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Sense of security when new at work: a thematic analysis of interviews with young adult retail workers in Sweden

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Abstract

Purpose – Positive examples of situations in which young adults new at work experience feeling secure in the role as novice in the work force are here focused. The aim is to analyze how young adults who are new to the labor market express having a sense of security in the workplace. The long-term goal is to strengthen the conditions for the health and wellbeing of workers entering the retail labor market.

Design/methodology/approach – Thirteen individual in-depth telephone/video-interviews were conducted with young adults (aged 18–28) working within the retail sector in Sweden. Using a thematic interview schedule, the interviews focused how the interviewees contextualizing stories on being novice at the labor market. The study is based on those parts of the material in which stories on feeling secure was expressed.

Findings – The analysis resulted in two themes: A sense of security is related to carrying out work safely and a sense of security is related to receiving support. The first theme illuminates how work is structured and safety training respectively contributes to a sense of security and the latter reveal how social support from a variety of sources (managers, colleagues and others outside the work environment) contributes to a sense of security when new at work.

Originality/value – Using a health promoting perspective, the study complements the existing perspectives of challenges faced by novices as they enter working life. Also, the study highlights the importance of including relations outside the workplace when searching for the understanding of the experiences of being new at work. The study indicates that focusing on the sense of security by well-structured work, safety training and social support might contribute to the strive for a sustainable working life for young adults.

Keywords Health promotion, Insecurity, Management, Risk, Safety, Workplace health, Working life
Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Being young and new at work is associated with various challenges. As shown in previous research, young adults encounter various difficulties, insecurities and risks when they enter

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the workforce (Breslin and Smith, 2005; Frone, 1998; Rohlman *et al.*, 2013; Simoyi *et al.*, 2001; Tannock, 2001; Westaby and Lowe, 2005). In Sweden, many young adults first experience working life in the retail sector. In Sweden about 18% of the total population aged 15–24 are working in retail (Statistics Sweden, 2016). This population is the focus of this article.

Runyan *et al.* (2007) emphasize that adolescents (aged 14–18) within the retail and service sectors often work without adult supervision and that they often lack comprehensive safety training at work. Similar results are reported in other studies. For instance, young adults (aged 19–30) in Italy were found to have less access to, and lower awareness of, occupational safety and health services compared to older workers (Dragano *et al.*, 2018). Also, young workers (aged 14–24) in the US were found to receive inferior work safety training (Rohlman *et al.*, 2016). When just entering the workforce, young adults are novices in their professional roles. Such novelty in turn is associated with uncertainty regarding what is expected of them in professional practice (Koivisto *et al.*, 2010; Miller and Jablin, 1991). Further, young adults are generally in a more vulnerable position in the labor market as compared to older adults. This can be related to their lack of work experience, less extensive social networks and weaker position in the workplace hierarchy (Bukodi *et al.*, 2008). That is, if young adults get a job (which in itself is difficult), they are often confronted with insecure employment (Baranowska and Gebel, 2010; Blossfeld *et al.*, 2008). Despite cooperation between trade unions and employers – what forms the basis of the characteristics of the Nordic model (Dyreborg, 2011) – this type of insecurity is present in the Swedish labor market as well (Reichenberg, 2019). This is often referred to as precarious work (Furlong *et al.*, 2017; Rasmussen and Håpnes, 2012; Underhill and Quinlan, 2011; Quinlan *et al.*, 2001) and is prevalent among young people with limited education (Hamilton *et al.*, 2014; MacDonald, 2011). Nielsen *et al.* (2017) found that when interviewed about their work situations, young people who are engaged in precarious employment define themselves in relation to ideas of replaceability, individualization and short-sightedness (Nielsen *et al.*, 2017). Some authors also assert that young people run the risk of becoming stuck in precarious employment with bad working conditions (Golsch, 2003; Stijn *et al.*, 2006; Woodman and Wyn, 2015).

