

„The dose makes the poison“
Informal eldercare and work-related strain

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Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus
Bombast von Hohenheim

called
Paracelsus

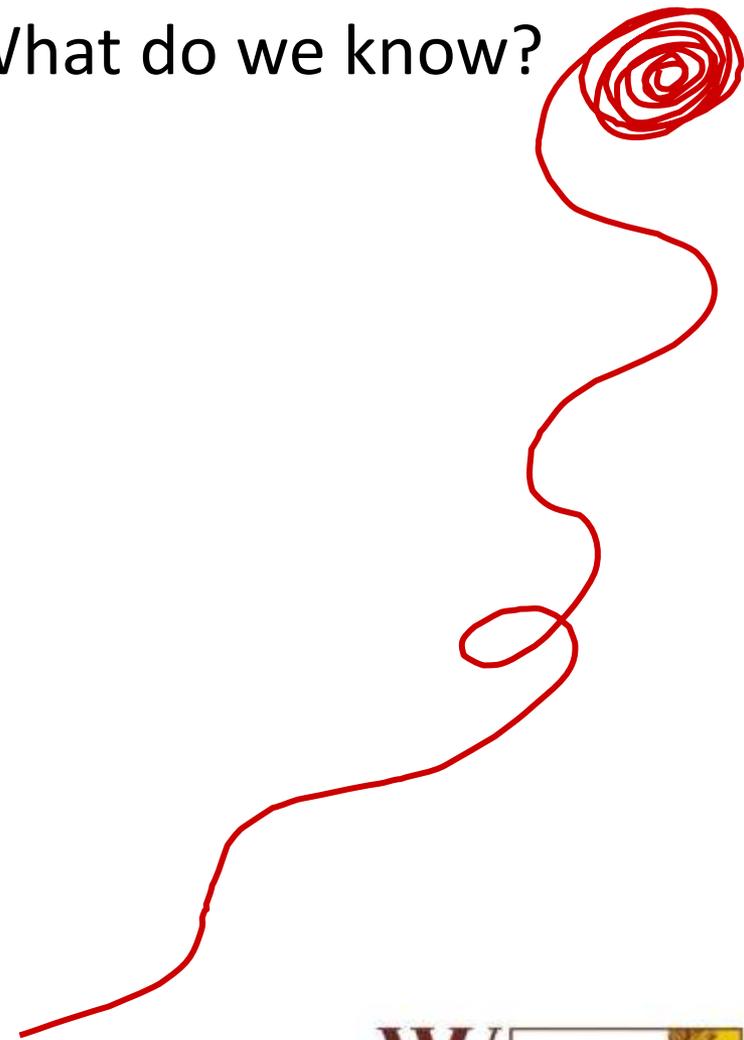
physician, alchemist and philosopher (1493-1541)

Dosis sola venenum facit.

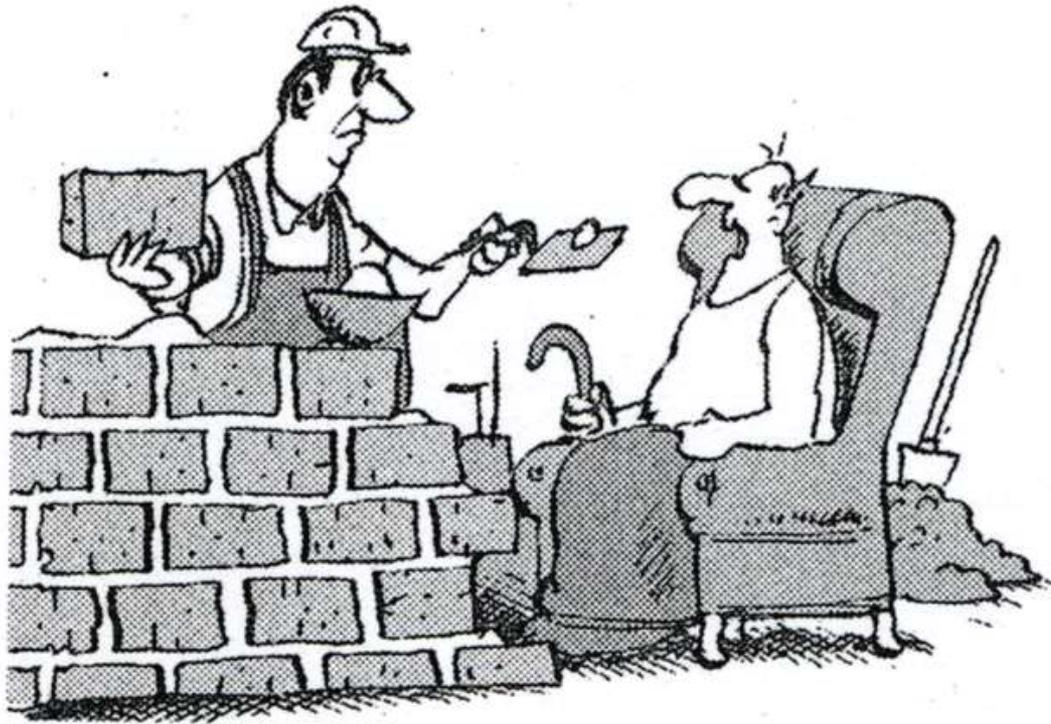
The dose alone makes the poison.

