

Virtuous Cycles of Employment of People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

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Employment of people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) is a significant social issue in the world. Their employment had significant effects not only on their individual life, but also social productivity [1]. Therefore, many researchers have been looking for factors to improve their employment [2,3].

Recent studies found two main factors of their employment. The first was long-term social support for them. Long-term supporters efficiently helped them to continue in employment [4,5]. The second was their cognitive performance. Those without mental retardation worked better than those with [6,7]. Furthermore, the levels of their cognitive performance were negatively correlated with the rates of their maladaptive behaviors, so high rates of their maladaptive behaviors also shortened duration of their employment [6,7].

These studies set their cognitive performance scores and long-term support networks as independent variables and their employment status as a dependent variable [4-7]. Although interactions between presence of ASD and social support were examined [5], the interactions between autistic spectrum and social support were not examined. Hence, the studies conveyed the impression that the cognitive performance and long-term support independently affected their employment.

However, many studies found the interactions between cognitive performance and long-term support. For example, their levels of cognitive performance were enhanced by the long-term supported employment around 30 months [8]. Their rates of maladaptive behaviors were also decreased by the specially supported environment for 12 months [9]. Furthermore, because of these environmental factors, their levels of verbal performance were significantly changed from childhood to adulthood [6]. In the similar fashion, their low levels of cognitive performance make difficult them to receive supportive education in university. Those who did not graduate from a university received fewer chances of employment than those who graduated [10]. These studies suggested the interactions between long-term support and their cognitive performance.

From systemic perspectives [11], their cognitive performance and

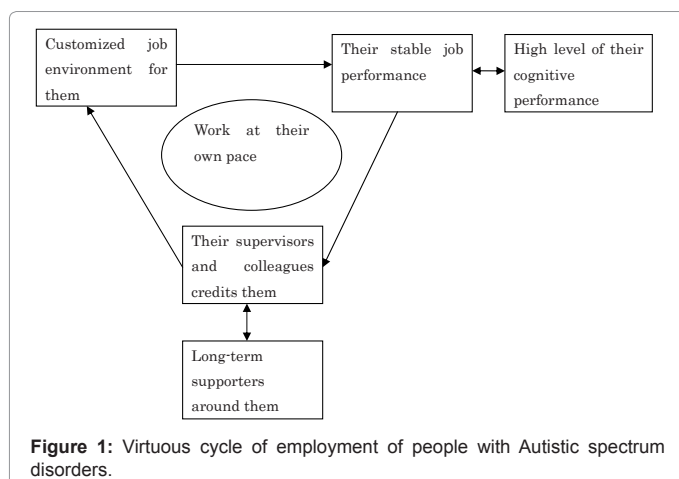


Figure 1: Virtuous cycle of employment of people with Autistic spectrum disorders.

long-term support contribute both virtuous and vicious cycles of their employment. Figure 1 shows virtuous cycles of their employment. Even though their talented cognitive performance affects their job performance, customized job environments also help their stable job performance, because the environments enable them to work at their own pace. They also earn their supervisors' and colleagues' trust with their stable job performance. Their trust also allows their customized job environments, which contribute their stable job performance. On the other hand, if their supervisors and colleagues do not trust them, the supervisors and colleagues are not likely to customize job environments for them. These job environments are likely to unfit with them. The unfit environments contribute their unstable job performance, which destroy the supervisors and colleagues trust (Figure 2).

Surely, I do not claim *tabula rasa* and I accept that their talented cognitive performance during childhood directly affected their employment during adulthood [6,7]. However, I emphasize the interactions between cognitive performance and long term support. I also claim that both of them contribute virtuous or vicious cycles of their employment. Several studies pointed out that recent job environments might be unfit with them [10,12,13]. The unfit environments might contribute vicious cycles of their employment. On the other hand, other qualitative studies emphasized importance of their supervisors' support [14,15] and their autonomous life styles [3,16]. These findings imply that long-term supporters enable them to carry their life autonomously.

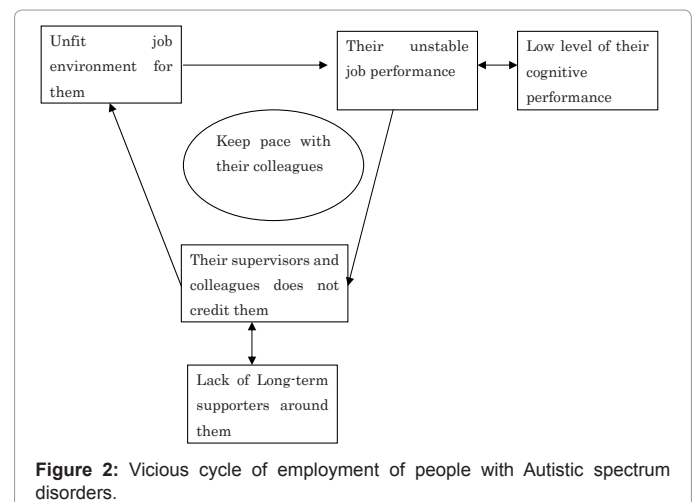


Figure 2: Vicious cycle of employment of people with Autistic spectrum disorders.

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The supervisors' support might contribute virtuous cycles of their employment.

Although supervisors' support might help them to enter into virtuous cycles, some of them could enter into vicious cycles in spite of the supervisors' support. Therefore, supporters around them need to evaluate virtuous cycles. The degree of their autonomy could be a good index (e.g., whether they work at their own pace, whether they were satisfied with their job performance) [3]. If their supervisors and they reports high levels of autonomy, their employments could be in virtuous cycles. If not, their employments had risks to be in vicious cycles. Regardless of their cognitive performance and long-term support, they had chances and risks to enter into either of cycles. Researchers and supporters around them need to foster them to be in virtuous cycles.

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