




CAREI

More than a Paycheck: The Multidimensional Benefits of Employment for People with Disabilities

The Path to Employability and Success



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Employment is more than just a paycheck - it can be a pathway to greater well-being, especially for people with disabilities. Research shows that employment plays a pivotal role in enhancing mental health, social connections, and overall life satisfaction for this often under-represented group. Beyond financial stability, employment has been found to be a critical contributor to a fulfilling life, with many people with disabilities expressing a desire for meaningful work (Ali et al., 2011). The main benefits can be grouped into psychological, societal, and health benefits.

Psychological Benefits of Employment

Employment has psychological and mental health benefits for people with disabilities. For example, having a job can provide a sense of purpose and bring dignity and independence to their lives (Birri et al., 2022). Research has also shown that employment boosts self-respect, self-assurance, work advancement, and autonomy (Amalky, 2020).

For people with disabilities, working more is associated with decreased malaise (e.g., discomfort, dissatisfaction; Emerson et al., 2018a). On the other hand, people who face job insecurity report worse mental health (Emerson et al., 2018b). There is also some early evidence suggesting that people with intellectual disabilities who experience competitive employment may be less likely to experience depression than others who are in sheltered employment or who are unemployed (Robertson et al., 2018). A study looking at the long-term effects of different job components on mental health found that people with disabilities who are not working had the poorest mental health outcomes (Milner et al., 2015).

Another study by Emerson et al. (2020), looked at how employment affects subjective well-being for people with and without disabilities. The authors found that people with disabilities who were unemployed reported lower life satisfaction compared to those who were employed.

Social Benefits of Employment

Employment often requires people to interact with others, providing them with opportunities to build and strengthen skills. Through work, individuals meet and form relationships with people they may not have encountered otherwise (Ellenkamp et al., 2016). These social connections and increased interactions can be vital for overall well-being.

Health Benefits of Employment

Employment has been connected with various well-being and positive health outcomes for people with disabilities (Blustein, 2008). A literature review by Robertson et al. (2018) found

that people with intellectual disabilities who worked at least 16 hours per week, rated their health higher than those who worked fewer hours.

Conclusion

Employment offers far more than financial stability and the ability to meet basic needs - it provides people with disabilities with a sense of purpose, stronger connections to others, and improved health and well-being. Having a job can increase life satisfaction and reduce feelings of isolation. People with disabilities who are employed report higher self-esteem, better mental and physical health, and more fulfilling relationships than those who are not. Creating opportunities for meaningful employment is essential for helping individuals with disabilities live healthier, more connected and more fulfilling lives.

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