

Your email didn't find me well: Employee perceptions of work and feeling safe during COVID-19

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Roadmap

- Effects of the pandemic on work in general
- The job demand-resources (JD-R) model
- Our research with different occupational groups
- Recommendations for helping employees and organizations during COVID-19 (and times of disruption in general)



You've heard it said...

- "Unprecedented times"
- "Uncertain times"
- "Abundance of caution"
- "In these challenging times..."
- "New normal"



"I hope this email finds you well"
How the email found me:



COVID-19 and work

- 1,121,843 people worldwide and 218,641 in the U.S. have died from COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2020)
- 69% of U.S. workers claimed that this pandemic has been the most stressful time of their entire professional career (Ginger, 2020)
- 81% of workers expect a negative effect on their work from COVID-19 (Pew Research Center, 2020)



COVID-19 and the bottom line

- A recent survey of U.S. human resources leaders found that 20% of employers have either laid off or furloughed employees, and 47% have not hired since March (Randstad RiseSmart, 2020)
- 70% of U.S. small businesses are concerned about financial hardship due to prolonged closures and 58% are worried about having to permanently close (MetLife & U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2020)



Our research

- Investigating the effects of COVID-19 among:
 - University employees
 - Public sector employees
 - Gym employees
 - Clergy
- Using JD-R theory as our guiding lens



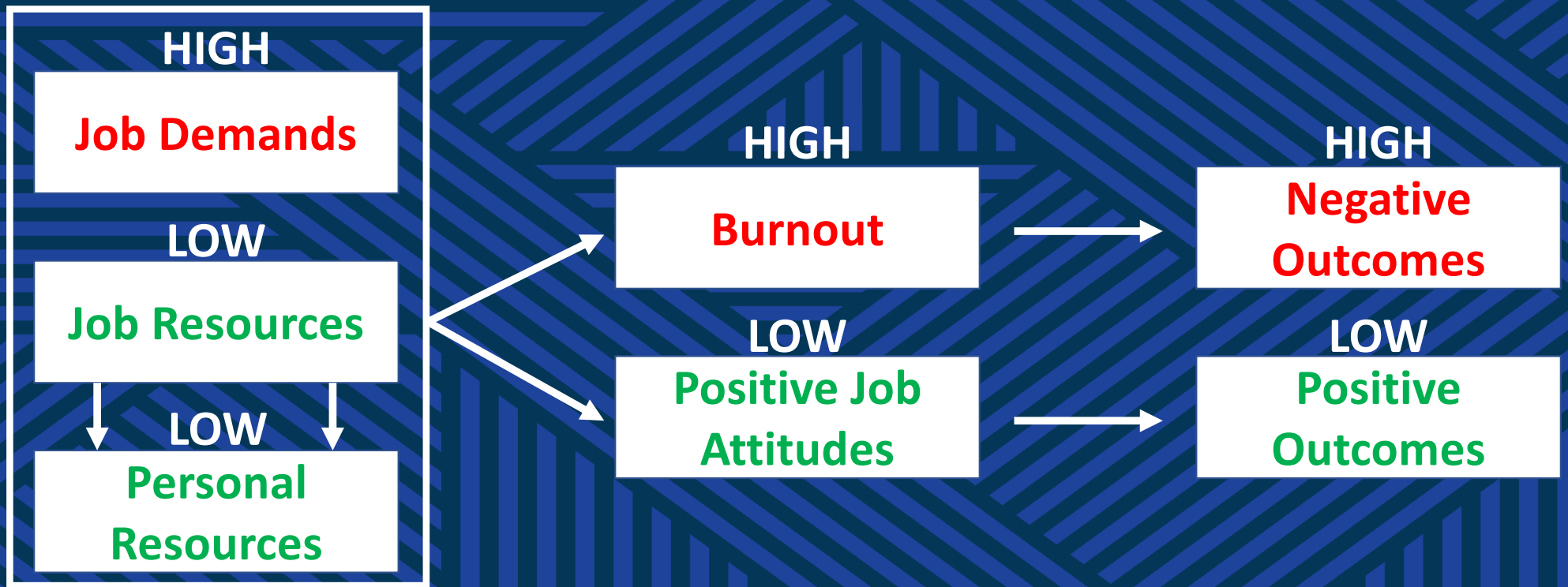
Job Demands – Resources Model

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001)

