

# Do work arrangements which are based on quantitative target goals have an impact on stress and health at work?

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# Theoretical background

High performance  
management

work load intensifies and  
mental stress at work  
increases

flexible and self-organized  
forms of work organization  
increase



the economic costs of  
overburdened employees  
increase

cost reduction

Definition:

***flexible and self-organized forms of work***

Work...

- ...in the framework of goal-settings with measurable performance data
- ...in teams or projects (time-limits)
- ...in profit-centres
  
- ...the performance of employees is no longer measured by the labour effort (like working time), but increasingly by the output

## motivation I

- more and more employees suffer from mental stress and work intensification (see OSHA)
- the economic costs have risen
  - 16 mrd. Euro in 2011! (directly costs in Germany of mental illnesses)
  - 32 mrd. Euro in 2030

## motivation II

As a result of work pressure and a strong commitment....

- laws, regulations and directives to protect employees are often ignored, even by employees themselves (breaks, leaves, maximum working hours)
- working times are being extended
- employees feel under pressure not to take breaks and sick leaves

# research gap

- no quantitative studies (in Germany) that analyze how working systems and psychomental stress at work are linked
- no study that analyzes how working systems and the regulation of working time and health and safety are linked

# research questions

- Do result-oriented work-systems affect working conditions?
- Traditional protection arrangements:  
Are they still able to deal adequately with result oriented working conditions?
- Do we need other measures to enforce the regulations?

# Empirical Strategy

# Methods:

- The WSI-works councils survey
- The survey is carried out every two years (n= 2000)
- Establishments are stratified by size and industry
- only establishments with 20 or more employees are included in the survey
- The data are weighted and therefore representative for all establishments with works councils in Germany

## Why interviewing works councils?

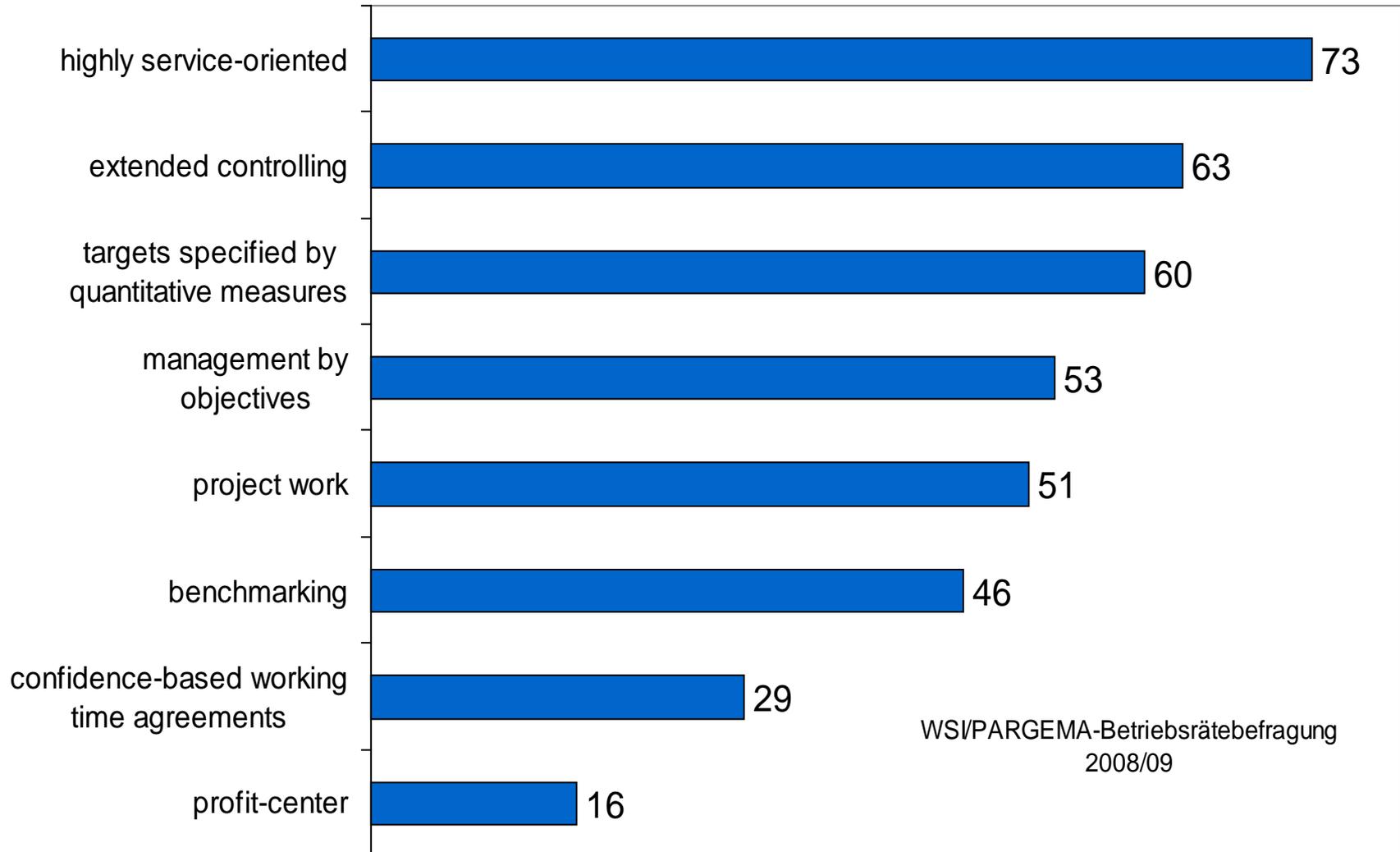
Surveying the perception of works councils on working conditions is highly important as employees – and employers, too - turn to them for complaints and problem solving

