

Short term effects of workload and extending working hours on exhaustion

Jonas Mumenthaler, Michaela Knecht & Andreas Krause

University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland FHNW, School of Applied Psychology

ABSTRACT

Employees exposed to high workload often compensate for this by extending their working hours. This diary study examines the relationship between workload, exhaustion, and two strategies for extending working hours: skipping breaks, and working longer than initially planned. The study analyses a sample of $N = 87$ employees and $N = 639$ measurement points with a multilevel structural equation model to investigate both within and between-person associations. The results showed that on days when the workload is higher than usual, participants were also more exhausted at the end of the working day. Also, the strategies skipping breaks and working longer were used more frequently on these days. However, there is no correlation between daily use of strategies and exhaustion. The study suggests analyzing the two strategies to extend ones working hours as separate constructs. On the between-person level, skipping breaks fully explains the association between workload and exhaustion. In the long run, this might have adverse effects on employees' well-being.

Keywords

Workload – exhaustion – self-endangering work behavior – extending working hours – skipping breaks – working longer