Worker mental health and burnout – Influencing factors, intervention approaches and international standards for best practice
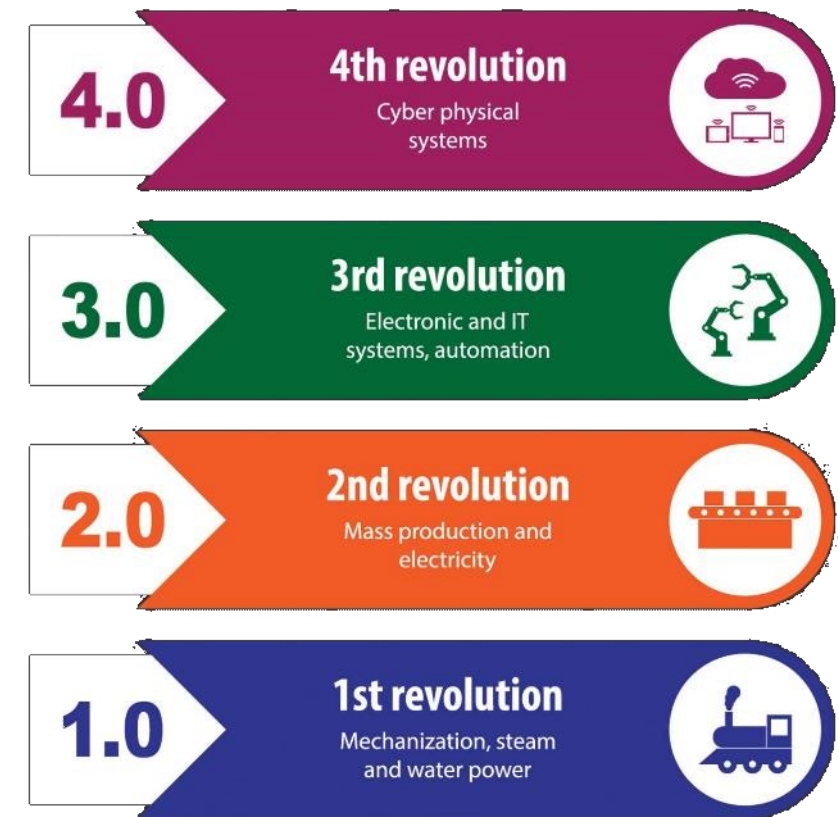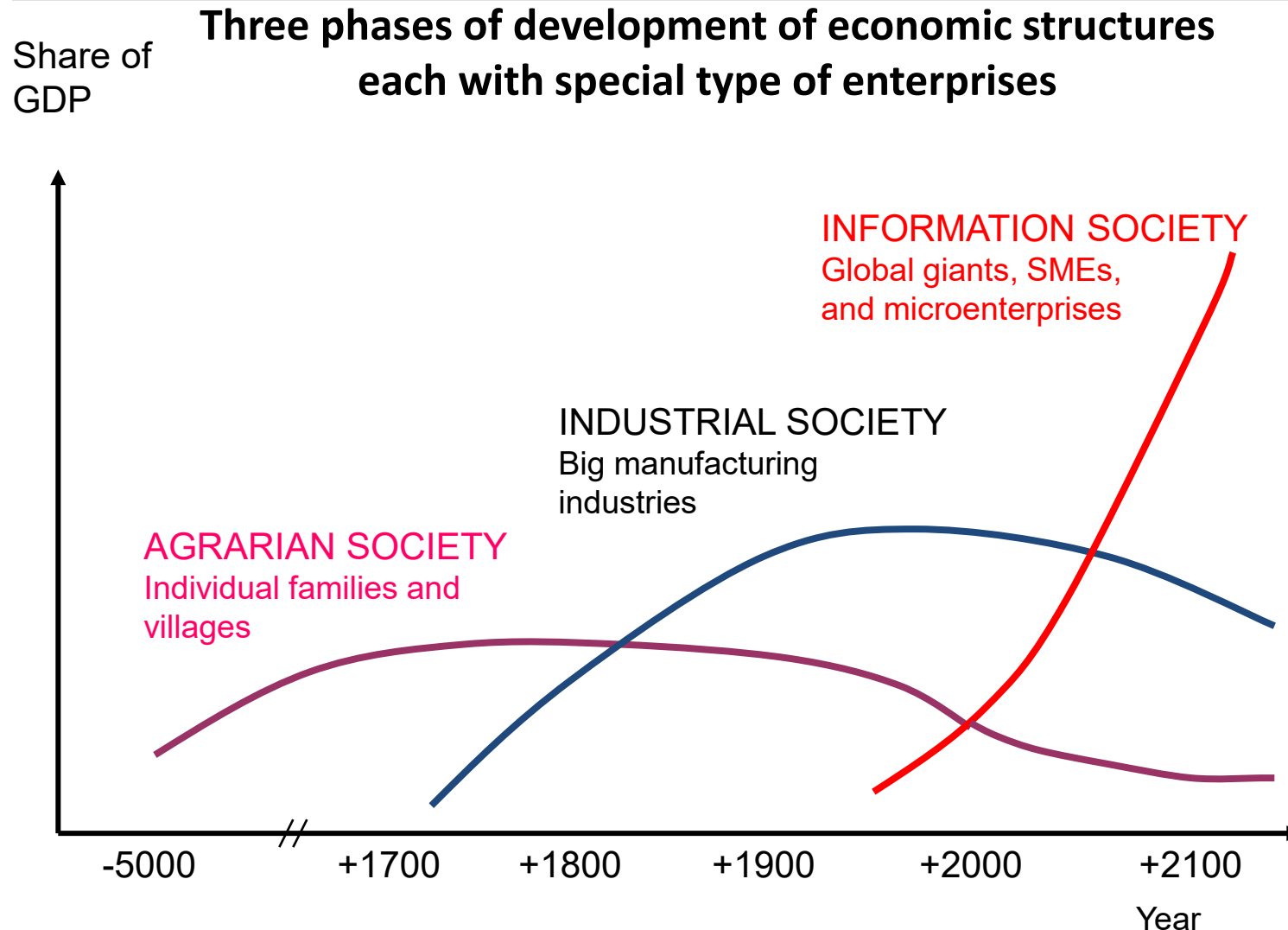
Stavroula Leka