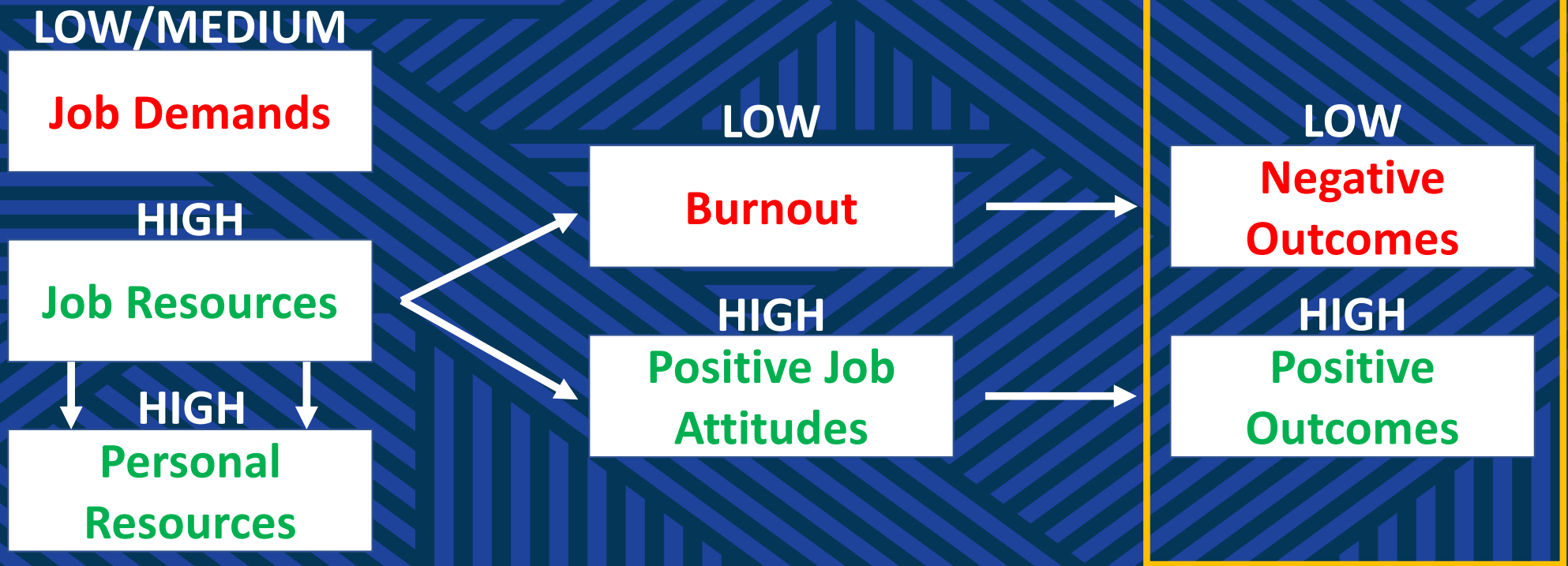


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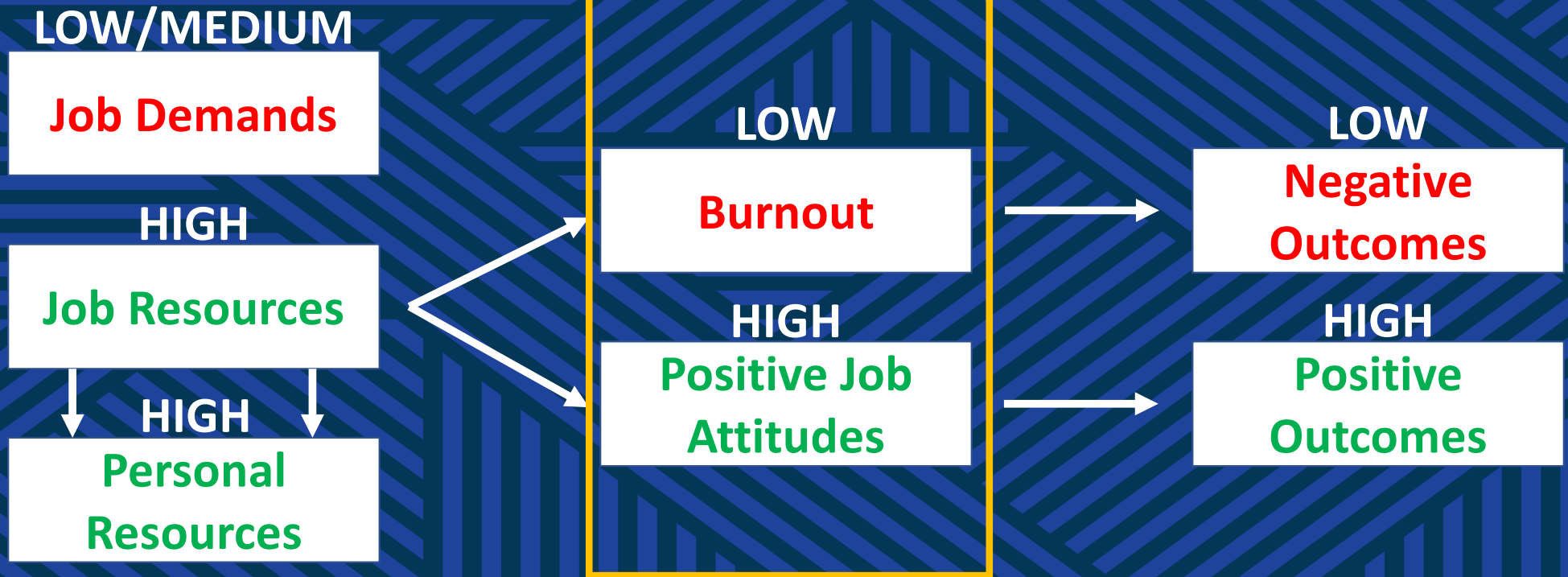
What Causes Work Stress?



