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Theory based assessment of work ability

Jan Sandqvist, Elin Ekbladh

Linköping university, Faculty of Health Sciences, Norrköping, Sweden

Introduction

An essential part of the vocational rehabilitation process is assessment of clients with reduced work ability. Adequate and reliable methods for assessment are crucial for both the individuals who are assessed and for society as a whole. Sound and precise work assessments are needed to guide clients to suitable interventions using rehabilitation resources effectively. A single assessment instrument generally does not address all the multiple factors involved in a client's work ability. Therefore, assessors should use several instruments in combination.

Objectives

The overall aim is to present how four instruments for assessment of work ability based on the Model of Human Occupation can be combined with each other.

Results

The instruments Assessment of Work Characteristics (AWC), Assessment of Work Performance (AWP), Work Environment Impact Scale (WEIS) and Worker Role Interview (WRI) are all based on the same theoretical foundation, The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO). MOHO is a theoretical framework that explains the meaning and importance of activities for human beings and offers a conceptual framework for the description of human occupation.

- The AWC is an observation instrument that describes the extent to which a client has to use different working skills to perform a work task in an efficient and appropriate way.
- The AWP assesses a client's observable (working) skills during work performance, i.e. it assesses how efficient and appropriate the client performs a work activity.
- The WRI is an interview instrument that focuses on how psychosocial and environmental factors influence a client's ability to return to work.
- The WEIS is an interview instrument that describes how clients experience their work environment.

Conclusion

Assessment instruments based on theoretical models have the advantage that they create conditions that are conducive to valid interpretations of assessment results and yield intervention strategies.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

Ongoing and future research will focus on further psychometric evaluation and studies of how and with what results the above instruments could be combined with each other.