Professor of Organisations, Work & Health, Lancaster University, UK

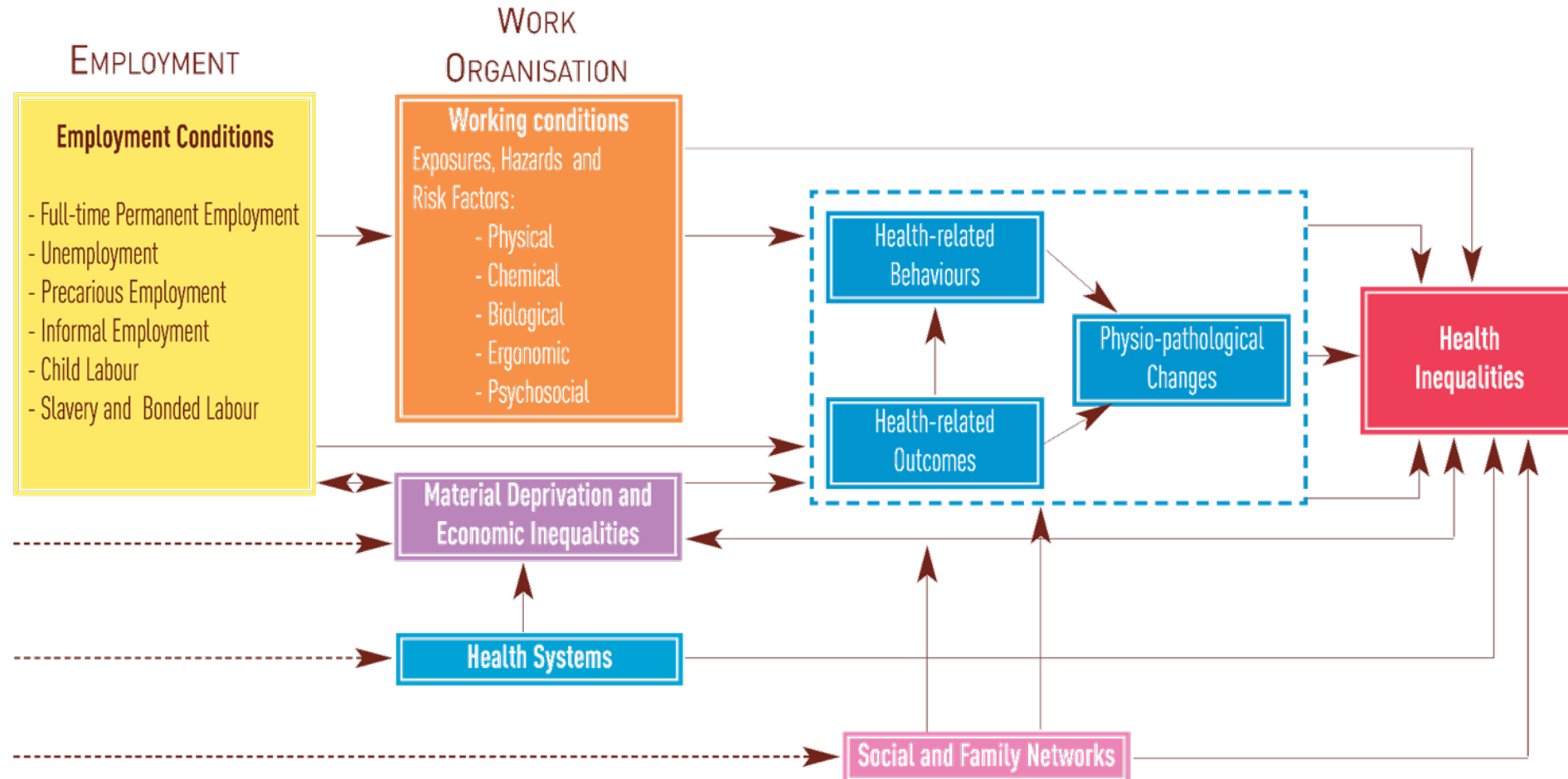Director of Centre for Organisational Health & Well-being, Lancaster University, UK

Emeritus Professor of Work & Health Policy, University of Nottingham, UK

President, European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology

Changing world of work

Share of GDP

Three phases of development of economic structures each with special type of enterprises

INFORMATION SOCIETY
Global giants, SMEs, and microenterprises

INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY
Big manufacturing industries

AGRARIAN SOCIETY
Individual families and villages

-5000   +1700   +1800   +1900   +2000   +2100

Year

4.0 — 4th revolution — Cyber physical systems

3.0 — 3rd revolution — Electronic and IT systems, automation

2.0 — 2nd revolution — Mass production and electricity

1.0 — 1st revolution — Mechanization, steam and water power

Work as a social determinant of health

Adapted from: Benach et al., 2013

Well-being at work

Worker well-being is an *integrative* concept that characterizes quality of life with respect to an individual's health and *work-related* **environmental, organizational**, and **psychosocial** factors.

It is the experience of **positive** perceptions and the presence of *constructive* **conditions** at *work* and in *other areas of life* that enables workers to thrive and achieve their full potential.
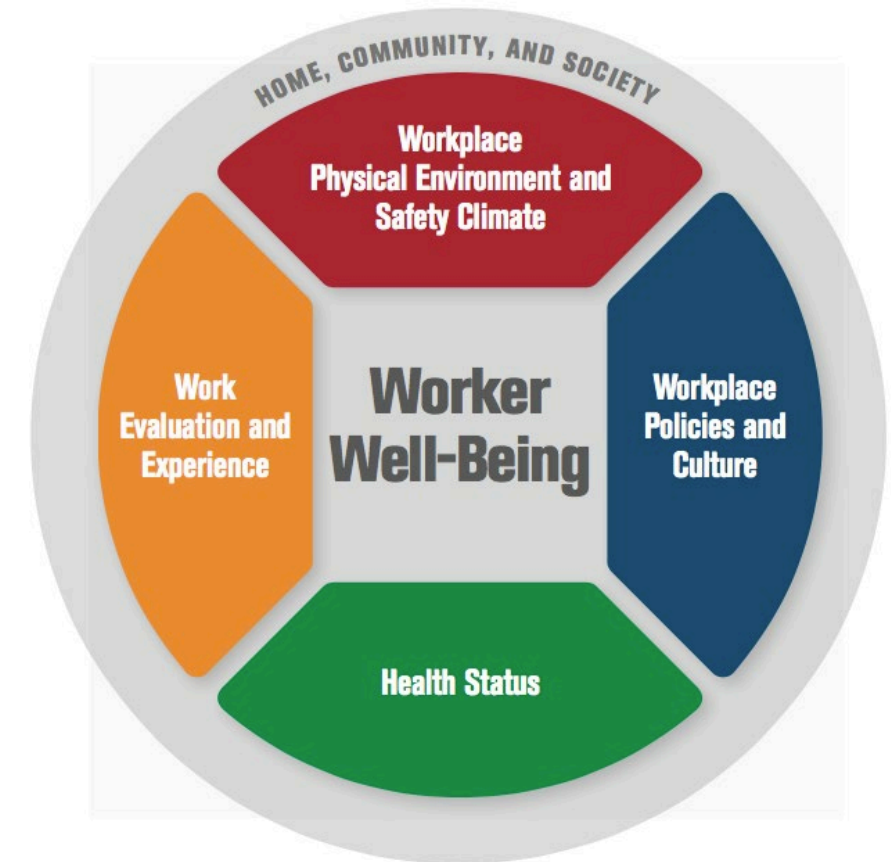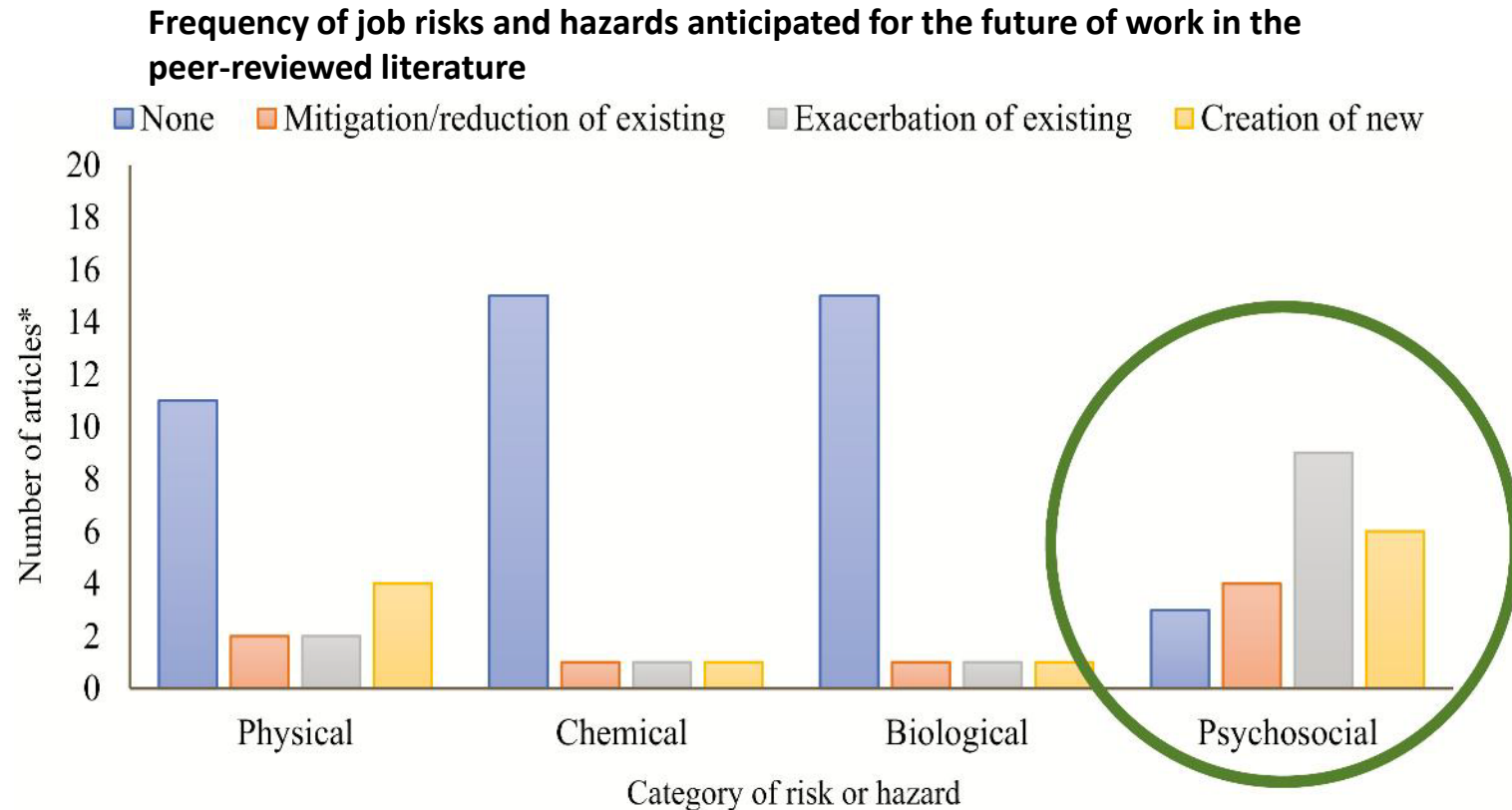

