



Research on the provision of videoconference-based employment support for people with disabilities

(Research Report No. 174) SUMMARY

[Keyword]

Videoconference-based employment support

Employment support for people with disabilities

Web conferencing system

[Summary]

This study conducted a questionnaire research and interviews targeting employment support organizations, with the aim of contributing to the study of future videoconference-based employment support at employment support organizations and effective implementation methods.

As a result, videoconference-based employment support was used in the surveyed establishments primary for retention support, etc. While videoconference-based employment support has several advantages, such as reduced burden of travel, ease of scheduling, and reduced psychological burden on the user, it also presents challenges with equipment, communication issues such as difficulty understanding nonverbal cues and speech timing, and difficulties in conducting assessments such as work tests and behavioral observations.

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2 Research period

FY2022 - FY2023

3 Structure of the Report

Chapter 1: Current Status of Videoconference-based Employment Support Services

Chapter 2: Questionnaire Research of Employment Support Organizations

Chapter 3: Interviews of Employment Support Organizations

Chapter 4: Toward the Promotion of Videoconference-based Employment Support Services

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4 Background and Objectives of the Study

Due to the spread of new lifestyles under the influence of the spread of the new type of COVID-19 infection, the possibility of providing employment support services, such as videoconference-based consultation using a video conferencing system, was considered in the employment support for persons with disabilities. Videoconference-based employment support was seen as having benefits, such as reducing the need for users from remote locations to come into the office and was seen as an effective form of employment support service.

However, it was also suspected that the accumulation and sharing of knowledge is still insufficient in many employment support organizations for persons with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "employment support organizations"). In addition, in order to continue to provide videoconference-based employment support not only for the purpose of infection prevention, but it was also considered necessary to understand the current status and issues of videoconference-based employment support and to confirm considerations and conditions for providing videoconference-based employment support.

The purpose of this study was to understand the current status of videoconference-based employment supports in employment service organizations, considerations and conditions necessary for implementing supports, and issues in implementing supports in order to contribute to the study of future videoconference-based supports and their effective implementation methods.

5 Research Methodology

(1) Interviews with experts

Interviews with experts on the provision of videoconference-based employment support services, practitioners at employment support organizations with experience in providing videoconference-based employment support services, and other experts to obtain advice on how to conduct effective research.

(2) Questionnaire survey of employment support organizations

In October 2022, the employment and life support center for persons with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "Employment and Life Support Centers"), employment support providers established by the municipalities for persons with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "Municipal Employment Support Centers"), employment retention support providers (hereinafter referred to as "Employment Retention Support Providers"), local youth support stations (hereinafter referred to as "Local Youth Support Stations"), the questionnaire research was conducted on the current status of videoconference-based employment support in the surveyed projects (a total of 2,008 sites) in order to understand the current status of videoconference-based employment support, considerations and conditions necessary for the implementation of support, and issues related to the implementation of support.

(3) Interviews with employment support organizations

From mid-February to mid-May 2023, interviews were conducted to obtain more concrete information on the effective implementation methods of videoconference-based employment support, targeting 15 of the offices that responded "yes" to the questionnaire research and were found to be actively providing videoconference-based support or making other distinctive efforts.

6 Details of the research

(1) Questionnaire research of employment support organizations

There were 807 valid responses to the survey, for an overall valid response rate of 40.3% (Employment and Life Support Centers: 38.5%; Municipal Employment Support Centers: 31.9%; Employment Retention Support Providers: 42.3%; Local Youth Support Stations: 34.5%).

When the data were tabulated by type of support organizations, about 50 to 80% of the business establishments provided videoconference-based employment support to users (persons with disabilities themselves) (71.5% for Employment and Life Support Centers, 62.3% for Municipal Employment Support Centers, 49.4% for Employment Retention Support Providers, and 80.3% for Local Youth Support Stations), about 60% for Employment and Life Support Centers and Municipal Employment Support Centers, and about 30% for Employment Retention Support Providers (see the table below).

