Reviewer’s report

Title: Workplace gender composition and psychological distress: The importance of the psychosocial work environment

Version: 1 Date: 9 July 2013

Reviewer: France Kittel

Reviewer’s report:

1. The question well-defined
   • The question is original because it combines various elements which have not been related before in previous studies.
   • It is important as the work environment has an impact on health which in turn is depending on multiple factors which have to be determined in order to be taken into account in interventions e.g.
   • It is also well defined in a precise theoretical framework

2. The methods
   • It is not made explicit by the authors why the categories: majority of males and majority of females are more prevalent than the mixed group. Does that reflect the real complete picture of the workplace distribution in Sweden? Is it linked to the type of sector or to the type of job? Could be made more explicit
   • Statistical analyses seem to be correct and appropriate in general.
   • Although one could wonder why multiple logistic regression of the total sample as a whole is not applied including interaction terms between the group and each of the 5 independent variables allowing for a better interpretation (statistical significance of the interactions) of the separate analyses presented in table 2

3. The data
   • It is not argued why the authors have chosen this particular sample, nor why they did chose a particular age group focused on one age, namely 42 leading to a relative sample size. Usually the population is taken as a whole and age sub-groups are defined. This would have been possible as if I understood well as this sample is extracted from a larger Cohort from the Statistics Sweden longitudinal Integration Database for Health insurance and Labor Market Studies. Anyway this needs more clarification

4. Adherence of data to relevant standards of reporting and deposition
   • Concerning the exposure variables it is not mentioned if the standard JDCS variables of the KARASEK questionnaire are used or proxies.
   • I miss the analyses with ‘Strain’ and ‘Iso-Strain’ as independent variables. It is not mentioned why the authors did not perform these analyses
5. The Discussion and conclusions

- “Working with people was the most common type of work at workplaces with more women” (like nurses?). I would like to advise the authors to give concrete examples of the sectors concerned in this sample. This could already be done in the description of the sample.

- Concerning the mixed group (also the smallest) High Demands in the full model (model 2) was not statistically significant although nearly (0.99- 5.60) and the OR fairly high 2.36 close to the one obtained by the workplace with more men. This deserves some comments maybe.

- I wonder if workers did move to another type of workplace or if they remained in the same in this 21 year period, could maybe be added in the discussion.

- The last paragraph (before on the method in the discussion section) is unclear to me.

6. Limitations of work

- To my opinion Table 1 is very busy one and somehow difficult to read, but I have no practical suggestions to enhance that table.

- The small sample size, mentioned by the authors themselves, but which might have been resolved by taking more age groups from the full cohort.

7. Acknowledgment of work by appropriate referencing

- Quoting the authors: “There is not a uniform support for the combination of high demands and low control…” I would like to refer the authors to the recently published articles by the IPD-Consortium as an example. See 2 references.


8. Title and abstract
• Are in adequacy with the content

9. Writing, Organization, Tables and Figures
• “The few studies that have focused on workplaces {5-8} has…” I would write have
• Why did the authors change the order of the 3 strata exposed in table 2 with the one in the Discussion part

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
Ethical Issues
No competing interests to my opinion