees suffering from presenteeism are not giving their full attention to their job. Such employees are likely to be less productive, make more mistakes, provide lower-quality service, and be less innovative, which has repercussions for the organization and its managers. Managers are judged by their results, and many of these results are achieved through the efforts of rank-and-file employees. Many organizations today are downsized and lean, and there are fewer co-workers who can pick up the slack left by presentees.

Furthermore, mistakes or "intellectual accidents" (Williams & Cooper, 1999) made by mentally absent employees can be extremely costly. Williams and Cooper related how a machine setter, "Geoff," distracted by domestic worries, performed his work on autopilot. Unfortunately, the job he was working on was an initial production run for a new customer for whom Geoff's employer had spent a great deal of time and money to win business. His supervisor monitored the setup, but could not tell that, "although Geoff's body was doing the work, his mind was elsewhere" (p. 52). The parts produced and shipped did not meet the customer's needs and caused a serious loss of production, resulting in a cancellation of further business with the firm. This incident clearly illustrates how managers and organizations have an interest in minimizing presenteeism.

Presenteeism and Job Stress

Research on presenteeism has been predominately related to presenteeism resulting from health problems. In fact, some researchers have defined presenteeism as "the problem of workers being on the job but, because of illness or other medical conditions, not fully functioning" (Hemp, 2004, p. 49). We disagree with this narrow view of presenteeism. This would be analogous to conceptualizing absenteeism as not being on the job because of illness or other medical conditions when absenteeism can be a result of a variety of different causes. This paper purports that presenteeism is better conceptualized like absenteeism, or as a phenomenon with a nearly limitless number of possible causes. Additionally, more accurate nomenclature for presenteeism scales should also be implemented. The *Stanford Presenteeism Scale*, for example, would be more aptly named the Stanford Health-Related Presenteeism Scale. The reason for pointing this out is not to malign worthwhile streams of research. Rather, it is to ensure that researchers interested in presenteeism and its effects are clear about what they are attempting to measure, which, in this case, is job-stress-related presenteeism. More precise nomenclature (e.g., "sickness presenteeism") has emerged in some recent articles (Caverley, Cunningham, & McGregor, 2007; Quick, Macik-Frey, & Cooper 2007).

Along with other researchers (Beehr & Schuler, 1978; Dohrenwend, 1978; Mohr & Puck, 2007; Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986; Perlman & Hartman, 1982; Sulsky & Smith, 2005), this article conceptualizes stress as the mediator between stressors and strains. In terms of the nomological network, what we are referring to as *job-stress-related presenteeism* is a form of psychological strain whose antecedent is job stress. It is predicted that job-stress-related presenteeism will have non-causal negative correlations with outcomes such as job satisfaction and work engagement, and positive correlations with other psychological strains (e.g., burnout). The consequences of presenteeism are hypothesized to be reduced quality and quantity of work. It is expected that work quality will be especially vulnerable because, as illustrated by the Geoff scenario, it is possible for workers to go through the motions of their work while suffering from stress-related presenteeism.

Among related constructs, job-stress-related presenteeism is most closely the opposite of Rothbard's (2001, p. 656) conceptualization of engagement, which focuses on attention ("the cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role") and absorption ("the intensity of one's focus on a role"). This paper, however, does not regard presenteeism as merely work disengagement or low engagement. Most definitions of engagement (Rothbard; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonźalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002) characterize it as pervasive and rolebased, whereas presenteeism is more transitory and situational (event-based).

The next section focuses on one potential stressor and our primary independent variable: supervisor behavior. The term supervisor is used because this study is primarily targeting the effects of an employee's immediate boss rather than management in general.

Supervisor Behavior

It is known that supervisors can have a significant influence on employees' morale and their work behavior (Fleishman & Harris, 1962; Walker, Guest, & Turner, 1956). Since the 1970s, researchers have learned that supervisors affect employees' psychological well-being (Gavin & Kelley, 1978; Sheridan & Vredenburgh, 1978). These findings continued to cumulate through the 1980s and 1990s (Duxbury, Armstrong, Drew, & Henly, 1984; Landeweerd &

Boumans, 1994; Martin & Schinke, 1998; Seltzer & Numerof, 1988). Stout (1984), for example, found that supervisor behavior was related to employees' health problems and their level of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion.

