

The Role of Gender and Precarity on Mental Health and Presenteeism Amongst Academics



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INTRODUCTION

Academics report lower levels of psychological health (Kinman, 2001) and higher levels of strain (Winefield et al., 2003) compared to the general population but do not tend to take leaves of absences to recover from mental health issues (Mantler et al., 2019). This makes it likely that rates of presenteeism (i.e., working while ill) are high. Given that academia is a gendered institution (Acker, 1990) with a widespread practice of using a contractual workforce, it is important to understand the role of gender and precarity in mental ill-health and productivity loss.

METHODS

- ❖ Online survey from Nov 2020 to May 2021 of 333 academics working in Canadian universities.
- ❖ Mean age = 49.4 (SD = 11.7); 73% women
- ❖ Women: 50.4% tenured/permanent, 20.3% tenure-track, 29.3% contract
- ❖ Men: 74.1% tenured/permanent, 6.2% tenure-track, 19.8% contract

RESULTS

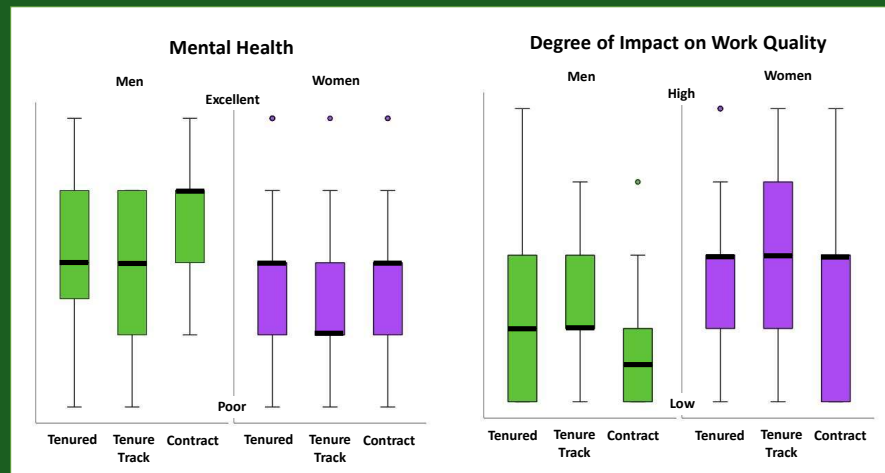
	Mental Health-Related			Presenteeism		
	General Mental Health	Psyc Distress (K6)	Burnout	SPS-6	Work Quality	Work Time
Step 1						
Gender	-0.56***	1.76**	0.41**	1.95**	0.27	0.47**
Tenure-Track	-0.34*	1.76*	0.39*	1.48	0.31	0.38*
Contract	0.02	1.12*	-0.15	-1.06	-0.23	-0.08
Step 2						
Gender x Tenure-Track	0.12	1.74	-0.05	3.47	0.50	0.08
Gender x Contract	-0.35	3.54**	0.11	3.79*	0.74*	0.85*

Notes. All values represent partial regression coefficients. Tenure-Track and Contract were dummy variables using Tenured as the reference group. Gender coded 0 for man and 1 for woman.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

- ❖ Findings that women and tenure-track academics were faring worse in terms of mental health and were more likely to be experiencing work-related difficulties underscore the challenges faced by women in academia and the difficulties faced by academics during the pre-tenure period.
- ❖ It is also important to note that a substantial portion of men as well as tenured and contract academics were experiencing poor mental health and felt their mental health was negatively affect their work.
- ❖ Further research is necessary to understand the gender differences between contract and tenured academics.

- ❖ Academics who identified as women reported experiencing **poorer mental health and higher presenteeism** compared to academics who identified as men.
- ❖ Levels of presenteeism were similar for women across tenured, tenure-track, and contract academics, but were **lower for men who were contract academics** compared to men who were tenured or tenure-track.



INFORMATION ON MEASURES

- ❖ General Mental Health – single item from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)
- ❖ Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6; Kessler et al., 2002) ranging from 0 to 24 with higher scores representing more distress.
- ❖ Burnout – single item from 1 (no burnout) to 5 (high burnout) taken from the Physician Worklife Survey (Williams et al., 1999)
- ❖ Stanford Presenteeism Scale (SPS-6; Koopman et al., 2002)
- ❖ Work time presenteeism – single item from 1 (never) to 4 (often) asking how often participants had worked despite feeling they should not have (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005)
- ❖ Work quality presenteeism = single item from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal) asking how much mental health had affected work quality.

CORRELATIONS

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Mental Health	-	-.59***	-.61***	-.63***	-.65***	-.60***
2. Psychological Distress	-.65***	-	.78***	.75***	.76***	.80***
3. Burnout	-.55***	.61***	-	.75***	.70***	.71***
4. SPS-6	-.64***	.68***	.70***	-	.67***	.75***
5. Time Presenteeism	-.62***	.66***	.55***	.66***	-	.69***
6. Quality Presenteeism	-.55***	.61***	.58***	.73***	.63***	-

Notes. Values above the diagonal for men and below the diagonal for women.
*** $p < .001$

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS BY GROUP

	Men			Women		
	Tenured (n = 60)	Tenure Track (n = 5)	Contract (n = 16)	Tenured (n = 119)	Tenure Track (n = 48)	Contract (n = 69)
General MH	3.3 (1.2)	2.8 (1.3)	3.6 (0.9)	2.8 (1.0)	2.4 (1.0)	2.7 (1.0)
Psyc. Distress	6.9 (4.9)	7.4 (3.5)	5.4 (4.0)	7.8 (4.0)	9.9 (4.2)	9.7 (4.4)
Burnout	2.4 (1.1)	2.8 (1.3)	2.1 (1.1)	2.8 (1.0)	3.2 (1.1)	2.6 (0.8)
SPS-6	15.8 (5.9)	14.4 (5.3)	11.8 (5.6)	16.6 (5.2)	18.7 (5.4)	16.4 (5.0)
Work Time	2.1 (1.1)	2.4 (1.5)	1.3 (0.6)	2.3 (1.1)	2.8 (1.1)	2.4 (1.1)
Work Quality	2.5 (1.3)	2.4 (1.1)	1.7 (0.9)	2.6 (1.1)	3.0 (1.2)	2.5 (1.2)

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