

**Occupational therapists' views of colleagues with seen and unseen disabilities**

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**Introduction:** Workplace discrimination and negative or unsupportive attitudes of colleagues continue to be barriers encountered by occupational therapists with disabilities. Nonetheless, the views and perceptions of employers and employees towards colleagues with disabilities has received little research attention (Bevan, 2014).

**Objectives:** This study aimed to explore this gap in the literature.

**Method:** An online survey was sent to 106 occupational therapists via a university's placement database in April-May 2016. The survey collected information on participants': demographics; work settings; involvement in recruitment; opinions on disability disclosure in the workplace; awareness of disability legislation; provision of reasonable accommodations; and perspectives on employees with disabilities. Additionally, the survey included several vignettes and open questions. Data was analysed using SPSS and thematic analysis.

**Results:** The response rate was 41.5% (44/106), with 41 women and 3 men, of which 31.8% (14) participants reported a disability ('seen' and 'unseen'). The majority, 68.2% (30), were involved in some aspect of recruitment. The findings indicated that there are many benefits to employing someone with a disability. Many reported supportive attitudes towards employees with disabilities, although some reported unsupportive and negative attitudes, or identified issues with employing someone with a disability.

Surprisingly, a high number of participants lacked awareness of disability support services, and inclusive and diversity policies in their workplace.

**Conclusion:** As expected, occupational therapists are mostly supportive of their colleagues with seen and unseen disabilities. However, disability awareness training and recruitment drive for people with a disability is recommended to tackle negative attitudes and unsupportive workplaces.