Working conditions and work-related anger: A longitudinal perspective

22th Workshop Aggression;

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Anger

- …as an **emotional state**, varying across time, situation and intensity

- … as a stable **personality trait**, reflecting a person’s tendency to experience anger frequently or intensely

- … is associated with **cognitive** (e.g. misappraisals and attributions of blame), **physiological** (e.g. hypertension), and **behavioral reactions** (e.g. fighting).

Anger at work leads to...

- Less
  - organizational commitment
  - work satisfaction (Fisher, 2002; Zhao et al., 2007)

- More
  - Workplace deviance / Counterproductive work behavior (e.g. stealing; Fox & Spector, 1999; Lee & Allen, 2002; Penney & Spector, 2002)
  - Workplace bullying/incivility (Penney & Spector, 2005)
  - Turnover intention (Fisher, 2002; Zhao et al., 2007)
  - Absence at work (Chen & Spector, 1992)
Risk factors

- Important situational release conditions of anger activation at work are the following:
  - job stress, frustration
  - unjust treatment, disrespect, incivility
  - incompetence of others
  - perceived injustice
  - blocking of goal attainment

Fitness, 2000; Glomb, 2002, Grandey et al., 2002.
Limitations of current studies on risk factors of anger at work

- Mainly diary studies
- Focus on high intensity anger events
- (Feelings of) anger often mixed with aggressive behavior
- Limited research on specific working conditions as predictor of anger
Study aim

- Investigate working conditions as predictors of work-related anger
  - Social support
  - Feedback at work
  - Participation
  - Mobbing
  - Time pressure
  - Mental demands
  - …
Explaining anger at work: Theoretical frameworks

- **Job-demand-resource model (e.g. Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)**
  - Job demands "...having the potential to harm or block personal growth or gains, tend to trigger negative emotions (e.g., fear, anxiety, anger)" (Crawford et al., 2010, p. 837)

- **Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996)**
  - Work environment and work events lead to affective reactions (e.g., anger), which then lead to work attitudes and behavior

- **Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001)**
  - Resource losses lead to anger (Lane & Hobfoll, 1992)
Anger at work: Mechanisms

Depending on theory, different mechanisms are possible

- **Working conditions** (e.g. working under time pressure)
- **Stressful and frustrating work events** (e.g., conflicts with colleagues, impairment of self-esteem)
- **Loss of resources** (e.g. mental resources, social support)
- **Feelings of anger**
Quality of Work Study

- Representative study of employees working in Luxembourg (Luxembourg residents and persons of border countries)

- Annually (in part longitudinal) survey since 2013 (CATI)

- Wave 2015 and 2016
  - 706 employees participated in both waves
  - 53.7% male $n = 379$
  - Age: 18 to 64 years ($M = 45.8, SD = 8.3$)
Study design – Measures

Measures

- Anger
- Social support
- Participation
- Feedback
- Autonomy
- Mobbing
- Mental demands
- Time pressure
- Satisfaction with income
- Promotion
- Workplace security
- Physical burden
- Risk of accident

Measures format

- Five-point Likert scales
- ranged from 1 (“never” / "at a very small extent) to 5 (“almost at all times” / "at a very high extent)
Reliability of measures

Notes. Cronbach's Alpha with 95% confidence intervals.
Distribution of measures

Notes. Kernel density plots.
Results – Intercorrelations (1)

Correlations with Anger T2:
- .21 (Feedback T1)
  .52 (Anger T1)

Notes. x: Not significant for p < .05.
Results – Intercorrelations (2)

Correlations with Anger T2:
-0.09 (Feedback T1)
0.13 (Mental demands T1)

Notes: Anger T2 is controlled for Anger T1
x: Not significant for p < .05.
Results – Regression Step 1

**Outcome: Anger T2**

- Anger T1
- Female
- Age
- Job change
- Professional
- Technicians
- Clerical s. workers
- Service and sales
- Craft workers
- Plant and machine operators
- Elementary occupations
- Other

(Standardized) Regression coefficients

\[ F\text{-statistic} = 24.57^{***}, \quad R^2 = .30 \]

Notes. Regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals.
Results – Regression Step 2

Outcome: Anger T2

Variables

- Anger T1
- Female
- Age
- Job change
- Professional
- Technicians
- Clerical s. workers
- Service and sales
- Craft workers
- Plant and machine operators
- Elementary occupations
- Other
- Feedback T1
- Autonomy T1
- Mental demands T1

(Standardized) Regression coefficients

$F$-statistic = 21.76***; $R^2 = .32$; $\Delta R^2 = .02***$

Notes. Regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals.
Discussion

Summary & conclusion

- Mental demands and Feedback seems to be important predictors for work-related anger
- Job change reduces anger at work (at least in the short run)
- Job-demand-resource model and affective event theory receives support

Limitations of the study

- Imprecise measure of anger (1-item)
- One year interval was chosen for practical not for theoretical reasons
- Working condition measures were not mainly chosen to predict anger
Thank you for your attention!

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Chen & Spector, 1992


