
Examining the Impact of Physical &
Sexual Abuse on the Employment of
People with Disabilities:
An Exploratory Analysis

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APHA Annual Meeting

November 7, 2007



Background

- Research has suggested that individuals with disabilities have greater chance of experiencing physical and sexual violence when compared to non-disabled counterparts
- Women with disabilities may at particular risk

Background

- Research regarding abuse and disability has noted that individuals with disabilities are more likely to experience all three types of abuse
 - Sexual
 - Physical
 - Emotional

Background

- Research regarding abuse and disability has grown over the last 10 years
- Despite growth, still a paucity of research
- There is a reluctance from both researchers and clinicians with and without disabilities to address this issue because of diminished social role.

Background

- One major factor that has been found to be highly linked to the abuse is economic dependence
 - Lack of viable living alternatives
 - Decreased performance at work (absenteeism, stigma at work)
 - Perpetuator can threaten the workplace

Background

- Increased rates of abuse also increase risk of experiencing PTSD or significant trauma symptoms
- Research has suggested that PTSD or increased trauma symptoms decrease effective work behaviors and perpetuate the disconnect from work

Background

- High unemployment, inequitable pay, and lack of health care benefits are significant barriers that individuals with disabilities encounter when attempting to enter and participate in the workplace
- Many times not able to sustain a livable wage live in poverty
- Increased economic opportunities of individuals with disabilities has been a priority

Purpose of Current Study

- With economic dependence being implicated as a major contributor to all three forms of abuse, it would appear to be very important to have an understanding of how individuals with disabilities is related to the incidence of abuse

Research Question

- The following research question guided this study:
 - RQ₁: Is there a difference in likelihood of unemployment between individuals with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts for the following types of abuse: unwanted sex, physical violence, attempted violence, and physical threat?

Methodology

- Study used data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System from 1995-2002.
- Publicly available dataset from the CDC.
- Shown to be reliable and valid.
- More information on www.cdc.gov

Methodology

- BRFSS is a state-wide, random-digit dialed telephone survey
- Tracks health behaviors, risk factors, and health status of non-institutionalized adults aged 18 and older in the US

Methodology

- Final weighting adjusts for the number of telephone numbers per household, number of adults per household, number of interviews per cluster.
- Post-stratification is then completed by the state population distribution according to age, race and sex.

Methodology

- Data is then weighted further with over- or under-representation of any single record addressed through post-stratification, so that the distribution of the sample data reflects the total population of the sampled area (CDC, 1998)

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Methodology

- Physical threat was defined as “yes” to “has an intimate partner ever threatened you with physical violence?”
- Attempted physical violence was defined as “yes” to “Has an intimate partner ever attempted physical violence against you?”

Methodology

- Physical abuse was determined by a “yes” response to “Has an intimate partner ever hit, slapped, pushed, kicked or physically hurt you in any way?”
- Disability determined by activity limitation question

Methodology

- Confounding variables included:
 - Employment
 - Education
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Age
 - Relationship status

Methodology

- To determine the likelihood of variables increasing the odds of violence, a series of logistic regression analyses were conducted by type of violence
- The coefficients of these models are expressed as odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI) reported to indicate the precision of these estimates

Results

- People with disabilities who experience abuse are much more likely to be unemployed than their non-disabled counterparts for all types of abuse except attempted violence
- Disability status is the demographic factor that interacts with abuse to have the greatest impact on unemployment

Results

Type of Abuse	Employment PWD	Employment PWOD
Unwanted Sex	47.2%	91.4%
Threat of Violence	51.9%	92.7%
Attempted Violence	92.7%	94.0%
Completed Violence	51.4%	92.4%

Likelihood of Unemployment in Individuals Who Ever Had Unwanted Sex

<i>Variable</i>	OR	95% CI
<i>Gender</i>		
Men	1.00	
Women	1.2	0.7-2.0
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
Non-Caucasian	1.00*	
Caucasian	0.72	0.5-1.0
<i>Education</i>		
Some college and above	1.00***	
No school-high school graduate	2.31	1.8-3.1
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Uncoupled	1.00***	
Coupled	0.62	0.5-0.8
<i>Age</i>		
18-64	1.00	
> 65	1.21	0.9-1.6
<i>Activity Limitation</i>		
Not Limited	1.00***	
Limited	3.16	2.3-4.2

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Likelihood of Unemployment in Individuals Who Have Ever Been Hit By a Partner

<i>Variable</i>	OR	95% CI
<i>Gender</i>		
Men	1.00**	
Women	1.35	1.1-1.7
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
Non-Caucasian	1.00*	
Caucasian	0.79	0.7-1.0
<i>Education</i>		
Some college and above	1.00***	
No school-high school graduate	2.11	1.8-2.6
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Uncoupled	1.00***	
Coupled	0.56	0.5-0.7
<i>Age</i>		
18-64	1.00	
> 65	1.04	0.9-1.3
<i>Activity Limitation</i>		
Not Limited	1.00***	
Limited	2.85	2.4-3.5

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Likelihood of Unemployment in Individuals Who Ever Had Partner Attempt Violence

<i>Variable</i>	OR	95% CI
<i>Gender</i>		
Men	1.00	
Women	1.23	1.0-1.5
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
Non-Caucasian	1.00***	
Caucasian	0.72	0.6-0.9
<i>Education</i>		
Some college and above	1.00***	
No school-high school graduate	2.13	1.7-2.6
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Uncoupled	1.00***	
Coupled	0.60	0.5-0.8
<i>Age</i>		
18-64	1.00	
> 65	1.00	0.8-1.3
<i>Activity Limitation</i>		
Not Limited	1.00***	
Limited	3.15	2.6-3.9

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Likelihood of Unemployment in Individuals Who Ever Had Partner Threaten Violence

<i>Variable</i>	OR	95% CI
<i>Gender</i>		
Men	1.00**	
Women	1.38	1.1-1.8
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
Non-Caucasian	1.00*	
Caucasian	0.77	0.6-1.0
<i>Education</i>		
Some college and above	1.00***	
No school-high school graduate	2.15	1.8-2.6
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Uncoupled	1.00***	
Coupled	0.58	0.5-0.7
<i>Age</i>		
18-64	1.00	
> 65	1.09	0.9-1.3
<i>Activity Limitation</i>		
Not Limited	1.00***	
Limited	3.20	2.6-3.9

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Discussion

- Data suggests that individuals with disabilities employment is significantly impacted by their experience of abuse
- Public health officials, health care professionals, and policymakers should be aware of the increased impact of abuse on employment of individuals with disabilities

Discussion

- Screening and intervention as well as protective policies need to be established
- Addressing abuse may have significant implications for increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities
- Health care providers need to be aware of the signs of abuse and act on accounts of abuse

Discussion

- Health care providers need to advocate of appropriate and highly qualified personal attendants
- Promote the human rights of individuals with disabilities
- Be active in increasing individuals with disabilities social role

Strengths/Limitations

- Strength in the use of a large database
- Does not include information about institutionalized adults
- Violence may be underreported, especially for persons with disabilities
- Definition of disability

Future Research

- Interaction of demographic variables with disability (Education x Disability)
- Gender differences in unemployment for individuals with disability who experience abuse
- Select References Attached

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