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# Health Implications in Regards to the Changing Nature of Work

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## Abstract

This theoretical paper is relevant to nontraditional workers, traditional employees, and businesses searching for ways to enhance workers' health and well-being. Businesses should also find this information helpful if they are aiming to increase their bottom line. The changing nature of work has health implications for both nontraditional workers and traditional employees; however, it has not been readily studied. I review the current literature available and analyze the health implications for both nontraditional workers and traditional employees. After reviewing a variety of literature I propose two theoretical propositions. My first proposition is that the changing nature of work, specifically the increase of workplace flexibility, benefits traditional employees more so than nontraditional workers. Secondly, I propose that nontraditional workers are likely to endure more of the negative health implications in response to the changing nature of work when compared to traditional employees. Ultimately, there needs to be further research done on comparing traditional employees to nontraditional workers and further investigation on what kind of health implications we should expect from the changing nature of work. From reviewing and discussing the negative health implications, it becomes evident that businesses need to focus on enhancing the health and well-being of all workers. I conclude by suggesting ways in which businesses can achieve a happier and healthier workforce.

## Keywords

Changing nature of work, gig economy, health implications, workers' health

## Disciplines

Medicine and Health Sciences | Other Public Health | Public Health

## Comments

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### Abstract

This theoretical paper is relevant to nontraditional workers, traditional employees, and businesses searching for ways to enhance workers' health and well-being. Businesses should also find this information helpful if they are aiming to increase their bottom line. The changing nature of work has health implications for both nontraditional workers and traditional employees; however, it has not been readily studied. I review the current literature available and analyze the health implications for both nontraditional workers and traditional employees. After reviewing a variety of literature I propose two theoretical propositions. My first proposition is that the changing nature of work, specifically the increase of workplace flexibility, benefits traditional employees more so than nontraditional workers. Secondly, I propose that nontraditional workers are likely to endure more of the negative health implications in response to the changing nature of work when compared to traditional employees. Ultimately, there needs to be further research done on comparing traditional employees to nontraditional workers and further investigation on what kind of health implications we should expect from the changing nature of work. From reviewing and discussing the negative health implications, it becomes evident that businesses need to focus on enhancing the health and well-being of all workers. I conclude by suggesting ways in which businesses can achieve a happier and healthier workforce.

### Health Implications in Regards to the Changing Nature of Work

The lack of research done in regards to nontraditional work despite the impacts it has on employee health is concerning. Our future jobs will increasingly become a part of this nontraditional culture. To ensure our economy remains productive and workers are satisfied, we need to discover the effects that the changing nature of work will produce. Traditional work and the toxic culture have been well known for causing detrimental health impacts on employees. For example, it was found that toxins in the workplace negatively impact not only the employees' health and psychological well-being, but also increases the costs businesses endure (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). With the changing nature of work, it is pivotal that more research is conducted on the new health implications that are linked to nontraditional work. For this paper, health implications include both physical health and psychological health (Polanyi & Tompa, 2004). Studies have revealed that when organizations undergo change, employees often endure a decrease in morale, motivation, perceived job security, and job loyalty (Cooper, 1999). These factors are especially enhanced by non-traditional work since our entire economy is in the midst of undergoing tremendous change. For example, gig work has greatly increased uncertainty and economic risk for workers (Friedman, 2014). Gig workers can be defined as nontraditional workers for digital platforms who are often categorized as independent contractors by their employers (Howard, 2017). These aspects are likely to be stressors for gig workers, which ultimately will have a negative impact on their health. Furthermore, some characteristics that define toxic organizations are often characteristics of gig companies. Poor internal communication and manipulative interpersonal relationships are two characteristics which define toxic work culture (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). Gig workers often lack a connection to the company's internal culture since there is not strong internal communication (Fisher, 2016), and

the employers can often display manipulative behaviors towards the workers. Although gig workers are an important sector of nontraditional workers, for this paper all nontraditional workers will be discussed as one entity unless specifically noted.

