

Occupational health and safety development needs in the home care sector in Finland

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Background – home care sector



(e.g. Eurostat, 2019; Galinsky et al., 2001; Denton et al., 2002; Merryweather et al., 2018; Tarricone & Tsouros, 2008)

→ Consulting home care personnel to identify key occupational health and safety (OHS) development needs

Materials and methods

Survey

- n = 160
- Employment relationship
 - Permanent 118 (74%)
 - Other 42 (26%)
- Gender
 - Female 136 (85%)
 - Male 23 (14%)
 - Other 1 (1%)
- Age
 - 20–30 years 17 (11%)
 - 31–40 years 28 (18%)
 - 41–50 years 24 (15%)
 - 51–60 years 43 (27%)
 - 61 years and over 48 (30%)

Interviews

- 55 interviews
- 98 interviewees
- Teams, face-to-face, phone
- Individual interviews (n = 34), group interviews (n = 21)
- Average: 45 minutes (± 16)

Workshops

- 9 workshops
- 36 participants

Results

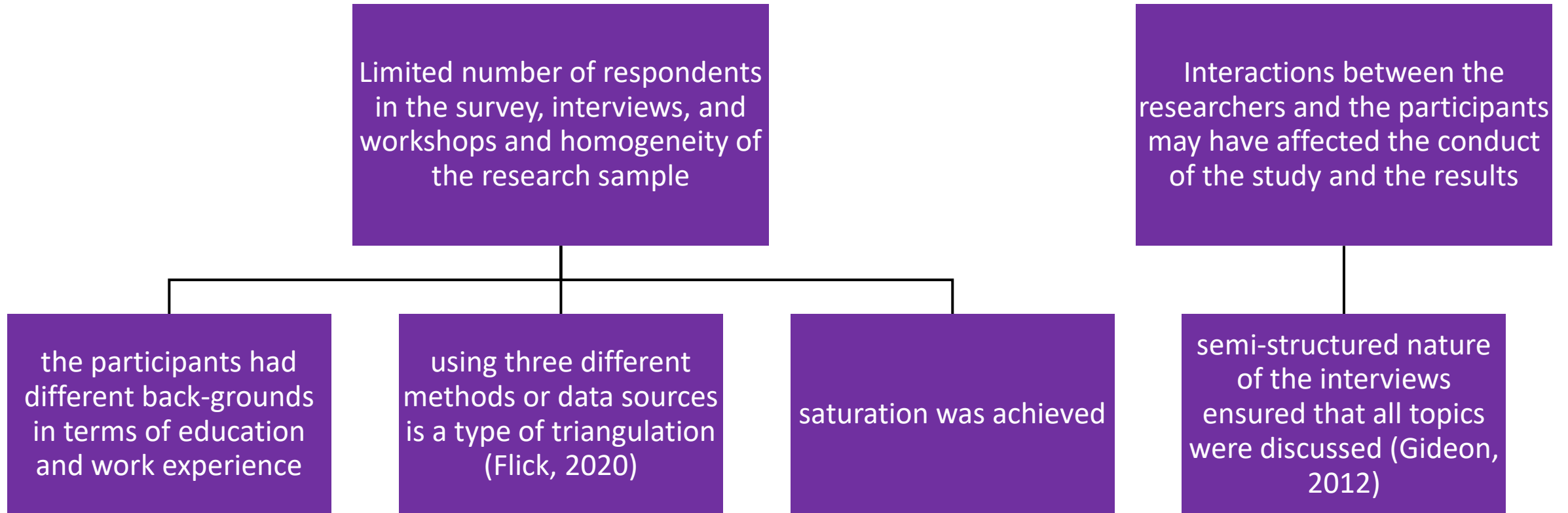
OHS development need	Matters discussed
Assistive equipment and work tools	The lack of proper equipment and tools and of knowledge of how to use them; customers do not accept equipment or the use of tools
How the employee calls for and receives help in emergency situations	What is the most efficient way to call for help; alarm button does not locate employees accurately enough; distances are long in remote areas
Information about customer	Lack of information; problems in communication and in information flow between cooperating parties; not all necessary information from customer visits is written down
Education	Education needed about physical ergonomics and how to deal with mental health and substance abuse; no time to participate in the training
Filming employees	What is allowed; how to act
The home as a working environment	Accessibility; clutter/number of belongings; cleanliness; lighting; fire safety; smoking; guns; pets; drug injection needles; heat
Making sure that employees leave their customer visits safely	No systematic monitoring
Organization of work	Time is short; commuting during the workday from customer to customer; shift planning; lack of breaks; no time for customer-related office work; unclear job description (what is included in work tasks and what is not)
Physical ergonomics	Lifting and moving the customer; lack of knowledge; pair work; lack of assistive equipment and work tools; showering the customers
Psychosocial, mental, and ethical loads	Customer's self-determination; work is rushed; number of customers; behavior of the customers and their relatives; time and opportunities for peer support; lack of a work community; wondering if the customer is going to be okay at home; work interruptions and constant changes
Safety orientation, guidance, and instructions	Needed about physical ergonomics, how to use assistive equipment, how to plan the workday, clear instructions for different situations, and instructions for assessing the occupational safety in the first customer visit; more orientation and guidance about safety issues overall; guidance should be repeated from time to time
Threats of physical and psychosocial violence	Inappropriate behavior of customers and their relatives; sexual harassment; outsiders in the apartment

Discussion

- The protection of home care employees based on occupational safety legislation is lacking compared to the protection for those employed in institutions (de Jong et al., 2014)
- Insight into OHS development needs in Finnish home care is provided
 - a wide variety of OHS development needs
 - both generic and specific themes
- Not much improvement in home care working conditions
- In this study, employees being filmed arose as a new OHS development need and as a problem to be solved



Limitations



Conclusions



The lack of improvement in OHS and in working conditions in the home care sector is of great concern as the need for home care increases

→ Promote public discussion to increase understanding between all parties about home care personnel's OHS risks and working conditions and to improve OHS in home care



Further research is required to focus on the OHS needs highlighted in this study in order to develop effective intervention programs and make working conditions more desirable

Traditional solutions may not be applicable
Preventive measures, risk assessments, and the participation of all parties (including employers, employees, customers, customers' relatives, and the government)

References

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