



The significance of the work place and the work for employee health:

A new questionnaire and a new model for work environment improvement and further research

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Background

The predominant psychosocial work environment models and investigative questionnaires were developed almost thirty years ago. Since then, working life has undergone radical changes. This suggests that existing models and questionnaires may no longer be fully suited to modern working life. The problem extends to the output values of these surveys as well; how can stress and ill health actually be measured?

Our research questions were

Are there other organisational conditions/dimensions that generate ill health and that can complement the work environment dimensions previously employed?

If so, what are they and how do they relate to the earlier dimensions and to employee health?

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Method

Our investigation and – finally – new survey questionnaire builds on a critical analysis of two classic psychosocial work environment models, the Demand-Control-Support (DCS) model (Karasek, Theorell, Johnson and Hall) and the Effort-Reward Imbalance model (Siegrist).

Focus group interviews carried out in eight strategically selected groups, along with one expert interview and one case study, make up the qualitative basis for the development of the new survey. The results from a pilot study carried out on a nationally representative sample provided

the fundament of the Work and Workplace dimensions studied and the construction of the hypothetical 'causal' model.

Results

Factors of Work (and the Workplace factors have an impact on the employees' stress symptoms and health through the demands of the work. However, the Workplace factors have an impact not only through the Demand factor, but also through the factor Humanity and social support, which has a direct impact on the employee's stress symptoms and health.

The model's total explained variance was 42.2% for the stress symptom factor (i.e. the stress-related health outcome). On the basis of the model's 'causal assumptions', the dimensions describing Work and Workplace account for 13.7% and 28.5% respectively. If we consider the 'health' outcome, the total explained variance is 11.2%, for which Work and Workplace account for 5.0% and 6.2% respectively.

Future Research

- Globalization, work environment and health
- Leadership, profitability and health
- The intervention study

