Journal of Industrial Relations

Call for Papers

Special Issue

Workplace Psychosocial Hazards: Employment Relations Frameworks and Implications for Workers' Health and Safety

Guest Editors:

Alexis Vassiley, Edith Cowan University a.vassiley@ecu.edu.au
Kantha Dayaram, Curtin University K.Dayaram@curtin.edu.au
Tom Barratt, Edith Cowan University t.barratt@ecu.edu.au
John Burgess, Torrens University john.burgess@torrens.edu.au

Workplace psychosocial hazards, and the risks they pose to workers' health and safety, are receiving increased attention from policymakers, regulators, and academics.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines psychosocial factors (hazards) as the "interactions between and among work environment, job content, organizational conditions and workers' capacities, needs, culture, personal extra-job considerations that may, through perceptions and experience, influence health, work performance and job satisfaction" (ILO, 2016: 2). Thirteen psychosocial hazards by Safe Work Australia have been identified which include job demands, bullying and harassment and organisational justice as some of the leading causes of work-related mental illness (Safe Work Australia, 2019).

Work-related stress is determined by psychosocial hazards found in work conditions, work design, labour relations and work organisation (ILO, 2022), and it appears to be increasingly prevalent in workplaces. For instance, while COVID-19 necessitated work from home arrangements (WFH), increased work hours, loneliness/isolation, stress around work/home conflict, and work intensification were reported (ACTU, 2020). For sectors such as engineering, WFH resulted in the blurring of work time boundaries and work-life balance (Hern, 2020), while for regional health care workers, labour demand resulted in work intensification. Although prior studies indicate the negative health effects of blue-collar occupations' long working hours, the increased uptake of WFH amongst white collar occupations have resulted in longer working hours and increased expectations of worker accessibility to meet work demands (Wong et al., 2019; ACTU, 2020). The Australian Productivity Commission's (2020) report on mental health identified workplace bullying as one of the leading causes of work-related mental stress in Australia.

While in Europe, stress is the second most frequently reported work-related health issue, accounting for approximately 50 – 60 percent of annual lost workdays (ILO, 2022), in Australia the cost of workplace mental ill-health in 2015-2016 was estimated at $12.8 billion (KPMG, 2018). While organisational psychologists have proposed interventions at the individual or organisational level to address the effects of psychosocial risks, national industrial relations regulations have also introduced measures such as 'stop bullying orders' and expanding the remit of work health and safety legislation with the intention of reducing these risks. Studies pertaining to the effectiveness of the latter, including stakeholder actions, however, are limited.

Workplace psychosocial hazards touch on many aspects of work which have been central to industrial relations scholarship for decades. Despite this, there is a dearth of industrial relations research on the topic.

The shifting regulatory terrain, as evidenced by new codes of practice on Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace, disruptions to both blue and white-collar work in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and wider trends and increased scholarly attention to the topic of psychosocial risk make this special issue particularly timely.

This special issue aims to generate research and insights on psychosocial hazards and health and safety risks, attempts to mitigate them and their effectiveness from an employment relations perspective. Contributions should conform to JIR's scope of qualitative and multi-method analyses, including theoretically informed case studies and international and comparative papers.

We would welcome contributions which engage with:

a) structural and antecedental forces at work which precipitate or exacerbate psycho-social risk,
b) Employee, trade union, employer and employer association responses to psycho-social risks, and the consequences of these responses
c) How changing workplace practices and locations (including working from home) influences psycho-social risks (in light of, or independent of, the Covid-19 pandemic)
d) Regulatory impacts and responses in light of changing perspectives on psycho-social risks
e) Precarious and informal work and psycho-social risk
f) How the burden of psychosocial hazards falls unevenly across the workforce
g) Other papers which engage with employment relations theory and psychosocial risk

This is an indicative list, and far from exhaustive. We would welcome other contributions which fall under the general topic area.

Timeline:

Call for Papers is open until 3 February 2023.

Deadline for full papers to be submitted to the JIR for peer review.

Publication date: 2023.

Authors should submit papers in the normal way through the JIR website, and take

care to follow the manuscript instructions available here:

https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/JIR

References:
Australian Council of Trade Unions (2021). Working from Home. Report, Australian Council of Trade Unions. https://www.actu.org.au/media/1449319/au_workingfromhome_p1.pdf.

Australian Productivity Commission (2020) Mental Health Inquiry Report, Volume 1 (95), June 2020. https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mental-health/report/mental-health.pdf

Pega, F et al. (2021) Global, regional, and national burdens of ischemic heart disease and stroke attributable to exposure to long working hours for 194 countries, 2000–2016: A systematic analysis from the WHO/ILO Joint Estimates of the Work-related Burden of Disease and Injury. *Environment International* 154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2021.106595

ILO (2016) Workplace Stress: A Collective Challenge. Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@safework/documents/publication/wcms_473267.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

International Labour Organisation (2022) Psychosocial risks and work related stress.

Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/areasofwork/workplace-health-promotion-and-well-being/WCMS_108557/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 13 April 2022).

Safe Work Australia (2019) Work-related psychological health and safety: a systematic approach to meeting your duties. Report, Australian Government, January. https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1911/work-related_psychological_health_and_safety_a_systematic_approach_to_meeting_your_duties.pdf

TechRepublic. (2020) Transitioning Asia-Pacific to a New Normal of Work. Available at: https://news.microsoft.com/wp-content/uploads/prod/sites/43/2020/07/Whitepaper-Transitioning-Asia-to-a-New-Normal-of-Work.pdf (accessed 25 October 2020).

Wong K, Chan A, and Ngan SC (2019). The Effect of Long Working Hours and Overtime on Occupational Health: A Meta-Analysis of Evidence from 1998 to 2018. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 16(12), 2102. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16122102