

THE IMPACT OF RESTRUCTURING ON SURVIVORS' WELLBEING: MEDIATING AND MODERATING FACTORS

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Aim

Research conducted in the field of restructuring and psychological health and well-being mostly concentrates on employees that have been laid off as a consequence of the restructuring. Only recently has there been awareness of the consequences of those that stay behind, 'the survivors'. This study is part of the quantitative analyses in the PSYRES project. In this paper the results will be presented of a secondary analysis on two Dutch datasets. The aim of this study was to 1) Gain insight into the impact of restructuring on survivors' wellbeing 2) to gain insight into the mediating and moderating factors in this relationship.

Participants

The analyses were conducted on two longitudinal datasets (two waves): The Cohort-study Social Innovation (CSI: a longitudinal survey among employed persons) 2008-2009 and the Netherlands Working Conditions Cohort-study (NWCCS: a longitudinal survey among a sample of Dutch working population aged 15 tot 64 years) 2007-2008. For the present analyses we focused on survivors, employees were excluded if (1) they had stopped working after one year of follow-up, or (2) changed to a different employer during the follow-up period. The study population consisted of 1.936 employees from the CSI database and 6.105 from the NWCCS database.

Measures

The NWCCS and the CSI both contain a question about the occurrence of different types of restructuring in the organization during the past 12 months. Included types of restructuring were downsizing, outsourcing of production/services, acquisition of or by another organization, merger, relocation of company activities, relocation of employees within the organization, automatization of activities and other internal re-organization (for instance, Just-in-Time production). Based on these questions we made a distinction between employees who experienced one or more types of organizational changes in the past two years and employees who did not experience change in the past two years. Employees who experienced restructuring only last year or two years ago were excluded from the analysis. Included outcome measures were work related wellbeing (emotional exhaustion, dedication, job satisfaction) and general wellbeing (general perceived health and sickness absenteeism).

Analyses

Linear regression analyses were used to study the effect of prolonged enterprise restructuring on health and well-being of survivors on T2 controlled for the outcome measure on T1, gender, age and educational attainment. To study moderation interaction terms were calculated and separate linear regression analyses were performed for each interaction term. Mediation was examined by conducting a series of regression analyses. In several steps the restructuring variable, relevant control variables and mediator variable (T2) were entered. A sobel test was used to test for mediation.

Results

The analyses revealed a significant difference in the degree of emotional exhaustion, sickness absenteeism, job satisfaction and dedication between respondents who experienced no restructuring in the past two years compared to respondents who did experience restructuring in the past two years. There are several variables that moderate and mediate this relationship. Work characteristics (task demands, time pressure, emotional demands), job insecurity and organizational factors (participation in decision making, adaptive culture, supervisory support, providing resources for innovation, support for innovation, conflict with supervisor and colleagues, internal unwanted behaviour) partly mediate the relationship between restructuring and the outcome measures. Personal factors (age, innovative capacity and employability) are moderating variables in the relationship between restructuring and sickness absenteeism.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that prolonged restructuring has a negative impact on the general and work related well-being of survivors. This is in line with earlier studies on the effects of restructuring. Furthermore there are several variables that mediate this relationship. Restructuring has a negative impact on work characteristics, job insecurity and organizational factors which partly explains the negative impact of restructuring on wellbeing. It is important to pay attention to these factors during a restructuring period in order to lower the impact. Personal resources (innovative capacity and employability) buffer the negative effects of restructuring and are therefore important factors to stimulate on individual level. Furthermore is important to take into account the age of employees since the impact of restructuring on sickness absenteeism is larger for older employees than for younger employees.

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