

Societal transitions of work and health from the perspective of subjectification – Critical synthesis of selected studies from Applied Psychology¹

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ABSTRACT

Synthesized are seven studies on work and health, conducted in an interdisciplinary collaboration between applied psychology and occupational medicine. Based on thematic analysis, this critical interpretive integration operationalizes the „*subjectification of work*“ as complementary trends of *intensification* (performance focus), *internalization* (goal adoption), and *individualization* (job personalization), embedded in broader contexts of employment insecurity (employee self-reliance). Applied structuring schemes include: a) focus primarily on *work task* (activity) or *work setting* (context); b) references to (or connections with) aspects of subjectification (primary and secondary); and c) theoretical and empirical relationships with negative and positive short-, medium-, and longer-term *health outcomes*. Work tasks are investigated in four studies; three focus on contextual factors of the work setting; work intensification is examined in four; internalization processes in five; individualization of work in three. Identified are tensions between motivational effects of individualizing work and internalization of organizational goals, coupled with inherent tendencies of work intensification. Associated structural and psychological dynamics are discussed as risks factors for dysfunctional self-management, reflecting internalized incompatibilities between work and health. Outlined are implications for reevaluating assumptions of voluntariness, personal choice, and agency in psychological research on work and organizations. Lastly, discussed are broader paradigm shifts, necessary for the discipline to address the most challenging social and ecological issues.

Keywords

Work and health – neoliberal transformation – work systems analysis – subjectification of work – research synthesis – meta-study – paradigm shifts

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