Works councils can be seen as an excellent source on information about working conditions

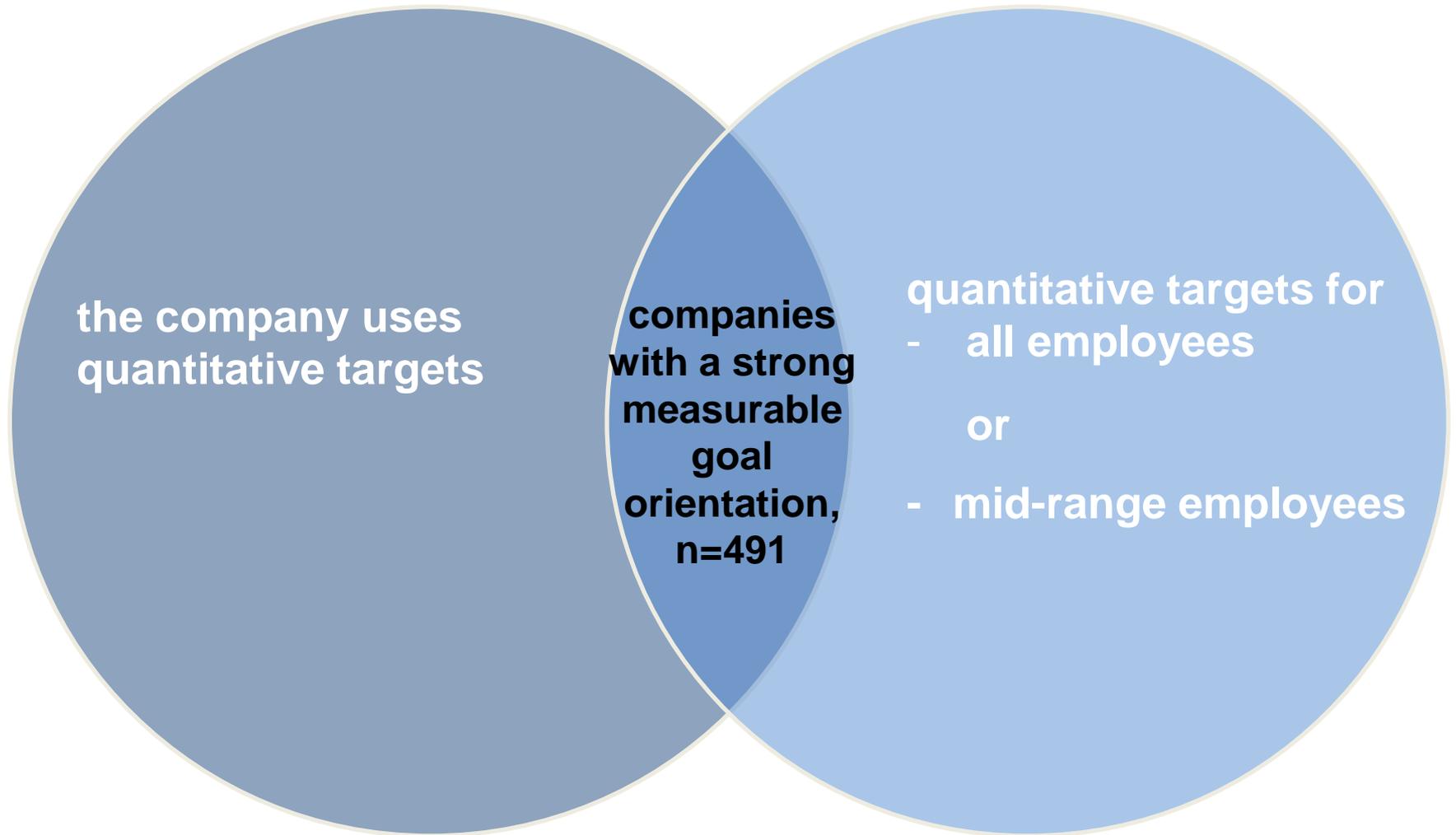
...and on the way these conditions and regulations are dealt with at establishment-level.

