

Title: The Impact of Workplace Social Support on Mental Health Functioning: A Cross Sectional Study of the Workforce in Stockholm County, Sweden

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Background

Social support in the workplace is a significant factor when addressing the mental health of employees, but few studies have explored how social support in the workplace impacts on mental health from a functional perspective. Using a biopsychosocial approach, this study relies on data collected from a random sample of 6578 employees within Stockholm County to investigate the association between social support in the workplace and reduced mental health functioning. The main exposure, Social support in the workplace, was measured through the Swedish Demand-Control-Support Questionnaire and the outcome, mental health functioning, was measured through the World Health Organisation's Brief Disability Questionnaire. Associations were explored using logistic regression models. Reduced mental health functioning among employees was highly prevalent (43.1%) within the sample. Low social support in the workplace was significantly associated with reduced mental health functioning (OR 0.84 95% CI: 0.83-0.86 $p < 0.01$). This association changed minimally when controlling for confounding by socio-economic, demographic, and work strain variables. Lower social support in the workplace was associated with mental health of employees in terms of functioning. Socio-economic and demographic factors explained more variation in mental health functioning of employees than work strain factors. Functional outcomes and a biopsychosocial approach should be considered when exploring strategies to strengthen the mental health of the workforce.

Biography

Kathryn Badarin completed her Master in Medical Science with a major in Global Health from the Department of Public Health Sciences at Karolinska Institutet, Sweden in June 2018. Before this, she worked as an occupational therapist (graduated from Canterbury Christ Church University, the United Kingdom in 2008) at the National Health Service in the United Kingdom. Her education and professional experience cut across fields of physical and mental health within hospital, community, and workplace settings with a focus on occupational epidemiology.

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