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## Legacy imprinting: a dynamic analysis of how interpretations of job demands and resources change in virtual contexts.

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PREFERRED RESEARCH STREAM: Organizing and social relationships in non-traditional contexts

The Job Demands-Resources model is a useful framework for studying workplace well-being in a variety of occupational contexts (Brough et al., 2013). It is based on the premise that all aspects of a job can be categorized as either demands (which require cognitive, emotional or physical exertion) or resources (which help workers meet demands and mitigate their cost) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Existing literature has treated demands and resources as relatively static notions: once something has been defined as either a demand or a resource, it is assumed to remain so over time. However, by following the problematization technique (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011), we argue that these assumptions may not be relevant in work environments that are unfamiliar or changing, and when the usual processes for identifying and evaluating work elements may be disrupted. For example, the Covid-19 pandemic led to an unprecedented transition into alternative ways of working, including new types of virtual teams (Chamakiotis et al., 2021) and work-from-home configurations (Waizenegger et al., 2020). A large part of the worldwide working population underwent an uncharted transformation process, creating new challenges, and a new interpretation of work and well-being (e.g., Bennett et al., 2021). Our position, therefore, is that with such large-scale transitions, people's experiences of demands and resources may also change, ultimately affecting their sense of well-being.

To explore this, we employed a multiple case study approach (Cavaye, 1996) involving 27 semi-structured interviews with virtual workers in five organizations. We adopted a phenomenological, interpretivist lens (Gill, 2014) to focus on the participants' lived experiences. We used reflective thematic analysis to code the data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Our coding strategy involved open coding followed by axial coding which was influenced by both the data and the literature.

We found evidence to suggest that workers' understanding and categorization of work elements as demanding or resourcing may change over time. This means that something that was initially perceived to be a resource can, in time, be perceived as a demand (and vice versa) as workers adjust to their new environment. For example, in going virtual, workers dealt with the emergence of new accountability routines, which created new tasks to showcase commitment and monitor workflow. Participants initially perceived these tasks as additional job demands but, over time, they began appraising them as resources. Indeed, while establishing new processes required cognitive, emotional, and physical exertion, our participants described how these processes later became helpful in meeting their work objectives. In this sense, our findings show a trajectory of experiences whereby initial demands evolved into being understood as resources.

Similarly, participants described having frequent online gatherings to meet and interact. While they first made sense of these gatherings as a resource investment, intended to conserve and build interpersonal resources, in time, these events became demanding and created feelings of exhaustion and saturation. Consequently, experiences that were initially evaluated as resources were later experienced as demands.

Additionally, our findings reveal an explanatory mechanism for this evolving sensemaking process. When they start working virtually, workers may apply criteria that are associated with demands or resources in traditional, face-to-face contexts. We call these "legacy imprints". Over time, participants realize the inappropriateness of these old criteria for explaining their virtual work experiences and appraisals change. For instance, if engaging in social activities is seen as a resource in a face-to-face context, then in a digital workplace, people may initially perceive online social meetings to also offer resource properties. However, over time, online meetings are experienced as emotionally

laborious and impersonally draining activities. The legacy imprint is thus challenged, and the experience is reassessed as being a demand.

We contribute to theory by developing a dynamic understanding of demands and resources and suggest that — in the virtual context — demands and resources are not static conceptualizations, but may categorically change over time. We also identify legacy imprints as a mechanism that may initially influence how events and conditions are appraised in novel or unfamiliar contexts. Finally, we highlight the need to utilize longitudinal research designs to study trajectories of resources and demands over time, to examine how and why their appraisal fluctuates, and expand theorizing on their ongoing influence on well-being. We also emphasize the importance of context and how theories relating to well-being and interpersonal experiences in traditional workplaces cannot necessarily be transferred into the new digital working world.

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