(Ramya et al 2018)

Psychosocial work environment

- The psychosocial work environment concerns psychological and social dimensions of the work environment relevant to aspects of work organisation, design and management, and interpersonal relationships

- It underpins <u>every</u> organisation's operations and is as old as work itself

- Increased focus is the result of accumulating evidence on negative outcomes of poor management of the psychosocial work environment in terms of potential harm to employee health, safety and well-being, and poor organisational performance with associated negative societal impacts

- However this is only half of the story…
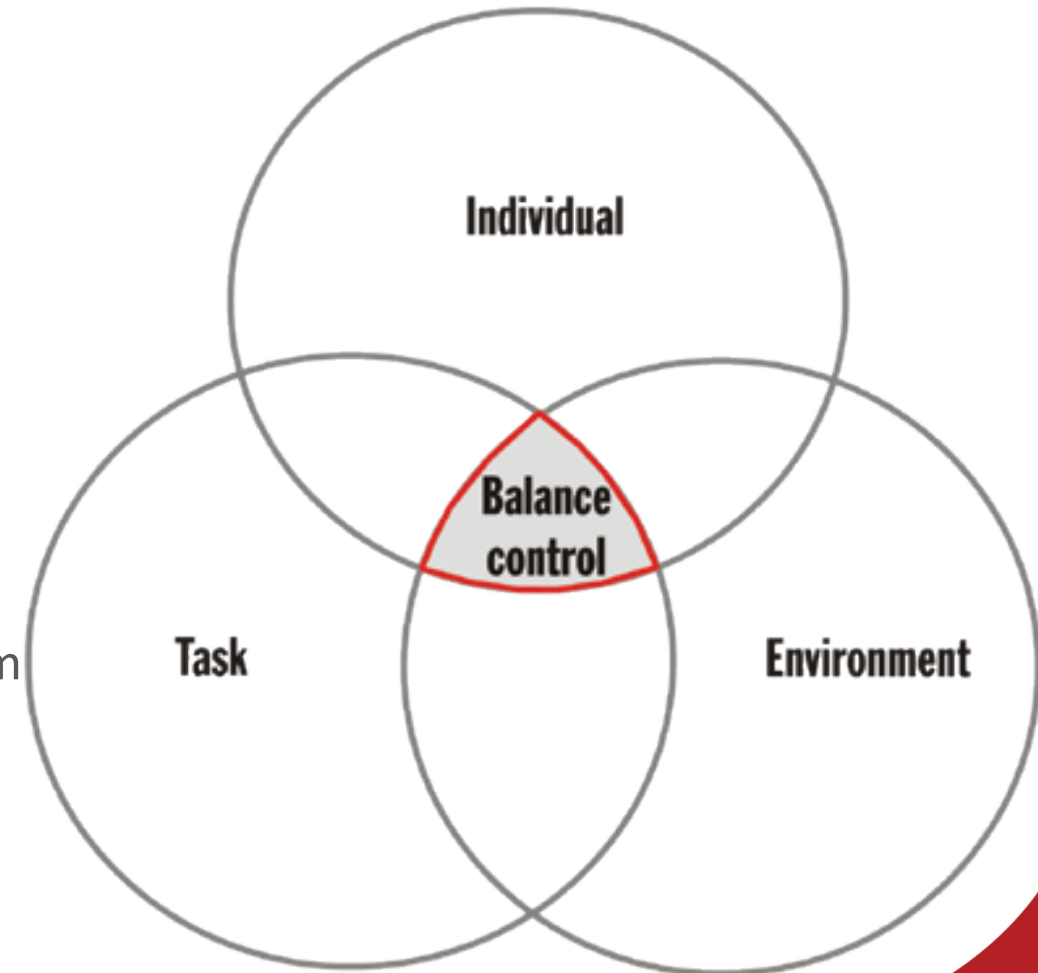
Psychosocial Work Environment - Definitions

- **Psychosocial factors:** *aspects of work organization, design and management* (e.g. work demands, organizational support, rewards, interpersonal relationships) > notice lack of negative connotation to the concept

- **Psychosocial hazards:** aspects of work organization, design and management that have the potential to cause harm (e.g. unrealistic job demands, lack of role clarity, lack of organizational support, harassment and bullying in the workplace) on individual health and safety, on organizations (e.g. sickness absence, reduced productivity, human error) and on society (e.g. increased disability pensions, healthcare costs, etc.)

- **Psychosocial risks:** potential of psychosocial hazards to cause harm

https://www.etui.org/publications/conceptualising-work-related-psychosocial-risks

Frequency of job risks and hazards anticipated for the future of work in the peer-reviewed literature

* Categories of *mitigation/reduction, exacerbation,* and *creation* are not mutually exclusive. Totals sum to more than 17 in each risk/hazard category.

PWE Key dimensions 1

Job content	Lack of variety or short work cycles, fragmented or meaningless work, under use of skills, high uncertainty, continuous exposure to people through work	Meaningful work, appropriate use of skills, work retaining employee interest and engagement, appropriate support
Workload & work pace	Work overload or under load, machine pacing, high levels of time pressure, continually subject to deadlines	Appropriate level of workload, appropriate work pace, sensible and achievable deadlines
Work schedule	Shift working (especially irregular), night shifts, inflexible work schedules, unpredictable hours, long or unsociable hours	Sensible shifts and reasonable working hours to maintain work-life balance, flexible working practices
Control	Low participation in decision making, lack of control over workload, pacing, shift working	Participation in decision making, control at work
Environment & equipment	Inadequate equipment availability, suitability or maintenance; poor environmental conditions such as lack of space, poor lighting, excessive noise	Good physical working conditions according to good practice guidance

PWE Key dimensions 2

Organisational culture & function	Poor communication, low levels of support for problem solving and personal development, lack of definition of, or agreement on, organisational objectives	Clear organisational objectives, appropriate support for problem solving and personal development, good communication processes
Interpersonal relationships at work	Social or physical isolation, poor relationships with superiors, interpersonal conflict, lack of social support, harassment, violence	Good relationships at work, teamwork, social support, appropriate policies and procedures to deal with conflicts
Role in organisation	Role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility for people	Clear roles and responsibilities, appropriate support to meet objectives
Career development	Career stagnation and uncertainty, under promotion or over promotion, poor pay, job insecurity, low social value to work	Appropriate career prospects & development matching skills & performance, effort reward balance, valuable/meaningful work, job security
Home-work interface	Conflicting demands of work and home, low support at home, dual career problems	Work-life balance, supportive organisational policies and practices to achieve 'life balance'

Work-related stress

Focus has been on *work-related stress:* the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope

ESENER (EU-OSHA, 2010, 2015, 2020) found that only about 20% of European enterprises inform their employees on psychosocial risks or work-related stress, let alone taking appropriate actions to tackle them

Often confusion between *pressure* or *challenge* and *stress* and sometimes it is used to excuse bad management practice