Outline

- Combining work and eldercare: What do we know?
- Research question
- Framework for the analysis
- Data
- Measures / Methods
- Results
- Conclusion



Combining work and eldercare: An increasingly common phenomenon ...



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Previous work & research question

Evidence: Informal eldercare & work performance:

- negative effects (majority of literature)
- positive effects (some evidence)

Research Question

How does informal eldercare affect work-related strain?

= What characteristics of informal eldercare are positively/negatively associated with work-related strain?



Framework for the analysis

Informal eldercare as a source of stress

negative and positive consequences

consequences of stress = strain

Two contradicting hypotheses (Matire/Stephens 2003)

Competing demands hypothesis

Expansion hypothesis



Eldercare-to-work-conflict: empirical evidence (I)

Negative impact of informal eldercare on workplace behaviour

- **stress and overload reduce workplace productivity**
(Pickard 2004; Smith 2004)
- **conflicts with fellow workers**
(Chesley/Moen 2006)
- **diminished recreation opportunities, less healthy lifestyle, higher risk of illness**
(e.g. Gilhooly/Redpath 1997; Couch/Daly et al. 1999, Burton/Chen et al. 2004, Ponocny et al. 2010)



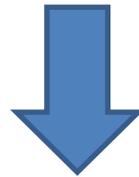
Eldercare-to-work-conflict: empirical evidence (II)

Positive impact of informal eldercare on workplace behaviour

- **coping with high demands causes feelings of mastery and competence**
(e. g. Scharlach 1994)
- **improved self-management skills**
(e.g. Dawid/Ludescher et al. 2008)
- **respite effect**
(e.g. Arksey 2002; Carmichael/Charles 2003; Heitmueller 2007)
- **need to cover the cost of care to a family member increases work attachment**
(e.g. Dawid/Ludescher et al. 2007, Heitmueller 2007)

