

Disability disclosure simulation as an education tool

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Background

- There are 3.8 million working age Canadians with a disability, but only 47% of them are employed.
- Less than 1 in 5 people with a disability receive workplace accommodations.
- Youth with disabilities (YWD) face barriers in disclosing their condition and requesting workplace accommodations.
- It is important to understand how disclosure and accommodations are facilitated in the workplace in order to create more inclusive and productive workplaces.

Objective

To explore participants' experiences as they contributed to the development of building a simulation scenario as an educational tool for employers and managers

Methods

Design:

Qualitative focus group design with 2 simulation build sessions (2.5 hours each) facilitated by researchers certified in SIM-One simulation debriefing and facilitation.

- *1st build session:* focused on disability awareness, disclosure discussions, creating inclusive environments and benefits of hiring people with disabilities
- *2nd build session:* piloted with live actors who trained for their character roles

Sample

7 employers and human resources personnel or hiring managers with experience in recruiting and hiring youth with disabilities

Results

Creating a comfortable and safe space for employees to disclose



- Themes: Trust, removing stigma, personal biases, effective communication

"For employers, it is what can you ask? Where can you build a safe space to talk about what you need? You can phrase it as, what do you need to be the best at work?" (Youth #12, Male, aged 30).

How to ask employees or job candidates about disability



- Participants expressed concerns about legalities of what they could while also considering the best way to set up the conversation.
- Type and visibility of the condition often affected this

"Often where it gets complicated is when we talk about disabilities...I think that's the big difference, when it's non-visible...whereas with the visible disability it is hard not to ask".

How to respond to employees disclosure of a disability



- Many participants were unsure about how to respond when an employee or job candidate disclosed a disability or if they overshared medical information.
- *Employers were "uncomfortable with someone disclosing toileting, medications or very specific procedures...There's a sense of liability with this information."* (#7, simulation 2)

Reactions to the disability disclosure simulation



- Participants expressed overall positive reactions to the simulation.

"I really enjoyed it...You bring a perspective that we don't get to see. We're on the employer's side but we don't get to see the job seekers side of it. You brought a really good window into that world" (#1, simulation 1)

Conclusions

Developing a simulation about disability disclosure discussions is a novel approach to educating employers and managers that has the potential to help enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Limitations and Future Directions

The sample was predominantly female participants. Future studies should aim for greater gender diversity.

Disability disclosure may vary by type of disability, cultural and workplace context

Acknowledgements

This was funded by a CIHR-SSHRC partnership grant & Kimel Family Opportunities Fund.