The relationship between workload and job stress and its mediators

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Executive Summary

The following study aimed to investigate the relationship between workload and stress and possible stress buffering factors. One of these factors is autonomy, which means that employees have the decision latitude to choose the way they are working, how they are doing their tasks and the time they want to work. The second possible stress buffering factor is called self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the feeling of competence employees have, when they are doing their job. Employees with high levels of self-efficacy have the feeling to be capable to deal with the challenges of their jobs. The third investigated possible stress buffering factor is called social support. There are different characteristics for an employee with high levels of social support. These include that employees have someone they can talk to at their work place and who also provides emotional support. All these three mentioned factors are known to buffer stress. However, during a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, which takes place in the time of this study, the needs of employees might have changed. Consequently, it might be that the three above-mentioned factors are not as effective anymore as they used to be in terms of buffering the negative effects of stress. The goal of this study was to investigate, if these three factors still keep their potential as stress-buffering factors. Therefore, an online questionnaire was distributed to employees of this organisation. To achieve a sample size with sufficient statistical power, additional participants were recruited in the social environment of the researcher. The results showed that there is still a relationship between workload and stress. However, not all three factors mentioned above showed a stress buffering effect. The findings for autonomy were mixed. Some people still have benefited from a high level of autonomy whereas others prefer a strong leader who gives clear commands. Therefore, autonomy does not have a clear stress buffering effect anymore. Self-efficacy still showed a clear effect on stress. This means that a high level of self-efficacy can still alleviate a high amount of workload. On the contrary, social support did not have any effect on stress anymore. This is probably a consequence of people working from home and only seeing themselves during online meetings. It is quite hard to show appropriate levels of empathy during these online meetings, which might make it difficult to be socially supportive. To conclude, working on self-efficacy is the best of the investigated factors to decrease stress in the time of this pandemic. This means that employees need to be trained sufficiently for their job to feel competent enough to deal with all their challenges at work.

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship of workload on stress and its possibly mediating variables autonomy, self-efficacy and social support during the Covid-19 pandemic. For that purpose, an online-questionnaire measuring all these variables is distributed to a population gathered via convenience sampling. The data are analysed with a regression analysis. Results show a significant effect of workload on stress. There has been found no mediating effect for social support. The findings for autonomy as a mediating variable were mixed. No significant effect has been found in the regression analysis, but the correlation matrix shows a significant negative correlation with stress. For self-efficacy, a significant effect as a mediator variable has been found as well as a significant negative correlation with stress. The implications of these results are discussed and proposals for future research is given.

One of the most popular topics in today's Organisational Psychology is work stress, which is no surprise because stress is among the biggest drivers of work-related illnesses (Lundberg & Cooper, 2010). Additional to the ethical motives to reduce work stress, there are also financial drivers to tackle this issue because it is estimated that work stress costs the economy 20 billion euros per year alone in the European Union (Brun, 2007).

Stress is a natural response that enables people to deal with a challenging situation (Semmer, 2006). In the literature, scholars have made a distinction between the stressors, which tend to trigger strain and the process of developing strain under certain environmental circumstances (Dougall, Hyman, Hayward, McFeeley, & Baum, 2001; Lazarus, 2006; Lovallo, 2005). In this paper, I define job stress as the strain that arises from demands that exceed resources at the workplace. The relationship between demands and resources is best described by the Job-Demand Resource model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2006). In this model, job resources such as support and autonomy have the potential to decrease the strain resulting from the demands. At the same time, the presence of job resources can increase motivation. Both of these processes can lead to better organisational outcomes. In contrast, mental, emotional, and physical demands can increase the experience of strain while decreasing motivation, which can lead to negative organisational outcomes. If demands exceed resources only over a short period of time, little to no negative consequences for one's health and well-being occur (Dhabhar, 2014). However, if this stressor-strain relationship remains activated over a longer time, negative consequences such as sleep disturbances, depression or immune diseases can occur (Glaser & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2005; Hammen, 2005; van Reeth et. al, 2000). Moreover, the risk for cardiovascular diseases and cancer can be increased (O'Connor, Jones,

Conner, McMillan, & Ferguson, 2008). An additional problem of stress at work is that it increases work accidents and the risk of workplace injuries (Pignata, Biron, & Dollard, 2014). Therefore, it is important that organisations keep the stress levels of their employees at an acceptable level to prevent high costs due to sickness leave (Moreau et. al, 2003).

