

MEHRZAD B. BAKTASH

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EDUCATION	University of Trier	Trier, Germany
	<i>Ph.D. in Economics (summa cum laude)</i>	2020-24
	University of Zurich	Zurich, Switzerland
	<i>Doctoral Courses in Economics of Education</i>	2022-24
	University of Warsaw	Warsaw, Poland
	<i>M.Sc. in Economics and Finance</i>	2017-20
	University of Trier	Trier, Germany
<i>M.Sc. in Economics</i>	2018-20	
Manisa Celal Bayar University	Manisa, Turkey	
<i>B.Sc. in Economics</i>	2013-17	
Poznan University of Life Sciences	Poznan, Poland	
<i>Erasmus+ Exchange</i>	2015-16	

RESEARCH FIELDS Applied Microeconomics, Labor Economics.

RESEARCH PAPERS

Home Alone: Work from Home and Loneliness (**Job Market Paper**)

Does working from home lead to loneliness? If yes, how and for whom? Using a quasi-natural experiment and individual fixed-effects, this study shows that work from home leads to increased worker loneliness. Teleworking not only increases overall loneliness, but it also affects each of the three dimensions of loneliness (feeling isolated, feeling left out, lacking companionship). Working from home increases irregular work hours and decreases satisfaction with leisure time, dwelling, and family life. Consequently, teleworkers feel lonelier. However, the effect is highly heterogeneous. Work from home is particularly detrimental to the loneliness levels of employees who are extroverted, not married, without children, living in smaller households, working in the private sector, or residing in East Germany. Importantly, this detrimental effect is mainly driven by fully working remotely. Implications are discussed.

WORKING PAPERS

Performance Pay and Happiness: Work vs. Home?

(with John S. Heywood and Uwe Jirjahn).

Using German survey data, we show conflicting influences of performance pay on overall life satisfaction. The overall influence reflects a strong positive influence through domains of life satisfaction associated with the job (job satisfaction, individual earnings satisfaction and household earning satisfaction) and a strong negative influence through domains away from the job (health satisfaction, sleep satisfaction and family life satisfaction). This trade-off between work and home generalizes and helps explain many previous studies examining much more specific consequences of performance pay. Finally, controlling for the mediating role of the domains, the direct influence on life satisfaction is positive for women and insignificantly different from zero for men.

Up to the Top or Stuck in the Middle: Does Gender Influence How Far Machiavellian Personalities Climb the Corporate Ladder?

(with Uwe Jirjahn).

Concerns about corporate scandals and abusive leadership suggest that individuals with an opportunistic and manipulative personality sort into managerial positions. Indeed, a fledgling number of econometric studies have shown that individuals high in Machiavellianism are more likely to hold a management position. Our study takes that research an important step further by analyzing the moderating role of gender. It examines whether gender has an influence on how far Machiavellians climb the managerial hierarchy. Using representative data from Germany, we find that Machiavellianism increases the likelihood of holding a middle management position for both men and women. However, Machiavellianism is associated with a higher likelihood of occupying a top-level management position only among men but not among women. For men, the impact of Machiavellianism even appears to increase the further they climb the managerial hierarchy. These findings fit theoretical considerations.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Employee Loneliness in the UK: The Roles of Performance Pay and Trade Unions

The Spillover Effects of Profit Sharing on Family Well-Being

In Diversity we Trust? Experimental Evidence from Europe (with Abilio de Freitas)

How Employees DEAL with Poor Psychological Detachment (with Lisa Pütz)

Unintended Consequences of Unemployment Insurance: Workers' Choice of Performance Pay (with Marco Barrenechea-Mendez and Sara Martinez-de-Morentin)

Codetermination and Environmental Concerns: (with Uwe Jirjahn and Stephen Smith)

PUBLICATIONS

[Overeducation, Performance Pay and Wages: Evidence from Germany](#)

Education Economics, Forthcoming.

Overeducated workers are more productive and have higher wages in comparison to their adequately educated coworkers in the same jobs. However, they face a series of challenges in the labor market, including lower wages in comparison to their similarly educated peers who are in correctly matched jobs. Yet, less consensus exists over the adjustment mechanisms to overcome the negative consequences of overeducation. This study examines the hypotheses that overeducated workers sort into performance pay jobs as an adjustment mechanism and that performance pay moderates their wages. Using German Socio-Economic Panel, I show that overeducation associates with a higher likelihood of sorting into performance pay jobs and that performance pay moderates the wages of overeducated workers positively. It also holds in endogenous switching regressions accounting for the potential endogeneity of performance pay. Importantly, the positive role of performance pay is particularly larger for the wages of overeducated women.

