

Transformation of labor and mental problems in individualizing society

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The objective of this dissertation is to clarify empirically how the labor issues to be coopted socially would be hidden as an individualized mental (mind) problem.

Here I will analyze the construction process of social problems over the case of suicide due to overwork at Dentsu as a case study where the labor issue was socially constituted into mental one. The Dentsu case was the first moment when a social problem category “suicide due to overwork” appeared and then this was the first case the court ruled the company to pay compensation for suicide due to overwork in Japan. The process of this social problem’s construction gives rise to social mechanism which reduces labor issue to mental problem to be dealt with by individuals’ responsibility.

In this dissertation I will deal with the working place of dispatched event companions as a job considered in worker dispatching act amended in 2012 as an exception to “prohibition of temporary dispatched worker”.

Event companions’ job situations can be characterized as 1) instable employment as temporary dispatched worker, 2) opaqueness of job conditions, 3) person-to-person services in selling and quota, and 4) gendered working place which needs a kind of femininity. In such a labor situation, what is needed for the companions as dispatched workers to adapt to and keep their jobs is “skills” to respond with flexibility to the problems raised in their working place. We can find that in the companions’ working place which needs flexible responses, the contemporary labor transformations such as instability, temporariness and flexibility emerged drastically. In addition to this, as the labor issue of companions is located legally in grey zone as a dispatched jobs, it will impose emotional labor and self-control upon them and will be individualized as “mental problem” and getting hidden.