



Evolution of psychosocial factors at work in a French region

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Résumé en anglais

Background : Psychosocial factors at work (PFW) can be defined as all non-physicochemical occupational risks. Several epidemiological models have been proposed to measure PFW, but one of the most widely used is Karasek's model.

Aims : To determine whether psychosocial factors, evaluated by Karasek's questionnaire, had increased in a cohort of workers.

Methods : A random sample of workers in the Pays de la Loire region of France, who could be considered representative of the region's population of salaried workers, filled in a self-administered questionnaire, including Karasek's self-administered questionnaire, in 2002-05 and 2007-09. Karasek's questionnaire can be used to study three psychosocial dimensions (psychological demand, decision latitude and social support in the workplace) in workers in order to define two high-risk situations for their health: 'Job Strain' and 'Iso Strain'. Changes in job strain and iso strain among workers were studied according to the workers' sociodemographic characteristics and their working conditions.

Results : In this sample of 2049 workers, the proportion with iso strain increased between the two periods from 12 to 16%, $P < 0.001$, mainly among manual workers. Deterioration of Karasek indicators was mainly explained by an increase of the 'low social support' dimension (38 versus 49%, $P < 0.001$). Working conditions such as temporary employment of colleagues and high perceived physical exertion were associated with higher PFW.

Conclusions : This study, based on a quantitative and collective model, showed deterioration of working team environments and increased risk for individual mental health in this cohort of French workers in recent years.

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