MENTAL HEALTH OF UNEMPLOYED YOUNG JOB SEEKERS IN JAPAN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Aiko Kito(1), Takeji Ueno(2), Akiko Tamakoshi(1)

1 Department of Public Health, Graduate School of Medicine, Hokkaido University, Japan;
2 School of Social Welfare, Hokusei Gakuen University, Japan

Objective: The aim of the present study was to explore and describe subjective experiences of Japanese unemployed young job seekers regarding mental health, which was defined not only as the absence of any mental disorder but also as a mental state that allowed them to continue their job seeking efforts.

Methods: Participants were 25 Japanese young job seekers (15 females), who were recruited using a purposive sampling strategy. All participants were unemployed, but had had some work experience before participating in the study. They ranged in age from 19 to 34 (mean age 27.8 years). Semi-structured interviews were carried out to examine participants’ previous work and job search experience, lifestyle and health, any social support they considered necessary, future job seeking plan, and demographic characteristics. Self-reported questionnaires including the 28-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28), the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), and the WHO Quality of Life-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF) were also used to assess psychological distress, depressive symptoms, and quality of life respectively.

Results: Using inductive thematic analysis, results showed that unemployment was not always a negative experience for young job seekers in Japan. It gave them the opportunity to be released from negative working environments affecting their health, to re-energize for their job seeking activities, and acquire skills required for getting a new job. The results imply that work environment and working conditions are not good for young workers’ health in Japan, and effective interventions to improve this situation must be developed. Further findings will be discussed.

Keywords: Japanese young job seeker; mental health