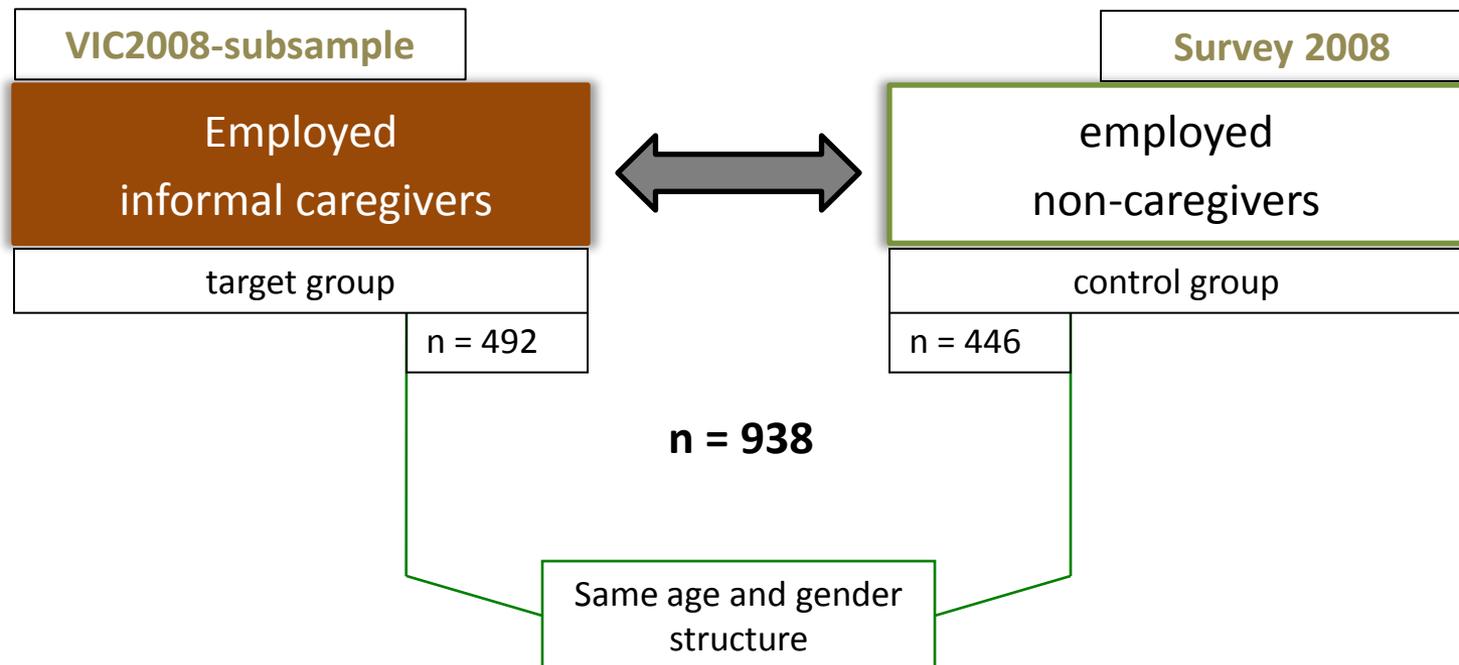
Research question

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= What characteristics of informal eldercare are positively/negatively associated with work-related strain?

Data – survey design



Sample description

(selected variables)

Employed informal carer and employed non-carer in the sample...

...are experienced workers.

...have the same age structure.

...have the same gender structure.

Indicator	Caregivers	Non-caregivers	p-value
Average age	50 years	50 years	0,892
Gender	69% women	73% women	0,092
Average work experience	29 years	28 years	0,060

dependent variable
work-related strain

during the last three working weeks, how often...

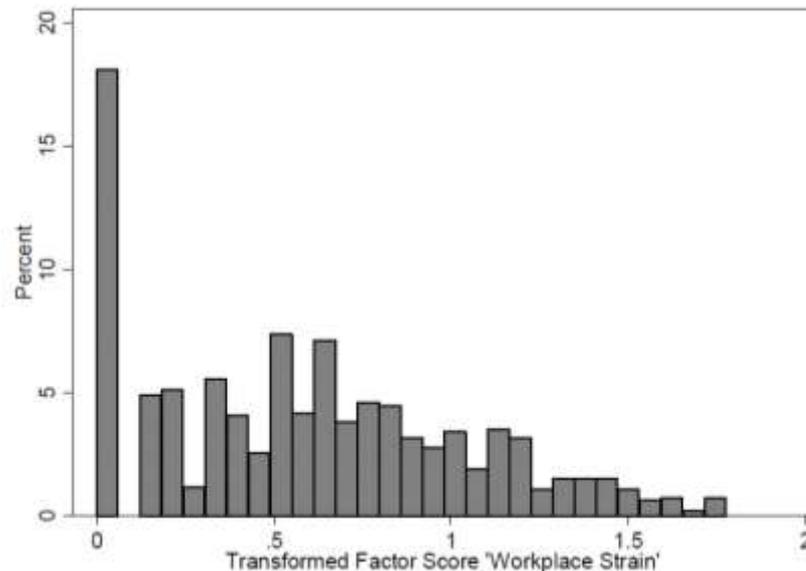
- “have you been **unable to finish your tasks on time**”
- “did you **make mistakes** at tasks you can normally cope with easily”
- “ have you been **affected at work by pain or fatigue**”
- “have you had **unusual problems coping with stressful situations**” and
- “have you experienced **situations to be stressful faster** than usual”

“never”,
“1-2 times”,
“3-5 times”,
“6-8 times”
and “more often”

