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Remote work and employee psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: a scoping review

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the implementation of large scale remote working arrangements in organisations. Organisations were forced to implement remote working arrangements to remain operational during the lockdowns. During this period, there was widespread fear and anxiety about the virus. People were concerned for their health, the health of their loved ones and their job security, as some businesses closed down during the early stages of the pandemic (Carracedo et al., 2021). This, and a number of other issues, affected people's psychological well-being (Fiorillo & Gorwood, 2020). The present study seeks to examine the relationship between remote working and employee psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, it aims to do so by reviewing existing literature by means of a scoping review. Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage research strategy for conducting a scoping review was used to review the existing literature. The study adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2009) protocol and checklist of items to improve the reporting of the scoping review and to limit bias. The theoretical frameworks that have been used to understand the relationship between the two variables in pre-pandemic literature are the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), Psychological Capital (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013) and the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). One of the research questions in the scoping review aims to establish whether the same theoretical frameworks were used to examine the psychological well-being of remote working employees during the pandemic and whether research outcomes developed these theories further. The study also seeks to determine whether the same research methods were used to study the relationship during the pandemic, and to establish which variables were included in the studies. 20 relevant studies were identified, selected and reviewed for this scoping review. A potential benefit of the study is to identify findings in extant research that have implications for remote and hybrid work in the future, and to identify gaps in the research.

Keywords: remote work, COVID-19 pandemic, psychological well-being