

Impact of Low Income and Linguistic Minority Context on Post-Stroke Participation: A Situation of Occupational Disadvantage

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Introduction: The majority of stroke survivors experience difficulties returning to meaningful activities, also known as "participation" in the *International Classification of Functioning, Health, and Disability* (ICF). The ICF acknowledges that both environmental and personal contextual factors can influence participation. Two such factors, socio-economic situation, and linguistic minority status, are known to influence stroke survivors' return to participation.

Objective: To use an occupational justice lens to examine the experience of return to participation for low income and official language minority status stroke survivors (French speakers in an English-dominant region of Canada).

Method: A multiple case study approach was used with eight low income French-speaking stroke survivors in eastern Ontario (Canada). Data was collected from several sources including semi-structured interviews, and chart reviews. From the data, categories, and patterns were identified, both for individual cases, and across cases. Findings were examined using an occupational justice lens.

Results: Stroke survivors accessed services in their preferred official language, and official minority language status appeared to have limited influence on return to participation. Income did impact precursors to participation, specifically the ability to afford goods, services, and housing. Factors such as age and social supports modulated the impact of low income. However, they could not counteract the influence of health and social policies, which determined post-stroke income, and perpetuated the related participation barriers by regulating access, through rehabilitation professional gatekeepers, and availability of services.

Conclusion: Health and social policies maintained situations of occupational disadvantage for these stroke survivors, which were rarely acknowledged by rehabilitation professionals.