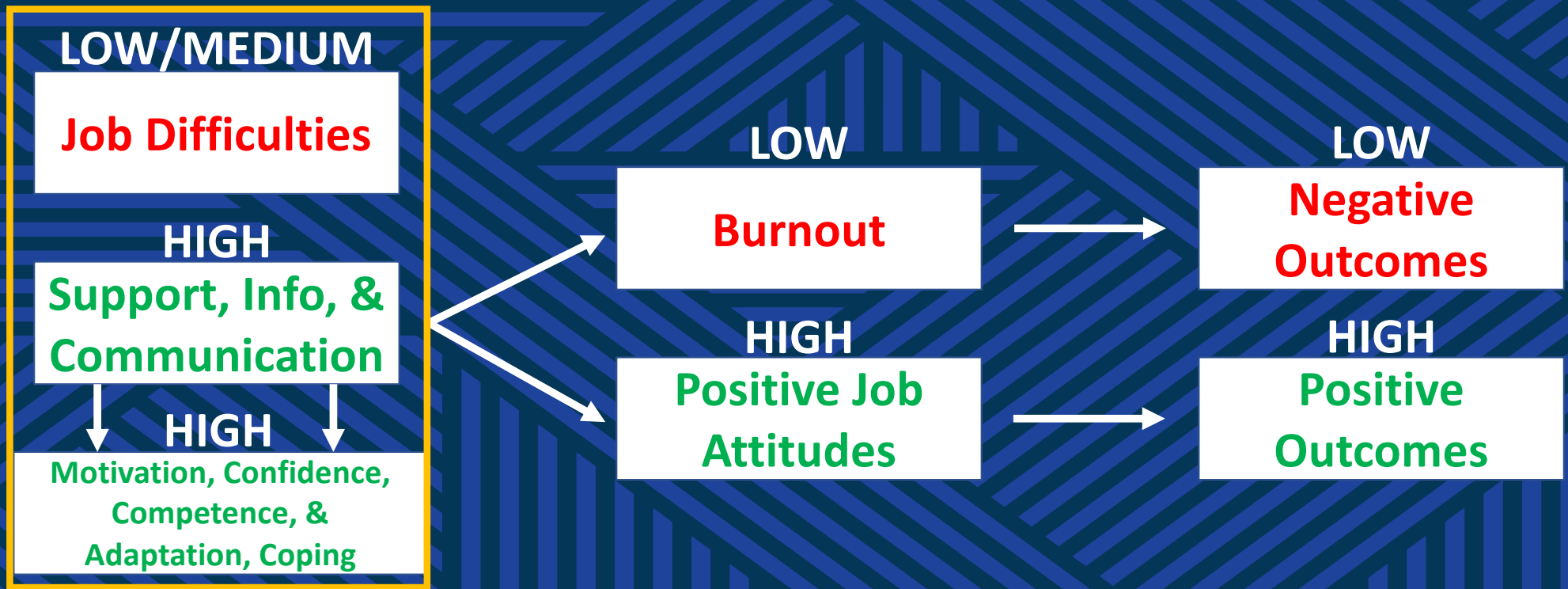
What Do We Want?



What Should We Monitor?



What Can We Manage?



University Employees

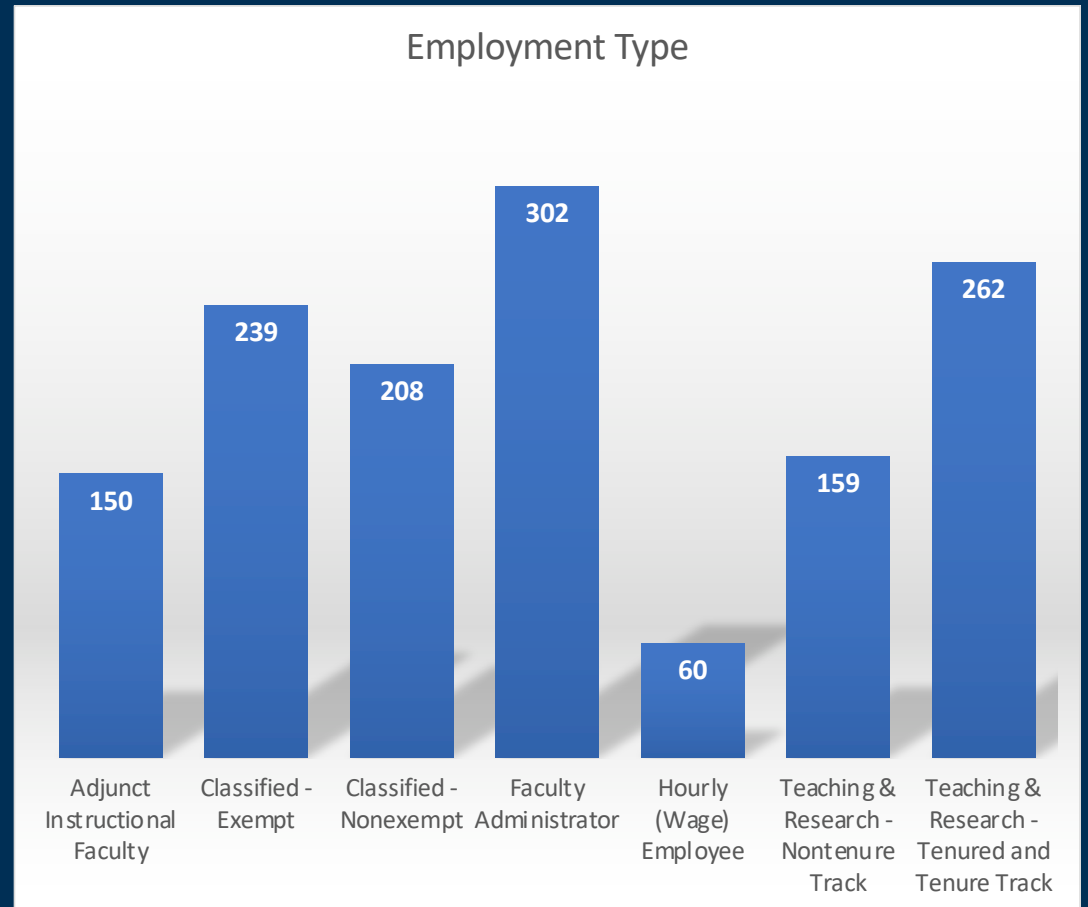
*Impact of Job Demands on
Positive Job Attitudes and
Burnout*