[Are Managers More Machiavellian Than Other Employees?](#)

Industrial and Labor Relations Review, Vol. 79, 2026, pp. 379-407 (with Uwe Jirjahn).

Concerns about corporate scandals and abusive leadership suggest that individuals with an opportunistic and manipulative personality take advantage of incomplete incentive and control systems to get their way into managerial positions. Against this background, we examine whether there is an association between Machiavellianism and occupying a managerial position. We suggest that the psychological concept of Machiavellianism can serve as a behavioral foundation of agency theory and hypothesize that individuals scoring high on Machiavellianism are more likely to attain and keep a managerial position. Using a large and representative panel dataset from Germany, our empirical analysis confirms a strong and positive relationship between Machiavellianism and occupying a managerial position. This result holds in various robustness checks and in instrumental variable estimations accounting for possible endogeneity. Furthermore, our analysis provides evidence that the relationship is monotone; i.e., those with the highest scores of Machiavellianism are most likely to be managers. The analysis also suggests that the direction of influence runs from Machiavellianism to occupational status and not vice versa.

[Does Performance Pay Increase the Risk of Worker Loneliness?](#)

Kyklos, Vol. 79, 2026, pp. 129-148.

Increased wages and productivity associated with performance pay can be beneficial to both employers and employees. However, performance pay can also entail unintended consequences for workers' well-being. This study is the first to systematically examine the association between performance pay and loneliness, a significant policy-relevant social well-being concern. Using representative survey data from Germany, I show that performance pay is significantly associated with increased loneliness. Correspondingly, performance pay is negatively associated with the social life satisfaction of workers. Investigating the transmission channels reveals work hours, earnings, conflict with coworkers, and conflict with the life partner as important mediators. The key findings also hold in sensible instrumental variable estimations addressing the potential endogeneity of performance pay and in various robustness checks. Finally, implications are discussed.

[Variable Pay and Work Hours: Does Performance Pay Reduce the Gender Time Gap?](#)

Economica, Vol. 92, 2025, pp. 1149-1167 (with John S. Heywood and Uwe Jirjahn).

Using German survey data, we show in worker fixed effects estimates that performance pay is associated with a substantially lower gender hours gap. While performance pay increases the work hours of both men and women, the increase is much larger for women than for men. We argue our finding likely reflects differences in household production and specialization by gender. Thus, we show that performance pay is not associated with increased hours for men with children in the household. Yet, performance pay is associated with a very large increase in hours for women with children in the household.

Does Performance Pay Increase the Risk of Marital Instability?

Review of Economics of the Household, Forthcoming (with John S. Heywood and Uwe Jirjahn).

This study is the first to systematically examine the association between performance pay and marital instability. Using German survey data on married couples and including an extensive set of controls, we show that performance pay is associated with an increased probability of subsequent separation or divorce. Yet, the results are entirely gender specific. When husbands earn performance pay, no association with marital instability is found. When wives earn performance pay, the association is large and robust. This pattern persists across a variety of modeling choices and holds in instrumental variable estimations accounting for the endogeneity of performance pay. We argue that the pattern fits theoretical expectations and discuss the implications.

Older Workers, Training and Innovation: A Comparative Study of Germany and Great Britain

Journal of the Knowledge Economy, Forthcoming (with Uwe Jirjahn and Wen Wang).

The demographic development in many industrialized countries gives rise to the question as to how an aging workforce affects firm performance and how firms can adjust to demographic change. We address this question by examining the relationship between the share of older workers and the innovativeness of firms in Germany and Britain – Germany as the prototype of a coordinated and Britain as the prototype of a liberal market economy. Considering product, process and marketing innovations, our empirical analysis shows that a negative influence of older workers on innovativeness is more pronounced in Germany than in Britain. For both countries, we find that employer provided training mitigates this negative influence. In Britain, training partially even tends to turn an older workforce into an opportunity for innovativeness. However, the type of training that helps firms adjust to an older workforce differs sharply between the two countries. In Britain, off-the-job training plays a crucial role while on-the-job training is the crucial adjustment mechanism in Germany. Our findings conform to theoretical considerations suggesting that the degree to which firms can adjust to an ageing workforce and the way in which they can adjust depend on the institutional framework of the respective country.