Work has increasingly become more flexible, insecure, and short-term. With the rise of nontraditional work, even traditional work has evolved to become more flexible. Within this paper, work flexibility will refer to increased flexibility in work conditions such as location and scheduling (Lewis, 2003). All of these changes in the workforce have created new experiences for all types of workers. This reiterates that nontraditional work is not only in regards to gig workers. The overarching theme that distinguishes nontraditional work from traditional work is that nontraditional workers have no expectation of their permanence (Howard, 2017). However, a variety of factors encompass what it means to be a nontraditional worker in today's world. Another difference from traditional workers is that nontraditional workers have an altered employer-employee relationship. Nontraditional work can include any job that does not fit the legal definition of employment. Furthermore, nontraditional work is different from traditional work because it does not include long term contracts, fixed hours, and a fixed location (Tran & Sokas, 2017). This may seem too broad of a definition; however, it is important it remains broad to be inclusive of all nontraditional jobs. With the rapid changing nature of work, it is imperative that all nontraditional work is included in research in order to discover the many implications this has for employee health.

The changes occurring in today's workforce have both positive and negative impacts, specifically to employees' health, that have not been readily examined before. Employee health is a complex concept to study since there are many different variables that affect it. In research, a single-level approach is often used when studying employee health. Individual aspects, cultural

aspects, and group aspects must be considered when examining employee health (Martin, Karanika-Murray, Biron, & Sanderson, 2014). Analyzing the health implications for nontraditional workers will vary because experiences will be different for each individual. For example, some workers prefer nontraditional work over traditional work. They value some of the perks that come along with nontraditional work such as the flexibility to work whenever they want. For gig workers specifically, some truly do embrace the opportunity of nontraditional work. However, few gig workers have this positive perspective on this type of life-style. It is important to note that the gig workers who enjoy their nontraditional jobs are well-paid. The majority of gig workers are not well-paid, do not get work benefits, and would prefer to have a traditional job (Friedman, 2014). The workers who enjoy nontraditional jobs will tend to demonstrate positive health impacts, while the ones who do not enjoy it will demonstrate the negative health impacts (Achor, Kellerman, Reece, & Robichaux, 2018). This demonstrates that job satisfaction is an important variable when discussing health implications for nontraditional work. This link will be important to consider when analyzing employee health implications, and a future topic for researchers to study more in depth.

Throughout this paper, I will discuss the impacts on employee health and general well-being in effect from the changing nature of work. I will first demonstrate how nontraditional work can be both beneficial and detrimental for employee health and well-being. Since this paper aims to highlight ways employers can enhance employee health and well-being, I will focus more on the negative health implications. However, it is important to acknowledge all the ways in which nontraditional work impacts employee health and well-being in order to discover the most effective ways to improve it. I will then discuss the impact the changing nature of work, specifically flexibility, has on traditional employees. This way, I can make comparisons between

nontraditional workers and traditional employees and theoretically contribute new ideas. I then make two theoretical propositions after discussing the benefits and downfalls both nontraditional workers and traditional workers are likely to experience from the changing nature of work. These propositions state that nontraditional workers endure more negative health implications and benefit less from increasing workplace flexibility when compared to traditional employees. Our economy depends on workers' success, so we must ensure workers remain healthy and happy so they can be successful in their jobs. Thus, I then outline effective ways to improve nontraditional employee health and well-being in today's workforce. I also include how polices need to change to better serve nontraditional workers. The stress nontraditional workers experience does not only negatively impact the workers themselves, it also negatively impacts the company they are working for. Costs the business endures from stressed workers include low quality products or services, permanent vacancies, high turnover and sick-leave, internal conflicts, poor communication, and bad publicity (Schabracq & Cooper, 2000). These costs demonstrate how workers' health and well-being can negatively impact a business' bottom line. Huff (2010) explains that businesses can likely increase their bottom line if they improve workers' health. Ultimately I hope to emphasize the importance of this topic from a business perspective since businesses will likely want to maximize profits and can do so by enhancing workers' health and well-being.