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Sample

- 1,388 university employees
- Response rate: 36%
- Data collected from April 20 - May 11, 2020

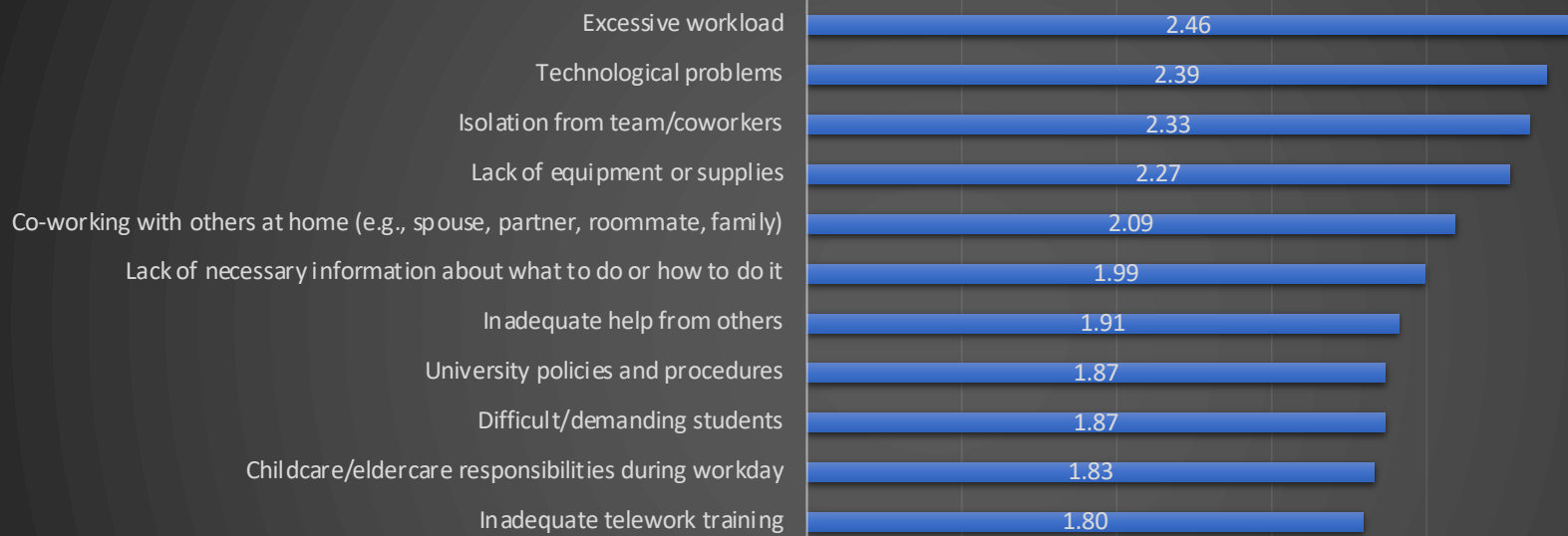


Potential Demands

- Childcare/eldercare responsibilities during workday
- Difficult/demanding students
- Co-working with others at home (e.g., spouse, partner, roommate, family)
- Technological problems
- Excessive workload
- Isolation from team/coworkers
- Inadequate telework training
- University policies and procedures
- Lack of equipment or supplies
- Lack of necessary information about what to do or how to do it
- Inadequate help from others



Means of Top Job Demands (5 point scale)



Correlations with Job Burnout

Childcare/eldercare responsibilities during workday	.26
Co-working with others at home (e.g., spouse, partner, roommate, family)	.34
Inadequate telework training	.34
Difficult/demanding students	.36
Isolation from team/coworkers	.37
Technological problems	.38
Lack of equipment or supplies	.40
University policies and procedures	.42
Lack of necessary information about what to do or how to do it	.44
Inadequate help from others	.45
Excessive workload	.60



All job demand items showed significant ($p < .001$) correlations

Correlations with Positive Job Attitudes

Childcare/eldercare responsibilities during workday	-.15
Difficult/demanding students	-.22
Co-working with others at home (e.g., spouse, partner, roommate, family)	-.24
Technological problems	-.28
Excessive workload	-.31
Isolation from team/coworkers	-.31
Inadequate telework training	-.32
University policies and procedures	-.33
Lack of equipment or supplies	-.35
Lack of necessary information about what to do or how to do it	-.39
Inadequate help from others	-.39



All job demand items showed significant ($p < .001$) correlations

Positive Job Attitudes

$b = -.148$
 $p < .001$

$b = -.146$
 $p < .001$

$b = -.086$
 $p = .003$

$b = -.121$
 $p < .001$

Childcare/eldercare
responsibilities during workday

$b = .057$
 $p = .019$

Technological Problems

$b = .063$
 $p = .014$

University policies and
procedures

$b = .061$
 $p = .015$

Excessive workload

$b = .387$
 $p < .001$

Difficult/demanding students

$b = .051$
 $p = .027$

Inadequate help from others

$b = .083$
 $p = .002$

Lack of necessary information
about what to do or how to do it

$b = .117$
 $p < .001$

Isolation from team/coworkers

$b = .070$
 $p = .004$

Lack of equipment or supplies

Job Burnout



Summary - What university employees need

- Reasonable workloads
- Information – communication is key!
- Help from supervisors and coworkers



Public Sector Employees

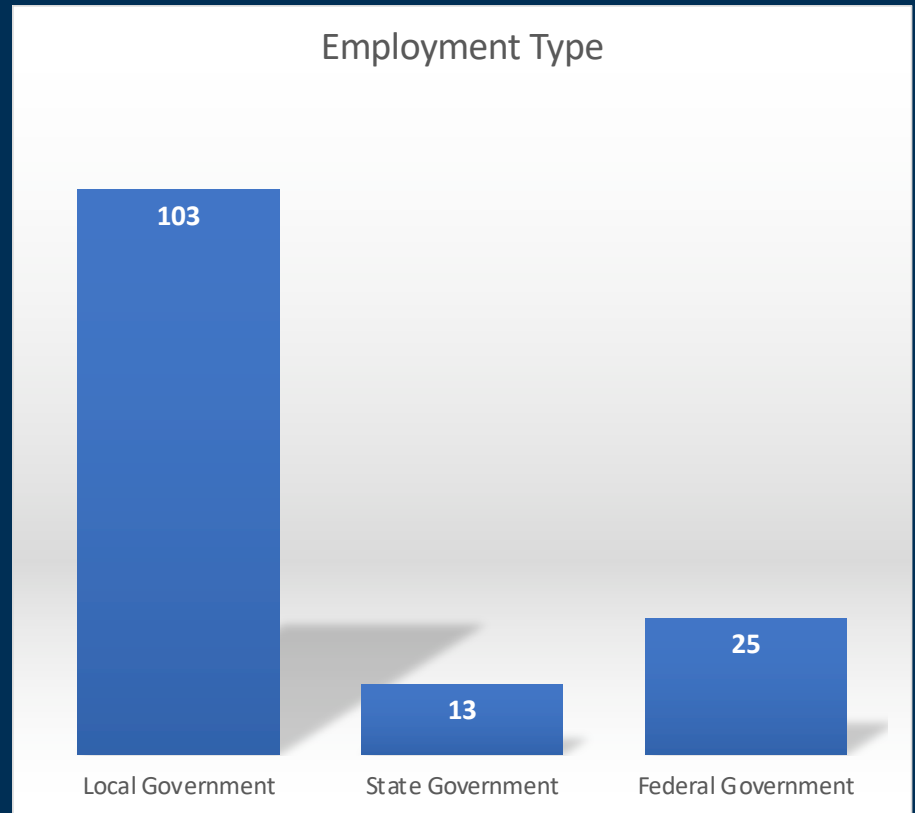
*Impact of Job Demands on
Employee Engagement and
Burnout*



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Sample

- The sample consisted of 141 public sector employees
- Data collected from April 20 - May 29, 2020



Means of Top Job Demands (5 point scale)



Correlations with Job Burnout

Work changes/restrictions to comply with COVID-19 directives	.13
Outdated or inadequate organizational rules and procedures	.17*
Technological difficulties	.18*
Lack of equipment or supplies	.19*
Isolation from team/coworkers	.20*
Interruptions by others at home	.21*
Lack of necessary information about what to do or how to do it	.28**
Difficult customers, clients, and/or constituents	.29**
Unrealistic expectations	.32**
Incompatible requests	.33**
Additional work responsibilities	.48**

Note: *Correlation significant at $p < .05$; **Correlation significant at $p < .001$.



Correlations with Employee Engagement

- None of the correlations between the top-rated job demands and employee engagement were significant ($p < .05$).