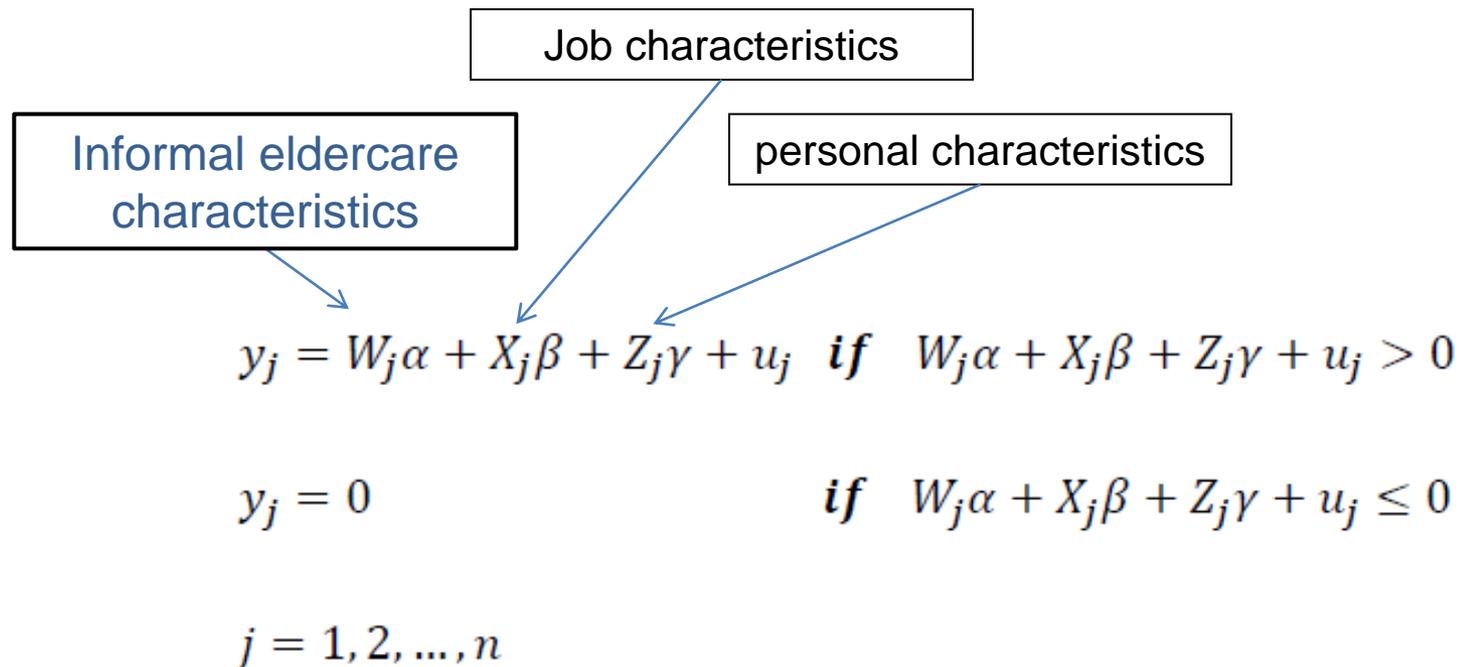
Factor analysis:

items' total variance: 58.8 %

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.814



Tobit model





Main explanatory variables:
informal eldercare

- **Carer identifier:** Yes/No
- **Care burden:** short version of Zarit Burden Interview (Bédard et al. 2001), factor scores
- **Care hours per week**

- **Competing demands hypotheses:**
 - If **care burden** is related to work-related strain then workers stating a higher care burden will experience **higher work-related strain (hypothesis 1)**.
 - If **care hours** are related to work-related strain then workers who dedicate more hours per week to informal eldercare will experience **more work-related strain. (hypothesis 2)**
- **Expansion hypothesis** (indirect approach)
 - If there is such a beneficial effect of informal eldercare on work-related strain, then informal eldercare, measured by the **care status** and **isolated from burdensome characteristics of eldercare**, will be negatively associated with **work-related strain. (hypothesis 3)**

Results

	Work-related strain (I) (transformed factor score)	Work-related strain (II) (transformed factor score)
	β /sig.	β /sig.
Care burden (factor score)		0.124***
Care hours / week		0.002**
Care status	0.922	-0.230***

Controlled for:

Job characteristics: Weekly working hours (logs)** , working long hours to make up for days absent*** , ISCO major group 2 (professionals)* , years working* , fear about job loss (more often)* ; job motivation (factor score)*** , skills at job (factor score)***

Personal characteristics: Women* , health status*** , recreation (fairly enough*** ; enough***)

n=938

Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 = 0.420; Cox & Snell pseudo R^2 = 0.341

Informal eldercare is associated with work-related strain in two ways:

- Burdensome eldercare characteristics (care burden, care hours/week) **increase** work-related strain
 - Lends support to the “competing demands”-hypothesis
- Eldercare isolated from its burdensome characteristics **decrease** work-related strain
 - Lends support to the “expansion hypothesis”

Taken together:

Informal eldercare might have positive as well as negative consequences for work-related strain, depending on its characteristics

We could single out burdensome characteristics – future work needs to be done to identify beneficial characteristics of informal eldercare

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