



ADDRESSING THE INTEGRATION CHALLENGES OF PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES IN SOCIETY AND THE LABOR MARKET: IMPLEMENTATION  
OF INTERVENTIONS AND RESEARCH OUTCOMES

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**Abstract:** *The article delves into the education and rehabilitation of people with disabilities, focusing in particular on children with motor skill abnormalities and deafness. Its goals include understanding the biological aspects of these conditions, assessing their psychological impact, and exploring pathways to recovery and rehabilitation. The study highlights the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for people with disabilities, promoting their socialization, and facilitating access to education, employment, and social services. In addition, it explores the obstacles faced by people with disabilities in the labor market and suggests strategies for their successful integration. We implement a six-month intervention program that is evaluated for its effectiveness using psychiatric rating scales to measure various parameters. The research question aims to determine whether the observed differences in the examined parameters are due to the intervention or to the natural variation of the randomly selected sample. The response demonstrates the intervention itself, and the conclusions are of particular interest.*

**Keywords:** *Disabilities, education, rehabilitation, inclusion, psychiatric assessment, vocational adjustment.*

### Introduction

In previous articles, we delved into the various aspects of rehabilitation and training persons with disabilities. We explored strategies, programs, and initiatives, aiming to promote inclusivity and empower people with mobility disabilities, deafness, or hematological problems. At the same time, we delved into family dynamics, including disabled parents in a holistic framework of empowerment. By strengthening intra-family bonds, we help disadvantaged people to socialize and integrate more smoothly into the working environment.

In the first article, we examined the impact of disability on a biological and psychological level, focusing on recovery and rehabilitation measures, for the equal social integration of the disabled. We identified obstacles and proposed strategies for their smooth integration into the labor market. Whereas, we found that professional counseling and psychotherapy improve mental health and enhance adaptation to the workplace. Finally, the importance of education and employment in the active social participation of the disabled was highlighted.

The second article introduced a multidimensional approach to understanding the challenges faced by parents of children with disabilities. It analyzed the emotional journey of the parents and underscored the importance of their psychological support. Furthermore, it focused on a six-month individualized

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intervention program (Wehman 2006; Hanafin et al. 2007; Van der Walt 2014; Laurino-Siegel 2021; Heron & Bruk-Lee 2023; Parsloe 2023) which we coordinated and implemented, aimed at the labor integration of individuals with disabilities. This was achieved through stimulating family support (Biel & Peske 2005; Nason 2014; Strauser 2014; Koscinski 2018), promoting social integration, enhancing mental well-being, and increasing self-confidence among the participants.

The value of the above intervention was focused on the disabled themselves, and their families (Siegel, & Hartzell 2003; Sroufe 2005; Hughes 2007; Walsh 2016). Facing the challenges of the family environment was considered a key term in approaching reality, in understanding the disease itself, and in the ability of parents respond (Bowlby 1982; Gerhardt 2004). At the same time, our intervention contributed to the socialization and inclusion of disadvantaged people at work (Bol & Van de Werfhorst 2013). In this article, we will present in more detail the results, the conclusions, and the discussion of the research we have completed, while points that need further research will be proposed and implementable proposals will be submitted.

## Methodology

We implemented a six-month intervention program in a group of disabled people participating in a subsidized training program. The program was designed by a group of volunteer scientists, aiming at the holistic support of the participants and their families. This included, among others, professional counseling and supportive psychotherapy. The program was implemented over a period of 6 months, with regular sessions and personalized interventions, for each participant. The sessions aimed to in stimulation of the participants' self-esteem, in the development of strategies for coping with stress, improvement of communication skills, and provision of professional guidance.

The field of counseling career assessed the interests, skills, and aspirations of the participants while offering guidance in choosing appropriate career paths. Participants received information about job opportunities and vocational training. The career plans developed took into account the type of disability and the individual capabilities of the participants.

To deal with certain psychological issues, such as anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem, supportive psychotherapy was used. Therapeutic techniques, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy and counseling, helped participants overcome psychological and emotional barriers. Through the sessions, psychological safety and guidance were provided to participants, which was about stress management, interpersonal skills, and "self-advocacy".

Trying to establish the effectiveness of the intervention program, we selected a random sample (52) of people with special needs, aged 18-25 years, with an average age of 22.6 years. The sample consisted of people with hearing disorders, motor disabilities, and hematological disorders. The examined sample shows a high degree of homogeneity in terms of age composition but also the fact that they came for the first time in contact with work. The sample includes people of both sexes, with a slight predominance of women. 84.62% of the sample lived with their parents, while the remaining 15.38% lived independently.