Interruptions by others at home

Technological difficulties

Additional work responsibilities

Difficult customers, clients, and/or
constituents

Isolation from team/coworkers

Lack of equipment or supplies

Work changes/restrictions to comply
with COVID-19 directives

Outdated or inadequate organizational
rules and procedures

Lack of necessary information about
what to do or how to do it

Unrealistic expectations

Incompatible requests

$b = .305$
 $p < .001$



Job
Burnout



Summary – What public sector employees need

- Reasonable (and compatible) workloads
- Realistic expectations
- Clear communication
- Resources for working with difficult customers
- Clear and reasonable policies and procedures
 - Guidelines for how to apply them



Gym Employees

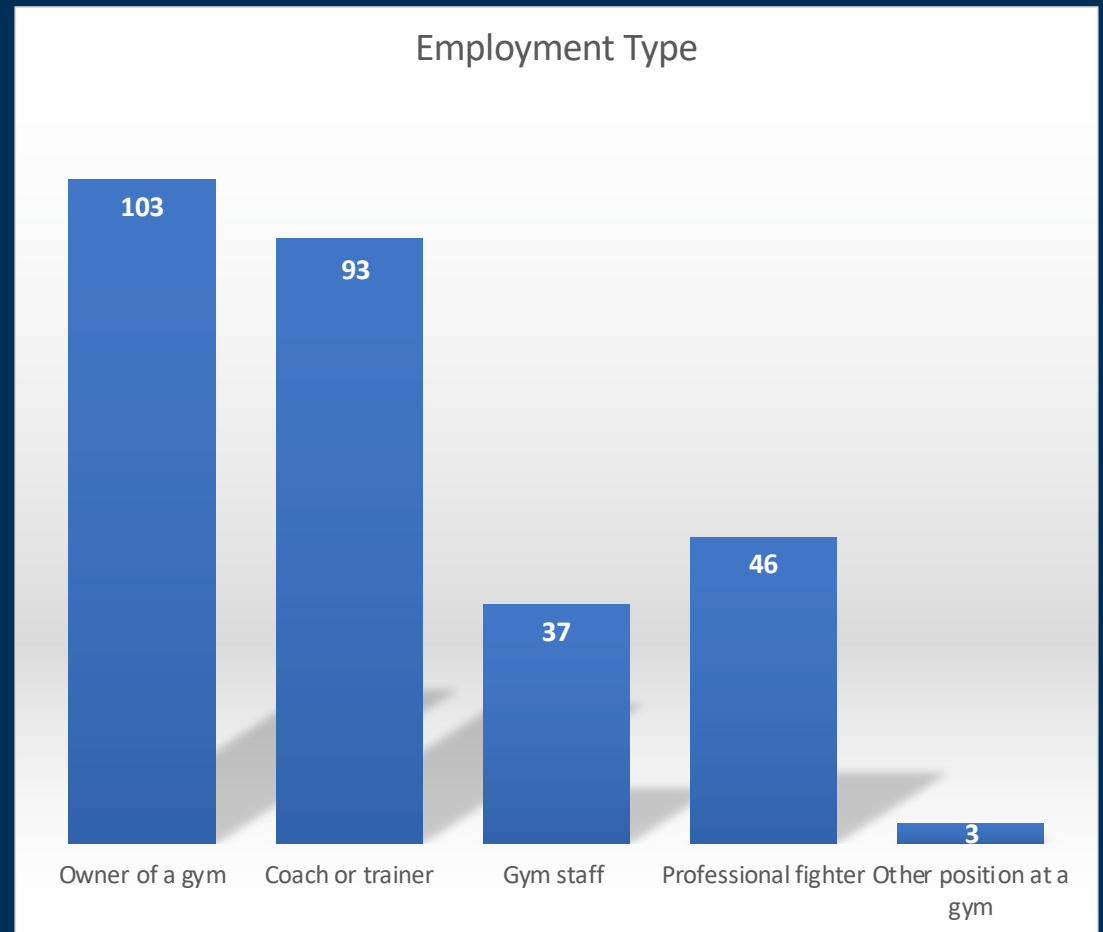
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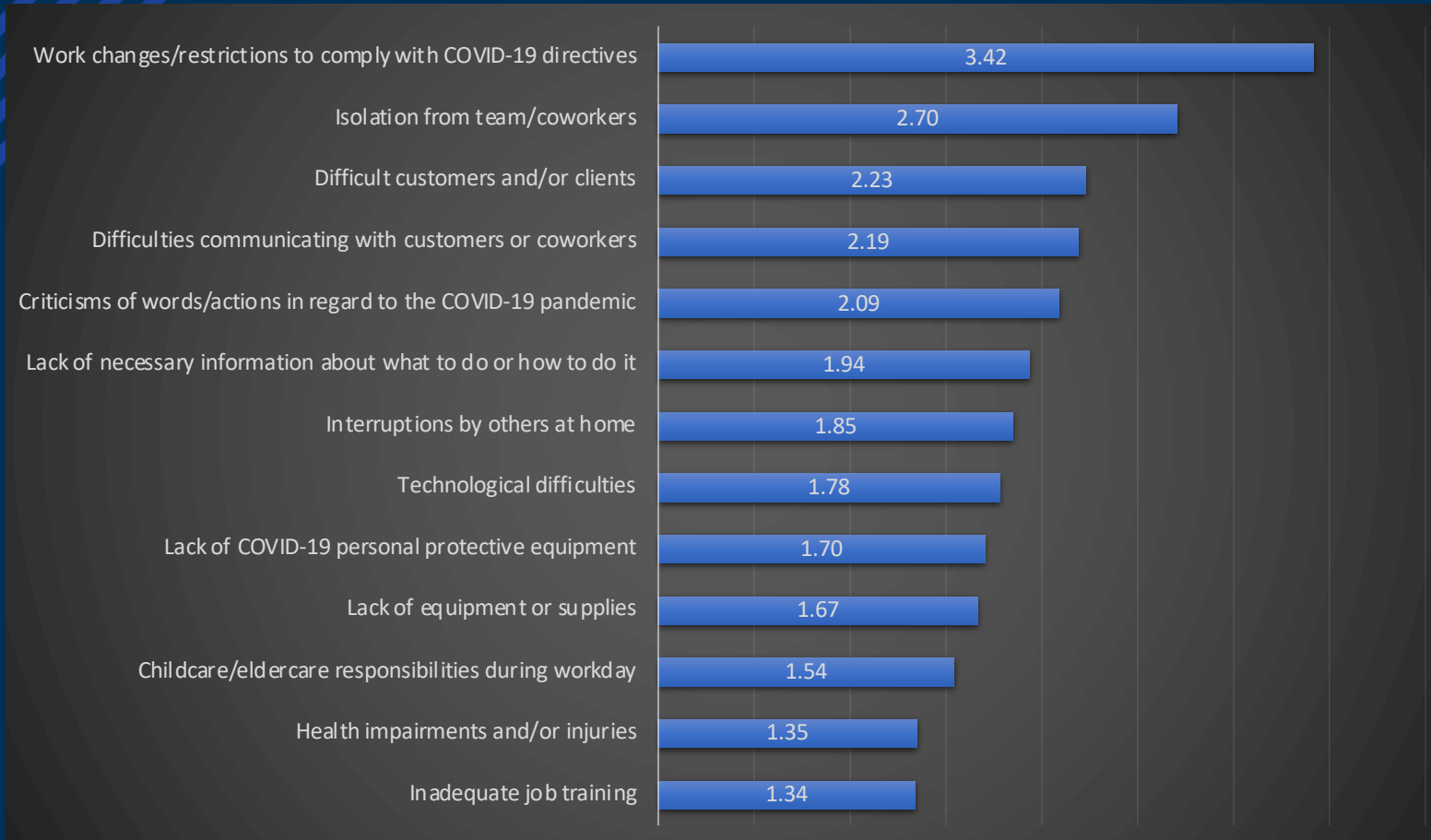
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Sample

