

Gender of supervisor influences workers' mental and physical health

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A person's gender in a leadership role is associated with their subordinate's mental and physical health, says new research out of the University of Toronto.

The study conducted by Scott Schieman, a professor of sociology at the University of Toronto and Taralyn McMullen, a PhD candidate, involved data from a 2005 sample of 1,800 working adults in the United States.

The participants were assessed on levels of psychological distress, physical symptoms, occupation, job sector and numerous work conditions including authority, pressures, the quality of interpersonal relations and satisfaction. The study examined workers who were managed by two supervisors (one male, one female), one same-sex supervisor or one supervisor of a different sex.

The study found that:

- Women working under a lone female supervisor reported more distress and physical symptoms than did women working for a male supervisor.
- Women who reported to a mixed-gender pair of supervisors indicated a higher level of distress and physical symptoms than their counterparts with one male manager.
- Men working under a single supervisor had similar levels of distress

regardless of their boss' gender.

-- When supervised by two managers, one male and one female, men reported lower distress levels and fewer physical symptoms than men who worked for a lone male supervisor.

"The gender of supervisors matters differently for the health of women and men subordinates--and this pattern generally holds net of an array of workplace conditions," said Schieman.

The study findings are published in the September edition of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.

Provided by University of Toronto

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