



# Enhancing Workplace Inclusion for Individuals with Disabilities through Supported Employment Programmes: Empowering Individuals and Enhancing Mental Health and Work-based Skills through CBT and Social Skills Training as Key Approaches

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## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on multifaceted challenges which implies the successful integration of Individuals with disabilities including Intellectual Disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and conditions like Autism Spectrum Disorder and more into the workplace. It aims to emphasize the critical necessity of supported employment programs which can be categorized as combined support for the same payment for the same workload in the open labor market. It unifies as a way to succeed in going through an array of challenges in securing and maintaining meaningful employment with the use of a range of approaches. It deals with a variety of findings exploring the limitations imposed by the workplaces. The paper addresses issues such as limited career development opportunities, stigma and discrimination, and the impact of anger management problems on job retention while highlighting the importance of skill-based training and ongoing support to assure sustainable employment while Highlighting CBT as a core approach. It indicates the impact of supported employment programs on individuals with disabilities, elucidating the journey towards increased independence and improved well-being to maintain competitive employment within the community. This review aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and significance of supported employment initiatives considering professional recommendations, and societal attitudes with the purpose of devaluing misconceptions to enhance diversity within the workplaces.

**Keywords:** Disability, Supported Employment, Work Based Barriers, Social Skills Training, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Societal Inclusivity, Societal Independence

## Introduction:

The employment gap between people who are normally functioning and people with disabilities has become a burning concern today (Angelina, 2023). Often people with disabilities have challenges in search, recruitment, and establishment at work (Lysagt et al, 2017 & Musser et al, 2005). Notably, concerning employees with disabilities, it has been recorded certain dropouts from the labor market (Beatson et al, 2020) based on a variety of reasons such as stigma, discrimination, the rigidity of employers, and an array of other reasons (Bonaccio et al, 2020) perhaps which are not so logical. The central issue which primarily reveals as the core to this problem is the unavailability of a proper system which studies and identifies the needs and cares on employment of the people with disabilities (Lin et al, 2014). So, as a solution, supported employment, which has been widely researched (Drake et al, 2009 & Musser et al, 2014) has emerged as a unique approach (Fouri, 2015) that specifically deals with ensuring security (Mendis, 2003) and maintenance of work based enhancement (Kern et al, 2018) of Individuals with disabilities in a manner of training and supervising (Martin et al, 2021) based on skill-based learning (David et al, 2021). It provides the delightful opportunity provision of ongoing support (Hanley et al, 2003) to coach the learners, trainees, and employees (David et al, 2021) systematically catering to the Individual (Poon et al, 2015) and also the disability with the contribution of multiple disciplines such as Clinicians, Counselors, Social Workers, Administrators, and Policy Makers (Hampton, 2014 & Lin et al, 2014) collectively. Profoundly, Individuals with developmental disabilities, Psychiatric conditions, and substance users (Drake et al, 2014 & Marshal et al, 2014) often face challenges in securing and maintaining competitive employment (Franklin, 2021, Marshal et al, 2014 & Styel, 2021) positioning towards intense independence, self-esteem (Drake et al, 2009 & Marshal et al, 2014) and confidence in the selves with the contribution of amplified social networks (Mussel et al, 1997) through skill development to foster vocational success (Russell et al, 2021) and the quality of life of the community with disabilities (Drake et al, 2009 & Lin et al, 2014).