### **Health Implications for Nontraditional Workers**

Certain aspects of nontraditional work are beneficial for workers' health and general well-being. Research done by Graham, Hjorth, & Lehdonvirta (2017b) that was conducted over the course of three years revealed that nontraditional workers, specifically online gig workers, benefit from potential higher incomes and increased worker autonomy. For example, research



done by Graham et al. (2017b) revealed that 68% of the survey respondents said their gig work is an important source of their household income. Furthermore, these workers said they were able to buy private health insurance because of the income online gig work provided them, ultimately increasing their sense of overall security (Graham et al., 2017b). This research shows how workers' well-being and health can be positively impacted by nontraditional work such as gig work. The study done by Graham et al. (2017b) also reveals that online gig workers found their work to be very interesting and stimulating, which is beneficial for a worker's general well-being due to an increase in job satisfaction. The online gig workers emphasized how having more freedom in their nontraditional work arrangement is something traditional work never afforded them. Another positive aspect nontraditional workers mention is the ability to better align personal interests with the work they pursue (Graham, Hjorth, & Lehdonvirta, 2017a). It has been said by Polanyi & Tompa (2004) that personal interests play an important role in quality of worker experiences. Since nontraditional workers can find work that is stimulating and interesting, their worker experiences are likely to be better and thus enhance their overall health and well-being. Furthermore, traditional workers will not necessarily experience these benefits nontraditional workers have, demonstrating how nontraditional work can positively impact health and well-being in ways traditional work cannot.

However, there are unfavorable aspects unique to nontraditional work that create increased stress for workers, which negatively impacts health. Nontraditional workers are not as independent and autonomous as society first perceives (Gray, Suri, Ali, & Kulkarni, 2016). The most commonly known aspect about nontraditional work is that it tends to be linked with job insecurity (Howard, 2017). It has been found in research that job insecurity is linked to more health ailments and workplace accidents, and lower levels of supervisor satisfaction (Probst,

Jiang, & Graso, 2016). All of these effects have a negative impact on health and well-being. Another downfall is that nontraditional workers do not have the ability to move upward or throughout different departments within a company in the same sense that traditional workers can (Graham et al., 2017a). This unfavorable aspect of nontraditional work can prohibit workers from achieving high job satisfaction in the way traditional workers can receive promotions or move around their company. Ultimately this can take a toll on the nontraditional worker's health and well-being. Mortality studies have revealed that nontraditional workers have a higher risk of physical injuries and mental hardships compared to traditional workers (Howard, 2017). For example, there have been many cases of gig workers on YouTube confessing their overwhelming feelings of depression and anxiety. Despite doing what they love, many YouTubers describe the overbearing pressures of their jobs and high stress they endure daily (Alexander, 2018). Furthermore, a study using longitudinal data revealed that the overall mortality rate for temporary workers was 1.2-1.6 times greater than the rate for permanent employees, most commonly caused by cancer related to alcohol and smoking (Kivimäki et al., 2003). These examples demonstrate how nontraditional work can decrease the quality of life for workers and sometimes even lead to deadly consequences.

More negative aspects nontraditional workers experience include the lack of social benefits and legal protections that are available for traditional workers. For example, independent contractors are not eligible for workers' compensation and do not have the legal right to a safe workplace (Howard, 2017). The lack of protection nontraditional workers have enhances stress and creates unstable and unsafe working conditions. This in turn will negatively impact nontraditional workers' health due to a decrease in job satisfaction and increase in stressors. Other trends associated with nontraditional work can also increase workers' stress such as lack of

work-life balance and discrimination (Graham et al., 2017a). In regards to discrimination, Graham et al. (2017a) reveals that gig employers are allowed to discriminate at will, which increases job insecurity for the workers. This means that at any time gig workers are at risk of being discriminated against in regards to their geographical location, age, and other aspects regarding their identity. Traditional employees are protected from discrimination like this. Workers who are at risk of discrimination like this often hide their true identities so that they can obtain the job (Graham et al., 2017a). Like the other unfavorable aspects, the likelihood of enduring discrimination will increase stress for a nontraditional worker and ultimately have a negative impact on their health and well-being.

