A twin study of factors associated with burnout

Burnout research has mostly concerned work related factors as explanations for burnout, where a work environment with e.g. low social support, low control and role conflicts constitute risk factors for employees to burn out. As regards individual factors, young people in the beginning of their professional career with a high involvement in work seem to be most vulnerable. This initial engagement in the burnout process has been explained in terms of a contingent self-esteem where the individual continuously strive to earn self-esteem by doings and thereby risk driving her or himself to excessive work intensity. Genetic effects on burnout have only been investigated in two previous studies. With twin data, differences in similarity between identical and fraternal twins provide information about the presence of genetic and environmental effects on burnout. The general aim of the project is to investigate the importance of genetic and environmental factors for burnout in a nationwide, population-based twin sample from the Swedish twin registry born 1959-1986. Further aims are to study the associations between burnout and demographic, life-style, life-events, personality, health, sickness absence and work-related factors and control for familial influences. There is a need for further knowledge of what causes burnout and to identify people at risk for burnout as it has become a common reason for sickness absence, particularly in women. The project can contribute with increased understanding of explanations to burnout which can improve rehabilitation and prevention efforts with gains for the individual as well as for the society.

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