Regarding being new at the labor market especially within retail, one can notice that work in retail is sometimes defined as "bad jobs" (Misra and Walters, 2016). The positions can be defined as frontline, entry-level jobs that include exposure to various risks. There is cross-sectional evidence that teens working in the retail and service sectors are exposed to various chemical, thermal and biologic risks as well as high noise levels (Runyan *et al.*, 2008a, b) and the risk of injury, for example, due to cuts and burns (Rauscher, 2008; Runyan *et al.*, 2008a, b; Tannock, 2001) and issues related to lifting, the use of various machines/equipment as well as sedentary work (Carmichael *et al.*, 2016). Despite the fact that young workers generally face the same types of risks as adults, they are more likely to be injured on the job (Breslin and Smith, 2005; Salminen, 2004). Previous research in the US indicates that young people (aged 14–24) in certain occupational areas are injured at least twice as often as adults working in the same sector (Miller *et al.*, 2007). However, stress has been identified as the primary occupational health problem in retail (Zeytinoglu *et al.*, 2004). Risks encountered in the workplace are often related to job performance pressure, short tenures, lack of experience, inability to recognize risks and limited communication with supervisors (Breslin and Smith, 2006; Frone, 1998; Rohlman *et al.*, 2013; Simoyi *et al.*, 2001; Tannock, 2001; Westaby and Lowe, 2005). Zeytinoglu *et al.* (2004) conducted an interview study of retail workers in Canada and emphasize that job insecurity, short- and split-shifts, unpredictable hours, and low wages and benefits in part-time and casual jobs in the retail sector, combined with the need to work multiple jobs to earn a living wage, contributes to stress, absenteeism, high turnover and workplace conflicts. Gendered work environments and work–personal life conflict also contribute to stress in the workplace (Zeytinoglu *et al.*, 2004). Also, customers (when behaving inappropriate) have been found to increase stress among retail employers (Carmichael *et al.*,

2016). Previous research has found that young workers (aged 16–29) in Sweden experience more work-related fatigue than older workers (Swedish Work Environment Authority, 2014), which seems to stem from poorer working conditions (Geurts and Sonnentag, 2006). Thus, retail workers have limited access to structural- and social resources at work, something which makes it difficult to handle work stress (Tuckey *et al.*, 2017).

This article focusing on the positive examples of situations, in which young adults recently joined the workforce experience feelings of being secure at the workplace – a sense of security. In the present study, the analyses are framed by the *health promotion* approach (World Health Organization [WHO], 1986). Health promotion refers to the individuals' possibilities to increase control over and to improve the own health. The approach is built on the idea of salutogenesis, that is, health seen as not only physical health but also mental- and social wellbeing. Health is understood as an everyday life resource emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capacities (WHO, 1986). From this, health promotion is seen as all activities that enable and facilitate health within the community (Eriksson and Lindström, 2008; Rootman *et al.*, 2001) including policies, supportive environments, strengthening community action, developing personal skills and reorienting health services (WHO, 1986). Supportive actions can relate to the community, as a whole, as well to a certain workplace (Fuchs, 2008).

As is evident from the bulk of the previous research on young adult's entry into the labor market, risk and uncertainty are prevalent and important. However, few studies have applied a health promotion perspective to investigate the experiences of young adults as they just enter the labor market. The need for research framed by a broad health promotion perspective has been emphasized by the European Agency of Safety and Health at Work (2012) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (Kines *et al.*, 2013).

From a workplace health management perspective, a focus on the first years of employment is important to convey knowledge that promotes a sustainable work life. Using a health-promoting perspective, the present analysis has the potential to constitute an important complement in workplace health management focusing on young people. Feeling safe and secure is an important part of wellbeing. In accordance with a health promotion approach, the present study focuses on the examples of situations in which young adults experience a sense of security at the workplace rather than the risks encountered when new at work. Drawing on data from interviews with young adults who were newly employed in the retail sector, individual perspectives on situations related to the feeling of security will be revealed. In relation to the need defined on deepened knowledge on job wellbeing (Kuoppala *et al.*, 2008) this study has the potential to contribute to improved health and wellbeing among young people as they enter the labor market. That is, stories of being a novice at the workplace can unclose information on what needed to promote the social and personal resources and the physical health of young adults working within retail.

The aim of the study is to analyze how young adults who are new to the labor market express having a sense of security in the workplace.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study design

In line with the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (WHO, 1986), a study design was created to capture the views of the targeted group, that is, young adults working in the retail sector. From this, individual in-depth interviews were conducted. The study design is framed by the theoretical perspectives on health promotion emphasizing the social context (WHO, 1986). The health promotion perspective is here used as basis for understanding the experience of entering the labor market as an employee in the retail sector. From this, focus here is the individual within the social context of a certain workplace and in relation to the whole life situation. From this, the study design reflecting the perspectives of salutogenesis

emphasized within health promotion research (Eriksson and Lindström, 2008). Therefore, no questions on individual risk behaviors (i.e. alcohol and drug abuse) were asked and these factors will not be included in the analysis.