One major source of job stress are high job demands (Huyghebaert, Gillet, Beltou, Tellier, & Fouquereau, 2018). As mentioned above, high job demands can decrease the positive effect of resources on motivation as well as decrease organisational outcomes due to its positive relationship with strain. Workload is a part of job demands, which means that a higher workload also results in a higher experience of job demands and consequently in potentially increased levels of stress (Asif, Javed, & Janjua, 2018). This has been confirmed in research determining high workload as one of the major drivers of increased stress levels (Qureshi et al., 2013; Smollan, 2015; Sweeney & Summers, 2002). Therefore, in this study, workload is used as a predictor for stress. There are three different ideas on how to conceptualize workload. The focus can either be on the number of tasks a worker needs to execute, the time a worker needs to execute a task, or the subjective psychological experience of workload by the worker (Cain, 2007). In this study, the latter conceptualisation of workload applies because it has been shown that it is most sensitive to demands (Muñoz-de-Escalona & Cañas, 2018). As argued above, workload can increase stress. In sum, I propose the following first hypothesis: *There is a positive relationship between experienced workload and stress.*

Fortunately, a high workload does not necessarily lead to high levels of stress. Three factors that can alleviate the negative effects of workload are autonomy, self-efficacy, and social support. These concepts can be used as resources and can, as mentioned above, function as a buffer on the positive relationship between workload and stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2006). *Autonomy* at a workplace can be defined as the freedom to choose the own chores, to decide in which order one wants to do them, or how much time one spends on these tasks as well as being free from intervening forces (Barber & Martin, 1999). Research has shown that high levels of autonomy can help people to deal with high demands (such as workload) and, consequently, lead to a reduced level of stress (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis: *Autonomy will moderate the positive relationship between workload and stress, such that the relationship will be weaker when autonomy is higher.* Next, I focus on the role of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be defined as the belief to be competent about one's own tasks (Zulkosky, 2009). It has been shown that high levels of self-efficacy moderate the effect of workload on stress (Grau, Salanova, & Peiró, 2001; Peng, Schaubroeck, & Xie, 2014). Hence, increased levels of self-efficacy can

increase one's motivation and feelings of mastery over a situation, and consequently can decrease experienced strain. Therefore, I propose the following: *Self-efficacy will moderate the positive relationship between workload and stress, such that the relationship will be weaker when self-efficacy is higher.* Finally, I focus on the role of social support. Social support is defined as useful interactions between colleagues that help employees to deal with their work (Cazabat, Barthe, & Cascino, 2008). It has been shown that social support can buffer the negative effects of workload and through that, decrease the levels of stress (Cazabat, Barthe, & Cascino, 2008; Nahum-Shani & Bamberger, 2010). Therefore, I propose the following: *Social support will moderate the positive relationship between workload and stress, such that the relationship will be weaker when social support is higher.*

This study takes place in special circumstances. Since the beginning of the year 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic is spreading around the world. Research has been shown that pandemics increase anxiety and stress in the affected population (Chong et. al, 2004; Taha, Matheson, & Anisman, 2013). Liu et al. (2020) conducted a large-scale study with over 14000 participants during the Covid-19 pandemic. They described that the stress levels of their respondents resembled those of people with acute stress and concluded that Covid-19 was the main cause for this phenomenon. This means that the stress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic overlays the stress caused by workload. However, if the stress is mainly caused by an external factor, it is reasonable to assume that factors that address the stress caused by work-related factors are less effective, simply because they are not the cause of the stress. Consequently, the above-mentioned factors that typically buffer the positive effect of workload on stress could be weaker compared to previous studies. Additionally, the three stress buffering factors mentioned above could also be ineffective in the current crisis. It has been shown that people value a strong leader in times of crisis, rather than having the autonomy to decide for themselves (Rast, Hogg, & Giessner, 2012). Therefore, it could be argued that autonomy has no stress buffering effect on work-stress at the moment, because it is the opposite of what people tend to desire during a crisis. Furthermore, it is possible that having a high self-efficacy in work does not make up for not knowing the answers of the far more fundamental Covid-19 pandemic and, therefore, self-efficacy also has no stress buffering effect. There are studies that indicate that self-efficacy might not be beneficial, when people feel helpless (Schönfeld, Preusser, & Margraf, 2017). Moreover, it has been shown that self-efficacy mediates the effect of stressful life events on depression, but only if patients already have suffered from a depression before and not if they had their first depressive episode (Kendall & Terry, 2009; Maciejewski, Prigerson, & Mazure, 2000). It is possible that they felt helpless