Pressure at the workplace is unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment; Pressure perceived as acceptable by an individual, may even keep workers alert, motivated, able to work and learn, depending on the available resources and personal characteristics

When that pressure becomes excessive or otherwise unmanageable it leads to stress
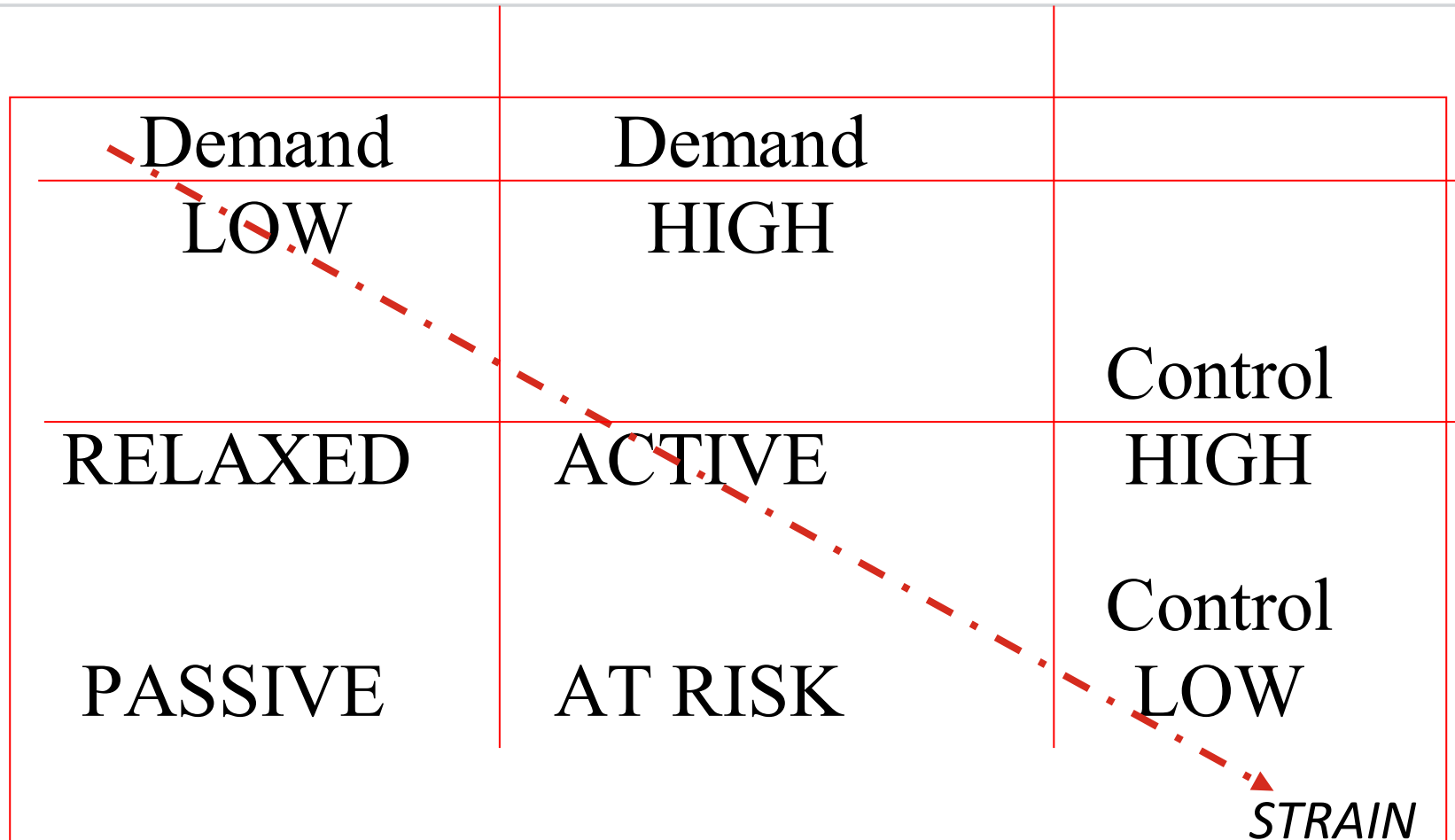
Burnout vs Work engagement

- *Burnout* is defined as a state of exhaustion where one is cynical about the value of his/her occupation and doubtful about his/her ability to perform. Characterised by:
  - *exhaustion* (being emotionally overextended and exhausted at one's work)
  - *cynicism* (an indifference or a distance attitude towards one's work)
  - *depersonalisation* (an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's service)
  - *personal accomplishment/performance* (feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people)
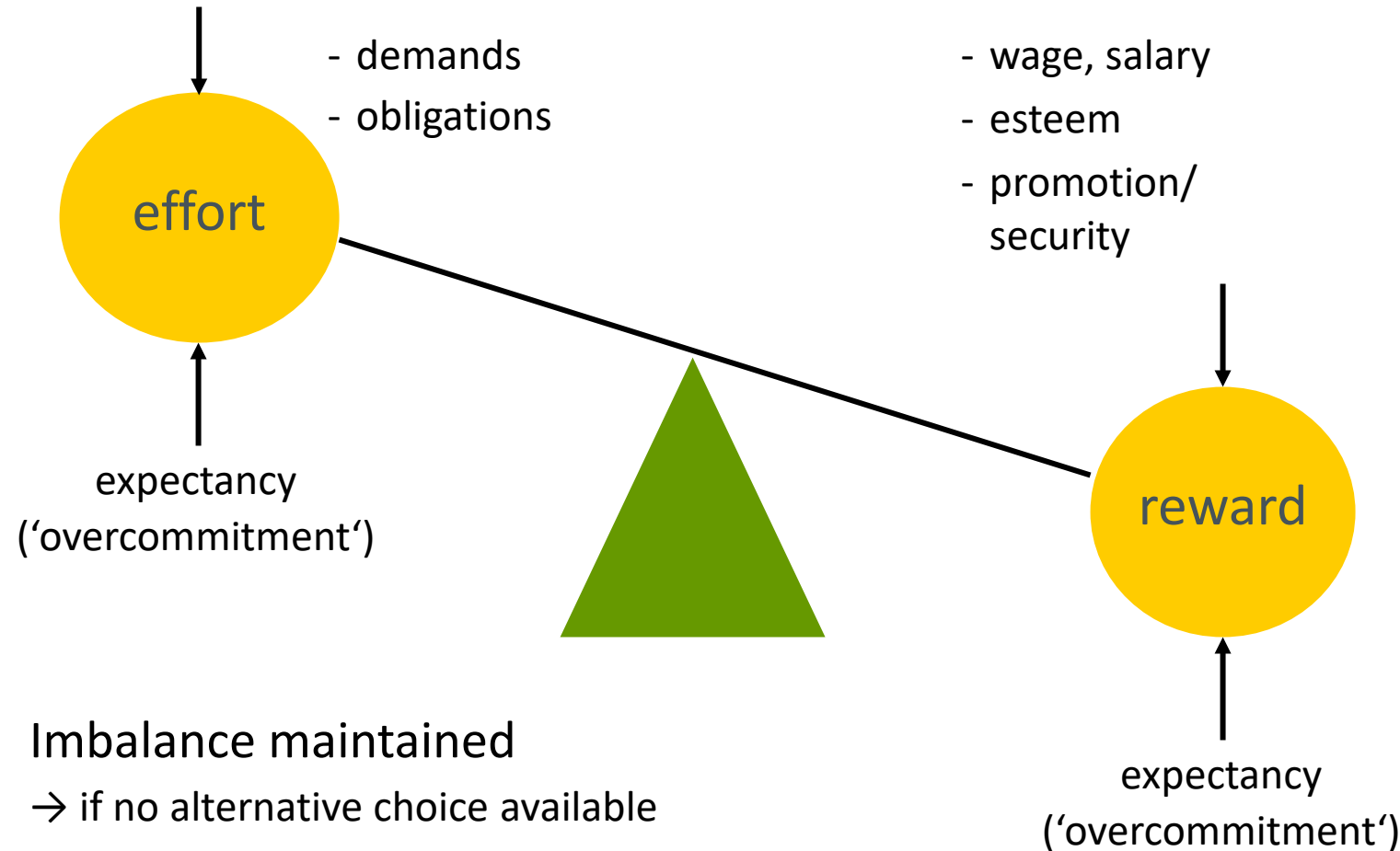
Work engagement

