

# Work & Stress

## Guidance on whether your paper is likely to be appropriate for submission to *Work & Stress*

**Work and Stress** receives a large number of submissions and applies certain selection criteria. Even submissions without major flaws may be unsuccessful if they are not appropriate.

Before submitting your paper, please check this guide to make sure that your submission is indeed suitable for submission to *Work & Stress*.

We especially seek empirical contributions that test novel theory-based hypotheses in a working population; that are interesting to a broad and international audience of those working in occupational health psychology; and that employ strong designs. We also welcome well-chosen reviews of the literature. Above all, we seek papers that add to our knowledge on the antecedents and/or consequences of work-related stress and health, the processes linking these concepts, and means to reduce the impact of stress (such as organisational interventions). Papers not fitting this profile are probably better submitted elsewhere. As a guide we list below the main reasons for submissions being unsuccessful.

### Common reasons for rejection

- **Local or limited interest only.** *Work & Stress* is international in its readers and authors, so ensure that the topic of your paper is appropriate for such a journal. For example, we are unlikely to publish the findings of **stress surveys** of the **causes or extent of stress in a particular country or profession** unless they tell us something new about stress. Translations and validations of well-established instruments in a different language are also usually of local interest only and should be submitted elsewhere.
- **Topics having limited appeal.** *Work and Stress* is targeted towards a relatively broad readership including researchers in a wide range of areas within occupational health psychology, as well as practitioners and policy makers. Papers that are only of interest to a very **small subset of this readership** may be better placed elsewhere.
- **Lack of innovativeness.** Papers that merely **replicate findings obtained for one occupation in another occupation** without adding to our knowledge of work-related stress and health should be submitted to journals dealing with the appropriate occupation. For instance there are specialized journals for the teaching and nursing professions, dentists, doctors, police officers, and so on.
- **Lack of theory.** We mainly seek to publish papers that extend theory, supported by empirical data. Although purely theoretical papers (not containing any new data) may be acceptable, purely empirical papers and papers **lacking a strong theoretical basis** are inappropriate for *Work & Stress*.
- **Off-scope.** *Work and Stress* publishes research in occupational health *psychology*.

Papers that are **largely physiological** (e.g., reporting EMG traces, heart rate records, assays of hormones) probably tell us more about possible responses to stress than about occupational psychology. These papers are better placed in a different sort of journal. However, we will consider papers with a physiological content provided that they make a clear contribution to occupational health psychology and that the text is largely understandable to our readers.

- **Student samples.** *Work and Stress* deals with stress in the **working population**. Studies employing students as proxies of workers are generally unacceptable. Even samples consisting of students holding a part-time job will not be representative of any standard working population in terms of age, experience, context or level of education. Unless exceptionally innovative, studies employing such samples should be submitted elsewhere.
- **Methodological shortcomings.** As regards **quantitative papers**, few readers will need to be reminded of the limitations of cross-sectional, self-report studies. In papers reporting such studies, authors should make it clear why this design and method are justified in their particular case. For example, (a) their study is very original (indicate why you think that is the case); (b) steps are taken to control for self-report biases; (c) no causality is claimed; and (d) the limitations are clearly stated. Studies employing very **small samples** (relative to the statistical techniques used or the number of concepts studied) are also at high risk of rejection; samples of fewer than 150 participants are rarely acceptable. Similarly, very **low response rates** (e.g., below 25%) open up the possibility of response bias. In such cases authors should consider whether their paper is likely to be found acceptable by reviewers, or alternatively should deal with these issues in the paper and in the covering letter to the Editor.

*Work & Stress* is glad to consider **qualitative papers**, provided they meet the criteria listed in the earlier sections of this guide. Qualitative research should be conducted and reported to a high standard, and include a consideration of theory, plus a **rigorous description of the method used and results obtained**. Most importantly, the contribution to knowledge should be clear, and authors should indicate how their findings can be **generalized** beyond the context of the study.

- **Inadequate reviews and meta-analyses.** Review papers can be very valuable, but need to meet certain standards. They should survey work conducted on working samples, and should be based on a **systematic, comprehensive and up-to date search of the literature**, leading to a critical analysis of the findings and pointers for future work. Although purely narrative reviews may be acceptable, we encourage authors to summarize their findings quantitatively, e.g., by conducting a meta-analysis of effect sizes.

### **Concluding comments**

If, having considered the above guidance, you are still in doubt as regards the suitability of your paper for *Work & Stress*, we suggest that you send it to us with a covering letter that deals with the points that are in question and states clearly how you believe your contribution adds to knowledge. Alternatively you can send us an abstract or outline of your paper. Please be as specific as possible, as this will help us in evaluating the possible suitability of your submission for the journal.