when facing the stress of their first depression, which could be similar to the major stress experienced during this pandemic. Finally, social support at work is currently only happening online because one is not allowed to go to the office and meet one's colleagues in person. Previous research has shown that social support that was given online was less effective compared to social support given face-to-face (Lewandowski, Rosenberg, Parks, & Siegel, 2011). Consequently, social support could be less effective during the Covid-19 pandemic because it can only be given online. Therefore, I raise the following research question:

"Do autonomy, social support and self-efficacy alleviate the negative effects of workload on stress in the investigated sample, despite the Covid-19 pandemic?"

To investigate this research question, I administered an online study within a large health care organisation. To acquire a larger sample, convenience sampling outside this organisation was also applied. Participants completed questionnaires about workload, job stress, self-efficacy, autonomy, and social support at their workplace. I analysed the data using a regression analysis with interaction effects to answer the research question.

Methods

Procedure

In this study, 27 participants worked for a global project within a large health care organisation. The aim of this project was to align HR-processes on a global level and implement a new software. At the time of the study, the implementation process was about to be finalized in the first region, giving employees the workload of the finalization on top of their daily jobs. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all employees had to work from home during the time the data were collected. I aimed for a minimum of 56 participants. This number of participants for the regression analysis was calculated with a power (1 - β) set at $f^2 = .20$, CI = .95, using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). To achieve the required minimum number of participants, more data was collected through convenience sampling in the social environment of the researcher. The data of 43 additional participants was acquired through this method, leading to a total sample size of 70 participants.

The study was distributed online using the tool lamapoll.de. I distributed the link to the study via email through the regional supervisors to collect the data within the organisation. To collect participants outside the organisation, the link was posted on my LinkedIn and Facebook page. When participants clicked on the link, they first received an information letter with information on the study, such as the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study. When participants agreed to participate, they were presented with validated questionnaires

measuring workload, autonomy, self-efficacy and social support. After finishing all the questionnaires, I thanked the participants for their participation.

Participants

In total, 70 people participated in the study. Due to company policy, no data regarding the age, gender and education of participants was collected.

Materials

Perceived job stress was measured with the Perceived Stress Scale consisting of ten items (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1994). Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = "Never" to 4 = "Very Often". An example item is "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?". Cronbach's Alpha was good in this study (.86).

Workload was measured using the six items about workload from the NIOSH Generic Job Stress Questionnaire (Hurrell & McLaney, 1988). Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = "Hardly Any" to 5 = "A great Deal". An example item is "How much time do you have to think and contemplate." Cronbach's Alpha was good in this study (.80).

Autonomy was measured using the Factual Autonomy Scale, which consists of ten items (Spector & Fox, 2003). Respondents rated each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "Never" to 7 = "Always". An example item is "In your present job, how often do you have to ask permission to take a rest break?". Cronbach's Alpha was excellent in this study (.90).

Self-efficacy was measured using the General Self-Efficacy scale consisting of eight items (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001). Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "Very Often". An example item is "I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself." Cronbach's Alpha was excellent in this study (.93).

Social Support was measured using the Social Support Scale with the seven items from the Receiving Emotional Support Factor (Shakespeare-Finch & Obst, 2011). The scale was slightly adjusted by adding the phrase "At my workplace" to only measure the social support at work. Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = "Not at All" to 5 = "Always". An example item is "There is someone I can talk to about the pressures in my work." Cronbach's Alpha was excellent in this study (.90).