Another unfavorable aspect is that nontraditional work has ironically increased working hours. Since employment and income have become more ambiguous and unstable, gig workers specifically tend to work extra hard to compensate for the times where they are not making money (Friedman, 2014). This reveals one reason why nontraditional workers are working longer hours than ever before. It also demonstrates the poor financial wellness many nontraditional workers experience, which can cause tremendous stress and ultimately negatively impact their health. Furthermore, the gig economy specifically is fueling a mindset to “work yourself to death” (Tolentino, 2017). This is a larger cultural problem that the corporate world has been trying to overcome. However, now the gig economy is reinforcing this toxic mindset towards a different group of workers that are at even more risk of enduring negative health implications and decreased well-being. Companies should not celebrate the fact that workers are hustling daily to the extent of becoming exhausted or decreasing their well-being. For example, Tolentino (2017) explains how a ride sharing company publically announced how exciting it was that one of their hardworking drivers is so dedicated that she gave rides to people moments

before giving birth to her daughter. Despite the positive spin the company took on this story, this demonstrates how the gig economy has normalized it for workers to prioritize making a few extra dollars rather than seeking medical help when they need it (Tolentino, 2017). Cases like this demonstrate how nontraditional work is not fostering a healthy balance between work and life, and is ultimately leading to decreased health and well-being for workers.

The worst impact workers are likely to experience in response to nontraditional work is loneliness. Loneliness impacts both physical and psychological health. Loneliness is a concern for our economy since it has been found that lonely workers perform more poorly, are more likely to quit, and have lower job satisfaction (Achor et al., 2018). This demonstrates how loneliness not only negatively impacts workers, but also the company. In regards to nontraditional work, loneliness is one of the biggest risks that workers have. After years of research, it was found that online gig workers are at risk for social isolation (Graham et al., 2017a). Aspects of nontraditional work enhance worker loneliness, such as no stable location or working hours. According to Fisher (2016), gig workers report the main downfall of their nontraditional work arrangement is “feeling like an outsider,” especially for millennial gig workers (p. 1). This feeling of being isolated and lonely ultimately leads nontraditional workers to be less satisfied with their jobs. Loneliness is also linked to how much perceived social support a worker feels in their workplace environment. As one would assume, the less social support a worker perceives at work the more at risk they are to experiencing feelings of loneliness (Achor et al., 2018). This links to the importance of workplace environment.

Research findings demonstrate how workplace environments impact worker’s experiences, which will ultimately impact their health. Social interactions at work were identified as a key aspect in effecting worker’s day-to-day experiences (Polanyi & Tompa, 2004). Research

by Graham et al. (2017b) reveals that gig workers feel detached from others and have limited opportunities to interact with people outside their families. In their study, 74% of survey respondents reported that they rarely have face-to-face interactions with people. Furthermore, having a work environment that does not promote human interaction or provide social support will increase the risk of experiencing loneliness. Gig workers specifically work during unsocial working hours such as the weekends or evening hours, leading them to experience more isolation (Graham et al., 2017b). Nontraditional workers more often than not experience little social support in the workplace. Through surveying gig workers, it was found that majority of the workers lacked a connection to the company's internal culture (Fisher, 2016). If nontraditional workers do not have a strong connection to the company's internal culture, problems will arise such as worker isolation and loneliness. This also demonstrates how nontraditional workers lack the benefits that come along with a positive workplace environment that a traditional job would provide. It would also be difficult to perceive social support as a worker if they do not have a connection to the company's internal culture. A lack of perceived social support will decrease the quality of their experiences and most likely negatively impact their job satisfaction (Martin et al., 2014). This is especially concerning for nontraditional workers since they lack the social interactions that traditional work is able to provide workers who have an office they go to. These trends are revealing that nontraditional workers are more at risk of experiencing loneliness since they lack a traditional work environment and perceived social support.

### **Health Implications for Traditional Employees**

Traditional Employees are reaping the benefits from aspects such as flexibility that have increased due to the changing nature of work. Employees reported that increased flexibility in their schedules improved their job satisfaction and also their physical health (Huff, 2010).

