Over the past decades the nature of work has changed dramatically around the world. The introduction of new technologies in the workplace, followed by a huge shift towards globalization, has resulted in marked changes in business organizations, management structures and employment relationships. Organizations in countries hit by recession have been forced to downsize in an effort to survive. There has been a noticeable rise in short-term contracts, possibly as a result of the deregulation of fixed-term contracts and the limited requirements on permanent employment in many countries (OECD, 2006). Other changes include new work patterns, such as self-regulated work and team work, and a shift towards a more flexible workforce, including the number of employees along with their skills and functions (Sparks et al., 2001).

The combination of globalization and technological changes has helped to create a new labour force varied greatly by ethnicity, gender and age. The United Nations estimates that in 2005, 3% of the world’s population – about 191 million people – were people who had migrated, with 33% of these having moved from a developing to a developed country, 33% having migrated between developing nations, and a further 33% having moved from one developed country to another developed nation (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2006). Furthermore, the steadily increasing rate of female participation in the labor force, combined with decreasing male rates, has brought the labour force close to a gender balance (BLS, 2007). The rise in female participation rates holds for married women and single women alike. In the workforce, the trend toward greater age balance is strong, increasing labour force participation among mature and older workers.

As the workplace has transformed, research reported in organizational psychology publications has had an impact on both the individual employee and organizational levels. This Handbook focuses on theory and research, concentrating on seven major areas: occupational health psychology, specific issues in organization psychology, managing occupational stress and increasing well-being, professional burnout, migration and health, emotional intelligence and work related support.

Part I: Conceptualization and theoretical framework
This section provides the foundation material for occupational health psychology and managerial behavior. Occupational health psychology reinforces the importance of psychological health in the workplace, why this is important, and levels of theory and practice (individual, group and organizational). One of the chapters provides evidence for the type of leadership and behaviours that are more effective in a complexity perspective. The remaining chapters demonstrate how stress can be harmful and how to identify appraisal patterns associated with different coping strategies.

Part II: Specific issues in organization psychology
The focus of this section is work–life diversity and professional development policies. The first three chapters discuss the influence of age on group performance and health, the work–life issues of single employees without children and latent motivation associated
with social frustration among Russian managers. The other chapters expand on the understanding of factors that enhance occupational safety and interpersonal justice in the workplace. Included in this section are discussions on unhealthy relationships at work and emerging ethical issues.

Part III: Occupational stress, well-being and health
The stress experienced as a direct result of a person’s occupation has an adverse effect on the health of individuals and organizations. The aim of this section is to understand the issue of occupational stress in the context of social inequality, facing the temporary workforce and in small- and medium-sized companies. Various chapters explore relationships between several personal and interpersonal variables, such as altruism, affect and stress, and demonstrate the way that stress depletes employees’ emotional resources, making them more vulnerable to mental health problems.

Part IV: Professional burnout, coping and prevention
Professional burnout can have serious consequences on an individual’s health. This section focuses on the role of person-organization value congruence on the experience of burnout in different countries and the concept of burnout among health professionals. Moreover, it covers certain coping strategies that seem to affect levels of burnout and distress, and suggests training programs for burnout prevention and for helping people to cope with demanding work situations.

Part V: Immigration, acculturation and health
The health of individuals and organizations is determined by a range of social, economic and environmental factors. Some conditions that affect population health – such as employment, living and working conditions and social support – can be especially challenging for immigrant groups in many countries. This section explores the health of immigrants as well as certain acculturation factors related to their mental health problems.

Part VI: Emotion at work
Recent research has begun to focus on the role of emotions in the workplace and the relation between cognition and emotions. This section has been attributed to new research around the construct of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and the role EI may play in occupational stress. The second chapter examines the relation between the psychological contract and emotional labour at work, together with the implications for psychological well-being and organization functioning.

Part VII: Social support aspects
The final section concerns the impact of a perceived support network and availability of functional support on stress. Longitudinal data are reported on the relations between social support from co-workers and supervisors and work strain characteristics such as job demands and job control.

At this point, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all contributors to this new volume who very enthusiastically participated in this project and provided original and in-depth insights on current issues of working life. It is an honour for us to welcome
such an international team of over 50 experts, academics and professionals from many universities and research centers worldwide. In conclusion, credits go to Edward Elgar’s staff for their assistance throughout the stages of this project. Their professionalism made this effort possible.

References