The study design (data collection, processing of data, analysis and presentation of results) thoroughly described within the research protocol (Wall *et al.*, 2021) was planned according to the process for conducting analysis presented by Nowell *et al.* (2017), which aims to meet the trustworthiness criteria defined by Lincoln and Guba and widely used within analysis of qualitative data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For example, to ensure credibility, preliminary findings and interpretations were checked against raw data, and all analyses were processed through member checking within the research group. To achieve dependability and confirmability, the study design, data collection and analysis process were described in detail. For confirmability and transferability, unedited quotations were used in the presentation of results. Before conducting the data collection, the study was subjected to ethical review by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority, who approved the research (2019-03,885). All data collection and handling in the project is performed in accordance with the Swedish Research Council's guidelines on research ethics (Swedish Research Council, 2017).

2.2 Data collection, participants and material

Thirteen individual in-depth interviews with young adults aged 18–28 (mean age 22) working in the retail sector were conducted between January–June 2020. The uneven gender distribution within the retail sector is mirrored by the interviewee group, consisted of eleven women and two men. All participants lived and worked in Sweden in cities with between 60,000 and 150,000 inhabitants. Data collection included whom had worked in a retail setting (in stores) at some point during the past 3 months. Half of them were employed within grocery stores and half of them working in other retail. Two-thirds of the participants had temporary contracts and the others had permanent contracts. However, even among those with permanent positions, most worked part time. Just two of the interviewees had full-time or near full-time permanent positions.

Participants in the individual interviews were recruited primarily via social media through a link to an information page at the university website. On the recruitment page, there was information for informed consent and the opportunity to register interest in participation. Once registration was confirmed, participants received information about the project (informed consent) and about the university's processing of personal data (GDPR). Before the start of each interview, information on informed consent was provided once again. That is, the responsible researcher presented himself and the other participating researchers, the purpose of the interview and repeated the conditions for participation that had previously been communicated in writing. Thereafter, all interviewees were given the opportunity to ask any questions. Before the interview began, all interviewees were given the opportunity to consent or refuse to the audio recording of the interview. All participants gave their informed consent and consented to recording prior to participation.

Each interview took about one hour to complete (the shortest run for 19 min whereas the most comprehensive lasted for 103 min). The interview guide focused on the participants' experiences of labor market participation relating to the following aspects: work experience, form of employment, meaning of work, entering labor market, relationships, learning, risks, safety, leadership and health. The questions asked aimed to capture how the interviewees contextualizing their stories on being novice at the labor market and was formulated in order to give material on as well experiences as expectations on various aspects of being new at work. The interview schedule included about 30 questions used as a tool for checking out that all selected perspectives were taken up in the interviews. The questions followed the same overall pattern in each interview, but the questions were not asked in exactly the same way or

in exactly the same order every time (for a full copy interview schedule, see the research protocol (Wall *et al.*, 2021)). At the time of data collection (spring 2020), the spread of the coronavirus impacted the research in the present project. As a result of the Swedish Public Health Agency's recommendations to avoid domestic travel and physical proximity, ten interviews were conducted by telephone and three by video meetings.

Each interview was followed by a review of audio recordings, transcripts, field notes and reflexive memos which constitutes the data in the project. Eleven of the interviews were transcribed verbatim after data collection was completed and two were transcribed during the interviews. The analysis of the present study was based solely on the 13 transcripts. Since the interviews were conducted in Swedish, the quotations presented is translated into English.

2.3 Data analysis

Based on the purpose of the study, a thematic analysis was performed based on the procedures described by Braun and Clarke (2006). That is, a reflexive data analysis procedure was performed to identify patterns and select those of interest in relation to the aim of the study (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

First, all three researchers in the research group completed several readings of the transcribed interviews. Based on these readings, an initial theme was identified as a framework for the initial analysis ("sense of security when new at work"). This theme was created to reflect the health-promotion perspective by focusing on self-reported narratives of security at work. Material from the interviews relating to risk and unsafe working conditions was therefore not included in the analysis of the present study.