More recently, Karlin, Brondolo, and Schwartz (2003) found that support from supervisors was negatively related to systolic blood pressure for employees in high-stress conditions. Similarly, Wager, Fieldman, and Hussey (2003) found that employees' blood pressure was higher when they were working under a less-favorably perceived supervisor, and the measured difference was high enough to make it a potential risk factor for the development of coronary heart disease. Karimi (2008) reported that supervisory support has significant effects on employees' well-being and intrinsic job satisfaction. In similar studies (Karimi & Nouri, 2009; Karimi, Karimi, & Nouri, 2011), researchers reported that the degree of perceived managerial/supervisory support in the workplace is associated with the experience of workfamily conflict and employees' perceived level of well-being. Gilbreath and Benson (2004) found behavior of supervisors to be predictive of employees' psychological well-being. They also found that supervisors were a more significant influence on well-being than co-workers, friends, and family members.

It is apparent that supervisors can be a key influence on what employees experience at work, and the list of outcomes associated with supervisor behavior continues to grow. Jannson and Linton (2006) found that employees who perceived their supervisor as supportive were more likely to recover from insomnia than employees who saw their supervisor as unsupportive. And Hoobler and Brass (2006) found that abusive supervision was associated with family undermining, suggesting that abused employees unload supervisor-induced aggression after they get home. Findings like these are less surprising when one considers that, for many employees, the supervisor is the most influential psychosocial factor in one's workplace (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). Furthermore, supervisors are a particularly accessible leverage point from which to alter the workplace (Bunker & Wijnberg, 1985). Supervisors should play a role in creating healthier workplaces because they can eliminate or reduce the effects of some negative work factors plaguing employees. Even supervisors with limited control over other workplace stressors can control their own behavior (Stout, 1984).

The Supervisor Behavior-Presenteeism Link

Donaldson (2003) noted, "anyone who has ever worked for anyone else will tell you that one's manager has an enormous influence on the level of stress in the workplace" (p. 27). It is not difficult to find further support for Donaldson's assertion (e.g., Lind & Otte, 1994; Oaklander & Fleishman, 1964; Offermann & Hellmann, 1996). Peterson (1999) found lack of consideration by management to be the major determinant of stress among employees he studied. Also, Gilbreath (2001) found that supervisor behaviors such as ignoring employee suggestions, being a guarded (i.e., not open) communicator, and leaving employees out of the communication loop had particularly strong correlations with employees' job stress.

Supervisors can also have positive effects on employees' degree of experienced stress. Yarker, Donaldson-Feilder, Lewis, and Flaxman (2007) identified 19 clusters of supervisor behaviors reported to be helpful in managing employees' pressure and stress, including managing workload and resources, dealing with work problems, increasing accessibility and visibility, and taking responsibility. Gilbreath (2001) found behaviors such as planning work to manage its demands, balancing workloads equitably, and trying to see employees' sides of

situations to have especially strong negative correlations with employees' job stress. Therefore, ceteris paribus, employees working for a supervisor who treats them well will experience less stress and presumably less presenteeism than employees working for one who treats them poorly. Thus, the first general hypothesis for this study is:

H1: Both negative and positive supervisor behavior will be associated with employees' job-stress-related presenteeism.

Although both positive and negative supervisor behavior may influence the degree to which employees experience presenteeism, we wondered which would have a greater influence. A review of theory and literature related to that question revealed Taylor's (1991) mobilization perspective, which suggests that negative events receive a disproportionate amount of cognitive attention. This perspective conforms to our experience as researchers of managerial behavior. We have collected hundreds of critical incidents of managerial behavior from employees at many different work sites. Although we have asked for both positive and negative incidents, we have found that negative incidents outnumber positive incidents by roughly a 3-to-1 margin.

Taylor's (1991) work indicated that negative events "elicit more physiological, affective, cognitive, and behavioral activity...than neutral or positive events" (p. 67). As Newsom, Nishishiba, Morgan, and Rook (2003) stated, "negative information or events have adaptive significance and lead to greater physiological arousal, trigger more cognitive processing, and are ascribed greater importance" (p. 752). This could be a result of natural selection, which may have led us to have stronger reactions to negative stimuli than to positive stimuli (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1997). Some researchers believe that negative stimuli attract attention through an automatic vigilance mechanism and that, once attended, have stronger effects than positive stimuli (Ito, Larsen, Smith, & Cacioppo, 1998). This is supported by the work of Newsom et al., who concluded that negative social interactions have longer-lasting effects than positive social interactions. In addition, in their study on employee burnout and its relationship with leadership styles, Hetland, Sandal, and Johnsen (2007) found that perceptions of negative leadership behaviors are more important for burnout than perceptions of positive leadership behaviors.

