

A Longitudinal Study Evaluating the Effects of a Boundary Management Workshop for Teams

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Background

The New Ways of Working allow employees to work from anywhere and at any time. This flexibility blurs the boundaries between work and private life, which may lead to work-family conflicts and poor well-being (Dettmers et al., 2016). Therefore, managing the boundaries between life domains is a key competence. Previous research shows that, besides individual boundary control, employees' boundary management largely depends on their team members' behavior (Derks et al., 2014). As such, interventions on a team-level seem to be a promising approach to improve employees' boundary management. Addressing recent calls for more intervention studies (Day et al., 2019), this study examines to what extent a workshop for teams improves boundary management.

Boundary Management in teams is influenced in three ways. First, it is associated with the use of boundary tactics (Kreiner et al., 2009). Second, integration norms shape team members' behavior (Derks et al. 2014). Third, family-friendly team behavior (adapted according to Hammer et al., 2009) plays an important role. Hence, we hypothesize that participation in a boundary management workshop improves boundary control (H1a), reduces the integration norms in teams (H1b), and fosters family-friendly behavior among team members (H1c). Additionally, we hypothesize that participation in the workshop reduces the integration of life domains (H2a) and increases the use of segmentation strategies (H2b). As the effects of health interventions are influenced by participants' appraisal of the intervention (e.g., relevance, comprehensibility) (Fridrich et al., 2020), we hypothesize that the effects are stronger when the workshop is appraised positively (H3).

Method

The sample includes 50 teams, each consisting of one supervisor and at least three subordinates. The half-day workshop is embedded in a longitudinal study with a measurement prior to the intervention, a measurement at the end of the workshop, and two follow-up measurements after four and eight weeks. The workshop aims to foster one's application of boundary tactics by raising awareness of the topic, by getting to know each other's boundary preferences, and by adapting one's own boundary tactics. The integration norms are addressed by clarifying mutual expectations and developing common behavioral standards. The family-friendly team behavior is supposed to be improved by offering emotional and instrumental support to each other.

Results

The workshops took place between May 2022 and June 2023. The data is currently being analyzed and results will be ready to be presented at the conference.

Conclusions

Blurring boundaries between work and private life are a critical challenge for employees in the changing world of work. This study examines how a team workshop can improve the boundary management of teams. The intervention aims to enlarge the competencies for employees and their supervisors to deal with the risks that are associated with the New Ways of Working and to benefit from its advantages. By considering participants' attitude towards the intervention, insights can be gained about for whom and under which circumstances the workshop is most effective. Thus, the study offers great practical value for organizations and their employees.

Categories*

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