

*I Rodriguez et al. Work and Stress. June (2001) Vol. 15#2 p. 97.*

It is becoming more widely accepted that stressors do not act independently of each other and neither do control measures. The exposed individual is the only tool available that actually accounts for all these interactions. Individuals have many, relevant individual characteristics.

This study aimed to assess the effect of just one personal characteristic on the validity of the demand-control-support model of stress. The personal characteristic is 'locus of control'; it can be measured; it can be described as the degree to which an individual believes he can be self-directing or is subject to the whims of circumstances and the will of others. People with an external locus of control perceive themselves to be victims. It would seem sensible to presume that they would not perceive the benefits of increased job control.

Job satisfaction was the outcome measure, although not efficiently related to health risk, it is a more sensitive measure of stress.

542 admin staff in 5 countries took part in this 2-year longitudinal study of new recruits, in their first full time job.

Tests of demands, control, support and locus of control were checked for any association with change in job satisfaction. Tests were made at recruitment, one year and two years.

72% at time 2 and 60% at time 3 completed the survey.

Dropouts were in higher demand, low control, low support, and external locus of control types. Therefore happy retainees bias the data.

Job dissatisfaction at 2 years was fairly correlated with dissatisfaction a year ago, and low social support.

Job dissatisfaction was weakly correlated with high demands and low control.

Job dissatisfaction was marginally correlated with age and external locus of control.

## **Comment**

The proposed interactions between demands, control, support and locus of control were confirmed, though to varying degrees. Studies of stress that do not record the relevant, measurable personal characteristics of the study subjects will be of doubtful value.

Social support was the strongest influence on job satisfaction.

Social support at work can be influenced. Factors include reciprocity (peers, juniors, supervisors), informal training (on the job), instruction, sharing, helping with problems at work and home, joint interests, respect for conventions, basic civility, keeping promises.