


**Employer Attitudes Towards
Psychological/
Neuropsychological Disabilities and
Job Accommodation in Mental Health
Conditions**

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**MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY
EPIDEMIC IN THE WORKPLACE**

- Mental disorders comprise four of the ten leading individual causes of disability worldwide (WHO, 2001)
- Account for 10.5% of the global burden of illness (Canadian Senate, 2004)
- Depression: 2nd highest burden of disease (Murray & Lopez, 1996)






MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY EPIDEMIC IN THE WORKPLACE

- Presence of mental disorder translated into an average of one day of work absence and three days of work cut back per month
 - Mood disorders: 6 cut-back days
 - Anxiety disorders: 4.5 cut back days (Lim, Sanderson & Andrews, 2000)




MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY EPIDEMIC IN THE WORKPLACE

- Most frequent work disabilities:
 - Dysthymia, Major Depression, PTSD, Panic Disorder & Social Phobia (Alonso et al., 2004)
- Presence of mental disorder reduces probability of employment by 11% (Ettner, Frank & Kessler, 1997)

SOCIAL STIGMA IN MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY

- More disabling than primary condition (Goldner et al., 2004)
- Impacts opportunities for securing employment, career advancement and tenure (Kusznir, 2001)
- Most salient barrier to work (WHO, 2001)

SOCIAL STIGMA IN MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY

- Based on workplace myths which perpetuate employers' discriminatory attitudes (Harnois & Gatchel, 2000)
- 90% of employers would hire a person with physical disability but only 20% would hire a person with mental illness (McFarlin, Song & Sonntag, 1991)

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SOCIAL STIGMA IN MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY

- Employers attitudes improved with:
 - Previous positive experience
 - Government sector
 - Female employer
 - Higher level on education
 - On-site training from a supportive agency (Graffam, Shinkfield, Smitz & Polzin, 2002)

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STUDY QUESTION

- What is the relationship between employer attitudes towards workers with mental health disability and job accommodation?

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METHOD

- National survey of employers using a random sample from all of the English-speaking Canadian provinces




METHOD

- Disproportional stratified random sampling of 20 employers from 10 industrial groups of the National Occupational Classification
 - N: 83
- Instrument: The Employer Attitudes Questionnaire (Diksa & Rogers, 1996)






EMPLOYER ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Industry Category	Frequency	Percent
Agriculture	4	4.8
Mining	5	6.0
Construction	4	4.8
Manufacturing	8	9.6
Transportation	15	18.1
Wholesale	9	10.8
Retail	6	7.2
Finance	4	4.8
Service	15	18.1
Public administration	13	15.7
Total	83	100.0






EMPLOYER ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Size of Company	Frequency	Percent
100-499 employees	49	59.0
500-999 employees	9	10.8
1000+ employees	25	30.1
Total	83	100.0




EMPLOYER ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Company Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
For profit	56	67.5
Not for profit	15	18.1
Government agency	11	13.3
Total	82	98.8
Missing System	1	1.2
Total	83	100.0




EMPLOYER ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Company Policy (Does company have a policy towards hiring PWD?)	Frequency	Percent
No	50	60.2
Yes	32	38.6
Total	82	98.8
Missing System	1	1.2
Total	83	100.0




EMPLOYER ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Hired person with mental illness	Frequency	Percent
No	50	60.2
Yes	33	39.8
Total	83	100.0




EMPLOYER ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Concern	Frequency	Percentage
WORK PERSONALITY		
Being flexible	39	47.0
Being reliable	53	63.9
Being on time	39	47.0
Show up for scheduled shifts	43	51.8
Adjusting to the work environment	57	68.7
Benefiting from the standard amount of supervision	48	57.8
Seeking assistance to perform job better	44	53.0
Respecting authority	37	44.6
Getting along with co-workers and supervisors	37	44.6
Communicating with others	46	55.4
Taking pride in work	30	36.1
Keeping the job	43	51.8
Responding to criticism	48	57.8

