Reviewer’s report

Title: A systematic review including meta analysis of work environment and depressive symptoms Running title: Job strain and bullying at work are related to depressive symptoms

Version: 2 Date: 14 April 2015

Reviewer: Karen Nieuwenhuijsen

Reviewer’s report:

This review is important in our field. However, the presentation could be much improved and essential information and data are not presented.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Aim of the study: The term ‘weighted’ is used in the aim of this study, but this is not introduced in the background. Weighted could mean a number of things, perhaps they are referring to GRADE?

2. The methods section is too unstructured, in a systematic review I would expect the steps of the review process to be much less narrative and more structured. Subheadings would help, but .

3. Important information (inclusion criteria and quality criteria) should be in the main text.

4. Page 5: what is the place in the review process of the expert group. Now it just states how they were recruited while as a reader you do not know why an expert group is needed or what function it has.

5. Please be more specific on the criteria for design equivalent to prospective (page 6, line 12).

6. I don’t see why only studies with > 100 participants are included. A meta analysis would take the smaller n in to account.

7. The levels for the quality rating should be specified in the main text.

8. quality aspect: ‘sampling’: most studies were based on…. that is a result, what was the criterion?

9. quality aspect: ‘sampling’: How is an insightful discussion of the consequences of dropout an aspect of quality usable for the GRADE method? GRADE is all about whether the results may be biased, a discussion of consequences does not change that.

10. Overall: in the discussion of quality aspects many times results of the review are presented. Quality criteria should be formulated without knowledge of the findings, this presentation may give the wrong impression.

11. Page 7: line 22 to 32: these are results.

12. Argumentation for GRADE could best be presented in the background
13. The GRADE system should be presented in the methods section to provide transparency for the readers. The results of the GRADE procedure belong in the results section.

14: More details on the meta analysis should be provided.

15: What are informal homogeneity tests??

16: Results: Overall, a clear overview of the findings is not presented. Which factors, which quality levels? And by presenting forest plots of parts of the results only, the data of the meta analysis of the other factors are not shown. An overview of the findings with the data is needed for readers to assess the findings. Page 10 includes many statements without any reference to the direction and strengths of the associations!

17. Discussion: highly unstructured. methodological considerations are presented together with other parts of the discussion. And then under the subheading ‘on the methods’ results are presented.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The numbering of the references should be checked. nr7 (page 3/line 34) refers to nr 8 in the reference list. Also the spelling of the references (I only checked reference 8) contains typing errors.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Background: the authors point to the Michie review conclusion on how factors are amenable to change. But the concluding line of that paragraph (line 24) could be more specific. How can the re-organisational exposure of factors be explored? If the authors mean that by knowing the associations, interventions can be focused towards these factors (and that is why the review is needed) I agree. But to what extent the psychosocial exposures can be changed cannot be answered by this review.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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