

Welfare regimes and differences in the mental well-being of European employees with respect to gender and social class

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BACKGROUND

- Lately, the mental well-being of the working population has received considerable attention in public health research
- Less is known about the social distribution of mental well-being across different groups of employees

BACKGROUND

- Changes in the nature of work
- More jobs defined by emotional and psychological demands
- Socio-economic inequalities in employee mental health?
 - The associations with conventional socioeconomic status measures (such as years of education or income) are weak
- We use an intersectional approach to examine the social distribution of mental well-being across employees
 - We consider gender norms within social class positions

BACKGROUND: The intersection of social class and gender and its effect on mental well-being

Social class

- Useful concept of "neo-Marxian" social class
 - Does not necessary assume a linear or gradational associations with health
 - Relates health to the structural relations of dominance and subordination in the labour process
 - Understanding of the way in which one's position in the labour process affects health

BACKGROUND: Wright's social class scheme

Wage laborers			
4 Managers experts	7 Managers semi-skilled	10 Managers "unskilled"	+ Organization assets 0 -
5 Supervisors experts	8 Supervisors semi-skilled	11 Supervisors "unskilled"	
6 Workers skilled	9 Workers semi-skilled	12 Workers "unskilled"	
<div> <div>+</div> <div>0</div> <div>-</div> </div> Possession of skill or credential assets			

Source: Muntaner et al. (2011)

BACKGROUND: The intersection of social class and gender and its effect on mental well-being

Gender

- Being female has a negative effect on well-being compared to being male

Intersection of social class and gender

- We allow the well-being effect of a social class to be different across genders
- For instance, the well-being implications of being an unskilled worker may be different for female compared to male unskilled workers.

BACKGROUND: Social processes and policies explaining social inequalities in mental well-being

- *Social processes* that create the context for increased risk of poor health in some groups
 - Job quality
 - Unskilled workers are exposed to more hazardous working conditions than other social classes
 - High psychological demands, low autonomy at work and absence of skill discretion are concentrated in non-managerial class positions
 - Household responsibilities
 - Material well-being at home and amount of household labour have also shown to partly explain the association between social class and poor health
 - **ONLY AMONG FEMALE EMPLOYEES!**

BACKGROUND: Social processes and policies explaining social inequalities in mental well-being

- *Policies* also influence social inequality in employee mental well-being
 - Korpi's (2010) institutional typology of welfare states
 - Clarifies health inequalities with respect to gender AND class

BACKGROUND: Korpi's (2010) institutional typology of welfare states

- Combination of :

Family Policy models:

1. Earner-carer
 - Nordic countries
2. Traditional family
 - Continental Europe
3. Market-oriented
 - Anglo-Saxon countries

Social insurance models:

1. Encompassing
 - Nordic countries
2. State corporatist
 - Continental Europe
3. Basic security
 - Anglo-Saxon countries

- The Southern and post-communist countries are also increasingly analysed as separate welfare state regimes

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the association of mental well-being with the intersection of gender and class in European employees
2. To examine the role of job quality and household responsibilities as potential mediating factors in explaining this association
3. To analyse whether patterns differ by institutional models relevant for gender as well as class inequalities (in the form of welfare regimes)

METHODS: Data & Variables

- ESS 2004/5 & ESS 2010 (15,266 male and 14,817 female employees)
- 19 European countries
 - Belgium, France, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Finland, Norway, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Slovenia, Sweden and United Kingdom
- Dependent variable: Good mental well-being (yes/no)
- Independent variables:
 - Social Class position
 - Household responsibility
 - Job quality
 - Country groups

METHODS: Measures

- Social class position:
 - International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)
 - International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)
 - A question on whether the employee is responsible for supervising other employees
 - Managers (those who worked as a manager and supervise other employees)
 - Supervisors (non-managers who supervise other employees)
 - Workers (all others)
 - Within these three categories, another subdivision was made using ISCED: "unskilled" (up to lower secondary); "semi-skilled" (up to post-secondary non-tertiary); and "experts" (completed tertiary education).

METHODS: Measures

- Household responsibilities:
 - Household structure
 - Based on “children at home” & “partner”
 - Categories:
 - Partner, with children
 - Partner, without children
 - No Partner, with(out) children
 - Economic responsibility
 - Based on “main provider” & “persons at household”
 - Categories
 - Head of household (main provider & other at home)
 - Not head of household (not main provider & others at home)
 - Single-person household

METHODS: Measures

- Job quality:
 - Intrinsic characteristics
 - High skill discretion
 - High autonomy
 - Low psychological demands
 - Employment quality
 - Type of contract, full-time vs. part-time, social/regular work hours, training opportunities, union member, high support

METHODS: Measures

- Country groups:
 - (1) basic security/market oriented (Ireland, Switzerland and UK);
 - (2) encompassing/earner-carer (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden);
 - (3) state corporatist/family support (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands);
 - (4) Eastern European (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and;
 - (5) Southern European (Greece and Spain).