Based on Taylor's (1991) mobilization perspective and the related body of previous research, it is also predicted:

H2: Negative supervisor behavior will have stronger associations with job-stress-related presenteeism than positive supervisor behavior.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected from Australian employees in two hospitals. This was a "convenience sample" in the sense that we contacted these organizations and they permitted access to their employees. Packets containing an introduction to the study, an invitation to participate, and a questionnaire were mailed to 400 employees. An email reminder was also sent to potential participants. A total of 180 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 45%. A review of data revealed that 31 questionnaires were unusable because of incompleteness,

resulting in a final dataset based on the responses of 149 employees. The resulting sample was 59% male with a median age of 31. Eleven percent of respondents were in managerial/supervisory positions, 18% were in manual positions, and 71% were in non-manual (e.g. administrative, technical, sales) positions. Among these, 46% were working part-time and 54% were full-time employees.

Measures

The data were collected via a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. Except for demographics and controls, all variables were measured using Likert-type response formats.

Demographic and control variables. Data were collected on each respondents' age, type of work (part-time or full-time status), and hours worked per week.

Supervisor behavior. Supervisor behavior was measured with the *Supervisor Practices Instrument* (SPI), which was created to study the effects of supervisor behavior on employee well-being (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, n.d.). It is a conglomerative measure of positive and negative supervisor behaviors from which composite scores are calculated (Gilbreath, 2005). Higher scores on the SPI indicate that, according to employee respondents, their supervisor engages more frequently in positive behaviors and less often in negative behaviors. The response anchors range from *all the time* (5) to *never* (1). Scores on the SPI have been found to be predictive of employee psychiatric disturbance (Gilbreath & Benson, 2004).

The SPI was chosen because the primary interest of this study is the overall effect of supervisor behavior on employees' stress-related presenteeism, not in narrow sub-types of supervisor behavior (e.g., initiation of structure, supervisor support). In other words, this study is investigating the extent to which how someone supervises employees affects the employees' degree of presenteeism rather than in associations between specific factors of supervisor behavior and presenteeism. The aim of this study, therefore, is more closely aligned with a question such as, "does whether someone is perceived by employees to be a good or bad boss affect employees' presenteeism?" than it is with a question such as, "does transactional or transformational leadership show stronger associations with presenteeism?" The SPI's 63 items encompass a wide variety of supervisor behaviors, including those related to job control (e.g., "Is flexible about how I accomplish my objectives"); leadership (e.g., "Makes me feel like part of something useful, significant, and valuable"); communication (e.g., "Encourages employees to ask questions"); consideration (e.g., "Shows appreciation for a job well done"); social support (e.g., "Steps in when employees need help or support"); group maintenance (e.g., "Fails to properly monitor and manage group dynamics"); organizing (e.g., "Plans work to level out the load, reduce peaks and bottlenecks"); and looking out for employee well-being (e.g., "Strikes the proper balance between productivity and employee well-being") (Gilbreath & Benson, 2004).

In addition to the breadth of behaviors it encompasses, using the SPI enabled us to create measures of positive supervisor behavior and negative supervisor behavior. The measure of positive supervisor behavior is comprised of the SPI's 52 positive behaviors. Example items include: "Shields employees from unnecessary interference so they can perform their jobs effectively and productively"; "Balances the workload among employees equitably"; and "Admits when he/she is wrong or makes a mistake." The variable *positive supervisor behavior* was created by calculating the mean score on the 52 items. Likewise, the measure of negative supervisor behavior is comprised of the SPI's 11 negative behaviors. Example items include:

"Ignores employee suggestions"; "Tends to be guarded (e.g., not open) in his/her communication"; and "Remains aloof from employees." The variable *negative supervisor* behavior was created by calculating the mean score on the 11 items.

Job stress. Job-related stress was measured with two items created by Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning (1986) to assess the stress employees experience because of their job: "I have felt a great deal of stress because of my job"; and "My job has been extremely stressful." The scale anchors were *strongly disagree* (5) and *strongly agree* (1). For final analysis, the scale anchors were reversed to be consistent with other study variables. Thus, higher scores on this scale suggest higher levels of job stress.