- *Work engagement* is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption

  – *Vigour* is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties

  – *Dedication* refers to being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge

  – *Absorption* is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work

Job Demands - Control Model

	Demand LOW	Demand HIGH	
Control HIGH	RELAXED	ACTIVE	
Control LOW	PASSIVE	AT RISK	

STRAIN

(Karasek, 1979)

Effort-reward imbalance at work model

effort
- demands
- obligations

reward
- wage, salary
- esteem
- promotion/ security

expectancy ('overcommitment')

expectancy ('overcommitment')

Imbalance maintained

→ if no alternative choice available

→ if accepted for strategic reasons

→ if personal style of coping present (overcommitment)

(Siegrist 1996)

Job Demands-Resources Model

- How the combination of stressful and motivating job characteristics influences negative and positive aspects of well-being
- Working conditions can be classified in two general categories (i.e., job demands and job resources) that are applicable to virtually all occupations
- Job demands require effort and are therefore associated with physiological and psychological costs, such as fatigue, whereas job resources foster personal growth, learning, development, and have motivational qualities
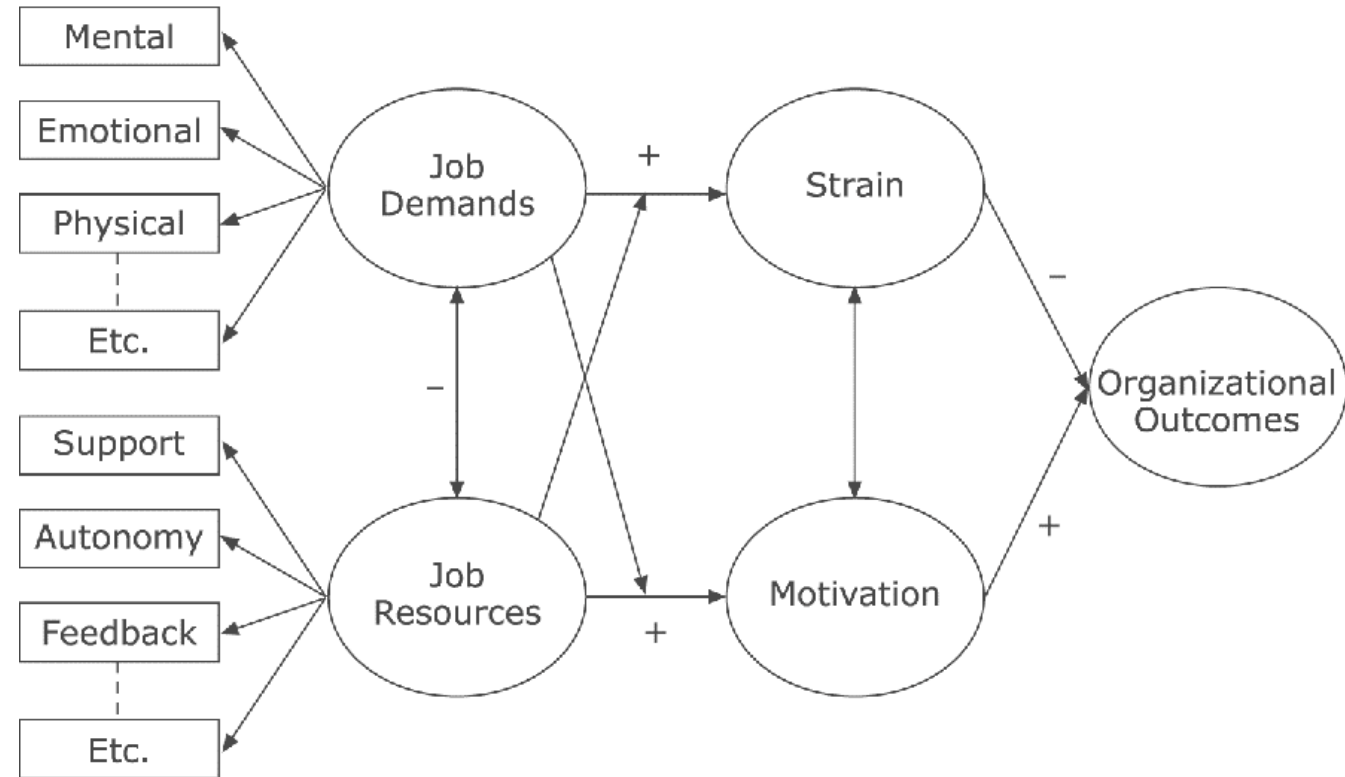
(Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)

Psychosocial Safety Climate

- PSC is a leading indicator that can predict levels of psychosocial risk in relation to workplace demands and resources as well as worker health and productivity outcomes (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) - Composed of four subsystems:

1. Management commitment: Senior management demonstrate a commitment to stress prevention through support and involvement

2. Management priority: Senior management prioritises the health and safety of their employees over productivity goals

3. Organisational communication: Organisations provide safe and usable channels for communication and listen to the concerns all their members

4. Organisational participation: All levels of the organisation (e.g., unions, occupational health and safety representatives, employees, and management) participate and consult on protecting and promoting the psychological health and safety of staff
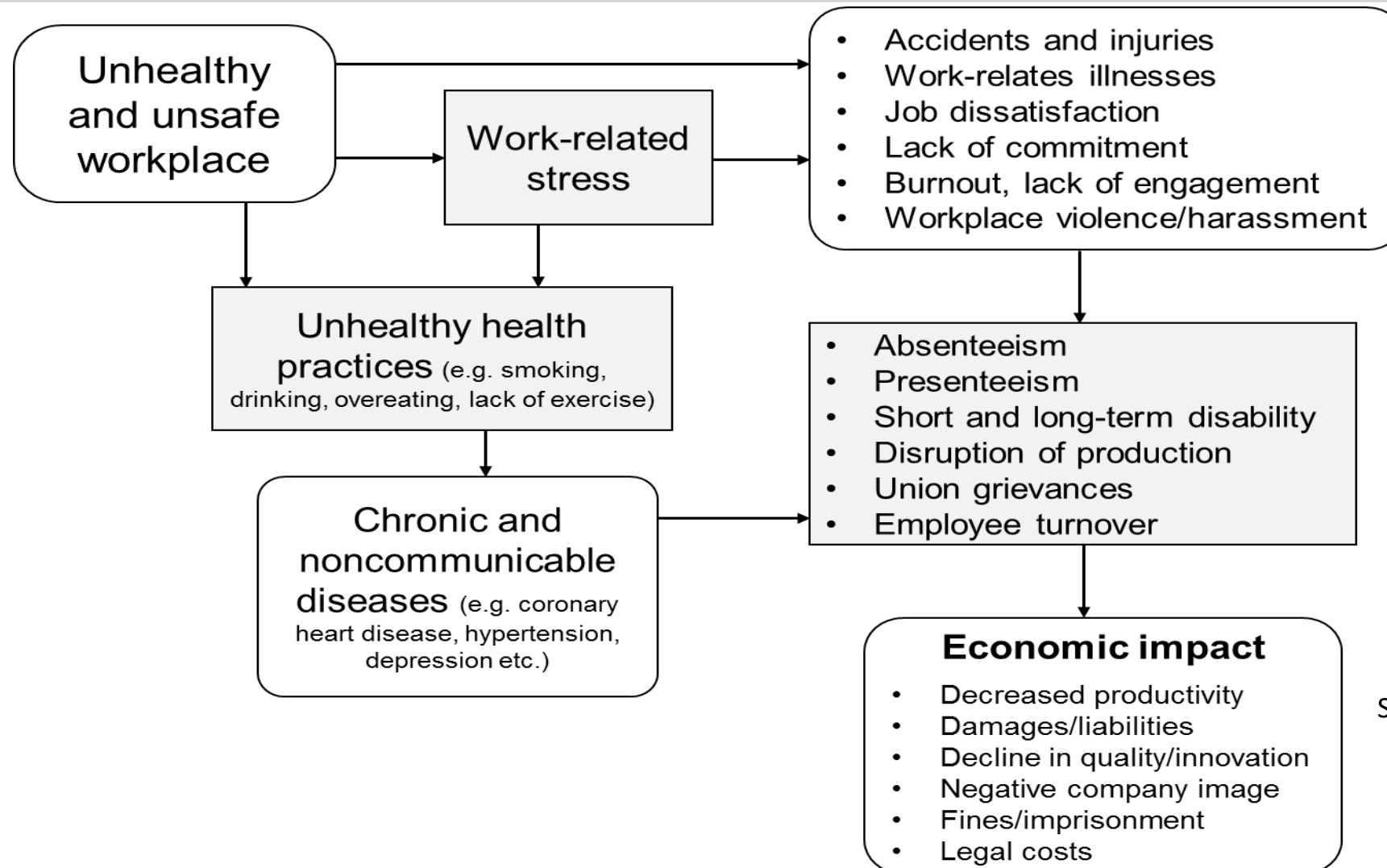
Why intervene – Negative Impact

