

Examining the Interplay of Work and Family Dynamics on Mental Health: A Longitudinal Study of Japanese Working Population

Studies have demonstrated that the experience of work–family interaction affects the psychological well-being of the working population; however, limited studies have longitudinally examined how the specific circumstances in the work and family domains together determine their mental health. The present study aims to examine whether family status modifies the influence of the psychosocial work environment on mental health among men and women in Japan over the life course. We used the Japanese Life Course Panel Surveys (JLPS) data from Wave 1 (2007) through Wave 14 (2020), comprised of participants aged 20–40 in 2007. Using the hybrid model to analyse the data from 3,531 male respondents (21,316 person-year observations) and 3,782 female respondents (22,128 person-year observations), we estimate both the within- and between-individual effects of the psychosocial work environment (work overload, job control, co-worker support, and flexible work arrangement), family events (marriage and parenthood) and their interactions on mental health, stratified by gender. The results indicated that, at the within-person level, changes in family status significantly modified the impact of the psychosocial work environment on mental health among women. Specifically, entering into marriage and transitioning to parenthood modified the associations between flexible work arrangements and mental health. Among men, the mental health impact of the psychosocial work environment was consistent regardless of changes in family status. At the between-person level, we found no modifying effect of family status differences on the associations between psychosocial work environment and mental health. The heterogeneity in the modifying effect by gender is likely caused by the household gender-role norms that expect women to fulfill roles as housewives and primary caregivers while expecting men to remain work-centred breadwinners, leading to differing utilization of flexible work arrangements as a resource compared to male counterparts.