

WORKPLACE STRESSORS AMONG SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHERS AND THEIR RELATION TO SELF-REPORTED ABSENTEEISM AND PRESENTEEISM

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AIM:

Perceived workplace stress has been linked to increased levels of presenteeism and absenteeism among employees [1,2]. Compared to other occupational groups, such as health professionals, there are few recent studies on workplace stress levels of scientists available. The existing data indicate that scientists are in a relatively low-strain occupation [3] and generally satisfied with their work [4].

Our study aimed to:

- examine the perceptions of workplace stressors among scientific researchers with regard to 2 comparison groups (health care workers and production workers)
- assess the relationship between workplace stressors, self-reported absenteeism and presenteeism in the whole sample of participants.

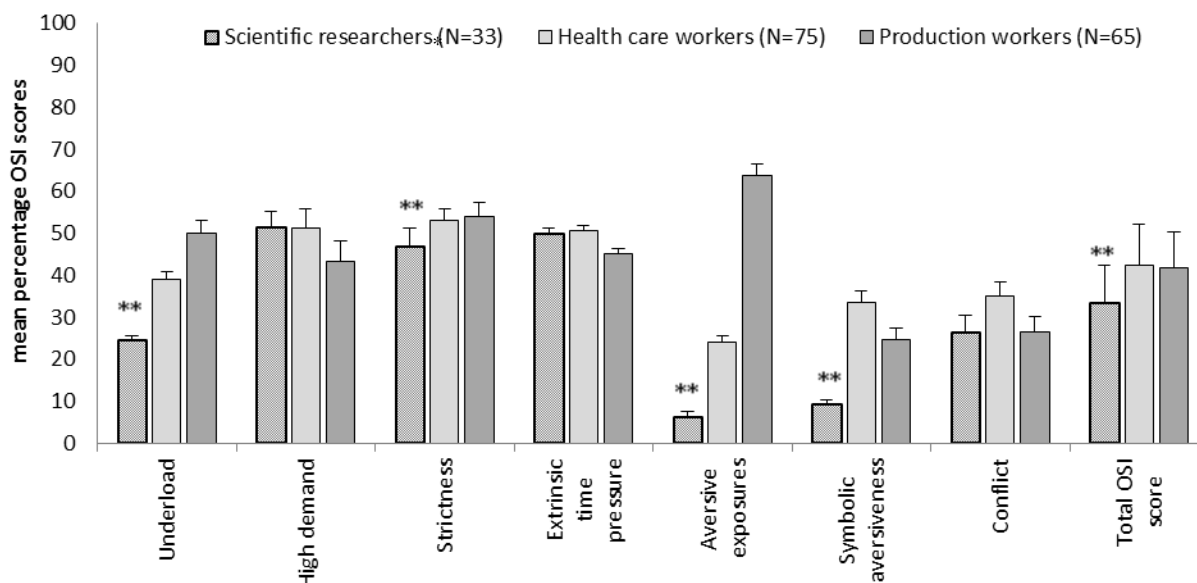
METHODS:

819 students from six different professional areas (economics, geography, engineering, law, sports pedagogic and nursing) were self assessed. The sample consisted of:

33 scientific researchers with a PhD degree level, employed in a public Slovene research organization, 75 health care workers from a public hospital and 65 production workers from a glasswork company. Participants completed the following questionnaires:

- General Occupational Stress Index (OSI) questionnaire [5], assessing 7 stress dimensions (Underload, High demand, Strictness, Extrinsic time pressure, Aversive/noxious exposures, Avoidance/Symbolic aversiveness, Conflict/uncertainty),
- Work Productivity and Activity Impairment Questionnaire: General Health (WPAI:GH) [6], assessing the impact of health problems on absenteeism and presenteeism,
- WHO Health and Work Performance Questionnaire (WHO-HPQ) [7], assessing absenteeism and presenteeism.

RESULTS:



** - 1% significance level; * - 5% significance level (Kruskal-Wallis Test)

Figure 1. Comparison of OSI stress dimensions between different occupational groups of Slovenian workers.

Compared with other groups, scientific researchers experienced in general lower stress levels, and in particular lower Aversive exposures, Symbolic aversiveness, Strictness and Underload levels.

Table 1. Kendall tau correlations between OSI stress dimensions on one hand and WHO-HPQ and WPAI:GH absenteeism and presenteeism measures on the other hand.

	WHO-HPQ			WPAI:GH			
	Relative absenteeism (4weeks)	Relative presenteeism (4 weeks)	Relative absenteeism + relative presenteeism	Absenteeism	Presenteeism	Productivity loss	Activity impairment
<i>Underload</i>	,164**	,017	-,122*	-,120	,105	,055	-,033
<i>High demand</i>	,053	,064	-,007	,035	-,201**	-,123*	-,063
<i>Strictness</i>	,026	-,025	-,024	,062	,237**	,110	,089
<i>Extrinsic time pressure</i>	,019	,079	,014	-,032	,013	-,006	,008
<i>Aversive exposures</i>	,066	-,073	-,100	-,075	,133*	,051	-,079
<i>Symbolic aversiveness</i>	,146*	,061	-,100	-,010	,028	-,021	-,036
<i>Conflict</i>	,101	,168**	,008	,045	-,008	,002	,039
<i>Total OSI score</i>	,165**	,076	-,096	,001	,071	,023	-,005

In general, most stress dimensions correlated weakly, yet significantly with both absenteeism and presenteeism measures.

CONCLUSIONS:

Results are in line with previous studies indicating that though scientific researchers generally experience low job-strain with regard to other occupational groups [3], their work is nevertheless characterized by high psychosocial demands, high job decision latitude, as well as tight time pressure.

Secondly, our results add to the accumulating evidence that the presence of workplace stressors stemming from job design features is related to self-reported diminished work productivity [1] and sickness absence [2].

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