AMERICAN
PSYCHOSOMATIC
SOCIETY

Dedicated to the Integration of Biological, Psychological and Social Factors in Medicine

68th ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING
MARCH 10 - 13, 2010

"Stress and Health"

Meeting Abstracts

Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront
Portland, Oregon USA

KARASEK'S DEMAND / CONTROL MODEL, EMOTIONS
AND HEALTH

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Purpose: to measure the relation between Karasek's demand/control model[1], the frequency of emotional experiences at work, self-reported psychological well-being and health. Subjects: 1204 civil servants of the Swiss canton Vaud (48.9 % women).

 Method: The subjects answered Karasek's demand/control questionnaire, 12 questions regarding the frequency of emotional experiences at work (6 positive and 6 negative emotions). Respondents rated the frequency of each emotion on a 4-point scale. Internal consistency measured by Cronbach's alpha was 0.82 for positive states and 0.76 for negative states. A new variable was created by subtracting the sum-score of negatively valenced emotional states from the sum-score of positively valenced emotional states. The resulting distribution ranged from -18 to 18. This variable, called "emotional balance", was normally distributed (Skew = -.217, Kurt. = -.122, Mean = 1.02, SD = 5.05). Participants estimated their psychological well-being at work and their general health on a 5-point scale. Gender, and education level were not related to psychological well-being and physical health. Age had no effect on the psychological well-being but a small negative correlation was found between this variable and health (Spearman's rho = -0.075, $p < 0.01$).

Results: Every emotion was significantly correlated with both psychological well-being and physical health. The psychological well-being showed the strongest link with "emotional balance" (F = 179.3, $p < 0.01$). Physical health was also significantly correlated with "emotional-balance" (F= 53.97, $p < 0.01$). The emotional balance indicator was negatively correlated with the psychological demands (r = -.18, $p < 0.01$) and it was positively correlated with the decision latitude (r = .377, $p<0.01$). ANOVAs between the decision latitude score, psychological well-being and physical health were significant (F = 21.13 and F = 21.47, both $p < 0.01$ repectively). The ANOVAs between psychological demands and the same variables were also significant (F = 11.60 and F = 11.39, both $p < 0.01$). The emotional balance explained .366 of the psychological well-being variance (adjusted R-square, r = .605).

1)   Karasek, R.A. & Theorell, T. (1996). Healthy work: stress, productivity and the reconstruction of working life. New York: Basic Books