

COVID-19 pandemic creates new causes of 'workplace' stress

6 November 2020, by Tony Moran



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The global COVID-19 pandemic has created new causes of job-related stress that have displaced the "traditional" main reason for workplace anxiety—ever-increasing workloads, according to new research.

Workload appears to have been pushed aside, whilst other factors which were not prominent or may not have existed before the pandemic now contribute significantly towards molding job [stress](#).

After surveying 700 UK workers, University of Birmingham researcher Dr. Eric Shiu has identified job stress enhancers caused by the COVID-19 outbreak which can be related to working from home and not working from home.

Dr. Shiu has identified three key COVID-19 induced general enhancers of job stress:

- Concern about income since the start of COVID-19;
- Fear of being exposed to the virus when being called to return to work; and

- Concern about potential job loss.

His analysis also revealed two key COVID-19 induced working from home enhancers of job stress:

- Being unable to separate [personal life](#) from work whilst working from home; and
- General stress created by working from home.

Dr. Shiu, Lecturer in Marketing and Innovation Management, commented: "Job stress is not a new phenomenon in any industrial society and, historically, workload has been a key contributor to workplace anxiety. Yet COVID-19 has caused other factors to suddenly take the center stage in influencing people's levels of job stress. These findings also illustrate the link between job stress and disaster. Hurricane Sandy struck North America in 2012 and left communities with a greater job loss problem and people experiencing a higher risk of post-traumatic stress disorder. One year after the September 11 [terror attack](#), victims were still afraid of potential job loss and job security."

Dr. Shiu added that, although studies on links between job stress and working from home were not as unanimous as those on linkage between job stress and disaster occurrence, findings of negative linkage seem to be in greater abundance.

"Working away from office is more stressful because it has breached work and family boundaries," explained Dr. Shiu.

"Home working can also lead to disruption of circadian rhythms—contributing to sleeping and eating disorders, which then lead to psychological stress."

Dr. Shiu will present his research findings at this month's ESRC Festival of Social Science 2020

where he has been invited as one of the panel experts.

Provided by University of Birmingham

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