

Poor leadership poses a health risk at work

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Perceived poor managerial leadership increases not only the amount of sick leave taken at a workplace, but also the risk of sickness amongst employees later on in life. The longer a person has had a "poorer" manager, the higher his or her risk of for example suffering a heart attack within a ten-year period, according to a new thesis from the Swedish medical university Karolinska Institutet.

The recently submitted thesis is based on data from almost 20,000 employees in Sweden, Finland, Germany, Poland and Italy, working in a range of fields, such as the forest or hotel industries. Some of the studies also included a representative selection of Sweden's entire working population and industries in the Stockholm region. The researchers compared levels of self-rated stress, health, [sick leave](#) and [emotional exhaustion](#) with how subjects perceived their managers' leadership in terms of certain positive and negative criteria, such as inspirational, supportive and good at delegating or authoritarian, dishonest and distant.

The researchers also looked at the effects of managerial leadership in relation to whether employees change jobs, quit due to [poor health](#), or become unemployed. One of the studies examined the correlation between how employees rate their managers' leadership and the risk of their developing serious [cardiovascular disease](#) later in life. They discovered that male residents of the Stockholm area ran a 25 per cent greater risk of suffering myocardial infarction during the ten-year follow-up period if they had expressed displeasure with their managers at the start of the study. Moreover, the level of risk increased more sharply with time of employment for subjects that reported "poorer" leadership.

Another result presented in the thesis is that Swedish men and women who rated their managers as inspirational, positive and enthusiastic also reported less short-term sick leave. This correlation was independent of their self-rated general health.

"In several of the studies, we controlled for a number of conceivable competing causes of the negative health results, but failed to find anything," says Anna Nyberg, postgraduate at the Department of Public Health Sciences. "The bottom line is that our results show that there's a relationship between how employees find their managers and how they feel, physically and mentally, and not just while at work but also later in life."

Source: Karolinska Institutet ([news](#) : [web](#))

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