

The perspective of persons with disabilities related to employment versus benefits

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Significance of Research Study

- ▶ Inform future directions of employment support programs, as well as government decision makers about employment policy
- ▶ Novel program - Partnering with a community agency (CONNECTRa) offered an Employment Mentorship Support Program (EMSP) for persons with physical disabilities who had employment goals.
 - Volunteer mentors
 - Offer assist to work toward employment goals over 8 months.
 - A resource manual & regular contact with community connector is provided



Research Question

- ▶ How do adults with disabilities receiving PWD benefits perceive employment prior to their involvement in the EMSP?

Qualitative Methods

- ▶ Conducted *pre* - EMSP intervention interviews
- ▶ 25 participants
- ▶ Interviews face-to-face, skype and phone
 - Flexibility necessary to meet clients needs

Demographics (n=25)

- ▶ Age (years):
 - range: 22 -60; Mean: 38.7
- ▶ 11 Males; 14 Females
- ▶ Disabilities:
 - Wide variety & multiple issues
 - Selected dx included: CP, sight & hearing impairments, arthritis, heart & stroke related problems, spinal cord injuries, MS & MD

Qualitative Analysis



- Frame: Interpretive description (Thorne, 2016).
- Analytic methods:
 - reviewing transcripts,
 - memoing, highlighting, flagging meaningful quotes
 - coding using NVivo to reflect thematic similarities (categories) & differences.
- A number of themes identified (preliminary, iterative analysis).
- Reflective journaling and triangulation (to ensure trustworthiness)

Thorne, S. (2016). Interpretive description-qualitative research for applied practice. New York. Routledge.

First Theme – “It’s an uphill battle”



- ▶ The work of finding work for someone with physical disability on PWD
- ▶ Feeling of having to work harder (on job)
 - participants describe feeling they have to prove themselves in the workplace
- ▶ Related in subtle ways to the next theme

Second Theme - “walking the tight rope”

Related to expectations:

- ▶ of self/from others;
 - ▶ too high/too low
-
- ▶ tensions between expectations and health issues;
 - ▶ evidenced not only in interviews but overall study;
-e.g. loss withdraws due to illness and even death





- ▶ Paradox of wanting to participate in meaningful “occupations” (social justice);
- ▶ Yet policies equate the value of person in what they produce economically;
- ▶ Employment fits with some ideals of citizenship (i.e. economic independence) but expectations need to be reasonable/flexible;

Thank-you!

Questions?