# Companies and their environment

- Percentage of works councils -



# Operationalisation



the company uses  
quantitative targets

**companies  
with a strong  
measurable  
goal  
orientation,  
n=491**

quantitative targets for

- all employees
- or
- mid-range employees

# Construction of types

Companies...

1. with quantitative target agreements for a significant number of employees (n=491)
2. that don't use target agreements at all (n=438)
3. with mixed management systems (n=770)

# Results

## To what degree is work influenced by...

	<b>Companies without target agreements at all (n=438)</b>	<b>Companies with mixed management systems (n=770)</b>	<b>Companies with quantitative target agreements (n=491)</b>	<b>total (n=1.700)</b>
<b>intense customer orientation</b>	60,0	73,9	<b>83,3</b>	73,0
<b>running regular customer satisfaction surveys</b>	51,7	70,7	<b>80,0</b>	68,9
<b>performance-based payment systems</b>	26,0	40,0	<b>58,7</b>	41,8
<b>projekt work</b>	34,5	49,7	<b>67,1</b>	50,8
<b>profit-center</b>	6,6	15,7	<b>25,5</b>	16,2
<b>employees are regularly confronted with performance rates</b>	36,2	61,2	<b>72,7</b>	58,1
<b>budget responsibility</b>	20,1	35,0	<b>44,4</b>	36,0

# clear link between management system and increased work load

(multiple answers of works councils in %)

	Companies without target agreements at all (n=438)	Companies with mixed management systems (n=770)	Companies with quantitative target agreements (n=491)	total (n=1.700)
time and performance pressures	60,8	63,7	<b>76,4</b>	66,6
high responsibility	44,0	50,3	<b>55,3</b>	50,1
high work intensity	36,8	46,1	<b>57,4</b>	47,0
fear of job loss	30,8	33,5	<b>37,7</b>	34,0

# Performance culture within the company

(- answers of works councils in % -)

	Companies without target agreements at all (n=438)	Companies with mixed management systems (n=770)	Companies with quantitative target agreements (n=491)	total (n=1.700)
it is a common practise to use categories for employees (like „high-performer“)	14,6	26,8	41,5	27,9
people work more than 9 hours a day	48,0	57,1	68,7	58,1
employees ignore safety and health requirements, such as breaks and working time limits	25,3	35,2	40,3	34,1
people go to work despite being ill	16,8	21,6	26,8	21,9

# Conclusions

- performance management system and work intensity is clearly linked
  
- performance culture:
  - efficient and market-oriented
  - flexible und dynamic
  - a lot of employees suffer from work and performance pressure
  
- conventional regulations seem to fail in many cases (e.g. working time and health and safety)

## limitations

- analyzing the perspective of works councils; not of the workers' perspective themselves
- limitation on larger companies (> 20 workers)
- cross-section analyze

**Thank you.**

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