METHODS: Measures

- Background characteristics:
 - Age
 - Lift-off (16-29 years)
 - A mid-career period (30-49 years)
 - The end-of career period (50-65 years)
 - Year dummy

METHODS: Statistical analyses

1. Description of the population
2. Robust Poisson regression models
 1. Model 1: crude estimates for each variable separately
 2. Model 2: Age, year dummy, social class, household responsibilities
 3. Model 3: Model 2 + job quality

PR and 95% confidence intervals

Reference categories for the PR were unskilled workers

All analyses included weights and were stratified by gender and welfare state

RESULTS

- General characteristics of the sample:
 - Encompassing/earner-carer: Highest % of Good MWB
 - Eastern male and basic security/market oriented female: Lowest % of Good MWB
 - Basic security/market oriented: Large gender difference in % MWB
 - State corporatist/family support: Small gender difference in % MWB
 - Europe: around 50% are un/semi-skilled workers
 - » More common in women

RESULTS: General characteristics of sample

- Household responsibilities:
 - Men are more likely head of household
 - Women are more likely not head of household
 - Encompassing/earner-carer : more single-person households
 - Men were more likely to live with a partner and children in the household
- Job quality:
 - Eastern/Southern: high % of 'no contract'
 - Encompassing/earner-carer & state corporatist/family support : high % of 'permanent contract'

RESULTS: Prevalence ratio's of Good MWB

Prevalence ratio's (controlled for age and ESS round) of good MWB stratified by country group and sex. Employee population, 15–65 years old. ESS 2004/5 and 2010

	state corporatist/ family support		basic security/market oriented		Eastern		Southern		encompassing/ earner-carer	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Social Class										
Unskilled workers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Semi-skilled workers	1.04	1.07	1.03	1.12	1.11	1.30*	1.02	1.02	1.02	0.97
Expert workers	1.07	1.10*	1.03	1.17*	1.15	1.37*	1.04	1.04	1.00	0.99
Non-expert superv.	1.07	1.20*	1.06	1.12	1.19*	1.32*	1.01	1.00	1.05*	1.04
Expert supervisors	1.05	1.18*	1.06	1.08	1.18	1.29*	1.09*	1.10	1.05	1.00
Non-expert managers	1.13*	1.07	1.09	1.10	1.17	1.32*	1.16*	1.11	1.00	0.93
Expert managers	1.11	1.20*	1.07	1.04	1.25*	1.43*	1.16*	1.01	0.99	1.05

* Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

RESULTS: Models controlled for household responsibilities and job quality

- Class differences in male employees:
 - Controlled for household responsibilities:
The association between social class and good MWB disappeared in state corporatist/family support and encompassing/earner-carer
 - Controlled for job quality:
Influences associations in Eastern countries, state corporatist/family support and encompassing/earner-carer
- Class differences in female employees:
 - Controlled for household responsibilities:
almost all significant associations remained significant
 - Controlled for job quality:
less class differences in encompassing/earner-carer, state corporatist/family support, basic security/market oriented and Eastern countries

DISCUSSION: Main findings

1. In all welfare regimes, social class differences in employee mental well-being are seen
2. Male employees from basic security/market oriented and female employees from encompassing/earner-carer and Southern European welfare regimes do not experience social class differences in mental well-being
3. The household responsibilities affect the relation between social class and mental well-being of male employees in encompassing/earner-care and state corporatist/family support
4. The job quality is able to influence the association between social class and mental well-being in all welfare regimes, but the Southern European welfare regimes

DISCUSSION: Inequalities in MWB by welfare regime

- Social class inequalities in male MWB in encompassing/earner-carer
 - Contributes to a growing body of literature reporting that health inequalities are not smaller in Scandinavian countries
 - Universal health message is beneficial for all, but more for (male) middle classes
- No social class inequalities in Southern female MWB
 - Countries with higher proportion of unpaid family care by women have smaller health inequalities
 - High educated women at work
 - in our study: 40% expert worker, 25% between 16-29 years old and 40% has no partner

DISCUSSION: Inequalities in MWB by welfare regime

- No social class inequalities in male MWB from basic security/market oriented
 - Basic security social program
 - No support of the mother-role leads to social inequalities in female employees

DISCUSSION: Household responsibilities and job quality as mediators

- Social class inequalities in male mental well-being of encompassing/earner-carer and state corporatist/family support reduced when controlling for the indicators of household responsibilities
 - Contradicts previous research
 - Due to choice of indicators (household responsibilities vs. household composition)
- Job quality is able to influence the association between social class and mental well-being in all welfare regimes, but the Southern European welfare regimes.
 - We did not measure relevant workplace variables of the Southern welfare state regime

DISCUSSION: Limitations and strengths

- Limitations:
 - Indicator children at home does not reflect OWN children
 - Possible brothers or sisters
 - Therefore combined with partner at home
 - When partner at home, children at home are most likely their own
 - Recession of 2008
 - Between-year within country variance in MWB is very small!
- Strength:
 - Focus on gender and social class simultaneously
 - Intersectionality approach
 - Inclusion of welfare regimes

CONCLUSIONS

- Importance of welfare regimes to explain social health inequalities
- Importance of simultaneously investigating social class and gender
- Social class and gender inequalities in mental well-being were least pronounced in countries who support the "earner-carer model" in combination with an encompassing social insurance model

Thank you for your attention!