Detach to Thrive: Psychological Detachment from Work and Employee Well-being

Journal of Happiness Studies, Vol. 26, 2025, pp. 1-31 (with Lisa Pütz).

Psychological detachment from work implies mentally disconnecting from work during off-job time. Using representative longitudinal data from the German Socio-Economic Panel, we identify psychological detachment from work as a key driver of employee well-being. This finding holds for a broad set of well-being indicators, including emotional responses, job satisfaction, life domain satisfactions, and global life satisfaction. Importantly, heterogeneity analyses reveal that detachment affects different subgroups of employees to a similar extent, indicating that the impact of detachment on employee well-being is universal. We further find that detachment mattered for employee well-being before as well as during the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, organizations and policy makers could foster psychological detachment in order to increase employee well-being. Given that employees nowadays search for happiness at work, ensuring psychological detachment becomes also relevant in the war for talent.

Worker Stress and Performance Pay: German Survey Evidence

Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Vol. 201, 2022, pp. 276-291 (with John S. Heywood and Uwe Jirjahn).

While performance pay can benefit firms and workers by increasing productivity and wages, it has also been associated with a deterioration of worker health. The transmission mechanisms for this deterioration remain in doubt. We examine the hypothesis that increased stress is one transmission mechanism. Using unique survey data from the German Socio-Economic Panel, we find performance pay consistently and importantly associates with greater stress even controlling for a long list of economic, social and personality characteristics. The finding also holds in instrumental variable estimations accounting for the potential endogeneity of performance pay. Moreover, we show that risk tolerance and locus of control moderate the relationship between performance pay and stress. Among workers receiving performance pay, the risk tolerant and those believing they can control their environment suffer to a lesser degree from stress.

Performance Pay and Alcohol Use in Germany

Industrial Relations, Vol. 61, 2022, pp. 353-383 (with John S. Heywood and Uwe Jirjahn).

Previous studies show that performance pay can benefit firms and workers by increasing productivity and wages. Yet, performance pay can also have unintended consequences for worker health. Using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel, we examine the hypothesis that alcohol use as “self-medication” is a natural response to the stress and uncertainty associated with performance pay. We find that the likelihood of consuming each of four types of alcohol (beer, wine, spirits, and mixed drinks) is higher for those receiving performance pay even controlling for a long list of economic, social, and personality characteristics and in sensible instrumental variable estimates. We also show that the number of types of alcohol consumed is larger for those receiving performance pay and that the intensity of consumption increases.

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS	Best Dissertation Award, University of Trier & Sparkasse Trier.	2025
	Award for Presentation at the RES, German Economic Association (VfS).	2025
	Research Grant, Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER).	2024
	Best Paper Prize, Warsaw International Economic Meeting (WIEM), University of Warsaw.	2024
	Top Cited Article, <i>Industrial Relations</i> , Wiley.	2024
	Travel Grant, DIW Berlin.	2024
	GLO Virtual Young Scholar, Global Labor Organization (GLO).	2023-24
	Germany Scholarship, Federal Ministry of Education and Research.	2019-20
	Scholarship Foundation, University of Trier.	2019
	Erasmus+ and Double-Degree Scholarship, European Commission.	2018-19
	Erasmus+ Scholarship, European Commission.	2015-16
Türkiye Scholarship, Council of Higher Education, Türkiye.	2012-17	
CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS	Royal Economic Society (RES)	2024, 2025, 2026
	Measuring Progress Annual Workshop (STATEC)	2026
	European Association of Labour Economists (EALE)	2026
	Society of Economics of the Household (SEHO)	2026
	Workshop on Labour Economics (IAAEU)	2026
	International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS)	2025, 2026
	American Economic Association (AEA), ASSA Annual Meeting	2025
	Global GLO- <i>JOPE</i> Annual Conference	2024, 2025
	Warsaw International Economic Meeting (WIEM)	2023, 2025
	German Economic Association (VfS) Annual Conference	2024
	European Health Economics Association (EuHEA)	2024
	International German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) User Conference	2024
	Young Economists' Meeting (YEM)	2024
	GLO Virtual Young Scholar Meeting (VirtYS)	2024
	Colloquium on Personnel Economics (COPE)	2023, 2024
	Canadian Law and Economics Association (CLEA)	2022, 2023
Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE)	2021, 2022	
European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (EIASM)	2021	
SEMINARS	Public University of Navarre: Economics Department	2023, 2025
	RWTH Aachen University: Research Seminar in Management and Economics	2024
	University of Bergamo: Empirical Labor Economics Seminar	2021
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE	Post-Doctoral Research Scientist, University of Trier, Department of Economics, Chair of Labor Economics, Professor Uwe Jirjahn	2024-present
	Doctoral Research Scientist, University of Trier, Department of Economics, Chair of Labor Economics, Professor Uwe Jirjahn	2020-24
	Research Assistant, Poznan University of Life Sciences, Department of Economics, Professor Slawomir Kalinowski	2017
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Teaching Associate, University of Trier, Department of Economics	
	Microeconomics (<i>undergraduate</i>)	2024-present
	Personnel Economics (<i>undergraduate</i>)	2020-present
	Research Project (<i>graduate</i>)	2025-present
	International Labor Markets (<i>graduate</i>)	2025-present
	Applied Microeconometrics using Stata (<i>graduate</i>)	2022-present
Empirical Labor Economics (<i>graduate</i>)	2020-present	
Theses Supervision (<i>undergraduate & graduate</i>)	2020-present	