## Challenges and Barriers; A Global Perspective

Synthesis of existing research on supported employment encompasses various approaches implemented globally (Poon, 2015). Being dispatched with the traditional viewpoint, employment has been crucially limited (Kerra 2021) for Individuals with Disabilities (Khayatzaheh et al, 2020) and other Psychiatric conditions (Drake et al, 2009) as well. Stereotypically the ability to acquire and maintain the Job has been minimized (Kerra, 2021) and the opportunities for career development have also been banned (Dammier et al, 2018) to a considerable extent. Predominantly, people with Autism Spectrum Disorder have encountered obstacles such as filling out job applications, interviewing, or in the work environment, or in other situations where social communications and interactions are being misunderstood, insulted, or bullied by a person's restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviors (Franklin, 2021). Significantly people with conditions such as Intellectual Disabilities, Attention Deficits (Franklin, 2021, & Kerra, 2021) and notably, Psychiatric conditions such as Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder (Hampton, 2014) have hindered the condition, because of the fear of rejection and losing the job (Franklin, 2021, Hampton, 2014 & Kerra, 2021). Most of the time in people living with Psychosis, labor has been unpaid, socially separated, and unsupported being subjected to threats and risks (Hampton, 2014). There are occasions where visual impairments, hearing impairments, communication deficits, and Intellectual deficits have been underestimated or not considered as special needs even by the sector of education and irrationally neglected in examinations, interviews, and education-based job placements, (Welham et al, n.d) may be as a result of not having skill-based training, ongoing support, recommendations, and coordination of a therapeutic environment (Rose et al, 2009). Uncountable incidents have been reported as a result of subtle reactivity, impulsivity, and conduct issues generated by the loss of self-control and interpersonal difficulties driven by sexual harassment (Reitmen et al, 1999 & Rose et al, 2009) and it has been drastically involved in Illogical suspiciousness, monetary punishments, imprisonments, and to be forbidden in occupation as well (Freckelton, 2016). Perhaps, Psychiatric conditions that are not severe in society, (Mackenzie, 2002) or else misunderstood not in the sense of a disability (Bonaccio et al, 2020) have been subjected to be devalued in workplaces due to stigma (Mackenze, 2002 & Seyde et al, 2018). Conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, sensation-seeking behaviors, and stereotypical expressions have widely resulted in repeated social failure due to rejection becoming a contrary (Thye et al 2018). There are instances where employer's perspectives harbored the employees based on the assumed gap in between the perceived ability and the actual ability (Lin et al 2014) of the Individual being limited to the historical misconceptions stating that disabled people are uneducated (Lin et al, 2014 & Slyter, 2021) or else incapable (Bonaccio et al, 2020) in job-based skill learning, training and performing (Nye-Lengerman, 2015) as well. Even though the skill-based training has been given with proper supervision, categorically, people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, (Nye-Lengerman, 2015) Intellectual Disabilities, and other Mental Disabilities (Slyter, 2021) have been rejected in job-based placements (Nye-Lengerman, 2015 & Slyter, 2021) compared to Physical Disabilities because of the assumed legal outcomes (Slyter, 2021) and assumed downturns of the targeted supply and demand (Vornholt et al, 2018) even without having or sometimes not considering the proper professional recommendations (Wellham et al n.d). At the organizational level, the demotivation, the rigidity of the

leadership, and the resisted attitudes of the other staff members have become huge barriers in recruiting people with disabilities (Lin et al, 2014). In ADHD, since people often struggle with utilizing and processing information timely, the difficulties have impacted organized tasks such as planning, monitoring, and documentation (Arnold et al, 2010). On another note, problems have been aroused when inappropriate verbal interactions are misunderstood as swearing due to poor self-regulation and impulse control (Arnold et al, 2010). Higher rates of dis sociability have been recorded with ADHD at the workplace and disciplinary actions have also been taken (Arnold et al, 2010) especially related to non-consented sexual activities (Reitman et al, 1999) probably originated by inattention and impulsive urges driven by misconduct (Arnold et al, 2010). Job expulsions related to ADHD have become common because of multiple failures to meet the standards expected by the performance appraisals as they habitually procrastinate (Arnold et al, 2010) and disregard the work ethics and the socially accepted manners at work (Reitman et al 1999). Occasionally, hyper-socialization (Alexandris, 2020 & Lin et al, 2014) of Individuals has also affected negatively on job performance and productivity (Alexandris, 2020). On the other hand, the trials to fit into societal demands and social comparison (Green et al, 2000) associated with either narrow interests (Welhman et al, n.d) or obsessional interests (Fitchca et al, 2009) has become a taboo at employment in maintaining relationships (Lemaire, 2018) .So it is typically explained that the disability has been challenged crucially at work world wide. Specifically it is demonstrated that the ingrained ideologies of the society has contributed strongly on generation of certain misconceptions. Therefore, in a way of searching a solution within the context, social skills training can be promoted as a productive way of introducing Disability to the society while helping the individuals to make them vocationally skillful through supported employment. In advance it is valued to train people with disabilities them to face the challenges and barriers with a balanced cognition and adapted Behaviour through Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