- 282 U.S. gym employees
- Primary positions included, although some overlapped doing multiple jobs
- Data collected during Summer 2020



Means of Top Job Demands (5 point scale)



Correlations with Job Burnout

Interruptions by others at home	-.04
Lack of COVID-19 personal protective equipment	-.02
Childcare/eldercare responsibilities during workday	-.02
Inadequate job training	.04
Technological difficulties	.08
Lack of equipment or supplies	.08
Isolation from team/coworkers	.09
Criticisms of words/actions in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic	.12
Health impairments and/or injuries	.12*
Lack of necessary information about what to do or how to do it	.16**
Work changes/restrictions to comply with COVID-19 directives	.17**
Difficulties communicating with customers or coworkers	.20**
Difficult customers and/or clients	.28***



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Correlations with Work Engagement

Childcare/eldercare responsibilities during workday	-.02
Health impairments and/or injuries	-.06
Interruptions by others at home	-.08
Inadequate job training	-.08
Lack of COVID-19 personal protective equipment	-.09
Technological difficulties	-.10
Lack of equipment or supplies	-.12
Work changes/restrictions to comply with COVID-19 directives	-.12*
Difficulties communicating with customers or coworkers	-.13*
Isolation from team/coworkers	-.13*
Criticisms of words/actions in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic	-.15*
Lack of necessary information about what to do or how to do it	-.16**
Difficult customers and/or clients	-.18**



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Difficult customers and/or clients

Difficulties communicating with customers or coworkers

Isolation from team/coworkers

Technological difficulties

Lack of COVID-19 personal protective equipment

Work changes/restrictions to comply with COVID-19 directives

Criticisms of words/actions in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic

Health impairments and/or injuries

Lack of equipment or supplies

Interruptions by others at home

Childcare/eldercare responsibilities during workday

Inadequate job training

Lack of necessary information about what to do or how to do it

$b = .277$
 $p < .001$



$b = -.145$
 $p = .046$



Job
Burnout



Summary – What gym employees need

- Enhanced communication with customers and coworkers
- Clear and reasonable policies and procedures
 - Guidelines for how to apply them
- Training for working with difficult customers
 - Organizational and supervisor support



