

Work-related stress in health occupations

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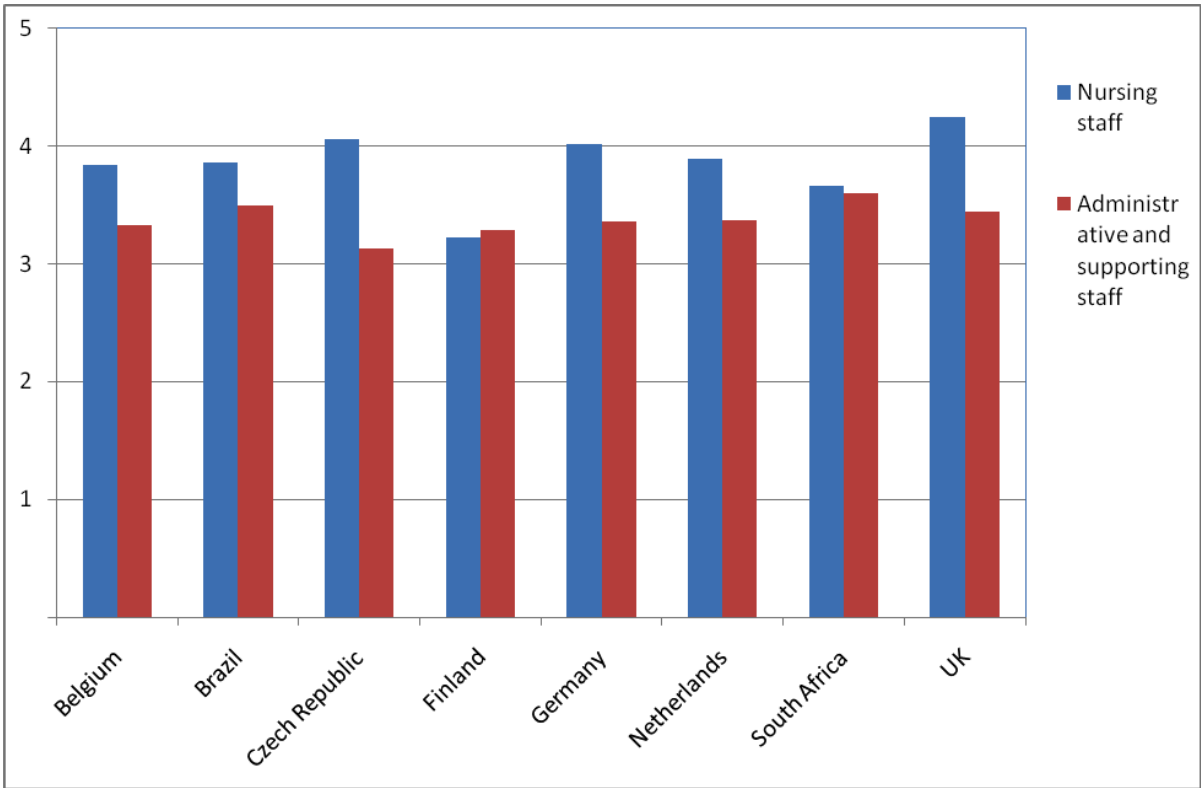
The last few years, the WageIndicator web survey asks in detail for the occupation of the respondent. Jointly with the growingly worldwide presence of the WageIndicator this allows for the comparison of wages and working conditions across occupations and countries. In this contribution we focus on work-related stress in the health care sector. At many occasions, at congresses and in the international trade union movement, the assumed high work-related stress level of nursing staff is a major issue. Here we test this assumption, by comparing the answers on the survey question “How often do you find your job stressful?” for 2008 and 2009 for nursing staff on the one hand and administrative and supporting staff in health care on the other. We do so for eight countries: six EU member states (Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom), Brazil, and South Africa.

The graphics shows the results of our analysis. The blue bars indicate the scores of the nursing staff on work-related stress, the red bars those of administrative and supporting staff. In Finland the scores of the latter staff are (slightly) higher, but in the other seven countries the assumption is confirmed by higher scores of the nursing staff. This difference is statistically significant in four countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, and the Netherlands. Except for Finland, the score of the nursing staff is also considerably higher than the average score on work-related stress for all health care workers in the survey, whereas the score for administrative and supporting staff remains below that average.

We also explored some backgrounds. The high scores on work-related stress do not alter the fact that job satisfaction of nursing staff is on average also high. Except for Germany, their job satisfaction is

higher than that of administrative and supporting staff. The difference is significantly in favour of the nursing staff in three countries, Czech Republic, Finland, and the Netherlands. By contrast, scores on satisfaction with pay bring about a less univocal picture. In the UK and Brazil, nursing staff shows a higher satisfaction with pay than their administrative and supporting colleagues, whereas Finland and Germany show the opposite picture. In the other four countries the differences between the two groups concerning satisfaction with pay are negligible. All in all, work-related stress of nursing staff does not translate clearly in strong dissatisfaction with pay. Their high job satisfaction suggests that in nearly all countries work-related stress is to a considerable extent compensated through so-called intrinsic job elements. Germany seems the exception: in that country nursing staff is comparatively dissatisfied with both jobs and pay.

Graphics *Average scores on work-related stress (1 = never, 5 = daily) for nursing staff and for administrative and supporting staff, by country*



Source: Unweighted WageIndicator data, selection two occupational groups in health case, January 2008– December 2009

See for more in-depth analyses: Maarten van Klaveren and Kea Tijdens (2008) Chapter 8. Work-related stress, in Maarten van Klaveren and Kea Tijdens (eds) *Bargaining issues in Europe: comparing countries and industries*. Brussels: European Trade Union Institute / UvA - AIAS / WageIndicator, pp. 163-194