

# Short-term effects of task restructuring on well-being

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### Purpose

Employment has altered in the last decades. Flexible work arrangements like temporary work have grown in importance. This has implications for stress research. Specific stress, stemming from the employment itself is not covered by classical task-related stress concepts like the job-demand-control model. Within flexible work, stress needs to be assessed concerning both task-related stress and employment-related stress. Drawing on JD-R theory we aim to expand Lewchuck et al.'s (2005) concept of employment strain and introduce employment-related demands and resources.

### Design/Methodology

We conducted two surveys: In Study 1 (N=167), a new instrument capable of measuring employment-related demands and resources was developed. In Study 2 (N=512) the instruments structure was confirmed. Furthermore we tested for incremental validity of employment-related demands and resources beyond task-related aspects of stress. Thirdly, we addressed possible interactions between employment-related stress and task-related stress.

### Results

EFA led to a 12 factor model that was confirmed with CFA in the second study. Hierarchical regression analysis provided evidence for incremental validity, moderated regression analysis revealed significant interactions.

### Limitations

Both our samples were young and some participants pursued an alternate career to their current one. This might underestimate the effect of conventional task-related stress in our samples.

### Research/Practical Implications

It might be that employees in flexible work arrangements are under a double risk: 1. They face poor designed jobs and 2. They are con-

fronted with new sources of stress, stemming from the employment itself.

### Originality/Value

We advance stress research as we provide empirical evidence for the employment relationship as a new source of stress within flexible work.

## **Short-term effects of task restructuring on well-being: The buffering potential of workplace-learning**

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### Purpose

Organizations need to be able to effectively implement structural changes in order to adapt to the dynamic environment. In this paper we focus on task restructuring as one of the most frequently occurring types of change in contemporary knowledge society. In spite of its evident prevalence, until now research on task restructuring and employees well-being has been scarce. In this paper, based on Conservation of Resources Theory, we argue that task restructuring has a negative effect on employees well-being (in terms of emotional exhaustion and vigor) in the short-term. Furthermore, we advance that opportunities for learning through reflection and experimentation, as well as recently acquired KSAO's can serve as a buffer in the relation between task restructuring and well-being.

### Design/Methodology

Hierarchical regression analyses and simple slope analyses have been conducted in order to test the research hypotheses on a large representative sample of the Dutch working population (N = 1711).

### Results

Task restructuring had a positive influence on emotional exhaustion but did not significantly affect employees' vigor. Furthermore, recently acquired KSAO's, as well as opportunities for reflection and experimentation buffered the relation between task restructuring and emotional exhaustion. Opportunities for reflection and experimentation moderated the relation between task restructuring and vigor as well.

### Limitations

The hypotheses in this study have been tested on cross-sectional data. Hence we could not draw conclusions on the directionality of the hypothesised relations.

### Originality/Value

This study adds to the scarce research on the effects of task restructuring on well being. Additionally, it suggests that workplace learning has the potential to mitigate the negative relation between task restructuring and well-being.

## **Contact center as new forms of work organization: The triangular relationship between worker, contact centers and contractors and well-being at work**

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### Purpose

The new forms of work organization are characterized by different evolutions: multiple workers status, fragmentation of collective work, etc. Among these evolutions, the triangular relationship between worker, employer and contractors and the intervention of contractors in work organization (Marchington et al., 2004) may be particularly affecting the well-being of workers. This research focus on contact center as a new form of work organization to investigate the influence of the tri-

angular employment relationship on well-being at work.

### Methodology

A quantitative and qualitative approach was used. A survey based on Job Demand-Resources Model (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2003) was conducted among 400 operators from Belgian contact centers to compare internal, outsourced and external contact centers. Three case studies allowed exploring more deeply the influence of triangular employment relationship on well-being. Finally, focus-groups with unions and management representatives helped us to design some practical recommendations.

### Results

Quantitative results indicate that operators from outsourced and external contact centers have a poorer perception of demands and resources at work. They are consequently more likely to report high levels of perceived stress and burnout and low satisfaction with their work. The case studies give us more information about the role of the strategy and the management style of contact centers in coping with triangular employment relationships.

### Limitations

Beyond this explorative research, quantitative data can be further used in multi-sample modeling approach.

### Research/Practical Implications

Recommendations for well-being at work regarding the triangular employment relationship, on which both employers and unions converge, will be highlighted at the conference.

### Originality

This research combines organizational psychology and management theory.