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Job demands and resources in elderly care services: How to maintain the work ability of elderly service employees?

Work strain in elderly care services has been high for a long time. The situation highlights the importance of coping at work. This study provides information on job demands and resources in elderly care services and their association with poor work ability. This information can be used in maintaining the work ability and coping of elderly care service employees. The data for the study were collected with a survey from Finnish public social and health care organizations (hospital districts and joint municipal boards) in 2020 (n = 22,528). Some 4,347 respondents worked in elderly services and 18,155 in other health and social services. According to the findings of the logistic regression analysis, the job demands and resources associated with poor work ability are the same in elderly services and in other social and health care services. However, there were differences in the levels of job demands and resources based on the covariance analysis. Employees in home care, service housing, and institutional care perceived their work to be more demanding than those in other fields of social and health care. They had less working time autonomy, less work task autonomy, and fewer opportunities to use their skills. To ease the workload and to promote work ability, elderly services and social and health care organizations should increase job resources and pay more attention to workplace solutions, such as team cooperation, fairness of decision-making, and the strengthening of engaging leadership.

Keywords: work ability, well-being at work, social and health care, eldercare, job demands and resources