Job strain affects almost 1 in every 3 employees in OECD countries

Share of employees who experienced a number of job demands exceeding that of job resources, percentage

OECD (2020). How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being.
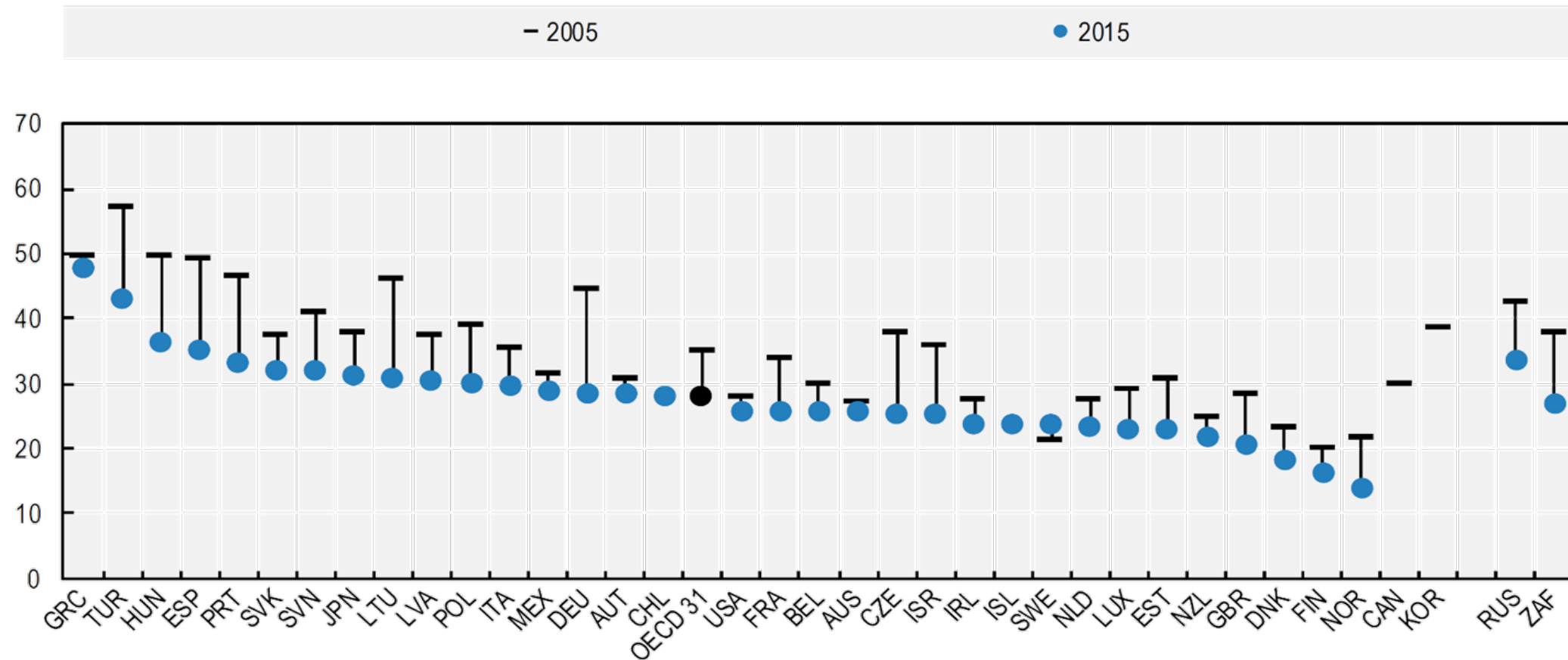
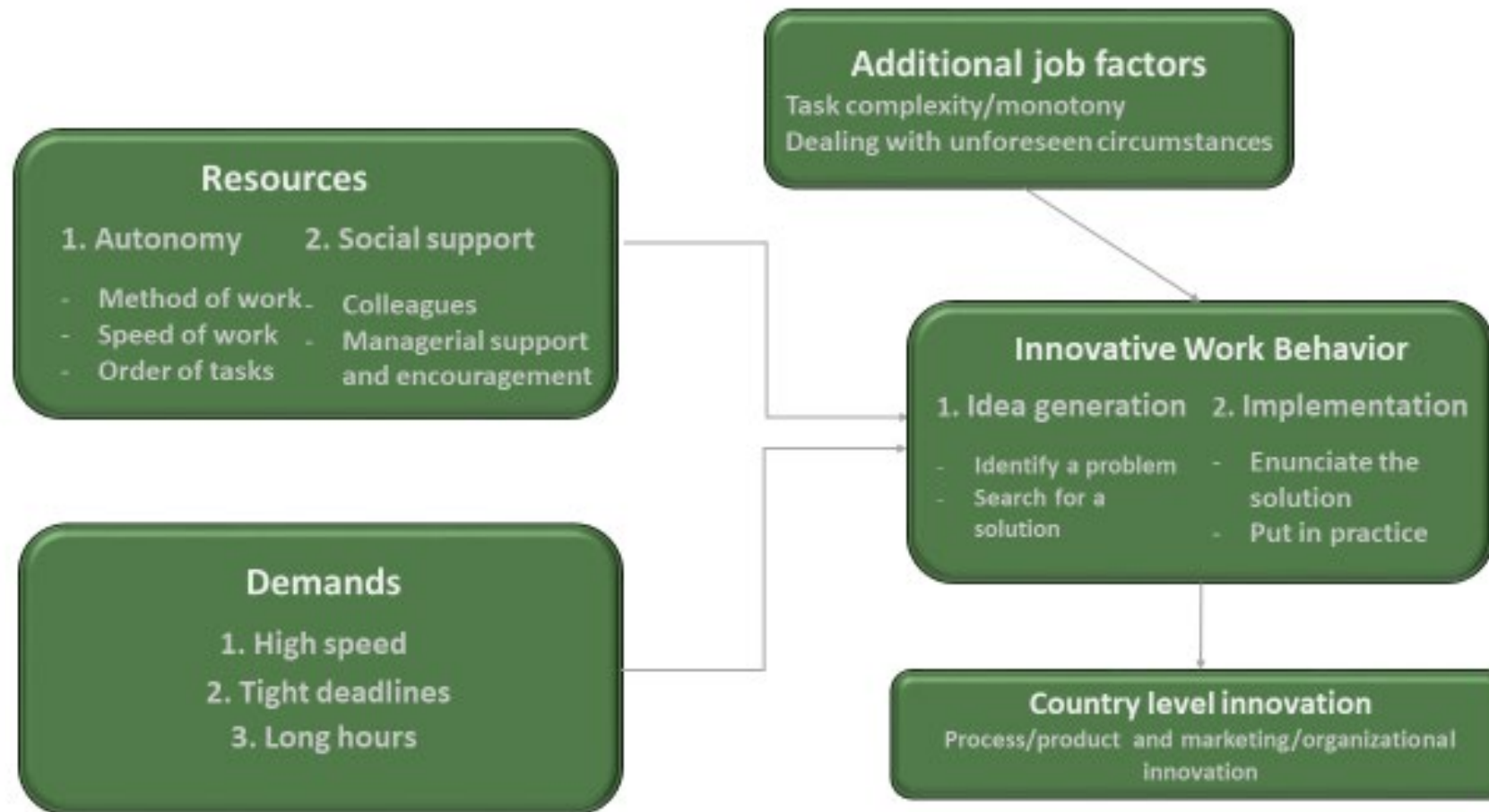# Psychosocial risks - negative impact

