

STIGMA AT THE WORKPLACE

Abstract

Mental illness stigma has been a factor hindering individuals from seeking help, which also poses significant impact on stigmatized employees in the workplace – deterring their disclosure and usage of mental health services due to their fear of losing job as well as the respect from colleagues. “Negative attitudes from co-workers” was seen as a major barrier during employers’ consideration on hiring people with mental health problem. In this study, we aimed to take a deeper look at co-workers’ view. An online questionnaire with self-constructed vignettes was used to compare participants’ views towards colleagues with depression (mental illness), thyroid disease (non-mental illness), or part-time study (non-illness), in respect of work-related competence, perceived fairness of accommodations, legitimacy doubts, relapse potential, and rejection/exclusion. Each participant (n=274) answered questions related to 1 randomly drawn vignette. The results showed significant difference in most aspects among the 3 conditions despite of the identical presenting problems of the character, that significantly higher level of stigma was noted in the condition of part-time study whereas no significant difference between the condition of depression and thyroid disorder. Such finding contradicts with the negative assumptions held by employers as well as individuals with mental health problem, which can be meaningful in facilitating their return-to-work and personal recovery.