Sustainable employment:
Implications of working conditions on mental state, work ability and sustainable employment

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Abstract

Demographic developments form an increasing challenge for ensuring a viable and adequate workforce. This research investigates the relationships of working conditions (work demands and work resources) and sustainable employment, together with the role of the mental state of the employee. A survey was conducted under Dutch primary school employees ($N = 1694$) using self-reporting questionnaires.

We found that the antecedents of sustainable employment are numerous and interrelated. Working conditions and mental state are related to work ability and sustainable employment. The variance of the measured aspects of sustainable employment resulting from the variance in working conditions, range from $R^2 = .12$ to $R^2 = .16$. The relationships found for work resources are stronger than those for work demands. Specifically autonomy and support from the manager show robust relationships to sustainable employment. The impact of the other aspects of working conditions on sustainable employment are more indirect. These relations are mediated by the mental state – work engagement, burnout – of the employee.

The effects of working conditions on sustainable employment are significant and sizeable. They offer an organization possibilities to influence sustainable employment. Providing proper work resources, especially autonomy and support from the manager, seems vital in this.

Keywords: labour market position, employability, sustainable employment, work ability, working conditions, work demands, work resources, work engagement, burnout, primary school.