Furthermore, results from longitudinal data deriving from a large multinational company also concluded that increased workplace flexibility positively impacted job commitment and negatively impacted absence from sickness and work-related impairment (Casey & Grzywacz, 2008). These results demonstrate how the changing nature of work has benefitted traditional employees by enabling more flexibility for their schedules, which ultimately positively impacts their overall well-being and physical health. Researchers have even predicted that workplace flexibility will ultimately increase profits for businesses in response to improving the health of employees (Huff, 2010). Ultimately businesses can benefit from fostering a work culture that is flexible because workers will be more effective and healthy. This suggests that the changing nature of work can benefit the livelihoods of all workers, not just traditional employees. It is important to note that if employees are stressed or have bad physical health not related to their work-life, flexibility will not necessarily benefit their health as much. A study done by Butler Grzywacz, Ettner, and Liu (2009) analyzed responses from employees from a large pharmaceutical company who self-reported their health and perceived flexibility. They then compared health records from a year later to the self-reported data. They found that flexibility positively impacted health only when employees reported less stress and bad health (Butler et al., 2009). This demonstrates that there are limitations to the benefits employees may receive from increasing flexibility, since ultimately it depends on individual preferences. Businesses must implement changes like increasing flexibility with intentions of improving worker health and well-being and be cautious of unintended consequences. Then, it is likely that businesses can improve their bottom line and both workers and employers can benefit from the changing nature of work.

However, despite good intentions of increasing flexibility for traditional employees, these changes are likely to have some unintended consequences. For example, while flexible hours may seem appealing to workers, this can also increase loneliness in the workplace with employees coming and going at different times. Furthermore, with the increase in other nontraditional work styles such as working from home, heavier workloads, and relying more on technology rather than human interaction, loneliness in the workplace is at an all time high (Carnegie, 2018). Also, similarly to many nontraditional workers, traditional employees are ironically working more hours despite the increase in workplace flexibility. According to Cooper (1999) the changing nature of work has enhanced the “long working hours culture,” especially with employees who are dual earner households (p. 569). With the increase of dual earner households, this problem of working long hours will only continue to worsen. Some may assume the ability to work from home or the increase in flexibility within the workforce enables employees to be more efficient and work the hours they wish to work. However, it is flexibility that has enhanced the mindset to always be working. Employees today are tending to work many more hours than they wish to be working. The link between long working hours and the impact on employees’ health have been readily examined. Findings have been consistent that long working hours negatively impact both employees’ physical and psychological health (Cooper, 1999). It is important to note that employee health is not only impacted by their work life, but also their personal life. With a lack of work-life balance in response to working long hours, more employees will endure family issues, ultimately depleting their well-being. The amount of broken and separated families has dramatically increased throughout the world (Cooper, 1999). This not only demonstrates the serious consequences of not balancing personal life with work,

but connects back to how the changing nature of work is heightening serious issues that are detrimental towards our health and livelihoods.

### **Theoretical Propositions**

In summary, there are gaps in our current literature that are failing to compare the health implications for traditional employees versus nontraditional workers deriving from the changing nature of work. This has led me to make two propositions after reviewing all of the literature. The research I have reviewed demonstrates how the changing nature of work is having many negative health implications that were often unintended consequences or unexpected. The increase in flexibility is commonly mistaken as one of the top benefits for nontraditional workers (Gray et al., 2016). On the contrary, traditional workers benefit from flexibility in a variety of ways, such as increased job commitment and improved health and well-being (Casey & Grzywacz, 2008; Huff, 2010). This leads me to make my first proposition which is that the changing nature of work, specifically the increase of workplace flexibility, benefits traditional employees more so than nontraditional workers.

Despite the benefits that workers may receive from the changing nature of work, it seems as though they are more likely to experience the downfalls. For example, both nontraditional workers and traditional workers experience pressures to work longer hours (Cooper, 1999; Friedman, 2014). Working harder and longer will then create many negative health implications for both types of workers. Nontraditional workers are likely to experience more negative health implications including feelings of loneliness, lack of social benefits and legal protections, and increased stress levels caused by a variety of factors such as job insecurity, job safety, and a lack of job satisfaction (Carnegie, 2018; Graham et al., 2017a; Howard, 2017; Probst, et al., 2016). The numerous detrimental health implications nontraditional employees are likely to experience



versus the experiences traditional employees are likely to experience lead me to my second theoretical proposition. My second proposition is that nontraditional workers are likely to endure more of the negative health implications in response to the changing nature of work when compared to traditional employees.

