

Return To Work after Vocational Rehabilitation

Does Mindfulness Matter?

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Abstract

Purpose: Mindfulness has become an important construct in back to work rehabilitation. The aim of this study was to investigate whether mindfulness is a predictor for return to work (RTW), and to examine the indirect effect of mindfulness on RTW and work ability through quality of life (QOL).

Methods: A retrospective study was conducted among 80 former participants at a multidisciplinary vocational rehabilitation program (MVRP) in south Norway. Self-report questionnaires were used to measure work status, work ability, QOL and mindfulness. Demographics data were also collected.

Results: In the current sample, 47% of participants reported having returned to ordinary work. The majority of the non-working sub-sample reported being in work-related activity or education. A bias-corrected bootstrapping technique was used to examine indirect effects. Results revealed that *mindfulness* was indirectly related to both RTW and work ability through QOL. There was no significant total effect of *mindfulness* on work ability or RTW. Logistic regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of mindfulness on the likelihood that respondents returned to work. None of the independent mindfulness variables, *observe*, *describe*, *act aware*, *nonjudge* and *nonreact*, made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model. The covariates, *work ability* and *education level* significantly predicted RTW. However, when the data was analyzed after stratification by education level, the *observation* facet of mindfulness made a significant contribution to the model (OR=1.28, $p<.05$) for high educated participants.

Conclusion: The data suggest that mindfulness may enhance RTW and work ability through QOL. Furthermore, for high educated participants the observation facet of mindfulness predicts significantly RTW.