

# The association between exposure to psychosocial work factors and mental health in older employees; a three-year follow-up study



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# Introduction 1

- Exposure to psychosocial work factors is associated with mental health problems
- Cross-sectional perspective limits dynamic view of exposure and its consequences
- Focus on decreased exposure can tell us about prevention benefits

# Introduction 2

- Older workers are a growing part of the workforce and maintaining their health is important
- Research question:  
*Is a decreased compared to stable high and stable low exposure to psychosocial work factors associated with a change in mental health in older employees after three-years follow-up?*

# Methods

- Prospective cohort study:
  - Study on Transitions in Employment, Ability and Motivation (STREAM; 2010 – 2013)  
[https://www.tno.nl/media/4618/stream\\_methodologisch\\_rapport\\_engels.pdf](https://www.tno.nl/media/4618/stream_methodologisch_rapport_engels.pdf)
- Psychosocial work factors at T0 – T2
  - Psychological demands (JCQ), Autonomy (JCQ), Support (COPSOQ), Mental load (NWCS), Distributive Justice (de Boer et al., 2002)
- Mental health (SF-12) at T3

# Methods: Exposure and analysis

- Exposure: highest quartile is high risk

Exposure group	Risk at T0	Risk at T1	Risk at T2
Stable high	High	High	High
Decreased	High	High	Low
	High	Low	Low
Stable low	Low	Low	Low

- Analysis
  - Linear regression with bootstrapping

# Results: Descriptives

N = 5,249

	n (%)	Mean (SD)	Range
Gender (female)	2,280 (43.4)		
Age		53.28 (4.95)	45 – 65
Psychological demands		3.16 (0.75)	1 (low) – 5 (high)
Autonomy		3.83 (0.69)	1 (low) – 5 (high)
Support		3.61 (0.75)	1 (low) – 5 (high)
Mental load		4.21 (0.63)	1 (low) – 5 (high)
Distributive justice		2.49 (0.50)	1 (low) – 3 (high)
Mental health		52.58 (7.93)	0 – 100

# Results: Adjusted models

			B	95%-CI
Psychological demands		Stable high	-0.929	-1.932 – -0.250
Poor autonomy	<i>Age 45 – 54</i>	Stable high	-1.046	-2.064 – -0.028
	<i>Age 55 – 65</i>	Stable low	-1.374	-2.427 – -0.321
		Stable high	-2.881	-4.090 – -1.672
Poor support	<i>Men</i>	Stable low	0.865	0.037 – 1.693
		Stable high	-1.052	-2.092 – -0.012
	<i>Women</i>	Stable low	1.075	0.076 – 2.074
Poor distributive justice	<i>Women</i>	Stable high	-1.376	-2.732 – -0.020

# Discussion: General

- *Decreased versus stable high* gives insight into potential benefit of interventions
- *Decreased versus stable low* gives insight into differences that still exist
- Minimal Clinically Important Difference (4.7)

Parker SL, Godil SS, Shau DN, Mendenhall SK, McGirt MJ., 2013.



# Discussion: Strengths/limitations

- Longitudinal perspective is useful
- Decreased exposure
- Variety of psychosocial work factors
  
- Use of cut-off points is debatable
- Complete cases → risk of selection bias
- No causal inference can be made

# Conclusions

- Decreased exposure compared to stable high exposure associated with better mental health in older employees
- Reducing exposure may be beneficial
- Useful information for organisations that consider deploying measures to manage exposure in older workers

# Thank you

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