### **Implications**

Businesses should embrace the changing nature of work in ways to enhance their workers' health and well-being to ultimately benefit their organizational bottom line. The following includes a variety of ways in which businesses can help limit the negative health implications workers may endure and ultimately enhance their health and well-being.

#### **Enhancing Nontraditional Workers' Health and Well-Being.**

After reviewing why nontraditional workers can experience negative health impacts it is clear that reducing worker stress and increasing job satisfaction would be effective ways to enhance nontraditional workers' health and well-being. Solving the issues and risks that nontraditional work creates can be based on the subjective characteristics such as adjusting leadership and management skills according to the workers' needs and personality and also the objective characteristics in the work environment. Because nontraditional workers often work in isolation, they tend to evaluate their work with respect to their personal motivations rather than in respect to others (Kost & Wong, 2018). Thus, despite the changing nature of work, the basic concept of meaningfulness and good leadership will still continue to be important for employers to have. Businesses can increase the meaningfulness workers experience by enhancing self-improvement, moral and social contributions, and monetary rewards (Kost & Wong, 2018). Again it is important to note that the ways to improve nontraditional workers' health and well-being is complex due to the subjective nature of one's life situation. While one worker may

benefit from more monetary reward, another worker may benefit more from increased autonomy (Kost & Wong, 2018). Good leadership is also an efficient way employers can enhance the nontraditional workers' health and well-being. A study was done that shows how high quality exchanges between a leader in the company and another subordinate worker can mitigate the negative impacts workers experience from job insecurity (Probst et al., 2016). As Friedman (2014) mentioned, job insecurity has increased with the rise of the gig economy. Job insecurity causes feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity. Ambiguity and uncertainty is the nature of nontraditional work, and unfortunately these characteristics are linked to negative effects on a worker's health and well-being. Thus, good leadership within the workforce is more important now than ever before. These points emphasize how enhancing job meaningfulness and fostering high quality exchanges between people of power and subordinates are effective ways to limit the negative impact worker isolation and job insecurity has on health and well-being.

Another way employers can help enhance nontraditional workers' health and well-being is by ensuring there is a positive work environment which the workers feel a connection with. Deloitte sets a good example for adjusting in our changing economy. Deloitte's talent officer acknowledges the importance of a community within the workplace and explains how the company is working to create a community that attracts and retains contingent workers (Fisher, 2016). This demonstrates how a traditional company is adjusting to ensure their nontraditional workers are welcomed and ultimately satisfied with their job. Creating a community that enables these workers to collaborate creates a meaningful job experience (Gray et al., 2016). This can ultimately increase their well-being because it satisfies workers social needs. As nontraditional jobs will continue to increase, it is pivotal for employers to adjust their workplace environment and business strategies to be inclusive for all types of workers, traditional or nontraditional.

Whether a worker is a traditional employee or nontraditional employee, they add value to the company and should be cared for. Employers who foster a good relationship with their nontraditional workers will have a competitive advantage over other employers, so smart employers such as Deloitte will start to adjust their company if they want to be successful (Fisher, 2016). It is important for employers to make good relationships with their nontraditional workers despite the lack of control the employer has over the nontraditional worker.

Furthermore, endorsing, encountering, and engaging are three vital aspects to creating a sense of community (Garrett, Spreitzer, & Bacevice, 2017). Thus, businesses should value these types of collective actions and aim to provide an environment that fuels a tight knit community.

