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Restricted opportunities at work, a comparison of mental and physical disabilities in the National Health Interview Disability Supplement

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Perceptions of restricted opportunities in the workplace were examined for those reporting conditions due to mental vs. physical disabilities using data from the National Health Interview Survey Disability Supplement (NHIS-D), 1994-1995. Logistic regression was used to examine more subtle forms of perceived discrimination among the disabled working population. Restricted opportunities were defined as being denied: a promotion, transfer, or access to training because of a disability. Results showed that 9.5% of this population reported being denied at least one of these opportunities because of their disability. When the primary cause of work limitation was examined, it was found that those who had a mental disability as their primary cause of work limitation were six times more likely to report encountering restricted opportunities in the workplace than those with a physical disability. When both primary and secondary conditions were included in the model, it was found that those with only mental disabilities were almost six times more likely to report encountering restricted opportunities; those with both mental and physical disabilities were almost eight times more likely, compared to those who only had physical disabilities. This current study is limited by reliance on self-reported data. Future studies comparing self-report responses to actual personnel records may be useful. Additional results and implications for disabled workers will be discussed.

Learning Objectives: 1. Recognize the impact of mental and physical disabilities on opportunities in the workplace. 2. Discuss the implications of study findings for workers and those working with the disabled. 3. Identify some of the work limitations faced by this national population-based sample of workers.

Keywords: Disability Studies, Workforce

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Organization/institution whose products or services will be discussed: None

I do not have any significant financial interest/arrangement or affiliation with any organization/institution whose products or services are being discussed in this session.

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