Clergy

*Impact of Job Demands on
Work Motivation and
Job Strain*



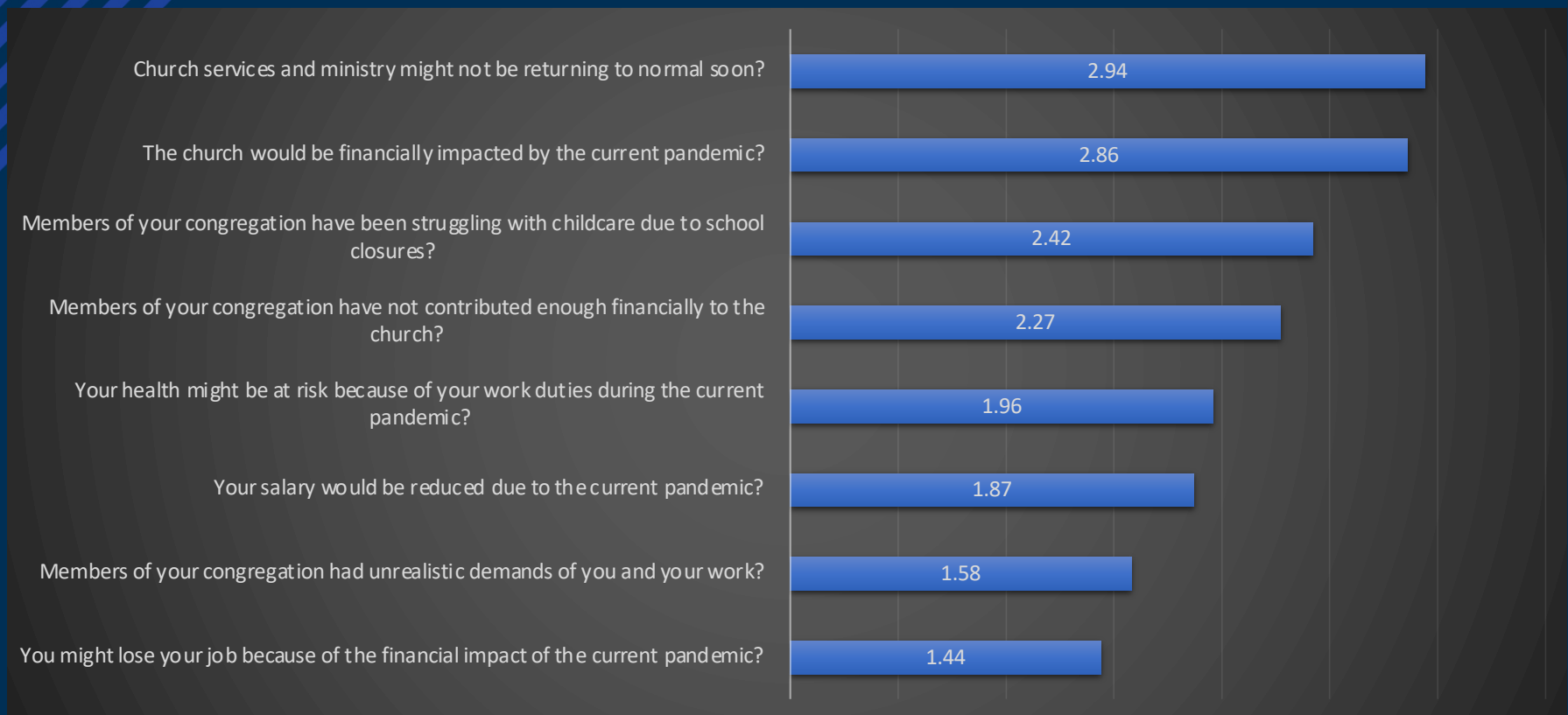
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Sample

- 216 full-time clergy
- Most participants identified as United Methodist (52.3%), Presbyterian (PCA; 30.6%), or Southern Baptist (13.9%)
- Most job titles included the term “pastor” (83.8%) or “minister” (10.6%)



Means of Top Job Demands (4 point scale)



Correlations with Job Strain

Members of your congregation have not contributed enough financially to the church?	.07
The church would be financially impacted by the current pandemic?	.15*
Members of your congregation have been struggling with childcare due to school closures?	.16*
Your salary would be reduced due to the current pandemic?	.17*
You might lose your job because of the financial impact of the current pandemic?	.23**
Church services and ministry might not be returning to normal soon?	.37***
Your health might be at risk because of your work duties during the current pandemic?	.37***
Members of your congregation had unrealistic demands of you and your work?	.37***



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Correlations with Work Motivation

- None of the correlations between job demands and work motivation were significant ($p < .05$).



Members of your congregation have not contributed enough financially to the church?

The church would be financially impacted by the current pandemic?

Your salary would be reduced due to the current pandemic?

You might lose your job because of the financial impact of the current pandemic?

Members of your congregation have been struggling with childcare due to school closures?

Church services and ministry might not be returning to normal soon?

Your health might be at risk because of your work duties during the current pandemic?

Members of your congregation had unrealistic demands of you and your work?

$b = .230$
 $p = .001$

$b = .219$
 $p = .001$

$b = .240$
 $p < .001$

Job
Strain



Summary – What clergy need

- Realistic expectations from congregants
- Best practices for protecting their health and the health of their congregants



Meta-summary - What all employees and organizations need

- Clear communication!
 - Empathy and confidence (Sergent & Stajkovic, 2020)
- Realistic expectations and workloads
- Help from others
 - Organizational telework task support, especially for interdependent tasks
(Chong et al., 2020)



Questions?



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