Promoting social interaction between the nontraditional workers is also key to enhancing nontraditional workers' health and well-being. Jobs with high degrees of social interaction tend to not experience loneliness (Achor et al., 2018). This demonstrates how promoting more social interaction among employees can decrease loneliness, thus reducing the negative health implications. Employers can decrease the tendency of worker loneliness and isolation by providing a positive work environment that promotes social interaction, provides social support, and builds relationships between the workers and employers. This in turn will enhance nontraditional workers' health and well-being. An effective way to create a positive work environment and promote social interaction is the use of coworking spaces. Coworking spaces can be used as places for nontraditional workers to gather while doing their own individual work (Garrett, et al., 2017). Thus, companies like Uber and Etsy could promote more social interaction by investing in coworking spaces for their nontraditional workers to gather during their free time and or work time. Workers have positive experiences in coworking spaces because it satisfies their desire for a sense of community. As discussed above, the sense of community for workers

is an effective way to enhance workers' well-being. Furthermore, in one study, employees rated that they thrive on an average of six out of seven when in coworking spaces (Spreitzer, Bacevice, & Garrett, 2015). Coworking space founders and community managers were interviewed and several hundred workers from dozens of coworking spaces around the U.S. were surveyed. It was then concluded that coworking spaces create a sense of community, and employees see their work as more meaningful and find they have more job control (Spreitzer et al., 2015). According to Polayni and Tompa (2004) when workers perceive their work to be meaningful the quality of their work experiences become better. Thus, coworking spaces enable workers to perceive their work to be more meaningful and in turn this increases the quality of their experiences, which ultimately benefits their well-being.

Another way to enhance nontraditional workers' health and well-being is by promoting and implementing more physical activity both inside and outside work hours. Promoting and implementing more physical activity to nontraditional workers has some challenges because of the lack of a fixed workplace and types of tasks the worker does. Physical activity is an effective way to enhance health and well-being. Programs can be beneficial for all types of nontraditional workers because the knowledge gained can be carried outside of work hours. The most effective programs to promote physical activity in the workplace are ones which are tailored to individual needs. For example, educational programs tailored towards individual needs were more effective compared to generic workshops (Marshall, 2004). In even more detail, it has been found that physical activity in nature can enhance employee well-being (Korpela, 2017). Nontraditional workers may not have a fixed workplace, but I still think employers could be more innovative and create programs for their workers to participate in or promote physical activity in general. Since some nontraditional workers do not have a fixed workplace, promoting physical activity

outside in nature is both a realistic and effective intervention strategy for employers to use. Research concluded that policy and environmentally-focused interventions were most effective since workers would incidentally make healthier choices. For example, some studies promoted active commuting to work and encouraged workers to use the stairs instead of the elevator through daily decisional prompts (Marshall, 2004). These are creative and affordable ways for employers to motivate their nontraditional workers to make healthy choices. In regards to gig work, interventions and programs like these could be easily done through messages in the platform itself. Furthermore, I believe interventions and programs like these could help enhance the connection nontraditional workers feel towards the company they are working for which would also be beneficial towards their well-being. Further research would have to be conducted on this idea to make those assumptions valid.

The use of treadmill and standing desks in the workplace is also an effective way to increase physical activity in the workplace. It has been found and readily accepted by the workforce that sedentary behavior is associated with negative health outcomes such as weight gain (Grunseit, Yuk-Yin Chau, Ploeg, & Bauman, 2013). Treadmill and standing desks are ways to reduce sitting time at work. Some nontraditional work such as Uber drivers could not benefit from this tactic during work hours, but many other nontraditional workers such as MTurkers could. The use of treadmill and standing desks has been examined and has shown positive results in enhancing employee health and well-being. Research conducted by MacEwen, MacDonald, and Burr (2015) shows that treadmill desks lead to the greatest improvements in workers' physical health. Standing desks also can improve workers' physical health. Both treadmill and standing desks also are beneficial for maintaining energy throughout the day, which would enhance workers' general well-being. In regards to psychological outcomes, mixed results were

produced from both treadmill and standing desks. However, it was concluded that both treadmill and standing desks have the ability to reduce stress and overall moodiness of the worker, thus enhancing their well-being and mental health (MacEwen et al., 2015). Employers most likely would not want to spend their company's money to provide each of their nontraditional workers standing and treadmill desks. This is something I think the workers themselves should consider in order to benefit their health and well-being if employers are not willing to endure this cost.

