

Organisational changes and long-term sick absence and injury leave: a difference in difference approach

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Abstract

Combining high labour intensity, physical and mental strain, some organisational changes result in increased occupational risks. Matching the Hygie administrative database on sickness absence and injury leave of the French population working in the private sector and the survey on organisational change and computerisation (COI survey), our goal is to evaluate the impact of organisational changes implemented by companies on long-term sick absence. We develop a difference in difference approach where we compare long-term sick absence of employees before and after changes that have been implemented in their companies with a control group of employees in inert firms. As changes develop over time, we implement our difference in difference approach using two time windows: a three years' time period after changes took place and a three years' time period during which changes took place. We capture organisational change by following up the implementation of new ICT and management tools and identify three different treatments: the employee's company has (1) implemented ICT changes only, (2) managerial changes only, (3) both ICT and managerial changes. We find in all regressions the same core results: changes in the management dimension alone reduce long-term sickness absences and injury leaves when joint changes in ICT and management tools increase occupational risks. There are however gendered differences in the timing and strength of impacts as women are mainly impacted during the period when changes are implemented and impacts are stronger while men are impacted after the period of change. Also, older employees seem protected against the serious health consequences of any form of changes. These results point to the need to better understand the process of organisational change (its complexity, intensity, dynamics) and the gendered construction of health behaviours as well as that of technology and management tools in the design of occupational safety and health policies targeted at changing work environments.

Key words: organisational change, information and communication technologies, management tools, long-term sickness absence, long term injury leave, difference in difference, gender, age, health behaviour

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