Source: Adapted from Burton, 2010

Negative health impact

- High job strain (high demands & low control) appears to independently affect the risk of future common mental disorders in midlife (Harvey et al., 2018)

- Job strain and long work hours longitudinally associated with moderate/severe suicidal ideation in the US (Choi, 2018)

- Job strain, effort-reward imbalance, and organizational injustice contributing to CHD (Jaskanwal et al., 2018)

- Job strain predicted degenerative MSDs among both men and women after 11 years of follow-up (Prakash et al, 2017)

- Risk of disability pension from depressive disorders 4.4–4.7-fold (95% CI 2.4–8.0) for combinations of job strain+ERI and job strain+ERI+injustice, and 1.9–2.5-fold (95% CI 1.1–4.0) for job strain and ERI alone (Juvani et al.. 2018)

Positive impact: Link with innovation

Source: Dediu, Leka & Jain, 2018

Policy instruments

WHO guidelines on mental health at work
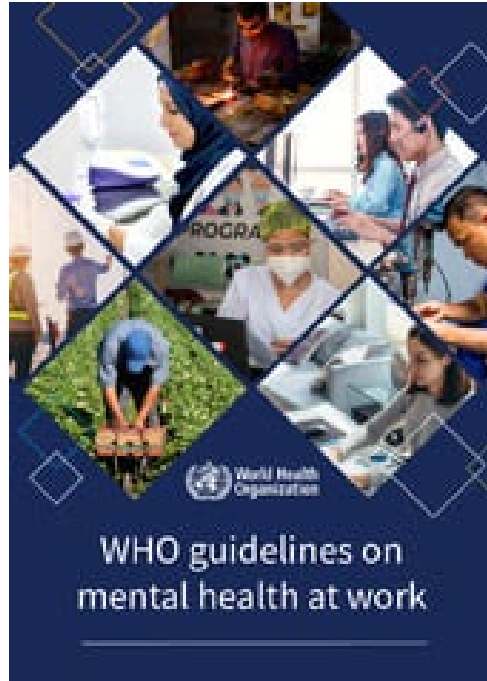
ILO CONVENTION 190
ON VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORLD OF WORK

IT CAN CHANGE LIVES

Violence and harassment in the world of work can happen everywhere – online, in the physical workplace, during the commute, where workers rest, eat or attend to their health and sanitation needs, as well as at social gatherings.

WE CAN MAKE IT STOP!
In June 2019, the International Labour Conference said STOP to violence and harassment in the world of work by adopting a ground-breaking international tool, Convention 190 (C190) and a Recommendation 206 (R206).

This new Convention protects all workers irrespective of their contractual status; interns, apprentices, people in training, workers whose employment has been terminated, volunteers and jobseekers.

▶ It has a strong focus on gender-based violence. Women are disproportionally affected by violence and harassment in the world of work.

▶ It covers all sectors in the public and private sector, rural and urban, formal and informal economy.

▶ Its scope is the world of work, which is larger than only the actual workplace.

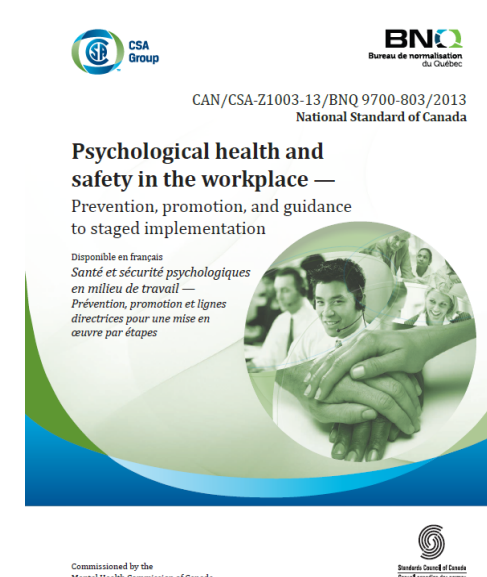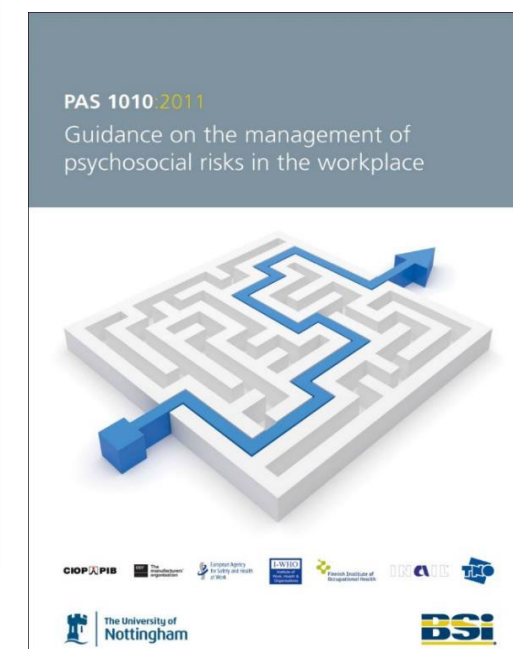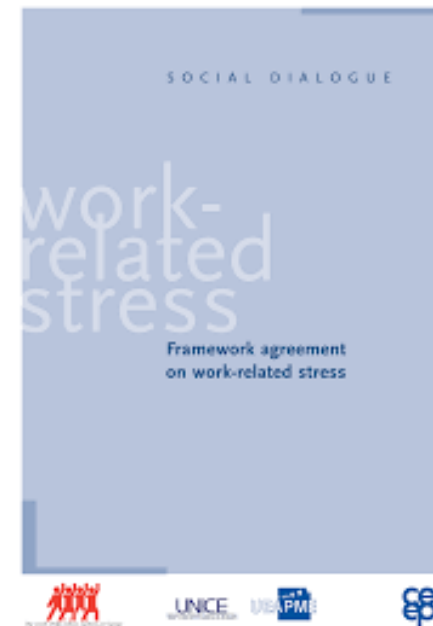▶ Convention 190 leaves no one behind.

WHY IS C190 IMPORTANT?

▶ Violence and harassment in the world of work cannot be tolerated.

▶ This is the first international standard that aims to put an end to violence and harassment in the world of work.

▶ It recognizes that everyone has the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment.

▶ The Convention will cover existing gaps in national legislation.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT
DIGITAL ISATION

ISO

Lancaster University

ISO 45003:2021
Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks

VISION ZERO
Safety.Health.Wellbeing.

How to create a healthy work environment and promote wellbeing at work with Vision Zero

SOCIAL DIALOGUE
work-related stress
Framework agreement on work-related stress

PAS 1010:2011
Guidance on the management of psychosocial risks in the workplace

CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013
National Standard of Canada

Psychological health and safety in the workplace —
Prevention, promotion, and guidance to staged implementation

Disponible en français
Santé et sécurité psychologiques en milieu de travail —
Prévention, promotion et lignes directrices pour une mise en œuvre par étapes
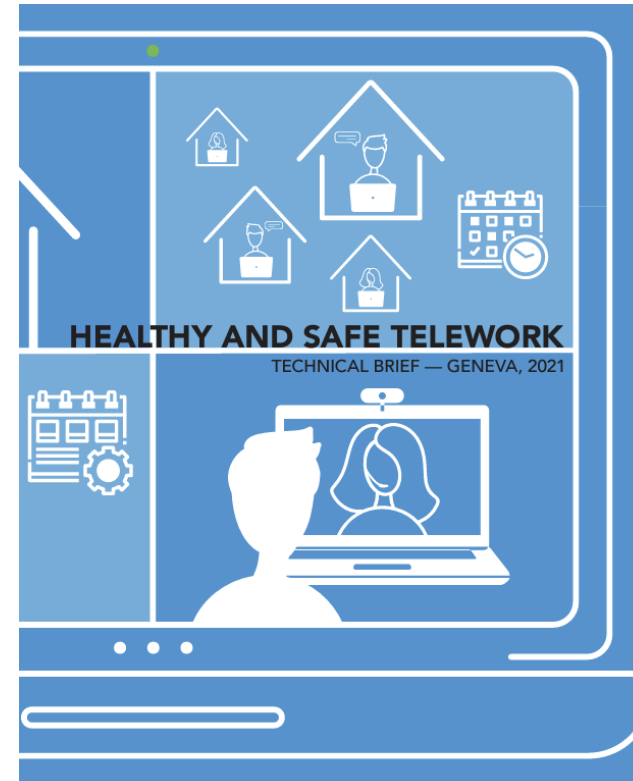
Commissioned by the Mental Health Commission of Canada

Psychosocial risks and Covid-19

https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_748638/lang--en/index.htm

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---lab_admin/documents/publication/wcms_836250.pdf

ISO 45003

- Provides guidance with respect to managing psychosocial risk within an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system to enable organizations to **prevent work-related injury and ill health of their workers and other interested parties, and to <u>promote well-being and engagement</u>**. It is applicable to organizations of all sizes and in all sectors for the development, implementation, maintenance and continual improvement of safe and healthy workplaces.