Job-stress-related presenteeism. As noted earlier, the working definition of presenteeism for this study is when employees are physically present, but mentally absent. Job-stress-related presenteeism occurs when employees are at work, but, because of job stress, only a portion of their cognitive energy is devoted to their work. To measure job-stress-related presenteeism, a self-report scale created by Gilbreath and Frew (2008) was used. This study is the first applied use of that scale, which was created to fill the need for a measure of job-stress-related presenteeism. The scale anchors are *all the time* (5) and *never* (1). It asks employees to respond to six items: "I'm unable to concentrate on my job because of work-related stress"; "I spend a significant proportion of my workday coping with work stress"; "work stress distracts my attention away from my job tasks"; "mental energy I'd otherwise devote to my work is squandered on work stressors"; "I delay starting on new projects at work because of stress"; and "I spend time talking to co-workers about stressful work situations."

Results

Internal-consistency reliability for most measures was good. The Cronbach's alpha for the measure of negative supervisor behavior was .92, .98 for positive supervisor behavior, and .91 for job-stress-related presenteeism. Internal-consistency reliability for the measure of job stress was acceptable (α = .80).

To test the discriminant validity of the positive and negative dimensions of supervisor behavior, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed with the entire sample. Since there are computational limitations for a structural equation analysis involving too many indicators, three-item parcels were used for each construct to reduce the number of indicators, consistent with other researchers (Hui, Law, & Chen, 1999; Ilies, Scott, & Judge, 2006). Specifically, the items with the highest and the lowest loading were combined by averaging them until three aggregated items were yielded. Model fit was evaluated using the chi-square statistic, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio, the goodness-of-fit index, the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index, and the root-mean square error of approximation. The one-factor model (no dimension of supervisor behavior) was compared with the two-factor model (positive and negative supervisor behavior). The results suggest an adequate fit to the data. As shown in Table 1, the chi-square statistic and associated fit indices showed a substantial improvement for the two-factor model ($\chi^2 = 18.58$, robust CFI = 0.99) compared to one factor model ($\chi^2 = 486.50$, robust CFI = 0.54), suggesting the validity of the two-factor model of supervisor behavior.

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all study variables are presented in Table 2. As indicated, employees' presenteeism was significantly correlated with age, job stress, and negative and positive supervisor behavior (p < .01).

Table 1				
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Two-Factor Model of Supervisor Behavior				
Models	χ2	df	CFI	
One-factor model (one dimension)	486.50	9	0.54	
Two-factor model (positive-negative supervisor behavior)	18.58	8	0.99	

Table 2									
Pearson Inter-Correlation among All Variables ($N = 149$)									
	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	31.1	7.5		0.33	0.33	-0.23	-0.06	-0.11	0.15
2. Work type (full-time/part-time)					0.72	-0.14	0.02	-0.09	0.08
3. Working hours	38.0	5.83				-0.16	0.07	-0.12	0.16
4. Presenteeism	1.44	0.81					0.53	0.57	-0.36
5. Job stress	1.64	0.95						0.34	-0.35
6. Negative supervisor Behavior	1.51	0.69							-0.53
7. Positive supervisor Behavior	2.30	0.66							

Recall the first hypothesis that both negative and positive supervisor behavior would be associated with employees' job-stress-related presenteeism. This hypothesis is supported by the statistically significant correlations between presenteeism and positive and negative supervisor behavior. Further analysis, using hierarchical regression, was conducted to investigate the level of association of each dimension of supervisor behavior with presenteeism. As shown in Table 3, Step 1 of the hierarchical regression analysis required controlling for the effects of demographic variables that often are associated with employees' reactions to work: age, part- or full-time employment, and hours worked per week. Then, Step 2 involved entering the negative supervisor behavior variable to test its ability to make an incremental contribution to the prediction of presenteeism beyond that made by the control variables. The results show that negative supervisor behavior made a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of presenteeism scores ($\beta = 0.50$) beyond the Step 1 variate, comprised of age, part- or full-time employment ("work type"), and hours worked per week (i.e., "working hours").

