

How does being 'on-call' impact employee fatigue?

August 5 2015

With the growing demands of consumerism and the need to assist customers on the clock, today's employees are working anything but nine to five. One in five EU employees are working on-call, but how does this arrangement stack up for labourers? Recently published research in *Ergonomics* monitors a group of 169 male Dutch distal on-call technicians and investigates the connections between high levels of work fatigue, need for recovery and the status of being on-call and off-call. The study suggested that the mere possibility of being called heightens the need for recovery among shift workers.

By examining the impact of physical, psychological, family, and [work](#)-related causes on job-induced tiredness, this research reveals that, despite high job demands, the mere experience of being on-call is a major cause of fatigue in the workplace.

Whilst past research has highlighted the negative effects of unstable working patterns on staff members – emphasising their association with high need for [recovery](#), health complaints and sickness absence – most studies have focused on proximal on-call employment in the medical profession, neglecting to consider off-site workers. This research considers if employees report higher levels of fatigue when 'on-call but not called' compared with 'not on-call'. Analysing the link between participants' age, health, work and social characteristics with need for recovery was also a key objective for the research. A study questionnaire was circulated to the group, confirming the highest need for recovery when 'on-call and called', and the lowest when 'not on-call'. Poor mental

and physical health together with high work demands and substantial work-family interference were also associated with higher need for recovery irrespective of the on-call scenario, whereas age and care for children appeared to be irrelevant.

In conclusion, the possibility of being called increases the need for recovery among [shift workers](#), especially for those with [mental health issues](#) and challenging work and family circumstances. While evidence suggests giving staff the opportunity to design their own schedule may help to minimise the deleterious effects of shift work, improving the experience of being on-call is still in much need of further research.

More information: "Need for recovery among male technical distal on-call workers." *Ergonomics* [DOI: 10.1080/00140139.2015.1046498](https://doi.org/10.1080/00140139.2015.1046498)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

Citation: How does being 'on-call' impact employee fatigue? (2015, August 5) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-08-on-call-impact-employee-fatigue.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--