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Data Work in the Digital Age. Reporting Practices and Coping Strategies in the Frontline

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Data Work in the Digital Age

Reporting Practices and Coping Strategies in the Frontline

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In the digital age, data moves to the centerstage of organizational life. Across multiple areas, organizations strive to become data-driven, and data compose a pervasive resource creating value in the organization (Alaimo & Kallinkos 2021; Bailey et al. 2021). While existing studies point out how data alters and affects organizational life, we know little about frontline workers' creation of data and how they deal with potential tensions between data work and actual work practices (Waardenburg et al. 2022). Specifically, we need to better understand coping mechanisms when dealing with data work. Against this backdrop, we report from a four-year qualitative case study of the implementation of a healthcare platform in a Danish organization requiring massive data work among frontline workers. Our analysis reveals a tension between the new requirements for digital reporting and frontline workers' values and beliefs, and we identified three coping mechanisms among workers: *rematerializing, verbalizing,* and *tinkering.* These mechanisms helped frontline workers ease perceived disadvantages of the new reporting requirements but also impacted work practices in ways that challenged the objectives of a data-driven organization. We contribute to existing literature on data creation by showing how frontline workers cope with new demands for data work in a digital age.

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