Table 3 Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Presenteeism, Demographic, & Negative Supervisor Behavior Variables (N = 149)

Variables	Step 1	Step 2
	β	В
Age	-0.23**	-0.20*
Work type	-0.15	-0.05
Working hours	0.02	.003
Negative supervisor behavior		0.50***
R	0.30	0.56
Δ R2	0.09	0.32
F	3.56**	12.52***

Note: *** = p < .001; ** = p < .01; * = p < .05.

Similar results were found for positive supervisor behavior. As reported at Table 4, positive supervisor behavior made significant contribution to the prediction of presenteeism (β = -0.33).

Table 4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Presenteeism, Demographic & Positive Supervisor Behavior Variables (N = 149)

Variables	Step 1	Step 2
	В	В
Age	-0.23*	-0.18
Work type	-0.16	-0.17
Working hours	0.03	0.07
Positive supervisor behavior		-0.33**
R	0.31	0.45
$\Delta R2$	0.09	0.20
F	3.88*	6.98**

Note: ** = p < .01; * = p < .05.

16.77***

The correlations in Table 2 provide some indication of the veracity of the second hypothesis—that negative supervisor behavior would have stronger associations with job-stress-related presenteeism than positive supervisor behavior. The absolute value of the correlation between positive supervisor behavior and presenteeism (-.36) is much smaller than that for negative supervisor behavior (.57). Hierarchical regression analysis was used to conduct an additional test of the difference in degree of association. Control variables (age, part- or full-time employment, and hours worked per week) were entered in Step 1, positive supervisor behavior in Step 2, and negative supervisor behavior in Step 3. As shown in Table 5, although positive supervisor behavior was significant at Step 2 of the analysis (β = -0.36, p < .01), it did not make a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of presenteeism beyond negative supervisor behavior (Step 3 of the analysis) (β = -0.08, p > .01). This supports the hypothesis that negative supervisor behavior will have stronger associations on job-stress-related presenteeism than positive supervisor behavior.

Table 5				
Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Presenteeism, Demographic & Supervisor Behavior Variables ($N=149$)				
Variables	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	
Age	-0.23	-0.17	-0.18**	
Work type	-0.15	-0.16	-0.06	
Working hours	0.02	0.05	0.01	
Positive supervisor behavior		-0.36**	-0.08	
Negative supervisor behavior			0.43***	
R	0.30	0.46	0.56	
ΔR^2	0.09	0.12	0.10	

Note: The coefficients are standardized beta weights. *** = p < .001; ** = p < .01; * = p < .05.

3.56*

17.03***

To express the effect sizes of supervisor behavior, the common language effect size indicator for bivariate normal correlations was calculated (Dunlap, 1994). Results in the sample indicated that if employees rated their supervisor's behavior above average, the probability was 43% that their presenteeism would be below average.

Thus, these supervisor behaviors had the highest correlation (positive or negative) with employee presenteeism (with corresponding Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients):

- fails to properly monitor and manage group dynamics (.58);
- makes decisions that affect employees without seeking their input (.47);
- *shows disinterest in employees' ideas and projects* (.47);
- *is easily threatened by competent employees* (.46);
- remains aloof from employees (.46);

 \boldsymbol{F}

• *ignores employees' suggestions* (.45);

• and *tends to be guarded* (*e.g. not open*) *in his/her communication* (.42). The supervisor behavior with the highest negative correlation with employee presenteeism (Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient = -.38) was *helps employees keep work in perspective* (*e.g., there is more to life than work*).

Discussion

Summary of Results

Internal-consistency reliability and discriminant validity for the measures of job-stress-related presenteeism and the two dimensions of supervisor behavior were acceptable. As expected, job stress and presenteeism were positively correlated. The first hypothesis, that both negative and positive supervisor behavior would be associated with employees' job-stress-related presenteeism, was supported. Further analysis showed that negative supervisor behaviors had the strongest associations with employee job-stress-related presenteeism. Among demographic characteristics, age showed a negative and significant correlation with job-stress-related presenteeism.

Implications for Research

This study marks the first known attempt to operationalize Cooper's (1994) conceptualization of presenteeism. To the extent that a construct can be "seen," like Cooper, we have observed presenteeism in ourselves and our co-workers. Although further refinement and testing is needed, we believe job-stress-related presenteeism is a legitimate construct and one that should be incorporated into models of occupational stress and lists of stress outcomes.