### **Integrating Social and Vocational Skills**

Social skills training assists as an integral part of supported employment to help Individuals enhance communication skills while managing social situations effectively (Musser et al, 1997) . It aims to be directed towards interactive learning with the use of mechanisms such as role plays as a practice to reinforce actual incidences of work (Musser et al, 2005). This type of training is particularly beneficial for people with developmental disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities, or social communication disorders (Freckelton, 2016). The purpose is to empower social interactions, interpersonal coping skills, communication abilities, and overall social consolidations (Franklin, 2021 & Welham et al, 2013). Group activities can also be effective in the resolution of peer problems strengthening the connections with neurotypical individuals and it is important to train the application of the skills to real-life scenarios with moderation consistently in various contexts until it is generalized. (Musser et al, 1997) but, exceptions such as greeting, communication, empathy, active listening, and non-verbal cues, anger problems have to be tackled (Musser et al, 2014). Continuous evaluation through discussions and evidence-based modifications with the involvement of multi-disciplines (Lin et al, 2014) is prominent in adjusting the strategies as needed based on the individual's progress and evolving needs (Hanley et al, 2003).

Even in social skill training, It is worth providing chances to build up further skills through vocational training programs under supervision (Franklin, 2021 & Hanley et al 2003). One of the key features of supported employment is the trainees are given the chance to choose the job stream based on interest and desire (Marshall et al, 2014). The Individual can be employed in the mainstream as a typical employee without providing special support (Mank et al, 1997) or while being supervised and supported for their disability. Not only that, a group of Individuals with disabilities will work in a protected environment (Day centers) under supervision (Hanley et al, 2003). Their products/services will be bought by an organization (Mascon, 1990) that is in collaboration with the day center and also self-employment can be recommended either as self-supported or else in collaboration with a business organization (Hanley et al, 2003).Placements can be done based on both Individual willingness (Drake et al, 2009 & Musser et al, 2014) and the progress of the skill training program (Hanley et al, 2003).

### **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy plays an active role in successfully supporting employment, particularly for Individuals with Mental Health & Behavioral Disabilities addressing Mental Health challenges (Davis et al, 2013) such as anxiety (Franklin, 2021) which disturbs a disabled individual at work and in advance the life bound disputes (Reitmen et al, 2014). Certainly, it deals with identifying problematic interactions, (Franklin, 2021) developing better interpersonal skills, (Adam et al, 2010 & Franklin, 2021) self-management, (Franklin, 2021) self-relaxation, (Seyedi et al, 2018) developing cognitive skills, (Franklin, 2021) cognitive restructuring (Seyde et al 2018) assertiveness, (Adam, 2010 & Seyedi et al, 2018) social competence (Seyedi



et al, 2018) and conflict resolution abilities (Franklin, 2021 & Leconte et al, 2020) which are the important skills needed in overcoming work-life challenges (Reitmen et al, 2014) while practicing to cope up with negative self-perceptions (Bandura et al, 2003) and increase self-awareness (Franklin, 2021) through acceptance and commitment, mindfulness-based interventions as well (McConachie et al, 2014). Profoundly, Acceptance and Commitment therapy and mindfulness-based Interventions have worked positively in Psychosis in improving job-oriented Psychosocial flexibility (Hampton, 2014). It glorifies as an approach that helps as a framework in managing core existing maladaptive or disruptive barriers (Reitman et al, 1999) through setting work-based goals (Bandura et al, 2003) with the agreement of both the therapist and the client and also employers, family members, and third parties can also be included in the session (Allen et al, 2020). CBT emphasizes goal setting (Bandura et al, 2003) and time management skills, (Aspland et al, 2019 & Franklin, 2021) which are fundamental for success in any job. Individuals in supported employment can benefit from these skills as they work toward their vocational goals, (Davis et al, 2013 & Franklin, 2021) manage tasks efficiently, (Aspland et al, 2019), and maintain a productive and enduring employment status (Davis et al, 2013). Through developing cognitive skills and adapting to the environment via behavioral modifications it is practiced to be adapted to the workplace rules as well (Franklin, 2021). CBT's focus on long-term behavioral change (Mc Guok et al, 2015) is beneficial for maintaining employment over time (Mc Guok et al, 2015 & Seyedi et al, 2018) toward job retention, which is a key outcome in supported employment programs (Mc Guok et al, 2015). Expressly, in ADHD, therapeutic Interventions are important in catering to deficiencies in education, as they often have to deal with difficulties in utilizing working memory and accessing recall present challenges in various aspects of work (Amold et al, 2010). Meanwhile, CBT combined with learning support systems has positively influenced increasing attendance in skill training, and educational and occupational therapy sessions (Seyde et al, 2018). It targets the process of teaching and learning specific job-related skills such as technical skills, communication skills, decision-making skills, and problem-solving skills strengthening individuals efficiently. It is expected to improve motivation through self-efficacy, (Franklin, 2021 & Seyedi et al, 2018) and confidence by boosting adaptability and flexibility in dynamic work environments. Teaching coping strategies is also a major task in managing stress (Aspland et al, 2019 & Rose et al, 2005) and facing unexpected occasions in work life. Strategically, dropouts can be minimized once employees feel confident through having multiple chances to be pre-exposed for future job-based disputes. A follow-up evaluation should be conducted to assess the progress while being updated with evidence-based data (Seyedi et al, 2018). Expressly, in ADHD, therapeutic Interventions are important in catering to deficiencies in education, as they often have to deal with difficulties in utilizing working memory and accessing recall present challenges in various aspects of work.

