



## **Vocational rehabilitation of people with mental illness: The need for a broader approach**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the role of several factors in shaping the employment outcomes of people with mental illness who were interested in gaining open employment and participated in a community based vocational rehabilitation program to achieve this goal. The majority of the study respondents had a diagnosis of schizophrenia. The work history, work competence and social networks of the respondents were examined. While several aspects of work history and work competence were important for gaining employment, equally critical was the role of the social network, particularly family members and employers, in influencing employment outcomes. The study challenges existing assumptions about the social network characteristics of people with mental illness and proposes that supporting these networks is crucial for the success of rehabilitation programs.

### **Keywords**

*vocational rehabilitation, work competence, work history, social networks*

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