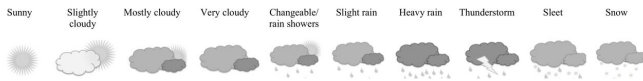


Study explores the effects of morning weather on people's mood and wellbeing at work

7 January 2021, by Ingrid Fadelli



The pictorial weather scale created by the researchers and included in the surveys they developed. Credit: Venz & Pundt.

The weather can greatly affect daily experiences, for instance, increasing or decreasing the yearning to spend time outdoors or making commutes to the workplace more or less enjoyable. While several past studies have investigated the effects that the weather can have on people's overall mood and energy levels, the extent to which it can influence their experiences in professional environments is still poorly understood.

With this in mind, researchers at Leuphana University Lüneburg have recently carried out a study investigating the effects of daily morning [weather](#) on how people feel while they are at work. Their paper, published in the IAAP's *Applied Psychology* journal, specifically examined people's [energy levels](#), [job satisfaction](#), burnout and stress on a daily basis as they related to morning weather.

"The idea for this study came spontaneously during a team meeting on a bad weather day," Laura Venz, one of the researchers who carried out the study, told MedicalXpress. "Everyone was sluggish and talking about the weather. Usually, we research how factors at work, such as conflict, high workload, or support, relate to how employees feel; that day brought the crazy idea that seemingly irrelevant factors, like the weather, might indeed play a role as well."

The primary goal of the recent study by Venz and her colleague Alexander Pundt was to test the hypothesis that morning weather can influence the mood and wellbeing of employees on a daily basis. Their hope was that their work would stimulate greater research exploring the role of environmental factors on people's behavior at work.

To test their hypothesis, the researchers conducted a so-called diary study, essentially asking employees to answer two surveys on a daily basis on all working days: one in the morning before they started working and one after work. Subsequently, they developed what is known as a pictorial scale, which is essentially a diagram in which different intervals or phenomena are represented by illustrations generally used to summarize weather forecasts (i.e., a sun, a sun partly hidden by a cloud, a cloud with rain, and so on).

"Participants simply chose the icon that presented the current weather," Venz explained. "After work, they answered questions that measured their current wellbeing (i.e., satisfaction, vigor, burnout, [negative affect](#)). This allowed us to relate morning weather to same-day wellbeing after work."

Venz and Pundt conducted their study in April, which is known to be the month with the most variable weather in Germany. One-hundred-fifteen employees took part in their study, completing the surveys they had prepared for a total of 457 workdays.

Interestingly, the data they gathered suggested that morning weather was only related to positive wellbeing states, and not related to negative ones. In other words, the researchers found that the better the weather was in the [morning](#), the more employees felt energized and satisfied with their work. Contrarily, when the weather was bad,

people felt more fatigued and unsatisfied. On the other hand, more negative wellbeing indicators, such as burnout and stress, appeared to be unaffected by the weather.

"Our findings surprised us, because we implicitly had expected stronger relationships with negative wellbeing states," Venz said. "We acknowledge that the weather is beyond the scope of managerial action. Nevertheless, we deem it important to realize that aspects beyond job design affect employees' wellbeing at work."

The results gathered by Venz and Pundt offer valuable insight about the role that environmental factors, particularly the weather, can have on the energy levels, satisfaction and overall wellbeing of people at work. Ultimately, they could promote the development of initiatives to improve the wellbeing of employees, for instance, encouraging them to ride a bike or walk to work when the weather is good or introducing energizing activities for bad weather days.

"In future studies, we plan to look at the mechanisms that explain the weather-[wellbeing](#) link," Venz said. "It might, for example, be that employees behave differently on good-weather days (e.g., are more likely to provide support to their co-workers) and this in turn makes them more satisfied and energized."

More information: Rain, rain go away! A diary study on morning weather and affective well-being at work. *Applied Psychology*(2020). [DOI: 10.1111/apps.12299](#).

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