

Prevent loneliness in remote working: are some psychological profiles more at risk?

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Abstract

Objective. The Covid-19 outbreak shed a light on remote working. However, remote policies may come with productivity pitfalls, as loneliness and isolation in these organizations are booming (Bloom, Liang, Robert Ying, 2015), threatening individual's well-being and company's economic growth. The purpose of this study is then to propose a proactive approach of loneliness prevention in remote working, by identifying psychological profiles (personality traits and motives) more at risk of feeling lonely and isolated, and by proposing personality-informed interventions business leaders can take to overcome employee loneliness.

Methods. For our study, 1224 participants completed a questionnaire measuring self-reported wellness, loneliness in remote working, and how many days per week they were working in remote. They also took a series of psychometric tests of an online assessment platform, which includes measures of work-related personality traits and motives. Data were analyzed using linear regression and correlational models.

Results. We identified facets of extraversion (sociability) and of openness (intellect), as well as four motives (the needs: to meet new people, to work as part of team, to be supervised closely, for recognition), that explain high level of loneliness in remote working. Similar results were observed when controlling for age and gender. We also studied the impact the number of days worked in remote per week had on our results: the more the number of days, the more these personality traits and motives explain loneliness. Data on a new sample are currently being collected to confirm results replicate.

Conclusion. Our study extends previous ones by considering psychological determinants of loneliness in remote working, rather than only structural ones. We show that some psychological profiles are more at risk of feeling lonely, also helping manager to develop tailored interventions to accompany high-risk individuals.