



Research Brief

Expectation of Engagement in Employment in 5 Years: Findings Among Participants with Spinal Cord Injury

Introduction

Individuals with SCI are faced with ongoing challenges to participate in gainful employment, particularly as they reach aging milestones. The objective is to identify expectations of future engagement with employment among people with spinal cord injury (SCI), the underlying dimensions of engagement, and the relationship with demographic, SCI, and educational factors with engagement scales.

Key Findings

- Most participants anticipated continuing to work about the same number of hours (61%), with 40% anticipating taking on more responsibility, 38% anticipating career advancement, and only 14% anticipating voluntary retirement.
- Factor analysis identified two underlying dimensions: job disengagement, measured by four items, and job engagement, measured by three items. Regression analysis indicated aging and years postinjury were highly related to both factors, with greater age and years postinjury related to disengagement.
- Completing a bachelor's degree or higher was related to engagement.
- Non-Hispanic Blacks were more likely to have disengagement. Ambulatory participants were more likely to be engaged in employment.

What does this mean?

There are several important implications of this work for rehabilitation counselors and vocational rehabilitation. Counselors should use a holistic approach in identifying any health barriers, particularly as the individual ages, and address these along with potential needs for retraining or other supports related to health complications, such as the need for better transportation or attendant care. Secondly, the relationship of race/ethnicity with expectation of future disengagement from employment raises concerns regarding employment equity for non-Hispanic Blacks. Thirdly, the relationship between education and expectation of future engagement with employment reinforces the importance of maximizing education wherever it is indicated and raises the possibility of potential for supplemental training to improve job retention. Lastly, although not specifically addressed in the current study, it is important for counselors to identify barriers and facilitators to continued employment.

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