Brouwers, E. P. M., Joosen, M. C. W., van Zelst, C., & Van Weeghel, J. (2020). To disclose or not to disclose: A multi-stakeholder focus group study on mental health issues in the work environment. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 30(1), 84-92. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-019-09848-z>

This study explores whether or not to disclose mental illness or mental health issues in the work environment. The research questions were: (1) what do stakeholders see as advantages and disadvantages of disclosing mental illness or mental health issues in the work environment; (2) what factors are of influence on a positive outcome of disclosure? The aim of the study was to explore different stakeholder perspectives on advantages and disadvantages of non- disclosure, and on factors determining a successful outcome. Generally, it was believed that disclosure can have important benefits, but if work functioning is not or minimally affected by the symptoms, for the employee’s well-being and employability it is best not to disclose. This is especially true during the hiring period- in order to avoid stigma and discrimination.

A discrepancy emerged between HR managers on one respect, and people with mental illness and mental health advocates on the other. Specifically, all were in favor of disclosure, but for different reasons. HR managers were in favor of disclosure, since it enabled them to discriminate and avoid financial risk. Managers had mixed feelings about it, however they regarded it as a basic responsibility of their jobs. Nevertheless, the other two groups emphasized that authenticity in the workplace was extremely important for well-being and work performance. The additional finding that concealment was associated with feeling dishonest on the part of people with invisible disabilities, resulting in a weight on one’s shoulders causing stress and exhaustion. Moreover, workplace authenticity by individuals (by disclosing invisible disabilities) was positively related to wellbeing,

This will be useful to my project because it clearly demonstrated the risk of discrimination as a major disadvantage of disclosure. This generally referred to the discloser being a financial risk for the employer. The HR professionals came up with many ways in which disclosure could lead to discrimination. These were all related to reducing the employers’ financial risk and included the following: trying to get rid of the employee, no continuation of a temporary contract after it finishes, not hiring, offering the discloser only temporary contracts, a shorter contract or lower salary. HR professionals viewed it as a positive hiring decision, due to their responsibility in their jobs. From their point of view, they were in favor of disclosure during the hiring period since this would enable them to avoid hiring the discloser and protect their employer from financial risk. Note that a strength of the study is that it concerned real stakeholders with personal and professional experience.