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“Remote workers’ health during COVID-19: an exploratory study of influencing factors”

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The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a sudden switch to remote working that many organisations and workers were unprepared for. The study investigates the perceived impact of remote working on workers’ health and influencing factors. The impact of remote working on workers’ health has received limited attention, with a few studies suggesting that it impacts health negatively. The factors that influence remote workers’ health have received less attention. A cross-sectional online survey which made use of both open and closed-ended questions was distributed to IT and communication remote workers ($N = 459$). Closed-ended questions were analysed quantitatively in order to identify perceived changes in health. Open-ended questions were analysed qualitatively to determine the perceived reasons for such changes. Findings indicated that overall levels of health were high; 33% reported that their health had deteriorated during the first 12 months of the pandemic, whereas 23% reported improved levels of health. Greater proportions of remote work were associated with improved levels of health. Several factors were perceived to have influenced levels of health, including: health behaviours, such as physical activity, nutrition, and sleep; the development of disease, particularly mental health issues; work related factors, such as social support, work demands, and the blurring of work-life boundaries; and personal factors, including family life and leisure. The study concludes that remote working can be beneficial for health when workers engage in the correct health-promoting behaviours and are provided with the necessary support, both during their working and private life.