

Abstracts

Current Status of Workers with Mental Health Problems

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The existence of workers with mental health problems was clarified in 2000 by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare “Study Group on Promotion of Employment of Persons with Mental Disability”. Since then, the number of patients with mental illness has been increasing. The number of workers with mental health problems increased sharply until 2010, and has maintained the same level since then. The number of workers who have been on leave for one or more consecutive months due to mental health problems has remained at 260,000 to 300,000. The number of industrial accidents claim for persons with mental illness has also increased, and this also does not show a peak. At the same time, companies and the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare have begun to take serious measures, preventing mental health problems by improving the working environment such as curbing long working hours, supporting the return of workers who have been on leave, and continuing support after returning to work. Not only companies but also psychiatric medical institutions and organizations are developing support for reinstatement, and efforts to cooperate with companies are becoming more effective. The construction of a support system for companies with small employees has not materialized. On the other hand, the number of employees with mental illness is rising steadily, and comprehensive support is required together with workers who have suffered from mental health problems after employment.

Work Environment and Mental Health

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This paper reviews previous literature concerning the relationship between work environment and mental health. In this paper, we first explain some theoretical models of job stress, which were presented in psychology and epidemiology. We show that those models predict what kind of factors have impact on job stress and mental health. We next review the indicators for work environment and mental health used in empirical literature. Most previous literature uses self-rated indicators of both work environment and mental health. Then, we review the empirical research examining the relationship between work environment and mental health. Previous literature find that high job demands lead to job strain and mental health problems and that rich job resources lead to an increase in a worker’s motivation and improve overall mental health. However, some studies show inconsistent results. At last, we point out unresolved issues and propose a direction of future research.

Less Like Gospel and More Like Gibberish: Definition of Individual with Mental Disability for Antidiscrimination and Reasonable Accommodation under Employment Promotion Act

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The legitimacy of antidiscrimination and reasonable accommodation is grounded by a disparity in excluded experiences of groups of individuals with some social traits, such as disabilities. While the prohibited grounds should not be interpreted expansively because antidiscrimination may excessively interfere with the enforcement of employment contracts, it is applicable to an individual in an analogous situation as the enumerated grounds. While Section 2 of the Employment Promotion Act provides the definition of “an individual with a disability” as including “individuals with mental disabilities,” antidiscrimination and reasonable accommodation may not be applicable to individuals with less serious mental disabilities because of the wording of the provisions, which set higher standards for mental conditions. Thus, this study attempts to clarify how the definition of “individuals with mental disabilities” excludes an individual who has a less serious mental illness but faces serious disadvantages in his establishment or who is misperceived as having a mental illness from due to antidiscrimination and reasonable accommodation. Then, it explores how the definition should be amended.

The Reality and Issues of Return-to-Work Support for Employees on Leave Due to Mental Health Problems Provided by Resources Outside the Workplace

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One of the effective ways to ensure the smooth return to work for employees on leave due to mental health problems is to provide support via resources outside the workplace. This paper reports on the actual status of return-to-work support by resources outside the workplace, the use of such resources by companies, and the challenges, based on the “Research on the Reality of Return-to-Work Support” conducted from FY2018 to FY2020. In the return-to-work support provided by medical institutions, programs such as “psychological education to prevent recurrence,” “improvement of communication skills,” and “opportunities to reflect on the circumstances that led to the leave” were provided so that employees on leave due to mental health problems could continue working stably after their return to work. In addition, there are resources outside the workplace that provide follow-up support not only during the period of absence, but also after returning to work. In particular, many Local vocational centers for persons with disabilities also provide follow-up support to companies. When companies were asked about their use of return-to-work support provided by resources outside the workplace, 155 companies, or about one-third of the 457 companies that responded to the survey, had used such support. Several companies that have experience using return-to-work support have commented that this support is beneficial not only to the employees but also to the company’s overall. However, the majority of companies do not utilize resources outside the workplace, suggesting that it is necessary to further disseminate information on the support and services provided by these organizations and to make it easier for companies to utilize these resources.

Measures Taken by Companies for Employees Returning to Work after Becoming Disabled

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This study investigates persons who became disabled after their employment and the measures necessary for them to return to work capably. Companies were surveyed using a questionnaire, and the results were analyzed. Compared companies with a higher percentage of physically disabled employees after employment and companies with a higher percentage of mentally disabled employees. The following results were found for companies with a higher percentage of employees who acquired mental disabilities after employment. Many companies collected information from the attending physician on dealing with the disabled employee during their absence from work and sought the coworker’s understanding of the consideration and support they would receive from the workplace after returning work. Furthermore, Furthermore, many employees who acquired mental disabilities after employment participated return to work support programs. In addition, prevention of incidence recurrence was a crucial problem to be solved to maintain stable employment. These challenges are common among those with mental health problems. Research and case reports on the prevention of mental health problem recurrence could be used to assist employees who become mentally disabled after employment.

Long-Term Career Development Processes of Nurses Who Have Experienced Mental Health Disorders: Focusing on Their Internal Careers Influenced by Leaves of Absence or Job Separation Experiences

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Based on the life experiences of two mid-career nurses with prior work stoppages (e.g., leaves of absence or job separation) due to mental health disorders, this study investigated their internal career development. The Trajectory Equifinality Approach (TEA) framework was used for analysis. Based on the Three Layers Model of Genesis (TLMG) approach, the participants’ processes of value transformation by these work stoppages were visualized, and effects on long-term career development were discussed. There were turning points during stages of conflict about career continuation during

work stoppages and later in the self-rebuilding stages after returning to work, and value transformation occurred in “being oneself” and “being a professional.”, leading to internal career development. Also, their “universal beliefs as professionals” were constantly maintained as the cores of their internal careers. Through this process, work stoppages due to mental health disorders had a supportive effect as one stage in long-term career development. This led to insights about the provision of support at turning points. It appears desirable to help visualize internal career development, prompting self-awareness of improvements and thus promoting further career development. It is important for supporters not to overlook periods that could possibly become turning points for self-improvement-oriented value transformation.

Inclusive Leadership Mechanisms' Influence on Help-Seeking Intentions: An Examination of the Effects of Moderated Mediation on Workplace Psychological Safety and Job Demands

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The purpose of this study is to identify the mechanisms that evoke the intention of newly engaged telecommuting employees to request assistance from their supervisors. This study clarifies the following two points. First, we will examine the impact of supervisors' inclusive leadership (ILS) on subordinates' help-seeking intentions through their perception of psychological safety; and second, we will examine how job demands moderate the impact of such mediation. In the previous studies, behaviors and attitudes directly related to job performance have been mainly taken up as outcome variables of ILS. On the other hand, the impact on seeking help for personal problems, such as workplace concerns, has not been addressed. In addition, previous studies have not focused on situational factors in the mechanisms by which ILS affects employee attitudes and behaviors through psychological safety. In this study, we conducted a web-based questionnaire survey of recently telecommuting employees through an internet survey company, and conducted statistical analysis based on the survey results. The results revealed that ILS promotes help-seeking intentions via enhancing psychological safety and that the effects of this mediation are stronger in situations of low job demands than in situations of high demands. The findings of this study are theoretically novel to previous research on ILS and assistance requests. Furthermore, the findings have practical implications for managers and human resource departments who manage employees that have switched to telecommuting.