The perspective of persons with disabilities related to employment versus benefits

Boniface, J¹, Forwell, SJ¹, Damiano, N¹, Miller, W¹, Hole, R¹, & Geddes, D².
¹University of British Columbia; ²Connectra Society

Vancouver, Canada
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)

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?