Introduction[1]

The third issue of the 2026 volume of *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* brings together four compelling and timely research articles. Like the previous issue, it spans several levels of the labor market, from individual experiences of work, via organizational responses, to crisis to understanding unemployment.

Even though the pandemic ended several years ago, there is still interest in understanding its effects on work. In the last two issues of NJWLS, the pandemic was revisited, and also in this issue, there is an article concerning work and Covid-19. The opening article *Demands and Resources in Retail: The Role of Occupational Status and COVID-19*, by Philip Ström, Helena Falkenberg, Jacobus Pienaar, Constanze Leineweber, and Magnus Sverke, draws on survey data from Swedish retail employees to examine how job demands, resources, and work-related outcomes differ between blue-collar and white-collar workers before and during a period of profound disruption, that is, Covid-19. The findings reveal notable inequalities in working conditions, with blue-collar employees experiencing higher demands, fewer resources, and greater burnout, disparities that appear to have intensified during the pandemic. By showing how external crises shape both the distribution and consequences of workplace demands and resources, the article extends job demands-resources theory and highlights the importance of considering occupational position when designing organizational and policy responses to periods of rapid change.

The second article, *Feasibility Study of a New Approach to Balance Job Demands and Resources*, also has a focus on job demands and job resources but not in the time of Covid-19. The authors Annette Meng and Birgit Aust instead address a pressing challenge in the care sector: how employees can manage high job demands in resource-constrained work environments. Focusing on childcare institutions, the study describes the development and evaluation of a participatory intervention designed to strengthen the collective use of selection, optimization, and compensation strategies. Through close collaboration with practitioners, the authors translate an established theoretical framework into the practical and accessible PEX approach, encouraging employees to Prioritize tasks, Explore available resources, and mobilize eXternal resources. The article provides a valuable example of how occupational health research can be transformed into workplace practice and highlights the importance of employee participation in the design of interventions. By demonstrating the feasibility and promise of a simple, low-cost tool, the study offers insights of particular relevance for small workplaces seeking sustainable ways to support employee well-being.

The third article *Downsizing Harshness Framework: Wage Cuts or Layoffs in a Collaborative Context?* by Arney Einarsdottir and Katrin Olafsdottir explores how organizations respond to economic crises. The article develops a framework that classifies downsizing measures as soft, moderate, or hard and applies it to organizations operating in Iceland during the recession following the 2008 financial crisis. Using survey data from HR managers collected at two points during the first 20 months of the downturn, the study examines the use of layoffs, mass layoffs, wage cuts, and other downsizing alternatives. The findings challenge the dominant focus on layoffs in the downsizing literature. Organizations were more likely to combine several adjustment measures than

[1] You can find this text and its DOI at https://tidsskrift.dk/njwls/index.

to rely on mass layoffs alone, and wage cuts were used more frequently than layoffs. By broadening the focus beyond layoffs, the article contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of organizational flexibility and crisis responses in Nordic labor markets.

In the fourth article *Chronic Unemployment: A New Concept for Capturing Weak Labor Market Attachment*, by Simo Aho, Magnus Jespersen, Regina Konle-Seidl, Rasmus Lind Ravn, and Stine Rasmussen, the authors revisit the study of unemployment by moving beyond conventional measures of long-term unemployment and introducing a broader conceptualization of weak labor market attachment. They draw on detailed longitudinal register data from Denmark, Germany, and Finland, to follow individuals' labor market trajectories over extended periods and shed new light on the complex relationship between unemployment and activation policies. By treating participation in active labor market programs as an integral part of unemployment careers rather than merely an interruption of them, the study offers a nuanced perspective on both the limitations and possibilities of activation measures. In doing so, the study makes an important methodological and substantive contribution to comparative research on unemployment and labor market integration.

We hope you will find these articles compelling and that you would like to continue the scientific discussions by contributing your own articles to the *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*.

Kristina Palm
Editor-in-chief