

PSYCHOSOCIAL DETERMINANTS, MEDIATING  
PATHWAYS, AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING  
IN FOUR ORGANIZATIONS

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The current transformation of working life, along with increased competitive pressures, has resulted in greater employee stress and decreased mental well-being. However, pathways linking the psychosocial work environment and leadership to mental health are not well articulated. Most studies to date are based largely on data involving single organizations which severely limits the ability to generalize results.

In the current study, 4,800 employees in four different hospitals responded to a standardized leadership-psychosocial environment survey (QWC). Results from the study were used in hospital-wide and unit-specific workplace improvements. The QWC survey focused on employee well-being, work stress, social climate, leadership, organizational goals, and efficiency. Covariate structure path analysis was used to examine interrelations between psychosocial environment, work stress, organizational efficiency, and mental health outcome, both within and across organizations.

There were notable similarities between organizations in a number of the relationships found between psychosocial environment and employee mental well-being. Specifically, organizational climate, management performance feedback to employees, participatory management, and clarity of goals were significant and invariant predictors of perceived organizational efficiency. Efficiency was invariantly associated with decreased work stress, which predicted improved mental well-being.

Prior research, based on single-site studies, has linked organizational characteristics, such as efficiency, and work stress to employee mental well-being. The current study, encompassing 4 large hospitals, not only confirms prior studies, but suggests that organizational efficiency and work stress might mediate some of the effects of the psychosocial work environment on employee mental health. Thus, occupational stress studies need to consider not only worker-specific factors, such as demand and effort-reward, but also the organizational context in which work is carried out. Many of the studied psychosocial determinants are malleable, and thus open for interventions.

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