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LONELINESS IN THE WORKPLACE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW & META-ANALYSIS

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Both loneliness and workplace health have gained increasing interest from the public, policy makers, and researchers in recent years. However, little attention has been paid to experiences of loneliness in the workplace, and its implications for workers and employers. This mixed-methods systematic review and meta-analysis was conducted to identify workplace, health, and personal factors associated with workplace loneliness. We identified 48 articles reporting original data on the association between workplace loneliness and workplace, health, or personal factors among occupational samples. Evidence quality was appraised using the Mixed-Methods Appraisal Tool. Quantitative data was synthesised using narrative synthesis and random effects meta-analysis. Qualitative data were synthesised using thematic synthesis. Pooled results indicate that workplace loneliness is associated with reduced job performance ($r = -0.35$, 95% CI = -0.49, -0.21), lower job satisfaction ($r = -0.34$, 95% CI = -0.44, -0.24), worse worker-manager relationship ($r = -0.31$, 95% CI = -0.38, -0.24), and elevated burnout symptoms ($r = 0.39$, 95% CI = 0.25, 0.51). Qualitative results point to links between work-related loneliness and workplace social interactions and mental health problems. As most studies used cross-sectional data and few adjusted for potential confounders, the direction and robustness of the associations remain untested. Overall, our results show that loneliness is associated with poor occupational functioning and worse wellbeing among workers. Results also indicate that loneliness is associated with modifiable aspects of the work environment, suggesting that the workplace may offer a fruitful avenue for interventions targeting loneliness.