Table Availability of Videoconference-Based Support [Multiple responses]

(%)

	Employment and Life Support Centers(n=130)	Municipal Employment Support Centers(n=53)	Employment Retention Support Providers(n=559)	Local Youth Support Stations(n=61)
Conducted for users	71.5	62.3	49.4	80.3
Conducted for business enterprises	69.2	83.0	37.4	16.4
None of the above	18.5	17.0	46.9	18.0

The implementation rate of videoconference-based employment support differs depending on the content of the support and the type of disability of the user. In terms of support content, the implementation rate is high for "employment retentions support (interview with the user)" and "meetings and conferences between support organizations", etc., and low for "standardized performance test" and "behavior observation using situation sampling methods, etc.". (Figure 1). The implementation rate of videoconference-based employment support was generally high for users with mental disability by disability type, but a certain amount of videoconference-based employment support was also provided to users with intellectual disability and developmental disability, although the implementation rate varied depending on the content of the support (Figure 2).

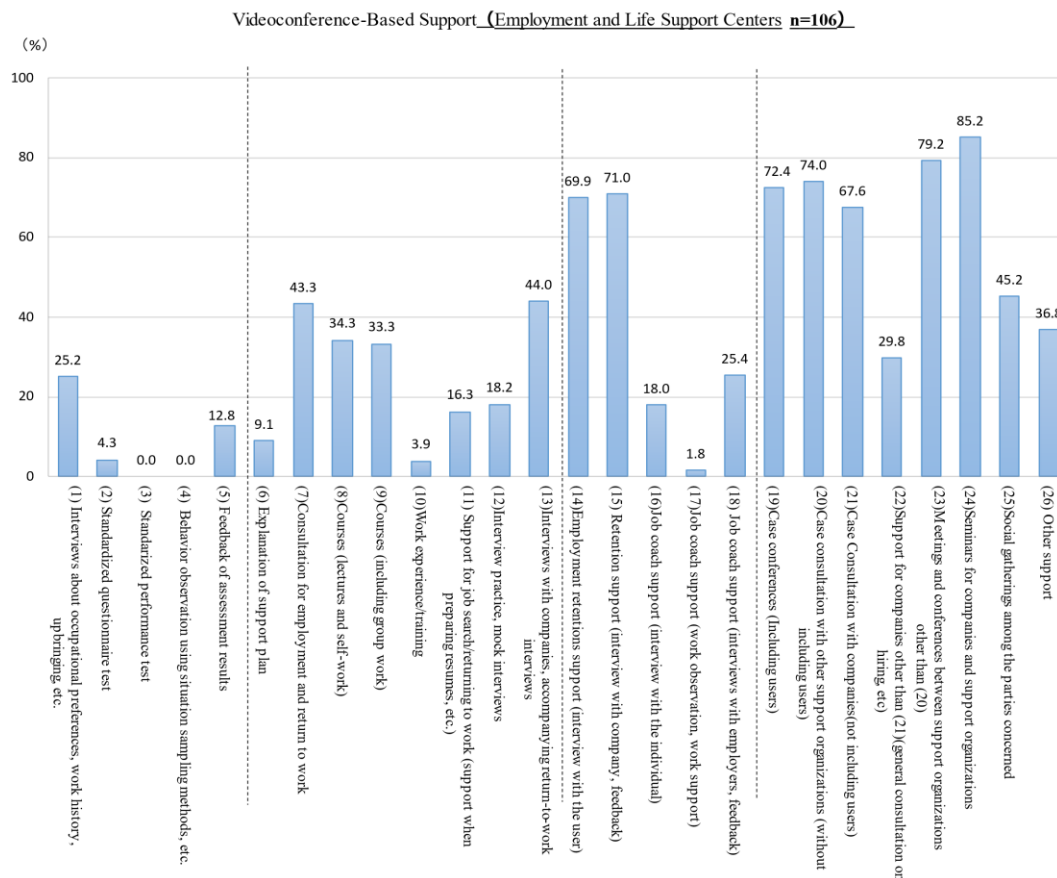
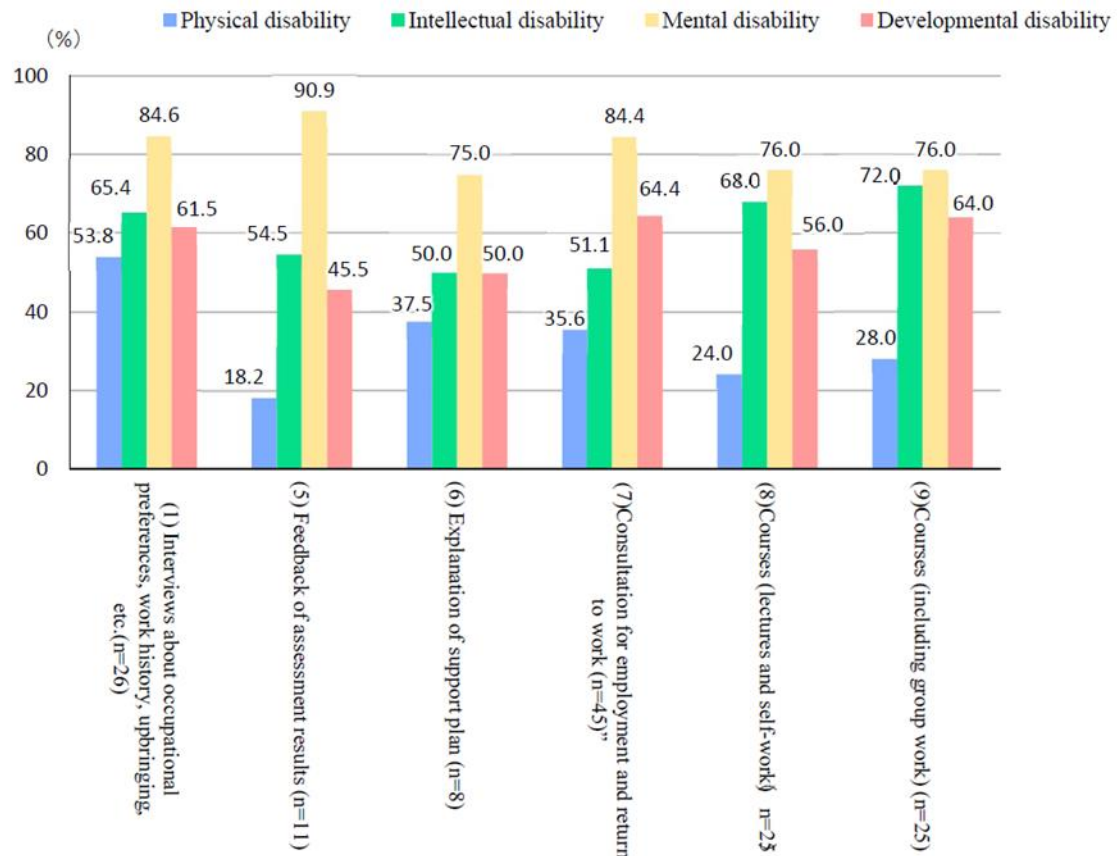


