Reviewer's report

Title: Psychosocial work load and stress in the geriatric care

Version: 3 Date: 25 January 2010

Reviewer: Jan Hyld H Pejtersen

Reviewer's report:

I think the manuscript have improved on many point. However, I still have the following comments.

Major Compulsory Revisions

2. The study compares the results with results from quite a huge database. However, it is not clearly described how this database is obtained. The database is described as dynamic, so I guess users of the questionnaire provide data to the database. The advantage and disadvantage of using reference values from such a dynamic database should be discussed.

MN The data in the German COPSOQ-database is not a representative German sample but a collection of data gathered in all enterprises and organisations that did the assessment together with us (FFAS) in a cooperation model. Advantage is that the database is huge and the data is “fresh”, disadvantage maybe the lack of a prove of representativity.

JHP The lack of representativity and the consequences for the present study should be discussed in the manuscript.

7. I do not understand the method used for the comparison related to figure 2. In the manuscript, it is described as an example of comparison made for all scales. It seems that the values for home care and geriatric care are compared to the other job groups as well as to the reference values for the database. But are the values for home care and geriatric care for the single dimensions ranked according to the mean values for the different job groups or how was the comparison made to the job groups of the reference database? I think the description should be moved to the method section and the method described
more clearly and in more details. The results of the comparison to the other job groups for all scales should be presented somehow, for instance in a table and not only as an example.

MN The figures were not in a good quality in the supplementary jpg-files. We have included them also in the text now. The comparison is made simply by showing the means of a COPSOQ scale for different job groups (grouping according to the German KbB92). In the example this is done for quantitative demands. With the example we want to show, what is in the COPSOQ database and how it works. We cannot show all the results for all professions – therefore we do the evaluation with the COPSOQ-overall mean and a profession specific reference value for the geriatric care, the hospital care.

JHP see, reply below comment 9.

9. The conclusion of the study is that workers in geriatric care and especially in home care have a positive psychosocial work environment compared to other professions. I do not think that the data presented fully support that conclusion. Table 3 shows that the psychosocial work environment for geriatric care and especially home care are more positive than compared with the average value for the reference group. However, this does not necessarily mean that the psychosocial work environments for the two groups are better than for most other professions. I can see that this is true for quantitative demands, at least for home care, figure 1. As stated before, I think the reader needs the results of the comparison to other job groups for all scales, not only for quantitative demands.

MN we give a comparison between the two study groups, of each group with hospital care and with the overall COPSOQ mean value for all scales – in the last version in the text and in tables 2 and 3 now all together at a glance in table 3.

The reader can see 3 things. First, that the situation of HC is evaluated better for a lot of aspects when compared to GNH– exception is the quantity of social relations (working alone). Second that the work situation for Home Care is favourable in a
lot
of COPSOQ-areas when compared to a similar profession, the hospital care –
this is
partly also true for the GNH-workers. And third: he/ she can see that both study
groups (again this stronger for HC) evaluate their working situation as being
better
than the mean of all COPSOQ respondents does. What the reader cannot see
(or
can see only for one example) is the comparison of the two study groups with
about
20 other professions (i.e. priests, teachers, admin. workers, etc.) – but this was
not
the aim of this study and would lead to far.

JHP First of all there is no table 3 in the new manuscript. I am a little confused. In
response to comment #14 you say that the tables 2 and 3 now are merged
together. However, you still refer to table 3 in the manuscript at page 13, 3.
paragraph. Is that a mistake?

Since the conclusion of the study is that Geriatric care employees and especially
HC workers judge their psychosocial working situation as being quite positive
compared to other profession (see abstract), I think it is very natural to present
the data that support this conclusion. Therefore, I still think the results of the
comparison to the other 20 professions for all scales should be presented
somehow. Or if the comparison is not part of the aim, then it should not be the
main conclusion.

Minor comment

The figures 3 and 4 seem to be the same?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being
Published

MN reformulated and corrected by a native speaker.

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a
statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests