


*Literature Review and Conceptual  
Paper on Measuring Inter-  
relationships between Disability and  
Job Retention; Career Progression*



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The views expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada or of the federal government.

# *Terms of Reference*

- The purpose of this project is to produce a document outlining the relevant literature and proposing a framework and methodology needed to understand the inter-relationships between disability and job retention/career progression.
- Provide basis for developing models for better understanding differences in the career paths of working people with disabilities vis-à-vis other working people.

# *Job Retention: What is it?*

- Can mean how long an individual has stayed at a particular job
- Could mean how long a person has been attached to the labour force
- Important issue because turnover can be expensive to employer, have long-term implications for employee's career path
- Holding onto a job is not always a bad thing--job mobility can be *Voluntary* (moving to another job, taking a leave) vs. *Involuntary* (due to layoffs, death, retirement)

# *Job Retention: Measures and Predictors*

## *What does the general literature tell us?*

The likelihood of holding onto a job/staying with an employer can be influenced by:

- The shape of the overall economy
- The nature of the job and the employer (i.e. varies with occupation, industry, type of employment, size of firm, unionization etc.)
- Education, training
- Gender, marital status, children
- Age, tenure
- Job satisfaction, organizational attachment
- Personality traits, quit intentions
- Disability characteristics
- Employment Program Incentives/Disincentives

# *Career Progression: What is it?*

- measured in terms of salary and job responsibility (Greg and Wadsworth 2002)
- Salary progression, promotability, and career satisfaction (Wayne et al. 1999)
- Career advancement, salary growth, and professional development (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley, 1990)
- Salary growth and the number of promotions during the previous 2 years (Seibert, Karimer, & Crant 2001)

# *Career Progression: Measures and Predictors*

## *What does the general literature tell us?*

- Higher levels of ability, schooling, educational achievement = increased career progression
- Early job mobility, longer labour force attachment = increased career progression
- Age, female gender = decreased career progression
- Career mentors, corporate culture (expectations), social inclusion, job satisfaction, performance appraisals = complex interaction with career progression

# *Exogenous Economic Circumstances: Labour Market*

- Canadian labour market – strong growth from early 1990s to mid 2000s (unemployment rate for pwd decreased from 13.2% to 10.4%)
- Increase in jobs = decrease in job retention (voluntary job shifts) as workers more often shift from job to job with increasing options
- Early job mobility = increased career progression
- **HOWEVER**, it is far riskier for pwd to leave their current job to find other employment, pwd may have more difficulty relocating to find better employment
- Perception of labour insecurity (global market, outsourcing, increased part time/contract employment) = involuntary job loss and decreased job satisfaction, another predictor of decreased job retention
- **But:** Historically, people with disabilities have often been “last hired/first fired”, especially during economic downturns— translating into significant declines in job retention levels



# *Exogenous Economic Circumstances: Industry and Occupation*

- Job Retention differs by Industry (ex. Hospitality, Trucking industry = high rates of turnover, and pwd tend to be over-represented in these industries)
- Industry can be a causal factor of disability (higher risks) and correlational (pwd tend to be clustered within low-paying industries and occupations such as retail and food services)
- Career Progression is limited for people in low-skill employment (where a lot of pwd are clustered)
- PWD are over-represented in Public Administration and Health Care industries, perhaps as a reflection of Employment Equity legislation and/or HR practices aimed at retention strategies

# *Socio-Demographic Characteristics:*

## *Age*

- Job retention lowest for younger workers, increases with age up to 55, where rates fall (retirement)
- Career Progression decreases with age (most salary growth occurs within the first 10 years of labour force attachment)
- Disability increases with age, PALS reports large increases of labour force participation of groups 45 and older with disabilities (reflection of aging of labour force)
- Age = attachment to labour force, mitigates effects of disability (labour force participation for pwd and non-disabled converge)
- **HOWEVER:** older age = increased risk of leaving employment following onset of disability, where people are moved into early retirement

# *Socio-Demographic Characteristics:*

## *Gender*

- Job Retention rates are virtually equal between men and women
- Career Progression – barriers to women due to ‘glass ceiling’, ‘pink-collar ghetto’, gendered job interruptions (childcare)
- Gendered cultural expectations regarding behaviours linked to promotion, managerial responsibilities
- Double jeopardy for women with disabilities? (negotiation for accommodations, sick-role expectations, capacity to manage both disability and childcare)