REFEREEING	Journals: <i>Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics</i> (x2); <i>Economics and Human Biology</i> (x3); <i>Education Economics</i> (x2); <i>European Journal of Industrial Relations</i> ; <i>German Journal of Human Resource Management</i> ; <i>ILR Review</i> ; <i>Industrial Relations</i> ; <i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i> (x7); <i>Journal of Labour Market Research</i> ; <i>Journal of Population Economics</i> (x4); <i>Labour</i> (x2); <i>Review of Managerial Science</i> (x2). Conferences: <i>Meeting of Young Economists</i> (x3).	
MEDIA ENGAGEMENT (SELECTED)	Forbes Japan : Psychological detachment in the context of work	2026
	Wirtschaftspsychologie : Machiavelli in Management	2026
	Forbes : Well-Being PTO reclaims the true value of time away from the office	2026
	Personalwirtschaft : Toxic bosses: How HR recognizes manipulative leaders	2026
	Tagesschau : Are bosses like Stromberg more successful?	2026
	SWR : Are bosses like Stromberg more successful?	2026
	Forbes : Detach to thrive	2025
	MSN : Switching off during leisure time increases job satisfaction	2025
	Lokalo : Bonuses, premiums, commissions — health and social life suffer	2025
	Baublatt : Completely switching off in your free time helps in your job	2025
	JuraForum : Performance-related pay: incentive and risk	2025
	Aponet : Switching off after work: How to increase job satisfaction	2025
	Personalwirtschaft : Performance pays off – but often at the expense of health	2025
	IHK : Switching-off makes happier	2025
	Finanz Nachrichten : Switching off during leisure time increases job satisfaction	2025
	MT : Switching off in your free time for more love for your job	2025
	City-News : Switching off during leisure time increases job satisfaction	2025
	Population.News : Overeducated: Germany & the role of performance pay	2023
PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES	Joseph A. Schumpeter Prize by German Federal Bank, Jury Member	2026-present
	Global GLO-JOPE Conference, Organizational Committee Member	2025-present
	Research Commission Member, University of Trier	2025-present
	Volunteer Agency (Ehrenamtsagentur)	2023-24
	Internationales Zentrum (iZ)	2019
	Erasmus Student Network (ESN)	2016-17
	AIESEC	2012
RESEARCH AFFILIATIONS	GLO Fellow, AEA, EEA, RES, Vfs, ISQOLS	
COMPUTER SKILLS	Stata, EViews, Python, R, SPSS	
LANGUAGES	English (<i>fluent</i>), German (<i>advanced</i>), Persian (<i>native</i>), Turkish (<i>advanced</i>), Uzbek (<i>intermediate</i>), Pashto (<i>intermediate</i>), Hindi (<i>elementary</i>)	
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	Citizenship: Afghan, German Born: May 8 th , 1997	