



# Quantifying Work-Related Psychosocial Risk Factors

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## WHAT DID WE DO & WHY?

Chronic work-related stress has a negative effect on employees' health and safety. This has led to the development of guidelines in many countries imposing obligations on all organizations to assess, prevent, and manage psychosocial hazards in the workplace. However, a significant challenge with this task is the lack of a general indicator that would allow for the identification of employees at high risk or categorize a workplace (unit) as posing a low, moderate, or high psychosocial risk for negative health outcomes. The aim of this study, therefore, was to develop a single indicator to assess the aggregate effect of numerous work-related psychosocial risk factors in order to help organizations quantify overall psychosocial risk at both the individual and the unit levels. Using the data of 13,104 employees, we developed an indicator (Composite Psychosocial Risk Score) based on the *Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire II*.

## OUR FINDINGS

The Composite Psychosocial Risk Score reflects the number (0-22) of subscales in the questionnaire, on which a given individual scored in the high-risk range. The results showed that the Composite Psychosocial Risk Score was in strong, positive relationship with the presence of psychological and physical symptoms of poor health. Based on the patterns of increase in risk for poor health outcomes, five Composite Psychosocial Risk Score categories were established (no-, low-, moderate-, high- and very high risk).

## WHAT'S NEXT?

We propose that the combined percentage of workers in the high and very high risk category can be an approximate indicator of the psychosocial risk at the given workplace. If this is above 25%, the organization or the unit is a very high-risk workplace, where risk reduction measures are especially needed. The detailed psychosocial profile based on the original scales of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire II provides the basis for planning and monitoring such interventions.

## TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES

- Chronic work-related stress has a negative effect on employees' physical and mental health and workplace safety.
- Organizations need to carefully select assessment methods to identify high-risk employee groups and units and to gauge overall work-related stress level across the organization.
- The same assessment methods can be used to monitor the effectiveness of individual- or organizational-level interventions to prevent / decrease work-related stress.

Stauder, A., Nistor, K., Zakor, T., Szabó, A., Nistor, A., Ádám, S., & Konkoly Thege, B. (2017). Quantifying Multiple Work-Related Psychosocial Risk Factors: Proposal for a Composite Indicator Based on the COPSQ II. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 24(6), 915-926. [doi:10.1007/s12529-017-9651-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12529-017-9651-6)

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