Subsequent in-depth readings and coding of the material across the data set were then driven by the respective analytical question. Statements from all parts of the interviews related to security in working life were coded and interpreted. From this coding and organizing of data, several themes were created (Tuckett, 2005). When this first thematization was done, the analysis was checked by returning to the raw data where coded statements were interpreted in relation to the context of each interview/partial interview. The assessment of these themes was carried out through a process of individual reading and re-reading and in critical discussions within the research group to determine if and how the themes created represented a "patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). During the process of interpreting these themes, it was noted that one of the identified themes did not have enough data to support it, and the decision was therefore made to remove it (see Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Once the identified themes were assessed, the respective themes with associated data were evaluated for similarities both within and between themes. From this, the final result consists of two themes: "Security is carrying out work safely" and "Security is receiving support" followed by two sub-themes for each main theme. These final themes contributed to a broader understanding of the perceived sense of security when new at work and constitute the results of the analysis. The themes are presented in the results section.

3. Results

The interviews revealed positive experiences of being a young adult new to the workforce within the retail sector in Sweden. Here, statements reflecting a sense of security formed the basis for the interpretation of the empirical material, and two themes emerged in the analysis process: *A sense of security is related to carrying out work safely* and *A sense of security is related to receiving support*.

3.1 A sense of security is related to carrying out work safely

When it comes to how a sense of security is narrated by the interviewees, the first theme illuminates how the expressions of being safe and sound is related to formal structures: organization and safety training, also constituting the two sub-themes here.

3.1.1 How work is structured contributes to a sense of security. Based on the analysis, the first sub-theme referring to carrying out work safely describes how the experience of the organization and management of work to achieve safety was found to contribute to the sense of security. That is, a well-functioning organization, procedures and processes related to risk management emerged as aspects the interviewees valued. In the following quotation, one of the interviewees pinpoints the importance of structure for a sense of security at work:

> Yes, but the thing is probably my middle managers. I think that they. . . They mean a lot. And it feels like. . . the way I see it, we really need someone to lead in a group, and that's how we function as humans. And so, you notice, if they are not around, that things can get more disorganized. It also creates a sense of security to have someone who is the designated leader, who also maintains, . . . rules and. . . and clarity in the group. So that indecisiveness does not take over. (IP 5)

The organization of work and the importance of trust in the managers was evident in the material. Interviewees also mentioned other aspects relating to organization and management, such as the following example where one interviewee describes how the risk management organization's use of external security guards contributed to a sense of security at work. As the interviewee describes below, simply knowing that guards were on duty and who the guards were provided a sense of security:

> It feels like it is. . . You are just never. . . Or, I never feel like I would be left alone in a bad situation. [. . .] And there are security guards as well, walking around all the time. Undercover guards who. . . We know who they are, but customers do not. But that certainly feels secure too, to see them walking around and. . . yes. (IP9)

As the interviewee highlights, it was evident from the analysis that there was a general appreciation for clarity and structure in how work is organized and managed. Order thus contributes to the sense of security.

3.1.2 Safety training contributes to a sense of security. The second sub-theme on carrying out work safely refers to safety training as a basis for a sense of security. When analyzing the interviewees' experiences of being new at work, some concrete examples of feelings of security were identified. That is, how work is (or is supposed to be) carried out according to specific training and/or the use of specific equipment. The responses showed that safety training is carried out, such as the following example where an interviewee recalls instructions on "how to wear things" [in a way that prevents injury] and to use "special shoes when driving a truck":

> So it's kind of more in general, these things they [the employer] go through with this kind of sense of security, that is, if you think about it on a physical level, like about how to wear things and that you need to wear special shoes when driving a truck and things like that. There are more things like that you get to learn in general. But I do not really see it as a risk, since I already have things that make them less of a risk. (IP1)

In the next example, the interviewee again references the use of special shoes while driving a truck and says that using the specific equipment meant for these work tasks makes provides a feeling of safety:

> Yes, it [sense of security at work] is kind of that you, um, you have control, um, and that you can get the right equipment, and we have steel-toe cap shoes I think they are called, there is metal at the toes so that if you, for example, drive a truck or well . . . you do not simply crush your foot or anything else

> like that. So that you do not injure your feet, so it feels like, well, a sense of security when you have shoes like that. (IP2)