All questionnaires can be found in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

For the analysis, the statistical program SPSS is used. Firstly, the variables were standardized and the mean scores for workload, stress, autonomy, self-efficacy, and social support were calculated for each participant. Secondly, a regression analysis with interaction effects was conducted using the process macro (Hayes, 2017). Workload was used as an independent variable, whereas Stress was used as a dependent variable. The mediator variables were autonomy, self-efficacy and social support.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Workload	3.50	.72
Stress	1.94	.69
Autonomy	5.33	1.33
Self-Efficacy	3.94	.71
Social Support	3.65	.89

Table 2

Correlation Matrix of Variables

	Workload	Stress	Autonomy	Self-Efficacy	Social Support
Workload		.365 p = .002	-.170 p = .160	.216 p = .072	-.069 p = .569
Stress	.365 p = .002		-.248 p = .039	-.381 p = .001	-.089 p = .462
Autonomy	-.170 p = .160	-.248 p = .039		-.009 p = .938	.064 p = .601
Self-Efficacy	.216 p = .072	-.381 p = .001	-.009 p = .938		.297 p = .013
Social Support	-.069 p = .569	-.089 p = .462	.064 p = .601	.297 p = .013	

The descriptive statistics of the mean scores and standard deviations of the variables are shown in Table 1. The correlations for the different variables are displayed in Table 2. The conducted regression analysis with interaction effects is statistically significant $F(4, 65) =$

10.64, $p < .0001$. There is a positive relationship between workload and stress $F(4, 65) = 4.47$, $p < .0001$, which confirms the first hypothesis. Furthermore, the correlation between workload and stress is also significant providing further evidence for this hypothesis. For autonomy, no mediating relationship has been found $F(4, 65) = -1.87$, $p = .0669$, disconfirming the second hypothesis. However, there is a significant negative correlation between autonomy and stress, which is in line with this hypothesis. Therefore, the hypothesis cannot be rejected completely. Self-Efficacy mediated the relationship between workload and stress $F(4, 65) = -4.91$, $p < .0001$, confirming the third hypothesis. This is also confirmed by the negative correlation between self-efficacy and stress. For Social Support, no mediating relationship has been found $F(4, 65) = 1.03$, $p = .3063$ contrary to my fourth hypothesis. There is also no significant correlation between social support and stress, which is in line with the results of the regression analysis.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between workload and stress hypothesizing that an increased workload leads to an increased level of stress. This hypothesis was confirmed. Furthermore, I hypothesized that autonomy, self-efficacy and social support will mediate this relationship. This was confirmed for self-efficacy while it was disconfirmed for social support. For autonomy, the results seem to be mixed. The implications of these results are discussed.

As mentioned above, the results indicate that workload influences stress, confirming my first hypothesis. This means that even though the Covid-19 pandemic may add stressors and influence stress levels, workload still contributes to the stress of employees. This leaves companies the possibility to decrease the stress of participants through decreasing their workload.

As discussed above, autonomy can be seen as a resource to decrease stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2006). The significant correlation between autonomy and job stress found in this study supports this theoretical model. However, as a mediator between workload and job stress, the effect was not significant. So, it seems that other effects, which decrease the effect of autonomy on stress must have been playing a part as well. One theory that might explain the weakening of autonomy as a stress buffering factor is the Uncertainty-Identity Theory (Hogg, 2007). The theory states that uncertainty increases anxiety and stress, if it arises from a situation relevant to the individual. Therefore, people are highly motivated to reduce relevant uncertainties. The theory distinguishes between knowing that a situation is uncertain and feeling that a particular situation is uncertain. The latter is not always clear-cut and can

lead to a generalized feeling of uncertainty (Hogg, 2007). Research has shown that one way of people to reduce this feeling of uncertainty is through valuing a strong leader who gives clear instructions (Rast, Hogg, & Giessner 2012). This way people are at least certain about what they have to do. It seems that in this study, two opposed processes played a role. On the one hand is the pandemic with all its unpredictable outcomes, which increases the uncertainty in the lives of the employees. It is very likely that this uncertain situation is relevant to every employee due to its huge consequences on the lifestyle of people. This feeling of uncertainty would then generalize and also be present at the workplace. Consequently, many employees might rather have a strong leader at their workplace instead of the autonomy to make choices on their own. On the other hand, there is probably still the need for employees to have autonomy at their work to effectively deal with stress. That can explain the findings of this study, in which autonomy correlates negatively with stress because of the latter process, but does not have a significant effect in the regression analysis because the need for a strong leader in times of uncertainty is too strong.

