



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE WORKING POPULATION

COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, a **significant impact on the mental health** of the working population, [as evidenced](#) in an increase in **depression, anxiety and suicide rates** during the last seven months [article of 18th November 2020], particularly amongst healthcare professionals and key workers, as highlighted in a number of recent studies and reports. These trends are reflected in many different countries currently impacted by COVID-19.

Workers have faced additional pressure exerted by factors tangential to the virus, such as companies downsizing and laying off employees; heightened workloads for those remaining in work, who have found themselves taking on 'absent colleagues' duties; and the variegated challenges associated with working from home, from inadequate working spaces to childcare issues.

People working from home are exposed to specific psychosocial risks, such as **isolation, blurred boundaries between work and family, increased risk of domestic violence**, among others. The fear of losing the job, pay cuts, lay-offs and reduced benefits make many workers question their future. Job insecurity, economic loss and unemployment can have a severe impact on mental health. These and other psychosocial risks may arise or increase as a result of the COVID-19- crisis. Many of them may have emerged during the period of the rapid spread of the virus and strict isolation measures and still persist over time as businesses open their doors. Others may increase when workers return to their workplaces.

Work arrangements and conditions have changed considerably, bringing **new psychosocial challenges for the health and well-being of workers** – whether in the frontline, in essential services, working from home, or having lost their businesses and jobs. The risks associated with COVID-19 are also exacerbating the existing vulnerabilities of poor workers in the informal economy, including informal domestic workers.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE INCREASED PSYCHOLOGICAL RISKS FOR WORKERS

If not appropriately assessed and managed, psychosocial risks may increase stress levels and lead to physical and mental health problems. **Psychological responses may include** low mood, low motivation, exhaustion, anxiety, depression, burnout and suicidal thoughts. **A range of physical reactions can also occur, such as digestive problems, changes to appetite and weight, dermatological reactions, fatigue, cardio-vascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, headaches or other unexplained aches and pains.**

There may be changes in behaviours, such as a **change in activity level or increased use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs as a way of coping, in addition to changes in the person's ability to relax or level of irritability.**

In addition, a poor psychosocial working environment may have a considerable impact on **workplace productivity, through increased absenteeism and presenteeism, lower job engagement and reduced job performance** (with respect to both the quality and quantity of work). The accumulation of stress and fatigue may reduce the accuracy of work and **increase the possibility of human error, heightening the risk of work injuries and accidents.** (*Read full article*)

PROMOTING EMPLOYEES' MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

Transcendental Meditation is **easy to be integrated into the workplace systems** and is a very effective instrument that might be of **support for protecting the mental health of workers** being very effective to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, substance abuse, PTSD and for improving mental health & well-being. The Transcendental Meditation programme also increases creativity, intelligence, adaptability and resilience, contributing in creating a resilient society.

Discover more at: friends-project.eu/impact-savings-health