# *Socio-Demographic Characteristics: Education Level*

- Lower education = lower job retention
  - Concentration of employment in low-skill/high turn-over jobs, non-standard work with little job security
- Higher education = higher starting point, higher potential for career progression
- Disability = lower likelihood of post secondary training because of
  1. Barriers in educational system
  2. Higher risk of job-related injury/illness in low-skilled work
    - However, significant increases in access has led to large increase in younger people with disabilities completing high school, post-secondary training
- Disability can also be a barrier to receiving professional development or advanced job training (access to education; ability to balance work and training simultaneously) often necessary for career progression

# *Socio-Economic Characteristics: Program Related Incentives /Disincentives*

- Workers' Compensation programs, labour legislation often encourage/provide incentives employers to accommodate/hold on to employees following a work-related injury or illness
  - Have undertaken considerable research in how to modify conditions of work to reduce likelihood of re-injury; condition deterioration

# *Disability-Related Characteristics: Type and Severity of Impairment*

- People with physical and learning disabilities most successful in holding onto work
  - Those with learning disabilities often have difficulties in career progression
- Unemployment highest for people with psychological, memory, and communication disabilities
  - Because job retention for people with mental health disabilities is so poor, it is often measured in # of *days* employed
- Participation rates for people with developmental disabilities have remained largely unchanged in the past 15 years
- Greater severity of disability = lower labour force participation, lower job retention, lower income levels, lower rates of career progression

# *Disability-Related Characteristics: Onset of Disability*

- Some affects of discrimination same regardless of congenital vs. acquired disability
  - But evidence that many firms more reluctant to hire people with disabilities than to retain people who experience onset while at work
- Career development opportunities (such as education) decreased for those who have had disabilities from young age
- Most pwd acquire their conditions during their working life
- Progressive onset of disability may lead to poorer job retention, as individuals may not report problems or request accommodations until ‘crisis stage’
- Younger age at acquisition = better adjustment to disability status
- Older age at acquisition = greater attachment to labour force, but also greater chance of early retirement

# *Characteristics of the Workplace*

- Organizational Commitment (pay, benefits, stress, work/life balance) = greater job retention
- Size – larger organizations = greater job retention for pwd (EE legislation, HR specialists)
- Corporate culture – expected working hours, overtime, flexibility to stay late (greater impact on pwd who have scheduling conflicts due to transportation, homecare, etc.) – this has a direct impact on career progression



# *Characteristics of the Workplace*

## *(cont.)*

- Employer/Co-worker attitudes: direct impact on job retention through ability to disclose disability, request accommodations, social inclusion, discrimination
- Provision of workplace accommodations = job retention
- Career mentors = career progression, and limited availability of mentors with disabilities is a barrier
- Performance appraisals – linked to expectations of job performance, which can be influenced by stereotypes of disability, leading to decreased career progression

# *The Individual and Employment*

- Commitment to organization – predictor of job retention/job turnover
- Job satisfaction (work-life balance, supervisor relationship, autonomy, pay and benefits) = job retention
- Self-efficacy (belief in abilities) = career progression: barrier for some pwd or their employers whose expectations are influenced by the ‘sick-role’ which excuses people from job responsibilities
- Perception of Fit – acceptance to groups, challenging assignments, mentoring opportunities
- Personality Factors – flexibility, openness, initiative, independence, intelligence = career success

# *Unanswered Questions*

- What is the influence of policy – Employment Equity, Human Rights legislation, focus of ‘return to work’ within income support programs on job retention and career progression on job retention and career progression?
- Is there a place within current or potential Employment Equity Legislation for job retention and career progression? How would measuring/evaluating these influence behaviour within those organizations?
- What other Legislation could impact Job Retention and Career Progression?

# *Unanswered Questions*

- Is there a difference between the personality factors that influence job retention/career progression of pwd as opposed to those without disabilities?
- Are those people who acquire disabilities at an advanced age choosing retirement or being forced into early retirement?
- Will the economic downturn affect pwd differently than those without with regard to job retention/career progression?