### **Necessary Adjustments to Policies**

With the changing nature of work there must be adjustments with how we define employment and policies impacting workers and the workforce. Friedman (2014) specifically points out that because of the rise of the gig economy, new initiatives need to be taken in both social policy and economic policy. I agree that these changes need to happen in order to better serve nontraditional workers. With the dramatic increase with nontraditional work, employment should not be so tightly defined. There should be an all-inclusive definition in order to give nontraditional workers the rights they deserve. Businesses are currently taking advantage of the value nontraditional workers bring to their organization. That being said, nontraditional workers should be protected in the same manner that traditional employees are. For example, nontraditional workers should be eligible for basic protective legislation such as the National Labor Relations Act, Americans with Disability Act, and should have the legal rights to workers' compensation and a safe workplace (Friedman, 2014). Very few nontraditional workers currently have these basic rights. Having these rights could help limit some of the issues nontraditional workers endure such as discrimination and ultimately help enhance their health and well-being.

Recently there have many pending court cases in regards to the rights and status of nontraditional workers, specifically gig workers. When these cases are resolved the individual

often gets individual benefits and there are no changes for our entire system (Tran & Sokas, 2017). This emphasizes the need for systematic change to occur in the workforce in order to protect nontraditional workers. Some suggestions include creating a new category of employment, enforcing employers of nontraditional workers to put money into a fund for safety net programs, and requiring these companies to function as a socially responsible intermediary (Tran & Sokas, 2017). Other policy suggestions include enforcing businesses to help manage and fund workers' benefits, such as health insurance or retirement accounts (Erikson & Meyer, 2016). Overall, in the near future our society will naturally have to adjust to the changing nature of work and hopefully have all workers' best interest in mind.

### **Further Research**

After reviewing the current literature on this topic it has become clear our society currently does not prioritize workers' health and well-being. It is pivotal that further research focuses on how the changing nature of work impacts both nontraditional workers' and traditional employee's health and well-being. Studies should be done comparing these two groups of workers and how they are impacted by a variety of variables from the changing nature of work. Although flexibility was largely focused on in this paper, workers' health and well-being is not exclusively impacted by flexibility. Therefore, this is a limitation to this paper. We must strive to foster a happy and healthy workforce, which ultimately maximizes success in our economy. There needs to be more empirical studies conducted to demonstrate the positive impact that enhancing worker health and well-being can have on an organization's bottom line. With more research like this, we will foster more awareness on this topic, which hopefully will persuade organizations to start prioritizing workers' health and well-being.

In conclusion, it is imperative our society acknowledges that the changes in the nature of work will continue to increase and thus impact workers' livelihoods in new ways. Although traditional jobs will never disappear, they too will be impacted by the changing nature of work. A company's most important assets are their workers, whether they are traditional employees or nontraditional. This emphasizes why companies should care about enhancing their nontraditional workers' health and well-being. Also it is important to note that it is ethical and necessary for employers to protect their nontraditional workers. Our society must start holding these companies accountable for mistreating nontraditional workers. The only way we will be able to hold companies accountable is if we make changes to the larger system by adjusting our policies. A common trend seen throughout this paper is how stress caused from factors such as job insecurity, uncertainty, and unfavorable aspects associated with nontraditional work are causing the detrimental health impacts on nontraditional workers. Another finding from the research discussed is the idea that job satisfaction increases employee well-being, ultimately having positive impacts on their health. So, effective ways to limit the negative health implications and enhance the positive ones would be reducing worker stress and increasing job satisfaction. Overall, after reviewing current research on nontraditional workers I propose that the ultimate concern is our workers' health and well-being. Businesses do not want to invest money in order to enhance their workers' health and well-being because they are unaware or skeptical of the benefits it could have on their bottom line. However, this paper demonstrates that not only is it ethical and moral for businesses to enhance their workers' health and well-being, but it will ultimately improve their bottom line. Human capital should be recognized as an organization's most valuable asset. Workers' health and well-being needs to become our top priority.



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