These uncertain times could theoretically also affect the role of self-efficacy as a mediator. As discussed above, self-efficacy might not work, when people feel helpless (Schönfeld, Preusser, & Margraf, 2017). However, my study shows that self-efficacy mediated the effect of workload on stress. The negative correlation between self-efficacy and stress further supports this hypothesis. This result is in line with those of previous studies (Grau, Salanova, & Peiró, 2001; Peng, Schaubroeck, Xie, 2014). This study adds to the current literature because it shows that even in times of a global pandemic with high levels of uncertainty, self-efficacy is still an efficient buffer for stress. This is an interesting distinction to autonomy, which seems to lose part of its value as a stress buffering factor. With autonomy, the feeling of uncertainty generalizes and probably increases the need to have a strong leader who gives clear commands at the workplace even though this decreases the autonomy at the workplace. With self-efficacy, the feeling of helplessness does not seem to generalize and affect the employees at the workplace. Feeling helpless, when confronted with this pandemic does not lead to feeling helpless at the workplace. Consequently, feeling competent about the own work and displaying a high level of self-efficacy is still an important asset, when it comes to decrease the stress levels at work.

Unlike self-efficacy, social support did not have any mediating effect on stress. Moreover, there was no significant correlation between social support and stress. These results show that social support does not work as a stress-buffering factor anymore. The mediation effect of social support on stress has been shown in many studies before (Cazabat,

Barthe, & Cascino, 2008; Nahum-Shani & Bamberger, 2010). Therefore, I assume that the special circumstances related to this pandemic neutralize these effects of social support. It might not be the pandemic itself, which renders social support ineffective, but the new working conditions. Due to the crisis situation, many employees are currently working from home to avoid contagion of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Von Gaudecker, Holler, Janys, Siflinger, & Zimpelmann, 2020). Consequently, they only see their colleagues in virtual meetings. This might affect the efficiency of social support. One cornerstone of social support is empathy (Devoldre, Davis, Verhofstadt, & Buysse, 2010). Only if people are able to understand the feelings and emotions of others, they can align their behaviour and support them. However, the digital meetings make empathic behaviour a lot more difficult. In digital meetings, many do not switch on their camera, which takes away most cues to recognize the emotions of others and realize the need for social support. However, even with the camera switched on, there remain significant challenges. It has been shown that eye contact is an important factor for empathy (Cowan, Vanman, & Nielsen, 2014). However, it is impossible to have eye contact in a digital meeting because participants can only look at the screen or in the camera. Moreover, additionally to being able to have eye contact, seeing the upper part of the body also facilitates empathic behaviour (Nguyen & Canny, 2009). However, many participants adjust their camera in a way, which only shows their face. This might have also a negative effect on empathy. Considering the strong relationship between empathy and social support, it is no wonder that social support also becomes less effective in these circumstances. Another factor that could play a role is trust. Trust is also an important factor in social support (Barrera & Ainlay, 1983). This is plausible because to be able to support each other, one must also be able to address personal problems and only, when people feel comfortable enough and trusted, these kinds of problems can be shared. Unfortunately, people tend to develop less trust in the context of virtual meetings (Bos, Olson, Gergle, Olson, & Wright, 2002). This might further hinder the effectiveness of social support. Putting all these consequences of virtual meetings together, it is no surprise that social support does not reduce stress in the current situation.

The findings of this study have important practical implications. First and most important, it shows that stress levels are still influenced by the workload even in the times of a pandemic. This gives organisations the opportunity to influence and possibly decrease the stress levels of their employees. However, the methods to decrease stress need to be changed because not all factors that are known to reduce stress are still working. Organisations who want to decrease stress levels should refrain from measures that focus on strengthening social support as this has no effect, when employees can only meet digitally. Also, autonomy seems

to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it might still help employees to deal with all their workload. On the other hand, it might be counterproductive because people value a strong leader in times of crisis as well. Therefore, methods to enhance autonomy should be applied with caution in a crisis situation. The factor still effective to reduce levels of stress is self-efficacy. This might be challenging because when working together digitally, it might be harder for managers to keep an overview about the competencies of their employees and how adjusted they are to the problems they are facing. Therefore, it is important that organisations still monitor the work of their employees and provide them feedback on a regular basis. If needed, training has to be offered, so that employees are still capable to deal with all the tasks at work.