Figure 1: Percentage of establishments providing videoconference-based employment support to offices providing in-person support for each type of support (Employment and Life Support Centers) [Multiple responses possible].

*Only the Employment and Life Support Centers discussed here is represented here.

Employment and Life Support Centers(n=106)



Employment and Life Support Centers(n=106)

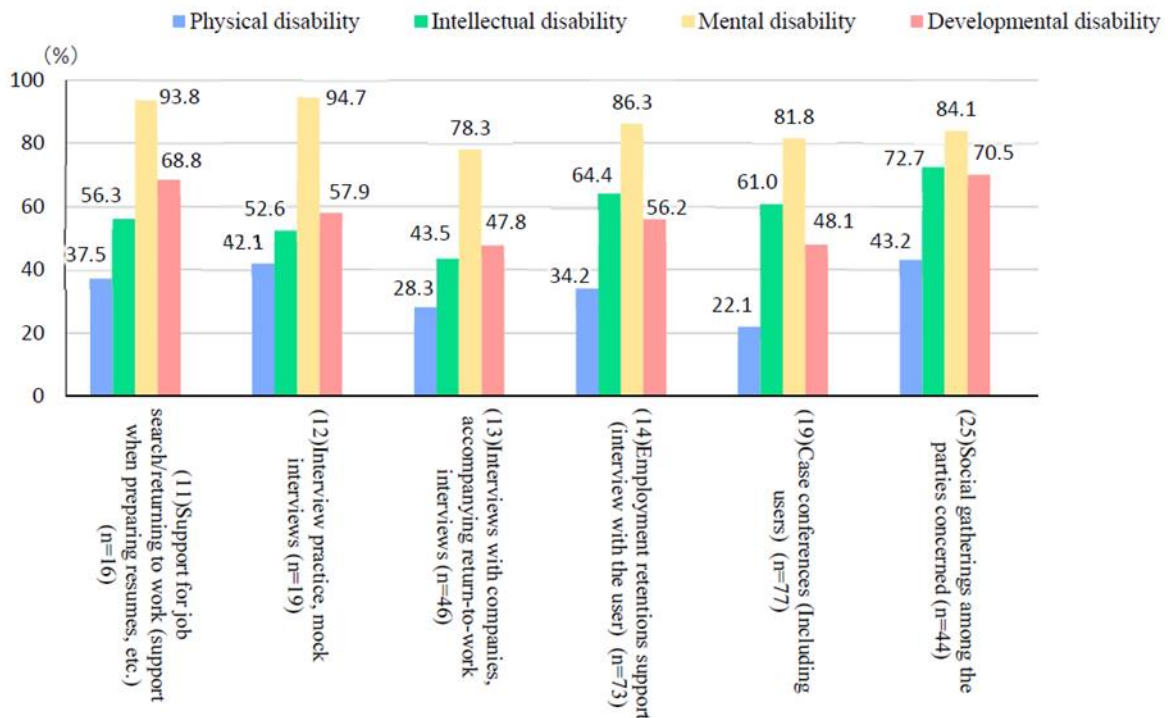


Figure 2: Type of disability of persons eligible for videoconference-based employment support (Employment and Life Support Centers) [Multiple responses possible].

*Excerpts from the section on support for people with disabilities. Only the Employment and Life Support Centers discussed here is represented.

As for "conditions to consider when implementing videoconference-based employment support", all projects selected "users' support needs and wants" and "users' communication devices and environment" at high rates. As for "devices in the implementation of videoconference-based employment support", all projects selected "conducting a transmission test in advance" and "paying attention to the tone and speed of voice when speaking" at high rates (Figure 3).

As for the advantages of videoconference-based employment support, the highest selection rate was "reduced burden of going out and traveling for users" for all projects, followed by "easier to continue support for companies that are difficult to visit due to busy schedules or distance" for the Employment and Life Support Centers, "easier scheduling of interviews, etc." for the Municipal Employment Support Centers and the Employment Retention Support Providers, and "easier to check users' facial expressions when they are unmasked" for the Local Youth Support Stations.

As for disadvantages of videoconference-based employment support, all projects selected "delays, interruptions, and extensions of program start due to transmission problems" and "difficulty understanding nonverbal cues (voice, facial expressions, etc.) of users" at a high rate. Many offices responded that they experienced disadvantages in the areas of transmission environment/equipment, understanding and assessing nonverbal information, and establishing rapport.

In terms of issues to address in promoting videoconference-based employment support in the projects reviewed, "improving interviewing techniques" was selected most frequently by all projects. Regarding the future policy of videoconference-based employment support, the highest percentage of respondents in three of the four projects chose "use only when it is difficult to provide face-to-face support" for both "support to users themselves" and "support to companies."

We asked respondents to respond to a maximum of two instances of videoconference-based employment support for users (the person with the disability). The subjects of the videoconference-based employment support were in their 20s and 30s, their employment status at the beginning of the support was "currently employed" (only the Local Youth Support Stations responded "currently looking for a job (except those in school)"), and most of them had "mental disabilities" (Employment and Life Support Centers and Employment Retention Support Providers) or "developmental disabilities" (Municipal Employment Support Centers) as their disability type. The reasons for providing videoconference-based employment support included "for infection control (prevention)" and various other reasons selected depending on the type of project and the type of disability of the user. In addition, as for "considerations and devices implemented when providing videoconference-based employment support in the case in question", a high percentage of respondents selected "paying attention to tone of voice and speed of speech" and others, and various examples of individual considerations and devices from before to after the support were extracted from the free responses. On the other hand, from the free responses regarding "difficulties in implementing videoconference-based employment support", "problems with equipment and transmission" were extracted in many cases, as well as verbal and non-

verbal communication problems and problems with the operating skills of the equipment of both users and supporters.