After administering a weighted demographic questionnaire, the sample was divided into four groups of 12-15 individuals. Where required, instead of a questionnaire we used the interview. Various indicators were then measured before and after the intervention programme, using the Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS) and the Work Adjustment Inventory (WAI). The above evaluate respectively the mental health status and adaptation to the workplace of the participants. The main research question seeks to answer whether the observed differences in parameters under study, are due to our intervention, or to the natural variation of the random sample.

Scale (BPRS) compared a set of 18 symptoms assessing psychopathology, including: Physical activity (SOM), Anxiety (ANX), Emotional withdrawal (EMO), Cooperative disorganization (CON), Guilt feelings (GLT), Hypertension-mental tension (TEN), Stereotypes and Abnormal Attitudes (MAN), Megalomania (GRA), Depressed Mood (DEP), Hostility (HOS), Suspicion (SUS), Delusional Behavior (HAL), Motor Delay (MOT). Uncooperativeness (UNC), Unusual Thought Content (GNO), Decreased

Emotions (BLU), Disorientation (EXO), Disorientation Disorders (DIS). It is important to mention that some adjustments were made to scale items to reflect the needs of the participants. While the method was applied by experts, as there are caveats and limitations (Hafkenscheid 2000).

The scale (WAI) assessed adaptation to work. In addition, it measures how well a person can perform their job duties while helping to improve their workability. The scale serves a dual purpose, helping to formulate individualized plans for students with disabilities, or high-risk individuals. The scale measures six sub-characteristics related to a person's adaptation to work, such as: activity, empathy, sociability, assertiveness, adaptability, and emotion. The scale assesses the ability of individuals to function effectively and successfully in the work environment, taking into account the above characteristics (Magnavita et al. 2024).

Overall, the study examined whether supportive psychotherapy and vocational counseling could have a positive effect on the mental health and adjustment to the workplace of people with disabilities. To determine the effectiveness of the intervention program, we used the SPSS statistical method, analyzing the data collected based on the BPRS and WAI scales (Creswell 2015).

## Results

After the intervention program was completed, results showed significant improvement in all areas of participants' mental health and workplace adjustment. The only, generally expected, index that did not improve afterwards the intervention concerned anxiety. He appeared at high levels, probably due to the uncertainty of finding a job and the high awareness of reality. On the contrary, the participants presented positive adaptive changes in the spectrum of empathy, sociability, assertiveness, and adaptability.

In addition, they showed high levels of excitement and stimulation of their emotional world. It was also observed, an increase in physical activity, an improvement in emotional contact with other people. Increased internal organization as confused and disorganized thoughts were reduced. Feelings of guilt lessened. Similarly, tension, nervousness, and hyperactivity were reduced. Negative affect decreased and personal activation increased. Stereotypical – abnormal attitudes and evidence of psychopathology were not detected. No ideas of megalomania, or beliefs of unusual abilities or powers were detected. No attitudes of apathy or sadness were detected.

In general, reduced levels of depression, increased self-confidence, and improved social skills were found. Through career counseling, participants understood their strengths and interests, maintaining increased motivation and commitment to their chosen career path. In addition, they showed better adjustment to the workplace and increased job satisfaction and productivity levels. All participants had access to vocational training programs that provided them with the necessary knowledge - skills to limit the adverse effects of their psychosomatic-physical limitations.

Similarly, participants with deafness showed improved mental well-being, showing reduced feelings of isolation, and improved communication skills. With the help of supportive psychotherapy, they faced the emotional challenges brought about by their disability, developed appropriate coping mechanisms, and demonstrated resilience. Confidence in their abilities was strengthened and they joined the labor market more easily. The job retention rate improved and career advancement opportunities were presented. Additionally, participants had access to assistive technologies and limited resources to facilitate effective communication in the workplace.

**Table 1.** *Factors studied based on the Scale (WAI)*

Aspect	Importance/Impact of the intervention
Self confidence	Substantial strengthening of the self-confidence of the participants.
Empathy	Improving empathy, as well as cultivating emotional and cognitive maturity in the workplace.
Sociability	Positive effect on the social integration and social networking of the participants.
Assertiveness	Positive effect on strengthening self-confidence, contributing to positive adaptations in the work environment.

