



# **EMPLOYMENT AND RECOVERY**

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## EMPLOYMENT AND RECOVERY

In addition to financial gain that will meet the basic needs of individuals, work-life provides the opportunity for self-development and supports mental well-being. Particularly in mental disorders, participation in working life plays an important role in regaining functionality and increasing the quality of life. Working makes people with mental disorders feel productive, respected, get satisfaction from life and find a place in social life.

Having a job affects the progression of mental illness as well as the positive emotions it provides. In the researches, people who are in the recovery process expressed being in employment as the center of their recovery process.

Working Is An Inseparable Part Of Healing Processes.

In Dunn et al.'s (2008) study with people with mental disabilities, one-on-one interviews were conducted with 23 participants who had advanced degrees of recovery and were diagnosed with schizophrenia spectrum disorder, bipolar mood disorder, and major depression. In these interviews, what it means for them to be in business life was investigated.

At the end of the interviews, it was seen that having a job has a special meaning for people: Working is an integral part of recovery processes.

According to the results, being in employment improved the self-esteem of people with mental illness. Participants in the workplace stated that they felt needed, valued, and appreciated. Working life has made them proud of themselves. One participant in the study stated that his self-confidence increased when he started working:

“I felt like the only thing that had any value in my life was work.”

Being in employment helped the participants cope with the problems brought about by their mental disorders. The routines of working life are a balancing factor in people's lives, especially when they are starting to recover. Working has also helped people cope with the symptoms of their ailments. Again, one participant in the study expressed this as follows:

“It was like, 'I have to do something. I had to reinvigorate myself because I was going to be a vegetable... I couldn't deal with people. I really couldn't cope, especially with large groups. So I got a job up the street (in the video store). I started working there to reintegrate myself into society. And I reconnected with people, groups, and different people.”

“(My job) was a place where I could use something devastating and somewhat tragic to my advantage that had shattered my life.”

There is a perception in society that people with mental disorders are generally "helped" people. However, under appropriate conditions, people with mental disorders can also be in the position of "helper". In this study, it was stated that people with mental disorders might be in the position of "helper"; It has been stated that this situation enables the person to evaluate himself and encourages recovery. One participant expressed the healing power of his work and stated:

“I just loved doing what I was doing... helping other people who needed help like me... (My job) was a place where I could use something devastating and somewhat tragic that had shattered my life to my advantage. I could actually help people with the pain that made me who I am.”

In addition, contrary to the prejudice that people with mental illness cannot work, in the research, it has been observed that these people work even when their illness is exacerbated. The status of working or not working was found to be related to environmental conditions and family culture, apart from mental disorders. Some respondents reported working in more than one location. In the study, a participant with a diagnosis of schizophrenia said the following while describing a difficult period in his life:

“... And then... I started working two more jobs. So I was working 40 hours (in the hospital) and then on Sunday I started working 8 hours at the City Hospital... and I got a 20-hour week job in the evenings (in another hospital).”

Participants in the study; stated that they continued to work full-time during periods when they were not well emotionally, used excessive medication, and had psychotic attacks. Many participants remained in employment while dealing with responsibilities such as school and family. A participant who was hospitalized in more than one prison and psychiatric hospital described his continuity in business life as follows:

**“I worked almost the entire time – I only had to take a break for 6 months when I was in deep despair.”**

The Pride and Sense of Success That Financial Independence Brings Contribute to Healing.

The financial gain of being in employment also supports the recovery. Participants, their earnings; They used it to meet their own needs, live independently, pay their debts during an acute phase of the disease, continue their education, to receive treatment, in short, to improve their general quality of life, and their sense of pride and achievement brought by financial independence contributes to recovery.

The stress–predisposition model proposes that life stress may exacerbate symptoms in psychiatrically vulnerable individuals. However, participants in this study were found to insist on staying in employment until they found a balance between the stresses and benefits of working. This persistence allowed them to consistently reap benefits as opposed to the stress load of work. The benefit of working life is greater than the harm caused by the stress of working life.

Considering the results of the research, employment does not only provide financial gain to people with mental disorders. Being in employment contributes to mental well-being and supports recovery.

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