

Employment Conditions and Implications: *The Experiences of Persons with Disabilities around St. John's.*



Presented by

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Purpose of The Study



This study focused on investigating the employment experiences of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in urban/suburban Newfoundland, how their location affects their access to social support systems and job opportunities, the barriers to employment opportunities and career advancement that they face, and how their work/life conditions can be improved to help foster their recruitment, productivity, retention and career advancement in the workforce.

AIM OF STUDY



The Study aimed to contribute to the workplace disability policy field by creating/improving general awareness about the experiences of persons with varying degrees of mental and physical disabilities and to investigate the extent to which the severity of their disabilities might affect their easy access to obtaining gainful employment. Consequently, useful, specific, feasible and financially affordable inclusion policies were recommended/proposed to help improve the work/life conditions of persons with temporary and permanent disabilities in the workforce.

Background of the Study



- A Study conducted by (Turcotte 2014) on the labour market participation of Canadians 25 to 64 years of age with a physical or mental disability showed that:
- **In 2011, the employment rate of Canadians aged 25 to 64 with disabilities was 49%, compared with 79% for Canadians without a disability.**
- The employment rate among persons aged 25 to 64 with a mild disability was 68%, compared with 54% of those with a moderate disability, 42% employment rate of persons with a severe disability and 26% among those with a very severe disability.
- **The difference in employment rates between persons with disabilities and those without a disability was lower among university graduates. This difference was non-significant in the case of university graduates who had a mild or moderate disability.**
- Persons with very severe disabilities are two-and-a-half times less likely to be employed than those than those with mild disabilities. (Statistics Canada 2017).

Background of the Study (Contd)



- **Approximately 1 in 2 university graduates, with or without a disability, held a professional occupation. However, graduates with a disability were less likely to hold a management position and earned less than those without a disability, especially among men (Turcotte 2014).**
- **Among Canadians with a disability, 12% reported having been refused a job in the previous five years as a result of their condition. The percentage was 33% among 25- to 34-year-olds with a severe or very severe disability.**
- **In 2017, persons with disabilities faced lower employment rates, particularly for Canadians with very severe disabilities, and those with lower levels of education (Statistics Canada 2017).**
- **About 59% of working-age adults with disabilities were employed compared with around 80% of those without disabilities.**
- **However, as severity of disability increased, the percentage of those employed fell from 76% among those with mild disabilities to 31% among those with very severe disabilities.**
- **About one-third of youth with more severe disabilities are neither in school nor employed. (Statistics Canada 2017).**

Problem Statement

- PWDs are still underrepresented in the workforce till today.
- **Recent and Past Studies have shown that PWDs have consistently experienced barriers in the educational, economic and social spheres, leading to high unemployment rate for them.**
- Even when employed, they tend to face massive obstacles in terms of working conditions,(Ergonomics) accommodations and career advancement opportunities.
- **This is especially true for those with more severe disabilities or low educational attainment.**
- This Study revealed that a lot of PWDs need work and educational accommodations/supports which are mostly not available or are not functional.
- **While over the years the government has developed measures to enable Canadians with disabilities to participate in the labour force, their efforts have been inconsistent. Federal, provincial and local programs for Canadians with disabilities have been described as “a disjointed patchwork of widely varying practices and uneven accessibility, affordability and responsiveness” (Prince 2016).**

Overview of the Study



- This qualitative study collected data from twelve participants of working ages 18-65 living around St Johns Newfoundland and Labrador.
- **12 in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted to be able to gather meaningful, adequate and accurate first-hand information/data from participants about their employment situations and experiences.**
- The findings from the study revealed common themes amongst participants' responses relating to **mobility, relocation, accommodations, disclosure and stigma.**
- **A major problem identified by participants is the issue of slow accessible transportation around the St Johns region especially when trying to get to work early.**
- The issue of Disclosure is also challenging for PWDs; Only one of the twelve participants in the study stated that they would disclose their disability when applying for jobs for fear of being discriminated against.

Research Methodology



- My Research Methodology entailed a qualitative approach which involved conducting 12 in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews to be able to gather meaningful, adequate and accurate first-hand information/data from participants about their employment situations and experiences.
- **The participants were persons with varying degrees of mental and physical disabilities with working-age ranges from 18-65 living in St Johns and its suburbs.**
- Data related to the nature of their disabilities, education, work and life experiences was collected.
- **In addition, data related to participant decisions to disclose the nature of their disability for employment purposes was collected.**
- Data related to decisions to stay or leave St Johns for job opportunities was also collected.
- **Data associated with participant experiences regarding accommodations that they have or have not received while finding work /in their workplaces was also collected.**

Research Questions



- *What should be the role of the Canadian Government and Employers in promoting the formal welfare and access to social supports for PWDs particularly those in the rural inaccessible areas?*
- *To what extent does the type and severity of a disability prevent or delay labour force participation and how should accommodations/social support programs be customized to support varying degrees of disabilities?*
- *What programs/policies would if made available, prolong labour force participation, foster retention and improve overall productivity amongst persons with disabilities?*
- *To what extent do employers promote the health and productivity of workers with disabilities in terms of professional/skills development, regular salary increases, employee assistant programs/benefits and career advancements .*

Results/Discussions



- Data was analysed using (Goulding 2005) Seven Steps of Phenomenological Data Analysis.
- The findings of this research revealed common themes amongst participants responses related to **mobility, relocation, accommodations, disclosure and stigma.**
- **Meanings were formed based on similar responses of other interviewees, recurring themes and the findings from previous literature reviewed on the topic.**
- Most of the participants stated that they would rather not disclose their status for employment purposes (especially those with invisible disabilities), because the stigma associated with their conditions will be significant enough to impact their obtaining gainful employment.
- **For example, one participant stated that it was really unfortunate that she has worked a couple of jobs whilst in the University, but since she spoke to an advisor at the student with disabilities learning and resource centre about “disclosing” her status during job applications, she had not gotten any interviews in almost a year as she used to.**
- A number of other participant also identified similar experiences relating to disclosure.

Results



- **Mobility**
- **Relocation**
- **Accommodations**
- **Disclosure**
- **Discrimination**
- **Stigma**

CONCLUSIONS

- Findings from this study reveal that some employers still do not fully understand how to properly accommodate PWDs.
- **Some employers especially private businesses try to minimize costs by not providing adequate or proper accommodation facilities for PWDs in the organisation even when it is requested for.**
- Employers must be properly educated on how to adequately accommodate PWDs up to the point of undue hardship.
- **Most employers should be educated with the fact that designing accommodation facilities for PWDs can actually be “cost saving” for their organisations as it reduces their turn-over rate.**

RECOMMENDATIONS



- **Recommendations for Business Owners.(Employers)**
- **Recommendations for the Government.**
- **Recommendations for Persons with Disabilities.**
- **Recommendations for Future Research.**

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTD).



EMPLOYERS

- ✓ Fair and Just hiring practices.
- ✓ Corporate social responsibility.
- ✓ Customized accommodations for more severe disabilities.
- ✓ Emulate best practices.

GOVERNMENT

- ✓ New Provincial Legislations on accommodations.
- ✓ Tax breaks/government grants for employers.
- ✓ Enforcement of training programs for employers on disability/accommodation.

PWDs

- ✓ Confidence in Disclosure.
- ✓ Participation in various research relating to disability & accommodations.
- ✓ Participation in various workshops/seminars to enhance employment opportunities.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- ✓ Economic/Opportunity costs for Businesses on accommodations.
- ✓ Legal and Political requirements on hiring practices of PWDs.
- ✓ Health care sector for PWDs (Insurance).
- ✓ Evidence-based hiring practices.

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