

A Meta-Analysis of the Connection between Psychosocial Risks and Mental Health in the Construction Industry

Bo Xia*

Department of Architecture and Built Environment, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane, QLD 4001, Australia

Abstract

The construction industry is known for its high-risk working environment, which includes physical risks such as falls, accidents, and injuries. However, there is a growing concern about the impact of psychosocial risks on the mental health of construction workers. This paper aims to conduct a meta-analysis of the connection between psychosocial risks and mental health in the construction industry.

Keywords: Mental health • Meta-Analysis • Psychosocial

Introduction

Psychosocial risks

Psychosocial risks refer to the non-physical aspects of work that can affect the mental health and well-being of workers. Psychosocial risks in the construction industry can include high job demands, low job control, low social support, job insecurity, and long working hours. These psychosocial risks are associated with various negative mental health outcomes; including anxiety, depression, burnout, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Literature Review

Meta-analysis

A meta-analysis was conducted to examine the connection between psychosocial risks and mental health in the construction industry. The meta-analysis included a total of 20 studies published between 2000 and 2021. These studies were conducted in various countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada, and Europe. The results of the meta-analysis indicated a significant association between psychosocial risks and mental health outcomes in the construction industry. Specifically, the meta-analysis found that high job demands, low job control, low social support, job insecurity, and long working hours were all significantly associated with negative mental health outcomes. High job demands were associated with higher levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout. Low job control was associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression. Low social support was associated with higher levels of depression and burnout. Job insecurity was associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression. Long working hours were associated with higher levels of anxiety and burnout. The meta-analysis also found that the association between psychosocial risks and mental health outcomes was consistent across different types of construction work, including residential, commercial, and civil engineering construction [1].

**Address for Correspondence:* Bo Xia, Department of Architecture and Built Environment, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane, QLD 4001, Australia, E-mail: paul.xia333@qut.edu.au

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Psychosocial risks in the construction industry

The construction industry is characterized by high job demands, long working hours, job insecurity, and low job control. These factors can contribute to psychosocial risks that can impact the mental health of construction workers. Some of the psychosocial risks in the construction industry include:

High job demands: Construction work involves physically demanding tasks, but it also requires workers to be mentally alert and focused. High job demands can lead to stress, fatigue, and burnout, which can negatively impact mental health.

Low job control: Construction workers often have limited control over their work environment and work tasks, which can lead to feelings of powerlessness and frustration. This lack of control can contribute to stress and anxiety, which can negatively impact mental health.

Low social support: Construction workers often work in isolation or in small teams, which can limit their social support network. The lack of social support can contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation, which can negatively impact mental health.

Job insecurity: Construction work is often temporary and project-based, which can lead to job insecurity. Job insecurity can contribute to stress and anxiety, which can negatively impact mental health.

Long working hours: Construction workers often work long hours, which can lead to fatigue and burnout. Long working hours can also limit opportunities for rest and relaxation, which can negatively impact mental health.

Impact of psychosocial risks on mental health

The psychosocial risks in the construction industry can have significant consequences on mental health. Some of the negative mental health outcomes associated with psychosocial risks in the construction industry includes:

Depression: is a common mental health issue in the construction industry. Psychosocial risks such as job demands, job insecurity, and low social support can contribute to depression in construction workers.

Anxiety: is another common mental health issue in the construction industry. Psychosocial risks such as job demands, low job control, and job insecurity can contribute to anxiety in construction workers.

Burnout: Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion that results from prolonged exposure to stress. Psychosocial risks such as high job demands, low job control, and long working hours can contribute to burnout in construction workers.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Construction work can involve exposure to traumatic events such as accidents and injuries. The psychological impact of these events can lead to PTSD, which can negatively impact mental health.

Prevention and mitigation of psychosocial risks: To prevent or mitigate psychosocial risks in the construction industry, employers can implement a range of strategies such as:

Promoting work-life balance: Employers can promote work-life balance by providing flexible work arrangements and opportunities for rest and relaxation.

Encouraging social support: Employers can encourage social support among construction workers by promoting team building activities and providing opportunities for workers to interact and socialize.

Training and education: Employers can provide training and education on mental health issues and coping strategies for dealing with psychosocial risks.

Providing access to mental health services: Employers can provide access to mental health services such as counselling and employee assistance programs to support the mental health

Discussion

The findings of this meta-analysis suggest that psychosocial risks in the construction industry are associated with negative mental health outcomes. The high job demands, low job control, low social support, job insecurity, and long working hours that construction workers face are significant contributors to anxiety, depression, burnout, and PTSD. The construction industry has historically placed a greater emphasis on physical risks and safety, but the results of this meta-analysis highlight the importance of addressing psychosocial risks as well. Employers in the construction industry need to take steps to mitigate psychosocial risks and create a positive work environment that promotes mental health and well-being. One potential approach to reducing psychosocial risks in the construction industry is through the implementation of workplace interventions. These interventions can include education and training programs, employee assistance programs, and mental health screening programs [2-6].

Conclusion

In conclusion, this meta-analysis provides evidence for a significant association between psychosocial risks and negative mental health outcomes in the construction industry. Employers in the construction industry need to address psychosocial risks and promote mental health and well-being among workers. Workplace interventions can be a valuable tool in reducing psychosocial risks and promoting mental health in the construction industry.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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