

ISSN 0958-5192

The
International
Journal of
HUMAN
RESOURCE
Management

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

Special Issue Editor(s)

Professor Timothy Bartram, timothy.bartram@rmit.edu.au

Professor Peter Holland, pjholland@swin.edu.au

Professor Thomas Garavan, Tgaravan@ucc.ie

Dr Kirsteen Grant, k.grant@napier.ac.uk

Manuscript deadline
30 May 2022

Putting extreme work or ‘working extremely’ at the centre of HRM Research: Employee performance, health, wellbeing and creating sustainable HR outcomes

Background and objectives of the Special Issue

In recent years, the ‘extreme’ has received increased attention within the HRM literature (Gascoigne et al., 2015; Bader et al., 2019a; Norris et al., 2019), however it has in many respects focused on extreme jobs and contexts rather than extreme work. This stream of research has focused on, for example, hostile environments such as global terrorism (Harvey et al., 2018), managing people in hostile environments (Dickmann, et al., 2018; Fee et al., 2018; Norris et al., 2019), and job roles in terrorism endangered countries (Bader et al., 2019b) as well as jobs such as those found in firefighting, the ambulance service, and hospitals (Wankhade et al., 2020). While this macro-level perspective is valuable, many jobs in organisations are not by definition extreme jobs and/or performed in extreme contexts. The focus of this Special Issue is therefore on micro-level conceptualisations of the ‘extreme’ or ‘working extremely’, which are important gaps in the HRM literature. There is emerging evidence that extreme work is on the increase, including work intensification (Granter et al., 2019), long-hours cultures and the normalisation of extreme work behaviours and cultures (Wankhade et al., 2020). Extreme work is considered unsustainable and is associated with a multitude of negative performance, health, and wellbeing related outcomes (Boxall and Macky, 2014; Ho and Kuvaas, 2019; Turnbull and Wass, 2015). Therefore, the objective of this Special Issue is: *To advance theory, knowledge, and practical insights on extreme work or ‘working extremely’ on employee performance, health, wellbeing, and creating sustainable HR outcomes.*

Theoretical contributions and practical importance

The phenomenon of extreme work or ‘working extremely’ is a worldwide issue. In a VUCA world (Cousins, 2018) there is increasing evidence of work intensification (Neirotti, 2020) including pursuit of high performance and HRM-driven initiatives such as more pressurised work schedules (Holland and Laing, 2019), and increase in globalisation processes that exacerbate these work pressures (McDonald and Thompson, 2016).

Research to date has focused on the HRM issues related to ‘normal’ rather than extreme work (Hannah et al., 2010). Therefore, we have limited insights into the role and types of HRM practices that are driving extreme work or ‘working extremely’ in organisations, in addition to the

impacts of extreme work on performance, health, wellbeing, and organisational sustainability. These are important theoretical and empirical gaps because the label 'extreme' is increasingly defining what may be described as more 'normal' or mainstream work (Caligiuri, et al., 2020; Carnevale and Hatak, 2020). In addition, exclusive focus on macro conceptualisations of extreme, with little attention to micro-level conceptualisations, will result in a lopsided understanding of the extreme in the context of the modern workplace.

The development of theory and research insights on micro conceptualisations of the extreme manifest in extreme work or working extremely can generate important theoretical insights into the role that HRM plays in exacerbating or alleviating these types of work situations. We have scope to address questions at the individual, interpersonal and team perspectives, such as: What are the motivations, drivers and attitudes of workers who perform extreme work or 'work extremely', and what implications do they have for HRM practices? Given the increased prevalence of extreme work, what are the most effective HRM strategies to improve mental health and wellbeing? What does effective leadership look like in extreme work? What role do HRM practices play in developing these leadership capabilities?

This Special Issue can also develop important theoretical insights at the organisational level, for example, concerning the following: What are the HRM practices can help prevent bullying and violence, promote diversity and inclusion, and create decent and healthy work environments? What role do unions play? What are the ethical issues emerging from managing workers experiencing extreme work or working extremely? How can organisations reduce the negative impacts on health and improve the wellbeing of employees? How can organisations build institutional, team and individual resilience?

Important theoretical insights can also be developed at societal and systems levels, for example, by considering this following: Given the increased prevalence of extreme work, how do we attract and retain workers and enhance their career commitment? What are the universally effective and culturally unique ways of managing the mental and physical health and wellbeing of these employees? How has technology influenced extreme work or working extremely? What is the role of HRM and HR analytics? What role does HRM play in helping workers experiencing extreme work to work effectively and contribute to societal recovery?

The practical implications of investigating these issues are also important. It is clear that extreme work or 'working extremely' is on the rise. For organisations, these trends raise important questions related to their workforces and how they can be most effectively managed to mitigate the negative features of extreme work. In particular, what can be learned from organisations that experience extreme work? What HRM practices are effective in mitigating negative impacts of extreme work? Finally, what are the implications for employees in the context of extreme work?

Submission Instructions

Information for authors

Contributions for this Special Issue must be original research not under consideration by any other journal or publishing outlet and papers should be formatted in accordance with the *IJHRM* style.

We are open to conceptual, empirical, and methodological papers that will help advance knowledge and understanding on micro-level perspectives on extreme work or working extremely and the challenges and implications for the HR function and individual workers. We are especially interested in contributions that stem from different national contexts as there is emerging evidence that suggests variation in the proliferation of extreme work across countries (Liu et al., 2019).

We are also interested in submissions that take an interdisciplinary perspective (e.g., management, organisational behaviour and psychological approaches, and industrial relations) to advance theoretical and empirical understandings of the role of HRM in these contexts. There are also methodological opportunities to utilise novel research approaches and methodologies to build new knowledge and theoretical insights. We strongly encourage submissions that utilise novel methodologies and mixed methods and that capture multiple levels of context in the same study.