As mentioned, access to safety training is apparent in the material. One example of how safety training can be organized for new workers is found in the next quotation, that is, a short (in this case, about 30 min) web-based training on ergonomics. Even this brief training, which was followed by some basic practical exercises, was found to be supportive in terms of perceived security at work:

> And then we have this, yes this computer training, to keep an eye on something called ergonomics, so it was a half hour course where we went through the theory of how to lift the right way, and then there were a few exercises that we were supposed to do at home, with a chair, and we had to think about 'so now you should bend your legs or back the right way' and not twist or anything So I feel that, it's also a sense of security, that they inform us that 'this is how you should lift' because we have to do some pretty heavy lifting sometimes. (IP2)

As illustrated, the theme is based on expressions related to formal safety training at work forming the basis for the sense of security when new at work. That is, interviewees report that receiving training on how to carry out work in a way that promotes a safe physical work environment contributes to a sense of security in the workplace.

3.2 A sense of security is related to receiving support

Support from a variety of sources also appears to be an important factor for developing a sense of security when new at work, namely social support from managers and colleagues, and support from family and friends. Referring to backing from whom inside work and outside work constitutes the two sub-themes on support forming the basis for positive examples on the sense of security.

3.2.1 Social support from managers and colleagues contributes to a sense of security. When new at work, support is important for a sense of security. Support can come from different sources, and the first sub-theme refers to support from managers and colleagues, as is shown in the following quote where support from the manager as well as colleagues is emphasized:

> So, the store manager [is important to that sense of security at work] of course, um, because he has to keep an eye on the whole place and takes care of, well, the staff and so on, so I feel that he is an important part of it because I feel like I can talk to him if I feel I have been treated badly or, then I feel that I can go to him because then he could deal with the problem and so, yes, he has an eye out for the entire store, so it is probably him, above all, I would say, um, and then it's about all staff members contributing to creating as safe an environment as possible as well. (IP2)

As shown in the quotation above, support comes from those who have knowledge about the work and the workplace. This generally means that someone helps the employee understand how things are done at the respective workplace, as one interviewee shows in the following example:

> Yes, I would say my colleagues who helped me understand what to do [were the important people when start working], and so on, taught me, and so on. (IP1)

That is, support includes knowledge and information, but also "someone to talk to". Both of these aspects are mentioned in the next two quotations:

> Um, yes, but [what was especially good when I first started working here] was that I felt that I received a proper training, so that I could get a feel for what I needed to do and that I always had someone to talk to in the store, that I could get help if there was something I did not know or if I just wanted support, so, I felt that, yes everyone, even regular staff as well, that they were very

> welcoming towards us summer workers and tried to make us a part of the team as well, so to speak. (IP2)

> I would say that I have colleagues who are also my friends, and you feel more secure with them. Then, one of the people I work with, I know her from before, so it also makes me feel more secure. And . . . yes, so there are people you can talk to like everyday people, not just people you work with. [I get a] sort of recognition. It's like this: That I can be myself, and kind of, and talk to a human being, kind of like that. (—) There is more to that feeling, that I kind of feel secure about having something kind of familiar. (IP1)

Also, it was found from the analysis that support from peers was especially important for the sense of security at work. As the interviewee in the following quotation expresses it, colleagues were found very important, and peers can be used to mirror one's own experiences, thus, peers "feel the same way":

> Indeed, yes tremendously. Especially peers the same age. (—) Yes, a lot because it's a kind of sounding board or reflection almost. I can express my feelings of dissatisfaction with the managers to them, and they agree. So, that you can talk to someone who feels the same way. It was very nice to have someone like this. . . To identify with. (IP4)

To summarize, this sub-theme shows that support includes knowledge and relationships built on trust, which the interviewees received from managers and colleagues. For the latter, peers are found to be especially significant for building a sense of security when new at work.

3.2.2 Social support through backing of family and friends contributes to a sense of security. In addition to support at the workplace, through the organization and social support from managers and colleagues, the results from the thematic analysis show that support in the interviewees' private lives is equally important for a sense of security. That is, family and friends contribute with good advice on how to approach working life and how to promote recovery. These aspects regarding the sense of security when new at work constitutes the second sub-theme on support.