## Discussion

Work-Life provides the uppermost importance for a person with an ongoing disability (Bonacsio et al, 2020) serving to uplift their identity, independence, and holistic well-being (Beatson et al, 2020) with the inclusion of economic benefits as well (Hanley et al, 2003). It aids Individuals in enhancing dignity through financial Independence ( Poon et al, 2015) in a way to challenge the social dismissal of disability (Jahoda et al, 2008 & Lemaire et al, 2008). The structure and objectives (Bonacsio et al, 2020) adjoined to the supported employment contribute largely to maintaining the worker's sense of purpose in life and positivity (McConachie et al, 2014), and engaging in a job also aids in the provision of meaning to day to day life (Muller et al, 2016) by enhancing different abilities underneath the disability with the potentials of grown personalities (Welham et al, n.d). As employees, individuals with disabilities make valuable engagement towards the diversity within workplaces, (Jahoda et al, 2008) challenging preconceived ideas generated by the stigma (Mackenzie, 2002) on disability to promote a more inclusive society (Welham et al n.d). Beneficiaries of the supported employment would assertively reduce the dependency on social welfare programs (Darke et al, 2009) with an emphasis on equal opportunities for empowering disabled communities as a unified community (Hanley et al, 2003).

There are positive outcomes associated with these programs, such as enhanced self-esteem, increased community integration, and the development of crucial vocational skills (Marshel et al, 2014 & Welham et al n.d). It has been found that the effects of Social Skill training in collaboration with Social Support Systems have been acted upon consequently in social networking to endure emotional regulation in minimizing risky behaviors at workplaces (Beatson et al, 2020) and especially problem-solving skills improve the ability to cope up with social challenges independently (Williams et al, 2017) at the work environment.

The combined effort of CBT and social skill training holds immense potential in enhancing supported employment for individuals with disabilities (Mc Gurk et al, 2015). This holistic approach not only fosters positive outcomes in terms of psychological well-being, vocational skills development, (Franklin, 2021), and a sense of purpose (McConachie et al, 2014) but also contributes to societal inclusivity and economic independence ( Poon et al, 2015). As we struggle for a more unprejudiced and inclusive society, recognizing and implementing the benefits of this combined therapeutic approach is crucial (Muller et al, 2016) for creating a supportive and empowering environment for individuals with ongoing disabilities in the

workforce.

## Conclusion

In compliance with the incidences and evidences reinforced by existing literature, It is well explained that the disabilities have been acted upon to cause a number of work based barriers worldwide. It's pathetic to see how humanity is discriminated so as to consider a disability to exclude a person from employment which is a critical mode of having Income, satisfaction, societal exposure and more important aspects which adds value to one's life. In addition to that, it's hilarious to denote the irrational unawareness of the authority and the colleagues at work influenced by stigmatized attitudes and prejudices rather than trying to find collective solutions to encourage inclusivity. With the purpose of giving more positive insights to work place inclusion for the people with disabilities it can be fairly concluded that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy combined with Social Skill Training can be effective in encouraging supported employment. In writing the article it is expected to persuade the employers, workers and professionals in the field to view the disability in a broader and more open mind.

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