

A prospective study of the importance of leadership support for health-related sustainability and participatory approaches towards employees

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1. Background

Managers and leadership approaches can have a great importance for employees' health-related sustainability. However, few published studies, and even fewer prospective ones, investigate what kind of support managers need to sustain in their position with preserved health and sustainable handling strategies.

2. Aim

The aim is to identify sources of leadership support (from own manager, management team, colleagues, subordinates, external and private life) that predict health-care managers' health-related sustainability and handling strategies.

3. Method

The study was a part of a larger project, the CHEFiOS-project, which aimed at exploring organizational prerequisites for managers in the Swedish public sector. A questionnaire with a 2-year follow up was sent to managers in seven municipalities. For the purpose of this study, data of the 344 health-care managers' responses to the Gothenburg Manager Stress Instrument was investigated using univariate analyses and structured equation modeling with a crossed-lagged panel design.

4. Results

All of the studied sources of support were cross-sectionally associated with sustainable health, but only support from private life predicted health related sustainability (stressors, stress, symptoms and health) across time. Stratified analyses revealed further prospective associations. First, among less experienced managers, all of the studied sources of support predicted at least some aspect of health-related sustainability. Second, among managers with a large span of control (> 30 subordinates), external support and support through good cooperation with subordinates predicted health-related sustainability. Regarding managerial handling strategies, a good external support and support through employees predicted participatory approaches and buffering of/decreasing high demands on employees.

5. Conclusions

It is important to provide health care managers with adequate support, but only support through private life predicted health-related sustainability. However, the degree of support to managers new in their role and managers with a large span of control predicts sustainable health and managerial approaches.