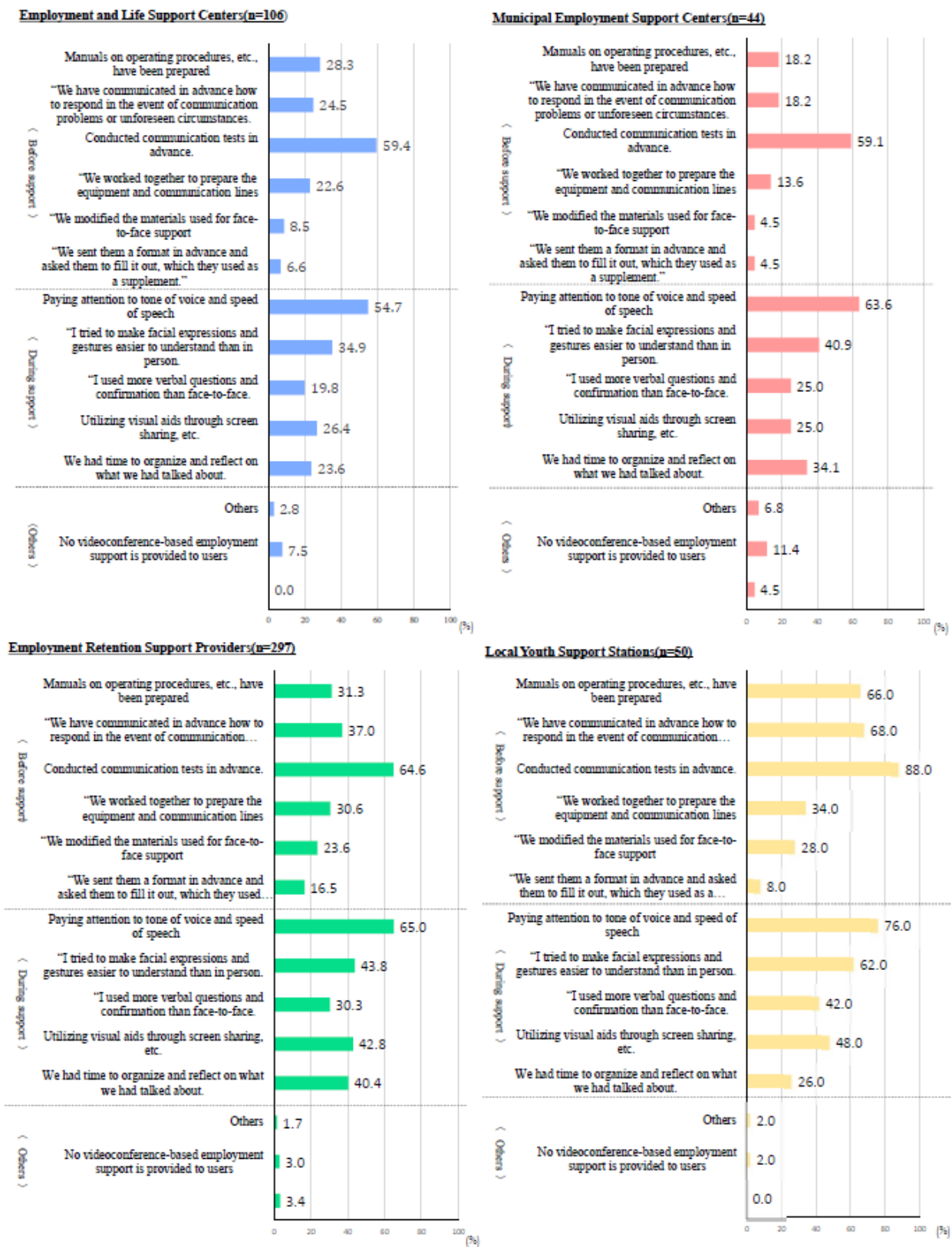


Figure 3: Considerations and devices implemented when providing videoconference-based employment support in the case in question
[Multiple responses possible].

In an exploratory analysis conducted to determine the characteristics of the groups of offices that were actively providing videoconference-based employment support or intended to continue to do so, the rate of implementation of various innovations in videoconference-based employment support was high in the groups of offices with large numbers of users with intellectual or developmental disabilities, those that had already implemented various types of videoconference-based employment support, and those that intended to continue to actively promote videoconference-based employment support in the future. Those with these characteristics were more likely to report that they would continue to actively promote videoconference-based employment support in the future. In offices that provide videoconference-based employment support as a response to various user needs that are not limited to infection control measures, such as reducing the burden of going out of the office and preparing for work at home, experience is accumulated in implementing various types of videoconference-based employment support with ingenuity, and the benefits of videoconference-based employment support are realized through the experience of providing support. This experience will facilitate the formation of a policy to continue videoconference-based employment support in the future.

