Functional Impairment among Telephone Crisis Support Workers: Impact on Callers

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Researchers sought to investigate the impact of functional impairment on telephone crisis workers’ ability to provide optimal support to callers. They recruited 210 active Australian telephone crisis workers, who had completed at least one shift during the recruitment period, to participate in an online survey. Functional impairment was measured by the number of days over the past four weeks that participants (1) were unable to manage their daily functioning due to psychological distress, and (2) had to cut back on their daily activities due to psychological distress. Participants were also asked about their intentions to use recommended crisis support skills with callers.

The study found that telephone crisis workers who are experiencing greater functional impairment due to psychological distress have lower intentions to use best practice support skills with crisis callers than workers with lower functional impairment. The researchers suggested that improved strategies to optimize the psychological well-being of the crisis support workforce are needed.