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Gender Specific Effects of Perceived Income Injustice on Stress-related Diseases - Genderspezifische Effekte wahrgenommener Einkommensgerechtigkeit auf stressassoziierte Erkrankungen

BACKGROUND

Income injustice is associated with an increased risk of disease. The physiological stress response is considered as a link. The aim of the study was to identify the influence of subjectively perceived income injustice on stress associated diseases, regarding the load duration of this perception.

METHODS

Based on the German Socio-Economic Panel Study, data from 5657 workers in the survey years 2005-2013 has been analyzed. The dependent variable is as an index of the doctor's diagnosed new cases from diabetes, asthma, cardiopathy, stroke, hypertension and depression in the years 2009-2013. The key predictor is the injustice perception of the own income. To operationalize the duration of the injustice perception, the variable for the years 2005, 2007 and 2009 has been accumulated. Using logit models factors were identified that affect the probability of stress-related diseases. There were performed gender separated analyzes and analyzes that detect only full-time employees.

RESULTS

The more often the income is assessed as unjust, the higher is the risk of stress-related diseases. An over 5 years unjustly perceived income increases significantly the risk of disease in women (OR 1.64 95% CI 1.17-2.30) and in men (OR 1.38 95% CI 1.002-1.90). Women working full-time seem particularly affected (OR 2.43 95% CI 1.54-3.84). Furthermore, regular physical activity is a highly effective protective factor against stress related diseases in men.

CONCLUSIONS

Perceived income injustice reveals to be a significant risk factor for stress-related diseases within a dose-response-relationship with increasing duration of exposure. Results of stress research indicate that this reflects the ‚allostatic load‘. Women possibly attach more value to justice than men what might explain the higher reactivity. Individual evaluation models to assess whether income is perceived as fair or unfair, could be of crucial importance.