Initial psychometrics used in this study for the job-stress-related presenteeism scale (Gilbreath & Frew, 2008) were favorable. Internal-consistency reliability and validity were high, and reactions of our respondents to the measure suggests it is not difficult to comprehend or taxing to complete. If further tests of its utility and validity are favorable, it may prove useful to others who are interested in the effects of job stress on employees.

The finding that negative supervisor behaviors had the strongest correlations with jobstress-related presenteeism contributes to understanding of outcomes associated with negative leader behavior (Fox & Stallworth, 2004; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). It is not particularly surprising that negative supervisor behaviors had strong associations with employee presenteeism, but it was surprising that *all* of the most strongly associated behaviors were negative. These results align with Taylor's (1991) assertion that negative events elicit more cognitive analysis than positive events. As Taylor explained, "extended energies are taken up in the management of negative information and events" (p. 80). Incidents of negative supervisor behavior and other negative work events will therefore be of particular interest when identifying antecedents of employee job-stress-related presenteeism.

However, this study also suggests there are positive supervisor behaviors that may affect the degree to which employees experience presenteeism. Supervisor behaviors that help employees keep their work in perspective may be especially helpful. This may be because of the pressure many employees experience in attempting to balance their work and home life. Employees with role pressures from the non-work domain may experience more presenteeism at work. A supervisor with the attitude that there is more to life than work could help employees

maintain balance in the face of competing demands, thereby helping to reduce role conflict, stress, and presenteeism.

We believe that considering presenteeism as an outcome with a variety of antecedents will help to discover which antecedents are most prevalent and which have the strongest effects. This study was based on the premise that, like health problems, job stress is a causal antecedent of presenteeism. Longitudinal research is needed to establish the validity of that presumed relationship.

Implications for Practice

The finding that supervisor behavior is associated with job-stress-related presenteeism is important given the competitive environment faced by organizations today. Many organizations are downsized and operating with lean workforces, exacerbating the effects of employees who are distracted and unable to concentrate on their jobs. Many organizations are facing global competition, and a productive, focused workforce is a competitive advantage. Organizations, therefore, may be interested in minimizing stress-related presenteeism by ensuring that supervisors engage in appropriate behaviors. In this study, the association of supervisor behavior with presenteeism was large enough to be not only statistically significant, but also practically significant.

Strengths of Our Study

Although this study clearly has practical implications, it makes theoretical contributions, as well. First, it makes a case for broadening the conceptualization of presenteeism. Second, it establishes a new supervisor behavior-outcome link. Job-stress-related presenteeism, an understudied phenomenon, is another outcome subject to supervisor influence. Third, it pilottested a measure of job-stress-related presenteeism. This scale appears to have good face validity and internal-consistency reliability. Fourth, it suggests presenteeism is another factor subject to supervisor influence, and it provides additional evidence of the important effects supervisors can have on employees.

Limitations of Our Study

There are potential shortcomings of this study that qualify the conclusions drawn. The exclusive use of questionnaire-based measures creates the potential for mono-method bias. One way to detect inflated correlations caused by mono-method bias or other causes (e.g., social desirability) is to examine correlations between all variables in a data set for a baseline level of correlation. As Spector (2006) noted, "unless the strength of CMV [common method variance] is so small as to be inconsequential, this baseline should produce significant correlations among all variables reported in such [cross-sectional, self-report] studies" (p. 224). In this case, although the sample size was big enough to provide a power of .80 to detect even small correlations (r = 0.23), 11 out of 21 correlations (52%) were insignificant.

Another potential limitation is the study's exclusive reliance on data provided by employees rather than data from co-workers or outsiders. This study, however, was concerned with variables for which employee-provided data are arguably the best feasible measures. Concerning supervisor behavior, observer effects and threats to validity, such as reactivity,

makes it questionable whether a third party could provide a more valid measure of supervisor behavior. Although employee reports of supervisor behaviors are undoubtedly subject to potential distortion, when compared to outside observers, employees are proximal and frequent observers of their supervisors' behaviors. Furthermore, employees have a better understanding of the work context and the implications and nuances of a particular behavior.

Concerning presenteeism, Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002) noted, "one should not automatically assume that self-reports are the inferior source of data in workplace research" or "that co-worker or supervisor reports are necessarily better than self-reports" (p. 257). Presenteeism is, for the most part, an unobservable mental state that is difficult to verify. Because of employees' ability to appear to be working while distracted by stressors, even co-workers may not be reliable judges of the degree to which an employee suffers from presenteeism. Still, extensions of this exploratory study should, when possible, utilize multiple data sources. Co-worker-reports of employees' presenteeism, for example, could serve as a complementary source of data to help limit mono-method bias.

