



Distance Managers' Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Perceived Organizational Support

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Symposium 10: Mental health and performance at work: Perspectives for a post-pandemic world

Chair Valerie Hervieux

Organizations are faced with numerous technological and organizational disruptions that intensify expectations regarding performance and productivity at work. These changes are progressively transforming working conditions and leading to a sense of overwhelm and urgency in the workplace, with consequences for the organizations, individuals, and their health. However, despite the abundance of studies that have demonstrated the negative impacts of psychosocial risks such as work overload and low decision-making autonomy on occupational health, organizations are still too often reluctant to act on prevention. Meanwhile, psychological health problems in the workplace are on the rise since the beginning of the pandemic, adding an additional burden: Work overload, absenteeism, presenteeism, staff shortages, and rising costs for organizations and society.

As we move up and down the waves of Covid-19, there is a need to reflect on 1) what are the impacts of the crisis on workplaces, in particular mental health, well-being, and performance 2) the effects on working conditions of teleworkers, and how they differ from those present physically on site 3) the pressure of connectivity and the increasing technological demands. The objective of this symposium is to take stock of the latest work in the field of occupational health psychology and to bring together researchers and students to promote the transfer of our knowledge to the workplace. This symposium represents an important opportunity to reflect on and anticipate how organizations should evolve to meet the complex challenges we face and promote occupational health.

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Distance Managers' Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Perceived Organizational Support

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Introduction: With the COVID-19 pandemic where working from home (WFH) for long periods of time has become common and is putting a lot of strain on employees, support from their organization has a large impact on feelings of appreciation, engagement, and work behaviors (Biron et al., 2021). A considerable amount of research has been conducted focusing on employees' experiences and behaviors in the change to WFH during the pandemic. However, much less, if any, attention has been paid on how managers experience distance or hybrid management and how they perceive organizational support in this role. Research has shown that leadership is a dynamic role where leaders must develop and be supported in tandem with an organizational change or intervention (Ipsen et al., 2021). Hence, additional studies are needed to understand managers' perceptions of organizational support in order to create a pathway for utilizing organizational support in practice, for those acting in a management role and as a distance manager. The present study investigates managers' perceived organizational support (POS) during the Danish lockdowns in spring 2021 and whether POS contributed to the well-being and appreciation of the job (WBA) for direct and middle managers in a Danish context. Finally, it examines what organisations should be aware of in terms of the future of work, which is now taking a more hybrid form world-wide.

Methods: Based on the literature, a survey including demographics, POS and WBA was developed. Most questions used a 5-point Likert scale. Data was collected from members of the Danish Association of Managers and Executives, Lederne, in March 2021 when restrictions were lifted and the numbers of COVID-19 cases were decreasing. Data collected from 1016 managers were included in the data analysis. The relationship between POS and WBA (each measured with 5 items) was calculated using a PLS model.

Results: The managers (n=1016) reported that 60% of their employees were working partly from home or in the office, where 70% of the managers shifted between the office and the workplace. Overall, the study shows, that 72% of managers found distance management demanding and not motivating. It also shows that the key sources of support came from their direct reports (71%) and less from their manager (51%) and internal support function (45%). The Cronbach Alphas of the two constructs POS and WBA were above 0.7. The PLS model showed that POS positively influenced WBA ($\beta = 0.337$, $p < .001$) with $R^2 = 0.114$, $NFI = 0.8$ and $SRMR = 0.089$.

In light of these findings, if workplaces aim to become fully remote or hybrid, it is essential to take into account the sufficient POS in order to maintain managers WBA. The changes in management locality should align to their skills and preferences (present or acquired). Not taking into account such skills and preferences may risk increased stress and anxiety and potentially ineffective management. Consequently, organisations would need to reconsider the support provided to their managers in the transition so that they, the managers, can develop in tandem with the changes.

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Investigating Associations Between Physical Activity and Presenteeism – A Scoping Review

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Introduction: One of the avenues for preventing and improving mental health in the population during the Covid-19 pandemic identified by the group of researchers was physical activity (PA). PA is also known to prevent work-health related illness such as burnout. Considering that PA plays a key role in the health of workers and organizations, numerous scientists recognize the relevance of further studying its relationship with presenteeism. Despite the widely recognized importance of PA for mental and physical health, several questions remain regarding the role of PA as a resource to better manage presenteeism. There are several inconsistencies in the results of studies examining the relationship between PA and presenteeism. Moreover, studies that have examined the relationship between PA and presenteeism have used varied methodologies, which makes comparisons between studies difficult. It is therefore essential to interpret these results with caution given the lack of consistency in the results, the possibility of bias in certain studies, and the variability in the methods used in these studies, and in the criteria used to define a physically active vs. inactive individual. Clarification through a scoping review of the literature on the subject is warranted.

Methods: A search strategy was conducted in six scientific databases. Two independent reviewers led a screening process for study selection. Studies written in English about the relation between PA and presenteeism were considered for inclusion. Data on definitions and measurement of presenteeism and PA were extracted.