(2) Interviews with employment support organizations

The start of videoconference-based employment support was triggered by the outbreak of a new COVID-19 infection in many of the facilities. As for the communication environment, all sites implemented the system within their facilities, connected by the facility's wired or wireless LAN. Zoom was the most used videoconference-based employment meeting system selected by the sites, and many of the respondents indicated that other software (e.g., Microsoft Teams) was sometimes used, depending on the other party. In terms of meeting location, many offices held face-to-face meetings in a private room or other separate location within the office. The communication environment for users in all offices was based on connecting from home using personal computers, smartphones, tablets, etc.

All offices indicated that the interview was conducted in person as much as possible, either initially or at some point in the process. Although most offices conducted the assessment in person, there were some cases conduct videoconference interview about vocational preferences, work history, and educational history. There were also cases where video conference interviews were conducted for reasons such as infection prevention and then videoconference-based employment support was continued, as well as cases where it was difficult to come to the office due to illness or physical condition, but videoconference-based employment support was continued.

In terms of training and programs for individuals, there were differences in the content of the support, with Employment and Life Support Centers and Municipal Employment Support Centers focusing on counseling, and the Employment Retention Support Providers and Local Youth Support Stations providing more training and programs for individuals, and the implementation status of videoconference-based employment support varied widely. In the case of job search support, there were examples of online interview practice and CV correction.

Videoconference-based employment retention support was also provided in all offices. For incumbents, videoconference-based employment retention support was often provided because they had access to the company's communication environment, had good PC skills, and could not take the time to come to the office. 6 offices provided videoconference-based job coach support for reasons such as infection prevention.

Several offices, Employment and Life Support Centers, conducted case conferences online. Benefits such as ease of scheduling and ease of participation by multiple organizations at the same time were cited. There were examples of user exchange meetings conducted online or as a hybrid of face-to-face and online. Online seminars were held in various offices.

In terms of preparation for videoconference-based employment support, several offices prepared microphones, cameras, headphones, etc. for videoconference-based employment support, and some prepared instruction manuals or created videos and posted them on their websites. Some of the communication efforts included: using reactions and facial expressions louder than usual, verbal confirmation, speaking at different lengths so as not to interrupt the others conversation, the supporter intentionally talking about himself/herself, using chat rooms, screen sharing, involving staff in group work, shortening the interview time to avoid fatigue, and so on.

Challenges in promoting videoconference-based employment support included equipment issues, lack of knowledge and skills among supporters, and the communication environment and understanding of their counterparts.

Although there is a movement to return to face-to-face support as the outbreak of new COVID-19 infections subsides, all offices indicated that they would like to continue to provide videoconference-based employment support in the future. In addition, opinions were expressed about the benefits and uses of videoconference-based employment support other than infection control. It is expected that videoconference-based employment support will continue to be an option, depending on the wishes and needs of individuals and companies.

(3) Discussion

Various advantages of videoconference-based employment support were observed, such as reduced burden of travel, ease of schedule adjustment, and reduced psychological burden on users. It will continue to be important as an option for support, not only for infectious disease control.

On the other hand, videoconference-based employment support has some challenges, such as equipment problems, communication issues such as difficulty understanding nonverbal cues and timing of speech, and difficulties in conducting assessments such as work tests and behavioral observations. Sharing these efforts is expected to increase the number of situations where the advantages of videoconference-based employment support outweigh the disadvantages.

In addition, to further increase the effectiveness of videoconference-based employment provider in the future, it will be important not only to improve the operational and support skills of individual

supporters, but also to make efforts at the organizational level, including the development of high-quality equipment and transmission environments, manuals and staff training, and the sharing of support knowledge.

The period from 2022 to 2023, when this study was conducted, was around the time when the status of new-type COVID-19 infectious diseases was downgraded from "new-type influenza and other infectious diseases (so-called category 2 equivalent)" to "category 5 infectious diseases" under the Infectious Disease Control Law. In this situation, the policy for videoconference-based employment support in the future varies from office to office, but there were many offices that said they would continue videoconference-based employment support as an option, and it will be necessary to continue to accumulate and share knowledge about videoconference-based employment support. We hope that the results of this study will help in this regard.