Another limitation is that this study was cross sectional. An ideal study of the effects of supervisor behavior would study a sample of employees over time, making it possible to measure changes in presenteeism, for example, after work groups were assigned new supervisors. Although this study was cross sectional, this does not invalidate the results. Stress-related presenteeism often quickly follows causal supervisor behavior. For example, if a supervisor behaves rudely in a morning meeting, many of his employees are likely to spend a proportion of the rest of the workday attempting to cope with the after-effects. In contrast to some other stress-related problems (e.g., musculoskeletal disorders), presenteeism would not take long to manifest.

Could reverse causality explain these findings? It is likely that supervisors behave differently with employees who are known to frequently engage in presenteeism. It is unlikely, however, that this would explain away the correlations found in this study. Although supervisors' behavior may sometimes fluctuate depending on the employee they're interacting with, most of them will have a generally consistent style of supervision.

Avenues for Future Research

It remains to be seen how the research community will perceive stress-related presenteeism. Some scholars (T. W. Taris, personal communication, February 27, 2008) take issue with our conceptualization of presenteeism, arguing that we are creating problems by deviating from the dominant paradigm, which we prefer to call *sickness presenteeism*. However, at conferences we have heard other scholars make the same objections made here about the narrowness of the current conceptualization of presenteeism. Furthermore, we have noticed problems with research using the dominant paradigm. Musich, Hook, Baaner, Spooner, and Edington (2006), for example, defined presenteeism as "health-related on-the-job work impairment" (p. 128). The questionnaire instrument used in their study, however, asks respondents: "how much time did your *stress levels* [italics added], physical or emotional health make it difficult for you to do the following."

A continued dialogue among interested scholars would be helpful to determine which viewpoint will best serve the field. If our broader conceptualization of presenteeism as a type of psychological strain that can result from a variety of causes is judged as potentially value adding, research will be needed to establish convergent and divergent validity for the presenteeism sub-

type focused on in this study. How does job-stress-related presenteeism relate to concepts such as stress, burnout, anxiety, attentional strain, rumination, motivation, job neglect, etc.?

Perceptions of situations are often influenced by individual differences, and there are, undoubtedly, some relevant individual-difference variables (e.g., coping style, ruminative activity) not measured in this study. Research on the individual-difference variables that make people more or less prone to presenteeism would be valuable, as would research on workenvironment factors that moderate the relationship between job stress and presenteeism. It seems likely that particular types of social support from co-workers and supervisors could be effective in attenuating the effects of stress.

Conclusion

There have been numerous research and media reports about how bad bosses affect employee well-being (e.g., Are Mean Managers Making You Sick?, 1995; Pisano, 2006; Study: Bad bosses abound in U.S., 2007). Any researcher who spends time asking employees about important work factors affecting them will quickly come to appreciate the potentially strong effects of supervisors on employees. As Kelloway, Sivanthan, Francis, and Barling (2005) stated, "leadership is a critical element of context that needs to be considered in understanding organizational stressors" (pp. 90–91). To date, however, there has not been much action in organizations specifically focused on producing healthy supervision. While we believe that well-meaning managers care about the well-being of their employees, individual concern from good bosses is not enough. Organizations need to track how their work environment is affecting their employees. They need to do this not only because it affects employees' quality of life, but also because it affects organizational effectiveness.

The problem is that monitoring the work environment and changing supervisor behavior will take focused time and attention, which requires top management to buy into the importance of doing it. It is our opinion that more is needed to show line managers how their treatment of employees affects them as managers. Managers are evaluated by the results they achieve, and these results are generally dependent on the employees who implement managers' directives. Since most organizations are unable to quantitatively track their service-profit chain, it is necessary to demonstrate how the work environment affects performance in a way that is meaningful to managers. Outcomes such as health care costs or employees' psychological well-being—although of concern—may be less salient than factors that directly affect work unit performance. It is our hope that job-stress-related presenteeism will prove to be an outcome that is salient to managers and a construct that is credible to researchers.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank Drs. Erin Frew, Jo Yarker, and Jenny Hoobler for their assistance in improving our article.

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