In the following quotation, the interviewee illuminates how parents are an important source of support in terms of contributing to an understanding of working life:

> Also, I would say my parents too. [. . .] Yes, they kind of had a big meaning for helping me understand what it [work] meant, I guess. (IP1)

In addition to providing input about work and working life, family and friends fulfil an important role in terms of promoting a healthy working life for the young adults interviewed. That is, the analysis of the material makes it evident that support in private life is relevant to how the interviewees approach work and take care of themselves what contributes to a sense of security as novice within the workforce. In the last quotation, the interviewee mentions that family and friends offer advice to "take it easy", which is emphasized as important for one's well-being at work:

> Yes, I would say that it's like having friends and family who can give advice, or who can remind me to 'take it easy', or. . ., or try to help me be more positive. I would say they are the most important people, as far as making me feel secure and happy at work. (IP1)

This sub-theme highlights that whether an employee feels a sense of security is not limited to what happens at work, instead, it shows that the interviewees' family and friends are important for these aspects as well.

4. Discussion

Our findings reflect the results from narratives provided by young novice workers in the retail sector. The results show that a supportive organization and safety training contributed to a

perceived sense of security among young adults working within the retail sector as did support from a variety of other sources, namely managers, colleagues and others outside the work environment. From this, the study contributes by illuminating how the health promoting perspective highlighting the individual in relation to the whole life situation (WHO, 1986) can highlight the importance of including relations outside the workplace when searching for the understanding of the experiences of being new at work. That is, unlike previous studies, which have largely focused on risks encountered when new at work in the retail sector (Breslin and Smith, 2005; Miller *et al.*, 2007; Rauscher, 2008; Runyan *et al.*, 2008a, b; Salminen, 2004; Tannock, 2001), the present study is based on a health promotion perspective where narratives of positive examples of a sense of security at work are the focus. As one might expect, risks and unsafe conditions related to work within retail were also revealed in the interviews conducted for this study, but the analysis is limited to the portions of the narratives relating to security. Though some of the results of the present study are comparable to results from previous studies, for example, a reported lack of safety training (Rohlman *et al.*, 2016; Runyan *et al.*, 2007), the results presented here show that safety training and the use of safety equipment provides a sense of security. The results also show that the support of managers and colleagues contributes to a sense of security. These results can be compared to previous studies of adolescents in the workforce, which revealed a lack of adult supervision in workplace (Runyan *et al.*, 2007). Given these findings, support can be understood as an action that promotes wellbeing in the workplace (cf. Kuoppla *et al.*, 2008). That is, the shortcomings regarding risks, found in previous studies of young people working in the retail sector (Rohlman *et al.*, 2016; Runyan *et al.*, 2007), appear in present analysis as well. However, it appears as if these shortcomings can be mitigated through safety training and support. That is, initiatives integrated within the organization have been emphasized as a key for well-functioning efforts, previous illuminated in a meta-analysis on work health promotion (Kuoppala *et al.*, 2008).

The feelings of security analyzed in the narratives of being a novice within retail presented here relate to aspects of working life where young people perceive that they receive support. Security is depicted as related to the social context, that is, something you receive from others. Few examples were found in the data where the interviewees expressed feelings of security depending upon their own approach to working life. This is evident even though the interviews generally include expressions of independence across all interviewees in other aspects of working life, for example, regarding being a leader at work. Based on these findings, further studies should focus on what factors can contribute to an in-depth understanding of how young people see themselves as independent actors versus passive recipients in various situations of working life. Thus, autonomy is an important aspect for the promotion of health and wellbeing (Eriksson and Lindström, 2007).

Lastly, previous studies on risks at work and workplace health management tend to delimit the experiences of work to the boundaries of the workplace (Carmichael *et al.*, 2016). The health promotion perspective (WHO, 1986) used here can be used to illuminate that there are more factors in play than what happens in the workplace. The analysis reveals that support from family and friends is central to how young people working within retail relate to security in their working lives. These results are in line with the socio-ecological approach of health promotion (WHO, 1986). As described within the Ottawa Charter: "Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love" (WHO, 1986, p. 7). That is, the use of a health promotion perspective makes it possible to include the broader understanding expressed by the interviewees, whereas the sense of security at work is not delimited to the workplace itself. Based on these findings, the application of the socio-ecological approach to health (WHO, 1986) implies that a supportive environment at work is crucial for a sustainable working life but also that support within private life is important for the health and wellbeing of young adults entering the labor market. In other words, "work and leisure have a significant impact on health" (WHO, 1986, p. 6).

