

Title	Work Stress and Health in a Globalized Economy-The Model of Effort-Reward Imbalance
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Source	Springer International Publishing Switzerland
Pub Date	2016
Brief Introduction	<p><i>“More and better jobs.”</i> This is a corner-stone in the European Union strategy for sustainable development of living and working conditions for its 508 million inhabitants. My own 60 years of research, teaching, and lobbying in this area, through countless conferences, speeches, publications, and discussions with cabinet ministers and parliamentarians, and my long-term collaboration with several of the United Nations’ specialized agencies have taught me that there is a very wide gap between the establishment of scientific knowledge and its translation into political action. And there is an even wider gap between such policies and their actual implementation by central and local government and all levels of management in trade and industry.</p> <p>At the beginning of my endeavors in the mid-50s, none of the major stress-and-health related theoretical models did exist – neither Karasek’s, Theorell’s and Johnson’s “demand-control-support,” Siegrist’s “Effort-Reward-Imbalance” nor Marmot’s “Social Gradient/Unfairness” models. Today, they do exist, are utilized worldwide, and have been the basis for the production of solid evidence concerning a wide variety of pathogenic (and some salutogenic) situational causes and health effects caused or triggered by our living and working conditions, and our ways to cope with them.</p> <p>Still, work stress and its direct and indirect pathogenic effects prevail, are endemic and probably even getting worse, as shown in this highly important volume with contributions from leading scientists from all over the world.</p> <p>Why is this so? The answer can probably be summarized in three quotes:</p> <p><i>“Simplify as much as possible – but not more!”</i> High-level politicians, managers, and administrators are usually very reluctant to read and digest thick volumes of scientific treatises. They usually prefer one-page memos. But such oversimplifications (cf Albert Einstein) do not fit attempts to solve highly complex societal, occupational and/or health problems, and their interrelationships.</p> <p><i>“It is not enough to know – you also have to apply. It is not enough to wish – you also have to act.”</i> This was said by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe some 150 years ago, and it has remained valid ever since. In addition, our analyses and subsequent actions should not be based on tunnel vision or silo thinking but need to be comprehensive, integrative, and sustainable.</p>

analyzed in a scholarly review by Rugulies, Aust, and Madsen. Their conclusion based on prospective cohort studies asserts that reward frustration at work has a significant impact on the development of depressive disorders.

The demonstration of potential psychobiologic pathways linking exposure at work with disease development defines a major scientific challenge in this field. In their chapter, Bellingrath and Kudielka provide a comprehensive, carefully elaborated review of respective research findings related to the ERI model.

As pointed out in the title of this book, stressful work has become a widespread concern in a globalized economy. It is therefore of interest to see to what extent this development is reliably captured by core notions of effort-reward theory. The third set of chapters deals with this task by discussing research findings from four different regions of the world. Tsutsumi, a pioneer of ERI research beyond western societies, discusses relevant respective scientific developments in Japan. Then Owen, Bailey, and Dollard demonstrate how ERI theory can be fruitfully extended using the notion of psychosocial safety climate. Their research is based on extensive data from Australia. China is one of the countries that will essentially shape the world's future. Therefore, research on work stress and health in China, as convincingly reviewed by Li, deserves special attention. Readers may learn that the author himself made significant contributions to this development. The book's part on economic globalization is concluded by a chapter by Gomez Ortiz and Juarez-Garcia who discuss more recent research developments on the topic in Latin America.

In the fourth section, two chapters are devoted to extensions of ERI theory beyond the scope of paid work. According to one line of epistemological reasoning, the quality of a theory is contingent on its capacity to explain a wide range of phenomena by a restricted set of elements. Siegrist and Wahrendorf explore to what extent the notion of failed reciprocity in non-monetary types of costly transactions is useful in explaining reduced health and wellbeing. More specifically, they illustrate the case of volunteering and informal caring. More recently, the model has been applied to school work of young students. A more thoroughly developed extension concerns household and family work. In their chapter, Sperlich and Geyer were the first to analyze these associations with health and summarize the current state knowledge.

The final group of chapters deals with interventions and policy implications of this research. Theorell, one of the founders of modern occupational stress research, explores the significance of three core notions, reward, flow, and control, for human wellbeing as well as their contribution to guide and enrich stress prevention programs at work, and specifically leadership training. A core chapter of this final part is devoted to the translation of scientific knowledge to practice, in particular to the design of health-promoting workplace interventions. The Canadian research team of Brisson, Guilbert-Ouimet, Trudel, and Vézina, who performed path-breaking studies in this field, summarize available evidence and set out recommendations for future intervention research. The last chapter broadens the perspective of analysis by addressing the contribution of national and international labor and social policies to the development of healthy work. Marmot, who has inspired and influenced policy through his scientific distinction more than anyone else in this field, discusses

together with Siegrist implications of current work stress research for the development and implementation of globally sustainable improvements of healthy work, with a special focus on the promises of effort-reward theory.

Although this comprehensive account of a theoretical model and its multiple applications in research and policy may give the impression that this work has come to an end, quite the opposite is the case. Each chapter points to open issues and new questions, and there is an urgent need to refine, revise, and update the current state of the art. Thus, this book may be instrumental in supporting researchers in their efforts towards moving the field to next steps of significant scientific progress and practical impact.

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