- ISO 45003 provides guidance to organizations on:

  - How to identify the conditions, circumstances and workplace demands that have the potential to impair the psychological health and wellbeing of employees

  - How to identify primary risk factors and assess them to determine what changes are required to improve the working environment

  - How to identify and control work-related hazards and manage psychosocial risk within an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system

- https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:45003:ed-1:v1:en

ISO 45003 - contents

The standard helps users identify how psychosocial risks can arise from:

- how work is organized
- social factors at work
- the work environment

Gives examples of the signs and symptoms of negative impacts

Gives examples of what you can do to eliminate or manage risks

Risk control strategies

The standard then outlines how control strategies can be designed on the basis of the previous stages in the process, and combining the following levels of intervention:

primary: organizational level controls to prevent or reduce harmful effects and promote well-being at work
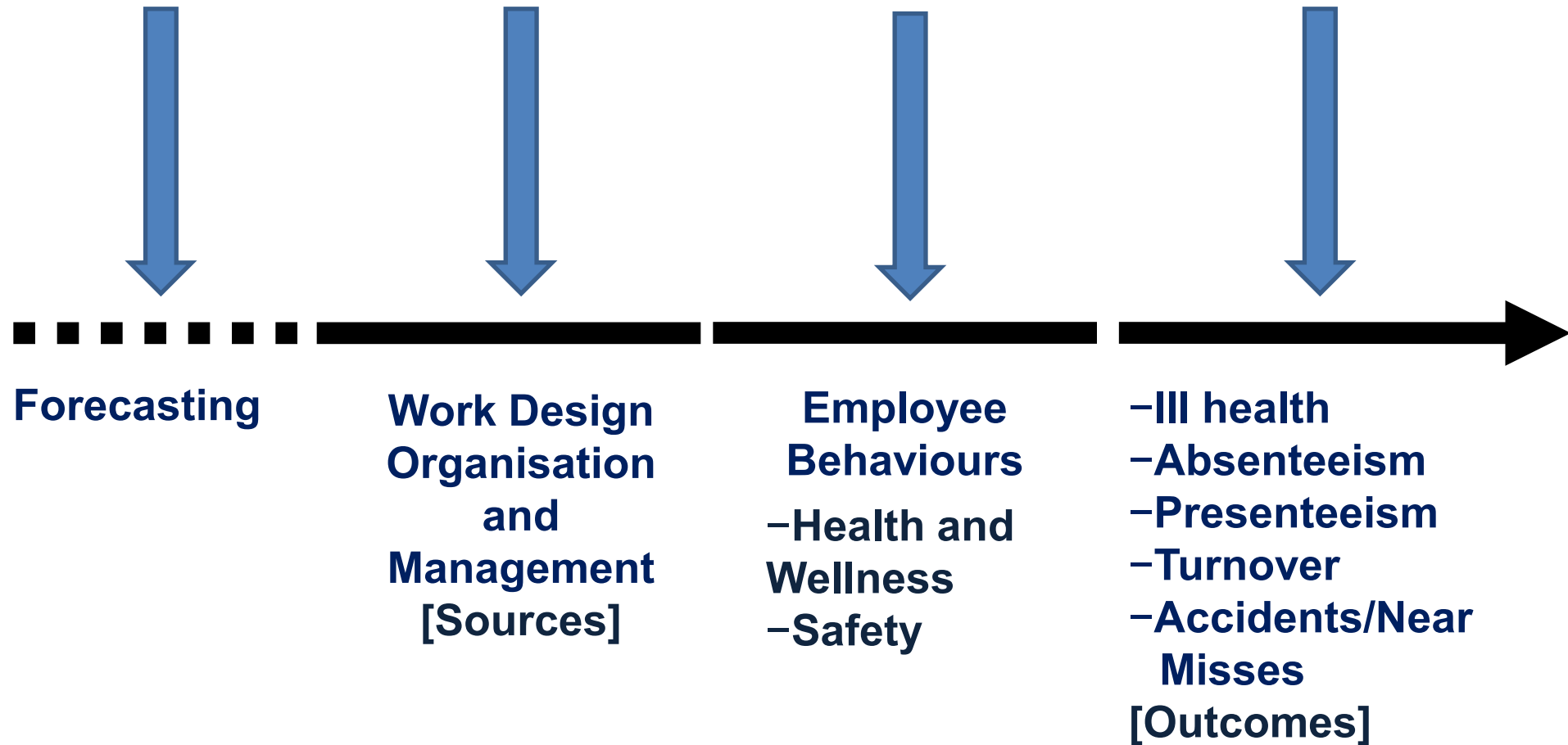
secondary: increasing resources that assist workers to deal with psychosocial risks by raising awareness and understanding through effective training and other appropriate measures

tertiary: reducing the harmful effects of exposure to psychosocial hazards by implementing rehabilitation programmes and taking other corrective and supportive actions

Interventions to manage psychosocial risks

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Legislative/ policy	Health and safety laws, employment law, legislation to prohibit bullying, harassment, discrimination.	Worker compensation	Social security disability programmes
Employer/ organisation	Anti-bullying Policies Codes of Conduct Development of organizational culture Management training Organizational survey	Handling procedures Return to work programmes	Corporate agreements and programmes of after-care Company provided long-term disability
Job/ Task	Job/task redesign Risk analysis	Staff surveys Training Conflict resolution; Mediation	Group recovery programmes
Individual/job interface	Training (e.g. assertiveness training), Health promotion programmes	Social support, Counselling	Therapy, Employee assistance programmes

What is needed

Forecasting

Work Design Organisation and Management [Sources]

Employee Behaviours
- Health and Wellness
- Safety

- Ill health
- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism
- Turnover
- Accidents/Near Misses

[Outcomes]

Future challenges (Leka, 2021)

Responsibility	How to define employer and worker responsibility in relation to risk management while working in new virtual work contexts and conditions (e.g. remote virtual work; virtual work from home; working in a VR environment). How can social protection be ensured even for independent workers?
Policy	How to achieve a good balance between regulation and other types of policy in order to address new and emerging risks in virtual work while not hindering rapid progress. How can inspections be more agile?
Autonomy and control	How to balance flexibility through virtual work with worker autonomy and control over their work. How can worker participation and collective bargaining be supported?
Privacy	How to protect worker privacy in a virtual environment while using algorithmic monitoring and surveillance. How can ethical hiring, appraisal an evaluation processes be developed maintaining human dignity?
Technology interface	How to incorporate new technological interfaces (e.g. enhanced sensory stimulation, robotics) in virtual work processes while ensuring human sensitive and human-in-control design. How can SME infrastructure and worker skills be developed appropriately?
Productivity	How to balance organisational economic performance against social performance. How can health, safety and well-being be addressed in a preventative way in the context of virtual work? How can an economy of well-being perspective be promoted and adopted?
Workforce diversity	How to support more participation of diverse groups (e.g. female, older, younger, different ability, migrant, low educated workers) in virtual work while developing their skills and providing appropriate support. How can a lifelong perspective to the development of the workforce be promoted?

Thank You!!!

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