In terms of limitations, it is worth noting that the results presented here are based on a thematic analysis. As noted by Nowell *et al.*, there is not a wide body of literature that applies thematic analysis (Nowell *et al.*, 2017, p. 2). From this, various researchers can interpret thematic analysis differently. To avoid such misinterpretations, the present study is designed in line with the process described by Nowell *et al.* (2017) who have presented a process aimed to ensure meeting the trustworthiness criteria defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This process includes the attempts to report the analysis and decisions made throughout this process as clearly and transparently as possible. To further increase the trustworthiness of the study, all three team members are included in the research design, data analysis and interpretation of the results. The team includes researchers in rehabilitation science, human work science and occupational health science, which further strengthens the ability of the group regarding perspectives included in the analyses. Further, the analysis is driven by the analytical question on a "sense of security when new at work". This means that the analysis does not provide a very rich description of the collected material as a whole, only a detailed analysis of specific aspects related to security (see Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84 on "theoretical" thematic analysis). However, the results must be considered in relation to the specific data analyzed. That is, first, the results can be related to the stories of the few young adults interviewed (that is, thirteen persons, most of them women). Also, if the data includes accounts of unsafe working situations and risks in working life, one can assume that other results would be found. Also, one can assume that those who volunteer for this kind of study, which is based on interviews about working life, might have experiences that differ from those who choose not to participate. For example, those who are motivated to talk with a researcher might find the attention of a leader/manager more relevant than those who do not sign up to be interviewed. From this, the results should be understood in relation to the specific group included in the study. Further, the use of telephone and video meetings when conducting the interviews might have impact on the stories told as well. That is, it's possible that face-to-face contact (even virtually) might impact the participants' willingness to give a good impression. Lastly, the timing of the data collection period might have an impact on the results. On March 11, 2020, the WHO defined the ongoing spread of the coronavirus as a pandemic. Data collection was carried out during this pandemic, which may have influenced what topics were raised in the interviews, and what was not mentioned. The relevance of the corona virus outbreak on the research project in its whole is further elaborated within the research protocol for the study (BWall *et al.*, 2021). We argue that it is conceivable that an increased focus on the spread of the coronavirus means that other issues that are important for young adults who are establishing themselves in the labor market came to the fore. From this, it is reasonable to think that other results may have been found by using other research methods for collecting data, especially if these methods included those who did not volunteer for the interviews conducted here and if data collection was performed without the influence of the coronavirus pandemic. However, the material analyzed did not appear to be directly affected by the spread of the corona virus.

4.1 Practical implications

To understand the experiences of young adults who are new to the labor market from a health promoting perspective, a focus on the sense of security, is important since it provides information on how to maintain a sustainable working life. That is, our results have practical implications for workplace health management. First, the results showed that, in order to strengthen the positive experiences of feeling safe and secure at work, the employer has to prioritize the opportunity for the novice work force participate in safety training, and, at the same time, offer a supporting context at the workplace. That is, safety training and support can be understood as tools to enhance wellbeing and create a sustainable working life for

young people entering the labor market. Second, our findings indicate the importance of context when dealing with young people new at work. Social relations outside the work as well as social support at the workplace have been found to be likewise important for the sense of security. From this, the holistic perspective of health promotion can be a useful tool in order to draw attention to how young people's experiences in the workplace are linked to the individual situation outside work.

4.2 Conclusions

The findings presented here complement the existing perspectives of challenges faced by novices as they enter working life. By focusing on security in the workplace based on the narratives of young adults new to the retail labor market, the present study provides new knowledge useful in workplace health management. In the material analyzed here, which was limited to positive narrations of feeling secure at work, it has been found that young people experience security in the workplace in relation to the ability to complete their work duties safely as well as in relation to support. From this, it is apparent that safety training and support can be understood as tools to enhance wellbeing and create a sustainable working life for young people entering the labor market. Further, it has been shown that the expressions of security at work are here understood to be embedded within structures and relations at the workplace as well as within relationships in private life. Thus, the use of the health promotion perspective provides an understanding on how work life and private life are intertwined during the emergence of adulthood.

To summarize, the deepened understanding of a sense of security presented here indicates that using a health promoting perspective to focus on safety might contribute to knowledge useful in workplace health management and the strive for a sustainable working life for young adults.

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