

# **Psychosocial work environment and the risk of severe depressive symptoms and burnout**

Results from two longitudinal studies

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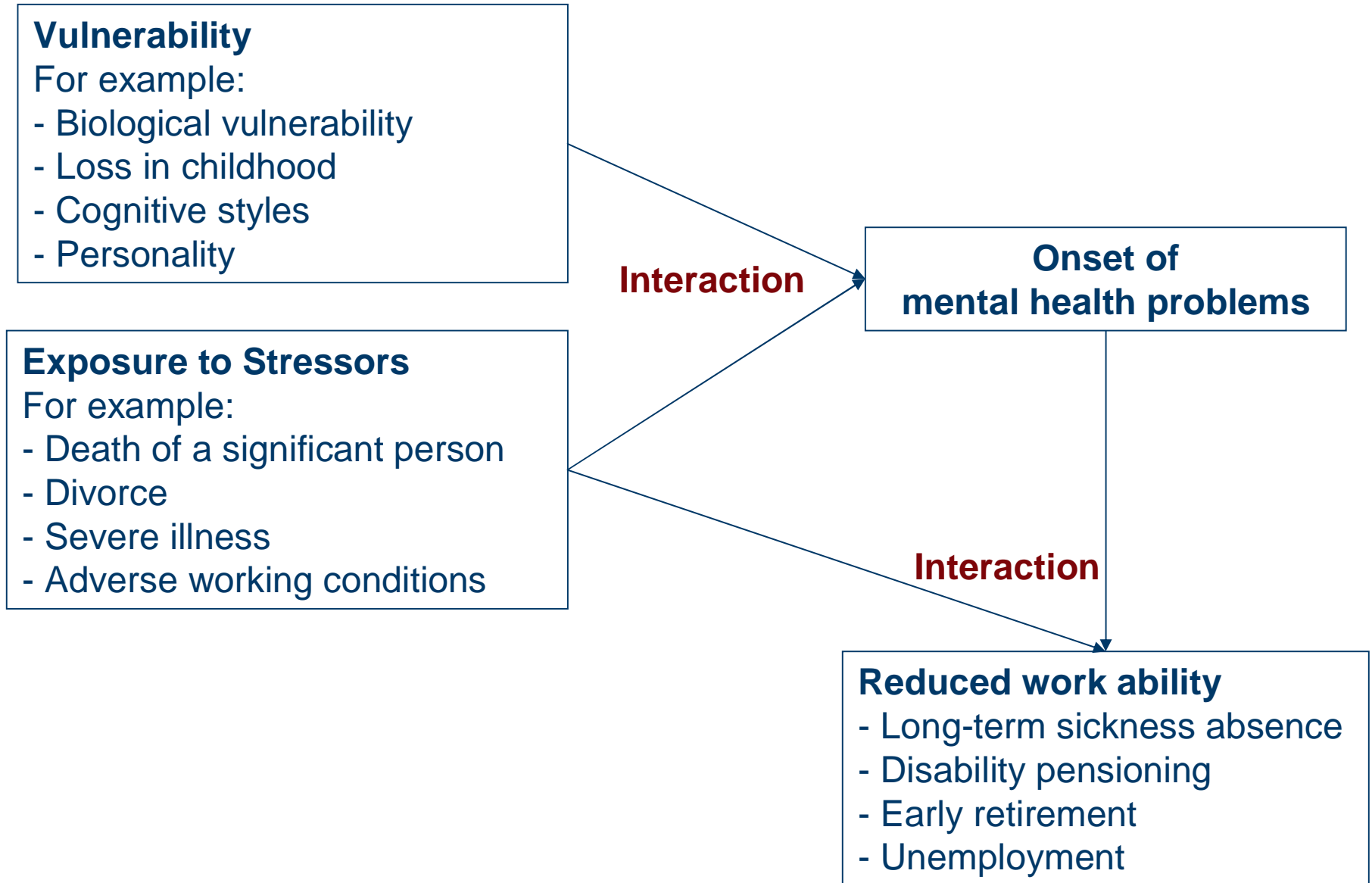
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# Mental health and work ability

- General perception that mental health problems, especially affective disorders, are rising in modern societies
- Need for a better understanding how the psychosocial work environment contribute to mental health problems
- Need to better understand to what extent mental health problems contribute to long-term sickness absence and disability pensioning

