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Health inequalities among Korean employees

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether social status, including age, gender, and occupational status, is a determinant of occupational health inequalities. The effect of social status on both work environments and health outcomes was analyzed using a sample consisting of 27,598 wage employees aged 15 years and older from the Korean Working Condition Survey in 2011. Work environments included atypical work, physical risks, ergonomic risks, work demands, work autonomy, social supports, and job rewards. Health outcomes comprised general health, health and safety-at-risk because of work, mental health at risk, work-related musculoskeletal disease, and work-related injury. Multivariable logistic-regression models were used to identify the associations between social status, work environments and health outcomes. Results showed that employees in the demographically vulnerable group (female, younger and older workers) had lower occupational status (precarious employment, manual labor occupation and small company) compared to their counterparts. Low social status was largely related to adverse work environments. Especially, precarious employment and manual labor occupation were associated with both adverse work environments and poor health outcomes. Thus, precarious workers and manual workers should take precedence in occupational health equity policies and interventions. Also, their cumulative vulnerability based on demographics, occupational status, adverse work environments, or poor health outcomes, can be improved through a multi-level approach such as labor market, organizations, and individual goals.

Biography

Hyunjeong Park has completed her PhD from Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing. She is an Assistant Professor at Towson University, Department of Nursing. She has been working with Korean American immigrants and vulnerable population.

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