EMPLOYER ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Concern	Frequency	Percentage
WORK PERFORMANCE		
Being able to perform job tasks	55	66.3
Being able to produce an acceptable quantity of work	52	62.7
Being able to produce an acceptable quality of work	55	66.3
Possessing adequate academic skills	21	25.3
Possessing adequate problem solving skills	52	62.7
Being able to perform job tasks safely	62	74.7
Being able to tolerate the working conditions	62	74.7
Being able to advance in organization	39	47.0
Being able to be accepted by co-workers	40	48.8
Being able to be accepted by the public or customers	44	53.0
Ability to discipline or fire the person once hired	44	53.0
Possibility of incurring unknown costs	44	53.0

LEAST KNOWN / USED ACCOMMODATIONS

Organization	Percent of employers with no or minimal experience
Daily to do lists	40.9
Use calendars	44.6
Electronic organizer	47.0



LEAST KNOWN / USED ACCOMMODATIONS

Memory	Percent of employers with no or minimal experience
Provide day planners	31.4
Tape record meetings	68.7
Typewritten minutes	35.0
Software organizers	53.0
Use of email	33.8
Environmental cues	42.2
Post instructions	36.2




LEAST KNOWN / USED ACCOMMODATIONS

Effective work with supervisors	Percent of employers with no or minimal experience
Strategies to deal with problems	36.1
Evaluate effectiveness of accommodation	35.0
Extra supervision	32.6




**LEAST KNOWN / USED
ACCOMMODATIONS**

Interaction with coworkers	Percent of employers with no or minimal experience
Sensitivity training	41
Non-work related conversations out of work areas	35




**LEAST KNOWN / USED
ACCOMMODATIONS**

Difficulty handling stress	Percent of employers with no or minimal experience
Allow a support animal	68.6




**LEAST KNOWN / USED
ACCOMMODATIONS**

Attendance issues	Percent of employers with no or minimal experience
Self-paced work load	42.2
Home work allowed	71.1
Part-time schedule	39.8
Make up time	35.0
Job sharing	55.4




WHAT PREDICTS JOB ACCOMMODATION?

Employee Stamina	
Predictors	R Square
Industry and work personality	0.237




WHAT PREDICTS JOB ACCOMMODATION?

Employee Concentration	
Predictors	R Square
Industry and size of company	0.154



WHAT PREDICTS JOB ACCOMMODATION?

Employee Memory	
Predictors	R Square
Industry and size of company	0.146



WHAT PREDICTS JOB ACCOMMODATION?

Employee Supervisor	
Predictors	R Square
Size of company and industry	0.207



WHAT PREDICTS JOB ACCOMMODATION?

Employee Stress	
Predictors	R Square
Industry and size of company	0.180




WHAT PREDICTS JOB ACCOMMODATION?

Employee Attendance	
Predictors	R Square
Work personality, size of company & industry	0.306




CONCLUSIONS

- Least known accommodations:
 - Work from home
 - Reduce distractions
 - Space enclosure
 - Music and natural light
 - Uninterrupted work time
 - Tape recorded meetings
 - Software organizers
 - Support animal
 - Job sharing




CONCLUSIONS

- The most significant predictors of application of job accommodation by the employer were:
 - Industry category
 - Size of the company
 - Perception of the worker personality (stamina, attendance)
 - Worker performance (organization)



CONCLUSIONS

- Employer attitudes were predictive of accommodations in the employee stamina and in employee attendance categories only.
- Industry category and company size were generally stronger predictors.



CONCLUSIONS

- Company policy on hiring persons with disabilities and prior experience in hiring a person with mental health disability were more predictive of attitudes and accommodations than company size
- Company size was a predictor of attitudes towards work performance and experience with accommodations related to employee attendance and employee-supervisor relationship



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Awareness-raising, education and fear reduction among employees and co-workers regarding employees with mental health disabilities
- Awareness, education and training regarding accommodations for mental health disabilities



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Structural and organizational changes to ensure:
 - flexibility, self-pacing in schedule and location
 - reduction of unnecessary and adverse environmental and social demands
- Increased knowledge of specific accommodations for stress management and cognitively-based difficulties



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increased research and training focus on accommodations in “blue collar” context and for smaller companies
- Development of written company policies for job accommodations for PWMHD
- Volunteer and subsidized employment opportunities to assist in desensitizing employers’ fears and to provide valuable management and job accommodation experience