This study also has some limitations. The data were acquired through convenience sampling. This limits the generalizability in a way that results are only valid for the investigated sample (Bornstein, Jager, & Putnick, 2013). Moreover, a disadvantage of convenience sampling is that sociodemographic minority groups may be underrepresented. This can cause insufficient power to detect differences within sociodemographic factors between subgroups (Bornstein, Jager, & Putnick, 2013). Another limitation of this study concerns the lack of demographical data due to company policy. Therefore, it is not possible to say if other variables like age or gender also had an effect on the results. Research has shown that older employees might be more resilient to stress because they are more experienced in coping with high amounts of workload (Ramos, Jenny, & Bauer, 2016). However, to the authors knowledge, there has been no relationship found between age and the mediating variables investigated in this study. Moreover, in current research, there also has been no relationship found between gender and the variables investigated here. Therefore, the lack of demographical data might not have a large effect on the results.

The above-mentioned limitations leave room for further research. It would be good to expand the study with a random sampling method and also investigating the demographics of the participants. That way, results could be externalized. Moreover, a more detailed look at the factors autonomy and social support is needed. It would be interesting to know, how exactly autonomy affects stress and if personality factors might play a role. Research has shown that people with a high need for cognitive closure (NCC) do not deal well with uncertainty (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; de Zavala, Cislak & Wesolowska, 2010). It could be argued that autonomy might especially disadvantage people with a high NCC in times of a crisis, whereas these effects do not apply to people with a low NCC who might benefit from autonomy at a workplace even in times of a crisis. Also, a closer look at social support would

be interesting. For that, empathy could be investigated closer to find out, if really the increased difficulty to show empathy in a digital setting is the driver for the reduced effectiveness of social support on stress.

To conclude, this study provides an important basis for future research. This study indicated that factors that are known to buffer the effects of workload on stress might not work in times of the Covid-19 pandemic anymore. The findings for autonomy were mixed and social support did not have any mediation effect at all, whereas self-efficacy still seems to be an effective buffer for stress. These findings are important given that it might still take a while until a vaccine, which could help to end the pandemic, is available for mass production (Le et al., 2020). Moreover, the risk for global pandemics like this is still increasing (Morse et al., 2012). Therefore, this crisis situation might occur not only for a longer time, but also more often in the next decades. This study takes the first steps in showing organisations how they still can contribute to lower levels of stress in their employees.

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Appendix A Questionnaire

Rated on a Scale from 0 = Hardly Any to 5 = A great Deal:
How much time do you have to think and contemplate?
How much workload do you have?
What quantity of work do others expect you to do?
How much time do you have to do all your work?
How many projects, assignments, or tasks do you have?
How many breaks between heavy workload periods do you have?

Rated from 0 = Never to 4 = Very Often:
In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your work?
In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed" at work?
In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your work problems?
In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your work life?
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?
In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Rated on a Scale from 1 = Never to 7 = Always:
How often do you have to ask permission to take a rest break?
How often do you have to ask permission to take a lunch/meal break?
How often do you have to ask permission to leave early for the day?
How often do you have to ask permission to change the hours you work?
How often do you have to ask permission to leave the office or workstation?
How often do you have to ask permission to come late to work?
How often do you have to ask permission to take time off?

Rated on a Scale from 1 = Never to 7 = Every Day:
How often does someone tell you what you have to do?
How often does someone tell you when you have to do your work?
How often does someone tell you how you have to do your work?

Rated on a Scale from 1 = Never to 5 = Very Often:
I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.
When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.
In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.
I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.
I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.
I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.
Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.
Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.

Rated on a Scale from 1 = Not at All to 5 = Always:
There is someone I can talk to about the pressures in my work.
There is at least one person at my workplace that I can share most things with.
When I am feeling down there is someone at my workplace I can lean on.
There is someone at my workplace I can get emotional support from.
There is at least one person at my workplace that I feel I can trust.
There is someone at my workplace that makes me feel worthwhile.
I feel that I have a circle of people at my workplace who value me.