Adaptability	Improving adaptability, especially important for people with disabilities.
Emotional world	Stimulation of the emotional world of the participants.
<b>Overall effect</b>	Positive results, highlighting its comprehensive impact on various aspects of adaptation.

**Table 2.** Factors studied based on the Scale (BPRS)

Aspect	Importance/Impact of the intervention
Physical activity (SOM), (MOT), (DIS).	Positive results, increased confidence / mobility.
Anxiety (ANX), (TEN).	Minimal or negative effect, possible correlation with uncertainty of finding work
Emotional contact(EMO), (BLU), (UNC), (EMO).	Positive effect, improvement of emotional contact with other people.
Perfect organization (CON)	Positive effect, improvement of the organization of the participants.
Remorse/ Guilt (GLT), (HOS).	Positive effect, reduction of feelings of guilt, possibly due to increased self-esteem and an organized approach.
Mental Tendency (SUS), (GNO), (BLU).	Positive affect, decrease negative affect, increase activation.
Stereotypical / abnormal attitudes (MAN).	Positive effect, absence of evidence of psychopathology.
Ideas of greatness (GRA)	Positive effect, absence of evidence of psychopathology.
Depressing feeling (DEP)	Positive effect, absence of evidence of psychopathology.

**Table 3.** Classification of results by domain

Sector	Results
Mental health	Significant improvement, with reduced depression, increased self-confidence and improved social skills.
Adaptation to work	Improvement in all areas such as activity, empathy, sociability, assertiveness and adaptability.
Anxiety	The stress detection remained relatively high, possibly due to the uncertainty of finding a job.
Emotional wellness	High levels of excitement and arousal, with a reduction in negative emotions and increased internal organization.
Social skills	Improving contact with other people and increasing personal activation.
Dealing with emotional challenges	Developing appropriate coping mechanisms and enhancing confidence in abilities.
Adaptive changes	Positive adaptive changes in all areas such as activity, empathy, sociability, assertiveness and adaptability.

**Table 4.** Effect on Employability after the intervention

Participants (52)	Rate (%)	Interval after intervention	Participation in Employment/ work situation
15	28.84%	8 months	Ensuring subsidized employment.
37	71.16%	8 months	They are looking for work / employment.

## Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of a specific intervention program for people with various disabilities. The changes it caused were considered statistically significant and verifiable and are solely due to it. Comprehensive support for PWDs, including professional counseling and supportive psychotherapy, significantly improves their degree of mental health and work adaptation. The findings suggest that the promotion of personalized training and employment opportunities contribute to the social and labour integration of disabled people. Particularly in the field of a highly competitive labor market, the application of holistic solutions is imperative, providing valuable insights to policymakers, educators, and rehabilitation professionals (Walker & Holden-Dye 2014).

Adapting our interventions to the challenges faced by PWDs and their families can mitigate integration difficulties and facilitate their work integration. Applying inclusive policies in education, work, in the public space, we promote the creation of an inclusive environment that incorporates diversity and provides universal equality opportunities. However, any scientific information ends up at the discretion of politics. Especially nowadays, everything is intertwined in a labyrinthine field of social awareness and pressures brought to the policy-making circle. Ultimately, everything is considered and weighed politically and either incorporated into current government work and the current budget or left as possible priorities for the future (Ladi & Dalakou 2016; Chu et. et al. 2021).

In this article, we present the results of a study that investigated the effectiveness of a targeted intervention in the vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities. These interventions led to an increase in self-confidence and the development of social and work skills and had a measurable positive effect. These interventions increased social awareness of the needs of people with disabilities and confirmed our main research question. However, a need for further extension of the research or development of intervention programmes was identified. It was understood that further social support and community initiatives can contribute to enhancing the autonomy and well-being of people with disabilities.

Furthermore, it became evident that social indifference is a problem that affects the whole society, not only the vulnerable social group of people with disabilities. Finally, we need to put more effort into stimulating the participation, accessibility, and inclusion of people with disabilities in society and the economy. The need for action at the political level is clear. Governments must take a leading role in providing resources and support for initiatives aimed at improving the situation of people with disabilities. In addition, working with international organisations and sharing best practices with other countries can strengthen efforts and lead to the required sustainable changes. Such changes will contribute to social equity and justice, reduce any social employment gap to the detriment of people with disabilities, and provide a significant economic, employment, and social impact.

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