Well-Being and Psychosocial Work Environment

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Questions to be addressed in this presentation

1. What is well-being?

2. What is the psychosocial work environment?

3. Are these two things related to each other?
   - Some examples from NRCWE research
What is well-being?

- Different concepts and understanding in the literature

- In Danish, there are two word for the English “well-being”
  - Velbefindende
  - Trivsel
1) Well-being as a broader understanding of “health”
This type of well-being is translated as "velbefindende" in Danish
Psychological well-being and risk of long-term sickness absence in 6984 Danish eldercare workers

Hazard ratio

0-4 (reference)  1,07  1,38 *  1,54 *  1,96 *  2,32 *  Depression

Adjusted for previous LTSA, socio-demographics, health behaviors, and occupational group

Hjarsbech PU et al. Journal of Affective Disorders 2011;129(1-3):87-93
2) Well-being as the combination of life-satisfaction and happiness in the World Values Survey

- **Global network of social scientists** studying changing values and their impact on social and political life.

- **Representative surveys in almost 100 countries.**
  These countries contain almost 90% of the world’s population. Currently, about 400,000 respondents.

- **Subjective well-being (SWB): An Index combining**
  - Life satisfaction: How satisfied are you with your life?
    - 1 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied)
  - Happiness: How happy are you?
    - 1 (Very happy): 2 (Rather happy); 3 (Not very happy); 4: (Not at all happy)

Read more at: [http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)
Fig. 2. Subjective well-being (SWB), per capita gross domestic product (GDP), and different types of societies. Well-being index is based on reported life satisfaction and happiness, using mean results from all available surveys conducted 1995–2007 (cubic curve plotted; r = .62). PPP = purchasing power parity estimates.
3) Well-being in “Positive Psychology”

• Positive Psychology is a relatively new paradigm in psychology. Has attracted a lot of interest in recent years, ranging from enthusiastic support to harsh criticism.

• Well-being is a key topic in Positive Psychology which focus on:
  – Happiness
  – Pleasure
  – Virtue
  – Flourishing
  – Engagement
  – Experiencing of flow

Here more about ”Positive Psychology”:
Keynote VII: Jari Hakanen
Wednesday 11:45 to 12:30
4) Well-being as a multi-dimensional construct: The Danish “Trivsel”

Trivsel på arbejdsplassen. Hvad betyder det?
En begrebslig og etisk afklaring

Christian T. Lystbæk, udviklingsafdelingen, VIA UC

Well-being: Summary

Well-being may be a

- broadening of the understanding of health
- combination of life satisfaction and happiness
- a key term in Positive Psychology
- a multidimensional construct including both aspects of the person and of his/her environment

and probably much more
What is the psychosocial work environment?

No official definition of psychosocial work environment

Chances are: There never will be one – given the different scientific backgrounds of researchers involved in the field:

- Occupational Medicine
- Anthropology
- Epidemiology and Public Health
- Medical Sociology and Medical Psychology
- Psycho-Biology
- Work and Organisational Psychology
What is psychosocial?

Psychology is about

• Cognitions, the way people think
• Emotions, the way people feel
• Behaviour, the way people act
• Psycho-physiology, the interplay of cognitions and emotions with physiological processes in the body

Sociology is about

• Societies, social structures and social contexts
• Social interactions between individuals and groups
What is psychosocial?

The relation of

• social structures, social contexts and social interactions

with

• cognitions, emotions, behaviour and psycho-physiological processes in the individual
A hierarchical framework for psychosocial research (or better: socialpsychological research)

- Economic, Social and Political Structure
  - Social Context
    - Psychosocial Factors
      - Individual Psychological States and Processes
        - Health Behaviours
        - Psychophysiological Changes
      - Health and Illness
    - Psychosocial Work Environment
  - Well-being

Psychosocial work environment factors

**Big factors:** Have been examined in several studies of high quality:

- **Job strain**
  - mismatch between high demands and low job control
- **Effort-reward imbalance**
  - mismatch between high efforts and low rewards at work
- **Organisational justice**
Psychosocial work environment factors

Other factors might be equally important or even more important but not studied as well:

- Emotional demands
- Role conflicts
- Trust
- Offensive behaviours (bullying, harassment, threats of violence)
- Unnecessary work tasks
- Leadership quality
- Predictability
- Job security
Psychosocial work environment: Summary

• The psychosocial work environment is a step in a causal pathway that links macro-level societal structures to individual-level psychological states and processes.

• The psychosocial work environment is multifaceted and includes a wide range of different factors.

Whether, to what extent and under which conditions psychosocial work environment factors may affect health and well-being is a question that needs to be examined empirically.
DOES THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WORK ENVIRONMENT AFFECT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?
Empirical research on the impact of the psychosocial work environment on health and well-being

• From early 1980’s to late 1990’s:
  An overreliance on small scale cross-sectional studies

• From late 1990’s until today:
  An increasing number of large-scale and well-conducted prospective cohort studies
A statistically significant associations between several psychosocial work environment factors (particularly low influence at work) and risk of musculoskeletal disorders.

However, the 54 studies were of different methodological quality, in particular regarding adjustment for potential confounders and addressing other biases.
Prospective cohort study of 1537 female eldercare workers on psychosocial work factors and onset of low back pain (1 to 30 days/year)

Adjusted for:
- Sociodemographics,
- Health behaviours,
- Physical workload

More on this study:
Parallel Session 3 D, Tuesday 08:30-10:00

More on observational methods:
Parallel Session 3 B, Tuesday 08:30-10:00 (A. Jørgensen)
Parallel Session 6 D, Wednesday, 08:30-10:00 (K. Karstad)

Clausen T et al. Occupational and Environmental Medicine 2013; 70(8): 538-544
Two reviews on psychosocial work environment and depression in 2008 found

- Evidence of prospective association of job strain components with risk of depression
- Lack of studies that focused on psychosocial work environment factors other than job strain
- Lack of studies that assessed work environment with methods other than self-report
- Lack of studies that examined interplay of work and non-work-related factors in the aetiology of depression
New prospective studies examining psychosocial work environment and mental health – in particular risk of depression.

Growing focus on social relations and interactions at work such as:

- Bullying
- Violence and threats of violence
- Emotional demands
- Leadership quality
- Organisational justice

Grynderup M et al., Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 2013;70(6):380-385
Psychosocial work environment and mental health. Still lacking:

- Studies on the interplay of work and non-work related factors in the aetiology of mental health problems

- Studies on how the psychosocial work environment affects the course and the consequences of mental health problems

- You can hear more about this today, Parallel Session 2 A (16:00-17:00)
Psychosocial work environment and health and well-being: Summary

• Great progress in the last 10-15 years, data from numerous large-scale high-quality prospective cohort studies are now available

• Many of these studies showing a statistical significant association of psychosocial work environment with health and well-being.

• Still many unsolved issues:
  • Measuring the psychosocial work environment with other methods than self-report.
  • Examining interplay of psychosocial work environment factors with other factors and with social context.
  • Examining the psychosocial work environment over the whole work life course.
1. What is well-being?
   - There are different concepts of well-being, certainly also among the participants of this conference.

2. What is the psychosocial work environment?
   - No official definition. I suggested here that the psychosocial work environment links societal structures with individual psychological states and processes.

3. Are these two things related with each other?
   - Yes, they are and we made great progress to better understand the relation. But there are still many issues to solve.
Thank you very much for your attention!

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