# Conceptual Model



# **Psychosocial Work Environment and Incidence of Severe Depressive Symptoms**

**Rugulies, R., Bültmann, U., Aust, B. & Burr, H.**

**American Journal of Epidemiology, 2006, 163(10), 877-887**



# Study Design and Methods

- 4,133 employees (49% women), aged 18-65, from the Danish Work Environment Cohort Study (DWECS) followed-up for 5 years
- Participants with severe depressive symptoms at baseline were excluded from the analysis
- All measures based on questionnaires and administered by telephone
- Psychosocial work characteristics measured in 1995
- Severe depressive symptoms measured in 1995 and 2000

# Measurement of Severe Depressive Symptoms

- Severe depressive symptoms were measured with the 5-item Mental Health Scale (MHI-5) from the SF-36
- Scale is standardized from 0 to 100
- Participants scoring 52 points or less were classified with severe depressive symptoms

# Results:

## Participants with severe depressive symptoms at follow-up

- 105 out of 4,133 participants (2.5%)
- 68 out of 2,004 women (3.4%)
- 37 out of 2,129 men (1.7%)

# Impact of psychosocial work characteristics on risk of severe depressive symptoms in 2,004 women

Stressor	RR	95% CI	p
High quantitative demands	0.83	0.48-1.44	0.51
<b>Low influence</b>	<b>2.17</b>	<b>1.23-3.82</b>	<b>0.007</b>
Low poss. for development	1.11	0.66-1.87	0.69
<b>Low supervisor support</b>	<b>2.03</b>	<b>1.20-3.43</b>	<b>0.008</b>
Low coworker support	1.05	0.50-2.23	0.90
High job insecurity	1.21	0.73-1.99	0.46

Adjusted for age, cohabitation, having children at home, school education, smoking, alcohol consumption, leisure time physical activity, change in employment status during follow-up and depression score at baseline

# Impact of psychosocial work characteristics on risk of severe depressive symptoms in 2,129 men

Exposure	RR	95% CI	p
High quantitative demands	0.46	0.18-1.19	0.11
Low influence	0.60	0.30-1.22	0.16
Low poss. for development	1.16	0.57-2.37	0.68
Low supervisor support	1.17	0.58-2.35	0.65
Low coworker support	1.29	0.59-2.84	0.53
<b>High job insecurity</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>1.02-4.07</b>	<b>0.04</b>

Adjusted for age, cohabitation, having children at home, school education, smoking, alcohol consumption, leisure time physical activity, change in employment status during follow-up and depression score at baseline

# Strengths and Limitations of the Study

## ■ Strengths

- Prospective study with a representative sample of the general working population
- Adjustment for various non-work-related variables and for depression score at baseline

## ■ Limitations

- Depression not measured with gold-standard
- Low number of cases among men
- Limited measures for psychosocial work characteristics

# **Psychosocial Work Characteristics as Predictors for Burnout: Findings from a 3-Year Follow-up of the PUMA Study**

**Borritz, M., Bültmann, U., Rugulies, R.,  
Christensen, K.B., Villadsen, E., Kristensen, T.S.**

**Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine,  
2005, 47(10), 1015-1025**



# Study Design and Methods

- 952 human service work professionals from 7 different organizations (e.g., social security services, psychiatric prison, home care service)
- 16 psychosocial work characteristics and 3 different domains of burnout (personal, work-related, client-related) were measured
- Baseline measured in 1999/2000, follow-up in 2002/2003

# Results

- The following psychosocial work characteristics predicted an increase on at least one burnout scale:
  - **Client-specific work characteristics**
    - High emotional demands, high demands for hiding emotions
  - **Demands at work**
    - High quantitative demands, high work pace
  - **Work organization and job content**
    - Low possibilities for development, low meaning of work
  - **Interpersonal relations and leadership**
    - Low predictability, low role clarity, high role conflicts

Psychosocial work characteristics were adjusted for each other and for age, gender, SES organization, family status, children below the age of 7 at home, smoking and exercise

## Next steps ...

- Comprehensive psychosocial work environment measures as predictors for depression
- Validated instruments for measuring clinical depression (MDI)
- Linkage with register data on prescription of antidepressiva
- Interaction of psychosocial work characteristics with variables on individual vulnerability and stressors outside the workplace
- Relation of burnout and depression
- Social consequences of mental health problems